

What's New in Writing?

PARENT NEWSLETTER

Empowering[™]
Writers

Teacher's Name _____ Grade _____

Expository Writing Newsletter # _____

VOLUME 1

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Your child continues to learn new skills in writing and practice those already taught. As mentioned in a previous letter, we use curriculum materials from Empowering Writers. This update will share some writing techniques with you your child has learned and will give you insight as to how you can help your student writer!

FOCUS SKILL AREA: MAIN IDEAS

Informational writing focuses on a chosen topic which is organized into paragraphs, with an introduction, at least three main idea paragraphs in the body of the piece, and a conclusion. Before students begin to write they need to establish the topic and the main ideas of the piece. They research a topic and/or brainstorm ideas about the topic. By doing this they can begin to categorize the details, grouping related details together.

For example, the topic might be a place they've visited or would like to visit. A brainstorming list might reveal such details as swimming, snorkeling, parasailing, and water skiing. These have a commonality—they are all activities. The main idea then, for one paragraph, would be activities.

Your child is being taught to avoid general main ideas like awesome, fun, and interesting. For example, one topic that could be assigned in class might be a research paper on Native Americans. Some logical main ideas may be homes, food, and clothing. The quality of these main ideas allows the writer to generate a greater number of details. In essence it is easier to write when the main ideas are distinct from one another.

What Can You Do to Support Main Ideas?

- Read through your child's writing and underline the main ideas. The main idea sentence is generally the first sentence of each paragraph in the body of the piece. Look for words like fun, cute, nice, or awesome. These words are general and need to be replaced with something more specific.
- Think of a topic, or use one that has been assigned in class, and then brainstorm a list of everything you and your child know about that topic. Write down anything that comes to mind. Then group words that have something in common and write down the categories. These categories will become the possible main ideas and the grouped words are the possible supporting details.

If there are any questions about your child's progress or about the writing process in general, feel free to contact me. For those of you who want more information, you can go to www.empoweringwriters.com and click on the **Parent's Corner**. You will find a link to Expository Writing.