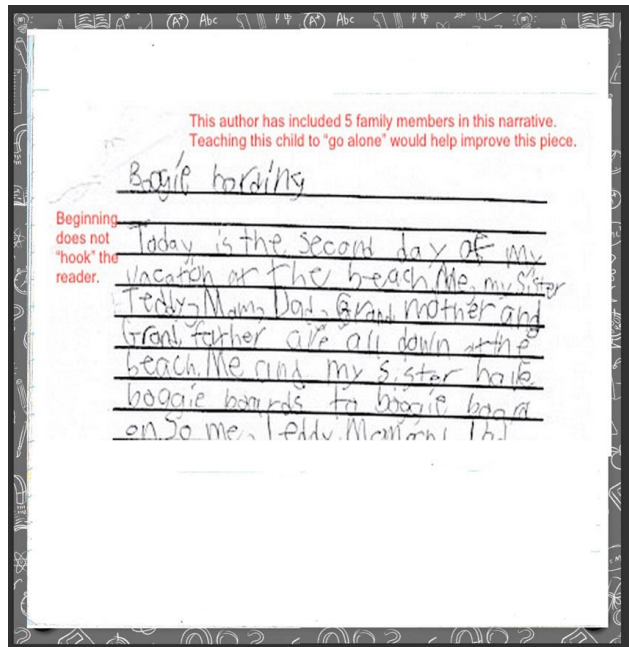
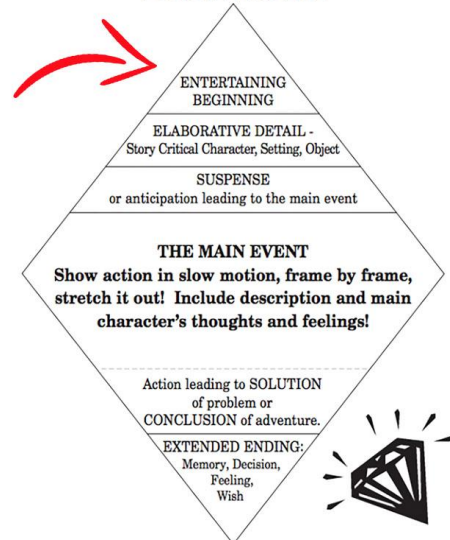


Writing is a process, not a destination! It's very easy for us as teachers to get overwhelmed by the task of helping young writers improve. The challenge seems daunting at times. Take the pressure off of yourself to create perfect writers and replace your thinking to produce improving writers. Below is an example of a student who started his fourth grade year without a lot of writing instruction.



Narrative Writing Diamond



Boogie Bording

Today is the second day of my vacation on the beach. Me, my sister Teddy, Mom, Dad, Grand Mother and Grand father are all down at the beach. Me and my sister have boogie boards to boogie board on. So me, Teddy, Mom, Dad...

At first glance, this writer obviously needs a lot of work. You may ask- where should I start in terms of instruction? The first skill of **Empowering Writers** is entertaining beginnings. There are a few key elements that would get this student off to a better start.

1. It's clear that this young author does not know what the purpose of a beginning is. Hooking the reader is crucial to a narrative story. Expose this child to narrative stories and discuss ways that the authors have drawn them into their stories. The student needs to build an understanding of entertaining beginnings through the use of published literature.

2. Teach this student that the main character should “go alone” and start the story as close to the main event as possible. It is very common among young students to include their family and friends in their writing (like the student above), but, developmentally, it’s not reasonable for them to do so.
3. Finally, teaching this student the four different types of beginnings: **action**, **thought/questions**, **dialogue**, and **sound**, will work wonders.

Empowering Writers instruction provides teachers with specific strategies and lessons using these four techniques for creating entertaining story beginnings.

Let’s look at how this story might unfold if this skill had been taught:

I sprinted barefoot towards the sunny beach, board in hand, and jumped into the ocean just waiting for the big kahuna of all waves!

Notice that by deleting mom, dad, sister etc., we can better focus on the main character and setting. This “action” beginning draws the reader in and gets the story off and rolling.

The next paper that this child wrote was much better. Not perfect, but a clear improvement, based on the specific instruction that took place. That’s what we want growing writers! Try it on for size and see what difference it will make in your instruction and in student writing.