

The Lost art of Letter Writing



Background about the school you worked in last year :

I am presently working in GPS, Moolakulam. Last year I was working at GPS, Perungalore, Zone-IV where I handled Grade-III of CBSE syllabus. The strength of the school was 87 and my class' strength was 14. There were 5 teachers and a Headmaster.

Presently, I am handling III Standard- Samacheer syllabus. When I was handling CBSE syllabus, it was really a challenging task for me as I had to handle all other subjects too.

Some key areas of interest

To impart quality education to my students, I needed lots of resources and guidance to improve my classroom process. I create my own resources and browse for a lot of support materials to make the class interactive. I'm also interested in drawing, painting, reading books and listening to music.

Why I was interested in joining the teachers' circle

When I got an opportunity to join the Puducherry Teachers Circle, I didn't want to miss it and became a part of the English group. There are several other

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Previous School : G.P.S.
Perungalore

Student strength – 87

Teacher strength – 5

teachers in the group with whom we discuss ideas to teach a particular concept, share our classroom practices and reflections of teaching.

After joining the PTC, I was able to update myself. The experiences of other teachers helped me improve my own teaching. I was able to modify my resources for various subjects and there was a lot of knowledge sharing during the meetings. We used to also discuss the various challenges faced in the classroom.

PTC is a great platform for teachers. The great advantage that I felt after joining PTC is that I could meet up with other like-minded teachers and expand my professional skills. Not only the members but the schools were also provided with print rich materials and several lesson-based resources which were really helpful in our classroom.

Summary of the different things I did last year

The PTC group is devoted to everything that has to do with the teaching and learning. Last year in PTC, I developed English lessons and resources for it for Grades III & IV. I have also shared my reflections and these were published in the Thisaimaani magazine. About seven of my lesson plans were published last year.

Experience Sharing

Purpose

This case-study is regarding a lesson which I had taken for Grade-III, “What’s in the Mailbox?” of CBSE syllabus. This poem enables the pupils to discover the joy of writing through letters to friends.

How I planned / to work on this objective

Letter writing is undoubtedly one of the most challenging tasks. It is an essential skill. There are a number of conventions to be adhered to and it is important that the overall structure is as clear and concise as possible and use of colloquialism is avoided. The key is to communicate in the clearest way possible be it a formal or personal letter.

Despite the prevalence of e-mails and text messages, everyone has to write letters at some point. Encouraging children to write letters from an early age will improve their communication, handwriting skills and social etiquette.

Summary of teaching and assessment

My students of Grade-III were quiet unfamiliar with the use of letters and writing a letter. First I asked them to draw a “Mailbox” and colour it in red. I asked them to draw an envelope, postcard, inland letter and a greeting card. I showed a model of each one before they began to draw. This activity was done as a warm-up for the students.

Examining Sample Letters: Then I gave them a sample letter and interrogated them after they had examined the given model letter carefully. I collected different types of letters and showed them a chart covering the different aspects of letter - Address, Greeting, Style of letter, Message and Conclusion & Signing

Word Web: For vocabulary enhancement, I cited new words from the poem and wrote them on the blackboard. I made them highlight those words in their textbooks. I procured related words from them and listed them on the board. I thought this might enable their divergent thinking.

I derived the following possible words from the new words. I did this activity as a semantic grouping "Word Web".

Example: LETTER - The students gave few related words to it such as...POSTCARD, POSTMAN, ENVELOPE, STAMP, POSTBOX, GREETING CARD, THANKS, REPLY, PAPER, WRITE, HI, HELLO, MESSAGE, WISHES, NEWS, YOURS, LOVINGLY...These words were familiar to the children.

Letter writing process:

Before they started letter writing in their note books, I made them complete the letter in a worksheet individually. The worksheet was created specifically for children to fill.

After they were done with the worksheet, one common topic was given to the whole class to write on. The words for birthday party letter was given to the class. Different ideas came out in Tamil and together we framed the sentences on the board in English. They were able to recall a few sentences and make simple sentences on their own. I also encouraged peer and group learning where children discussed ideas among themselves. They first discussed in Tamil about what they had planned to write. Then they drafted their letter in English. I helped each group to complete the letter. Peer-support was visible. Spellings were corrected among themselves. This process was the second step and a step forward from the worksheet they did earlier.

Writing Process:

The writing process started by first making them imagine as if they were inviting a friend to a birthday party and then writing the time, date, day and venue. These were written on the board and the order in which they should be written was shown to the children. To do this I asked a series of questions to bring out all aspects of a function, like place, time and venue. The children got excited and gave out different suggestions. Then I asked them to keep the model letter in front and asked them to work in groups.

There were a lot of discussion going on. After the group process I asked them to write it on their own in their notebooks. One person from each group presented it in the class and peer correction and discussion happened.

I assessed the children at all stages. I had to concentrate more while I asked them to complete the letter in the worksheet and when I evaluated them on writing a letter to their friend independently.

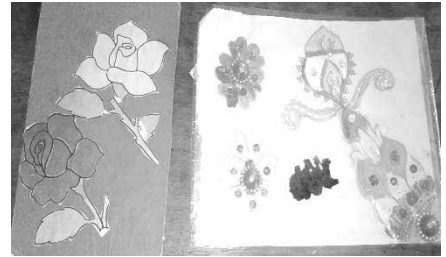
I kept a read-aloud session and ensured that all the children read the letter before the entire class. I further encouraged them to display them on classroom walls.

Letter to a friend: A few days later I asked the children to bring an inland letter/ postcard. After the children brought a postcard each, I asked them to select one friend to whom they wanted to write a letter. We discussed various occasions like local festivals, birthday parties, visit to a place and family functions for which a letter could be written. This interaction generated lot of interest. Then I made them select their own groups (Peer-grouping) and divided them accordingly and asked them to write letters to their friends. As I had already shown them a model letter in the warm-up session, they were familiar with the different aspects of letter.



Making an Envelope: After the completion of letter, I showed them how to make an envelope. Each one made an envelope on their own. I asked them to post the letter they had written to their friend with the school's address on the envelope. Further I encouraged them to prepare greeting cards to their friends or family members with a proper message. This they could do better as they had written one earlier. The pictures they drew on the cards were different and colourful.

The children thoroughly enjoyed writing a letter and posting it to their friends. Likewise, I saw the joy in the faces of children when they received a letter in their name. There is something special about posting the letters in the post-box and about the brightly coloured stamps, seeing their name on the envelope and knowing that inside is a long awaited letter from a friend or family member. I learnt that the usage of stamp could be used for cross-learning such as they reveal the national designation, denomination, names of countries, perforations, images related to historians...



Way Forward: After the introduction of CBSE, I felt that the children were struggling to learn and started taking extra effort to make their learning easier. I feel a change in me and I can see a difference in my teaching methods. I used to prepare one TLM per lesson but now I am planning to create a lot more for my lessons. I used to be keen on completing the portions earlier, but now I am ensuring that children learn the language skills.