

Writing in Math Class



Writing and mathematics are similar in that they both require gathering, organizing, and clarifying thoughts. Writing can assist math instruction by helping children make sense of mathematics and by helping teachers understand what children are learning.

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Journal Prompts

Write about what you did
Today I _____
I learned _____
I'm not sure about _____
I'm wondering about _____
I think the answer is... I think this
because .. .
Write about your strategy for solving a
word problem.
What is mathematics?
What is multiplication?
What is addition?

List all of the ways that you used math yesterday...
If I were one centimeter high...
What is a fraction?
Show two ways to solve a division problem
Write about how long one minute is.
Write about all the ways that you use money.
Make a chart showing your daily activities.
Write a note to a friend explaining how you learned
your multiplication facts.
Write about when it is appropriate to use estimation.
Write about mathematical things that you see on TV.
Draw your favorite shape and write about it.
Math is important because...

Writing Solutions to Math Problems

Have students write solutions to math problems. When you are working on problem solving, having students write about the solution they got, as well as how they arrived at that solution is a great strategy to build confidence in this difficult area. Problem solving is often the weakest area for students of all ages. If they are able to think about what they are doing, and put it in words, often the process becomes easier. It also tells teachers exactly what students are thinking, and possibly gives key evidence as to what students might be missing in their thinking. When students are solving problems, they should be required not only to present answers but also to explain their reasoning.

Writing Math Stories (Creative Writing and Math)

Giving students writing assignments in math class that is more like a creative writing assignment can give students a fresh way to think about mathematical ideas, as well as give students who feel they are more interested in writing than in math can bring their writing strength to a math assignment. Writing assignments like this can also help students broaden their view of mathematics. One way that you can teach students to write creatively about math is to read stories about math aloud to

them, model for them how to write a math story, write a math story together, and then have students write their own. They may rewrite a popular story to include a math concept that you have been studying. Students may write poetry about math, as well as write creatively based on a prompt that you have given them.

Math Haiku

Zero what would
We do without
You?

Following are some examples of prompts and creative writing assignments:

If I were one centimeter high...one foot high...sixty feet high...

How would you explain geometrical shapes to a friend?

Write a poem about numbers.

Look through magazines to find active math pictures. Write a situation to go along with each picture.

Menu Math - Have students create original menus for their favorite restaurant. When they are finished, they can write word problems about their menu, or a story about their trip to eat at this restaurant, including what they ordered, how much money they spent, and how much change they had left.

After reading a class novel, or a read aloud book, invite students to rewrite the story to include math concepts that you have been studying. Or, have students write math word problems using characters and/or events from the story.

Math and Writing Strategies/Tips

Talk with students about the purpose of their writing. Make sure that students understand the main reasons that they are writing in math - to support their learning, and to help assess their progress.

Use students' writing in classroom instruction. Children's papers are very effective to start classroom discussions and activities. Using papers this way shows students different ways to approach problems. Ask students to read their papers aloud. This encourages oral speaking and student directed learning. Using student papers motivates students to continue to improve their writing skills.

Post math word lists so students can spell words correctly in their writing, as well as recall words from past units to include in their writing.

Ask students to revise and edit. As any great writer does, revising and editing is an important part of their writing process, in any subject area. When students do not give complete or detailed information, have students read aloud their papers, and add information that they were missing. Depending on the child and the assignment, ask students to correct spelling and grammatical errors.

Compare/Contrast math topics - addition and multiplication, perimeter and area, square and triangle, 2 numbers, etc...