# Personal Essay: Grade 4
## Writing Unit 2

**Unit Title:** Personal Essay  
**Duration:** 3 weeks

### Concepts:
1. Writers generate ideas for writing personal essays.
2. Writers learn strategies for good personal essay writing.
3. Writers learn strategies for revising personal essays.
4. Writers learn strategies for editing personal essays.
5. Writers publish and share personal essays.

### Materials:
1. On-Demand Personal Essay Pre-Assessment
2. Writer's notebooks
3. Writing folders with notebook paper
4. Anchor charts:
   - Examining the Structure of Essays
   - Comparing Narratives and Essays
   - Possible Essay Ideas
   - Thought Prompts
   - Boxes and Bullets
   - Parallel Structures
   - Ways to Start an Essay
   - Ways to End an Essay
5. Enlarged copies of the following:
   - “The Genuine Van Gogh,” from Chicken Soup for the Kid's Soul 2
   - “Lessons in Friendship” from Chicken Soup for the Kid's Soul 2
   - “Doing the Right Thing” sample essay
   - Personal Essay Revision/Editing Checklist
6. Individual copies of the following:
   - “The Power of Attitude,” from Chicken Soup for the Kid's Soul 2
   - “Things Are Not Always Black or White” from Chicken Soup for the Kid's Soul
   - Possible Essay Ideas chart
   - Personal Essay Revision/Editing Checklist
   - Special paper for final drafts
   - Personal Essay Conferring Checklist
   - Personal Essay Assessment Rubric
7. Two-column charts for small groups

### Resources:
1. Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays, Lucy Calkins
2. Chicken Soup for the Kid’s Soul, Jack Canfield, et.al.
3. Chicken Soup for the Kid's Soul 2, Jack Canfield, et.al.
4. The Summer My Father Was Ten, Pat Brisson
5. Miss Rumphius, Barbara Cooney
6. Thundercake, Patricia Polacco
7. An Angel for Solomon Singer, Cynthia Rylant
8. Owl Moon, Jane Yolen
9. Assessing Writers, Carl Anderson

### Notes:
1. Spend more than one day for a session if necessary.
2. Create permanent classroom anchor charts by adding new strategies as you go. If you choose to use a document camera to share the anchor charts from this unit, also create classroom anchor charts so students can refer to them later.
3. Use the Conferring Checklist located at the end of this unit.
Instructions

Students should be at their regular writing seats and will need loose-leaf paper and pencils. They need to be able to add pages if they want. Write the following statement on the board:

“Some people judge others by the way they look instead of what is on the inside.”

Tell students:

Read the statement, “Some people judge others by the way they look instead of what is on the inside” aloud from the board. Have the students think about whether or not they agree with the statement.

“Let’s each write our opinion about this big idea - a piece that shows our best work. You will have an hour to write your opinion about this big idea and think of stories from your life and in the world that you can use to support your opinion. Use everything you know about good writing.”

Have students begin their opinion writing.

Note

This on-demand assessment shows what students know about essay writing to write about a given idea. Score these essays using the Personal Essay Assessment Rubric located at the end of this unit. Use the same rubric to score their published essays at the end of this unit to show what they have learned.
## Personal Essay: Grade 4
### Writing Unit 2

### Session 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Writers generate ideas for writing personal essays.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>Writers analyze the content and structure of personal essays.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References
- **Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays**, Lucy Calkins
- **Chicken Soup for the Kid’s Soul**, Jack Canfield, et.al.
- **Chicken Soup for the Kid’s Soul 2**, Jack Canfield, et.al.

### Materials
- Anchor charts:
  - Examining the Structure of Essays
  - Comparing Narratives and Essays
- Enlarged copies of the following class-sized essays:
  - “The Genuine Van Gogh,” from Chicken Soup for the Kid’s Soul 2
  - “Lessons in Friendship” from Chicken Soup for the Kid’s Soul 2
- Copies of the following essays for each group:
  - “The Power of Attitude” from Chicken Soup for the Kid’s Soul 2
  - “Things Are Not Always Black or White” from Chicken Soup for the Kid’s Soul
- Two-column charts for each group

### Notes
- In this session, students will be reading and discussing personal essays in small groups to immerse them in this genre. Plan ahead for group assignments.

### Connection
- Explain that students will begin a new writing unit of study today. They will start by looking at the structure and content of personal essays. In personal essays, the author advances a theme of personal significance.
**Personal Essay: Grade 4**  
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| Demonstraton/Teaching | • Explain that essays are always organized around a topic or **important idea**. Authors present their opinion, or perspective, related to an important idea, and then they argue their position in their essays.  
• Explain that today students will study the **important ideas** and **evidence**, or support, for those ideas in essays. They will learn more about forming an opinion, or taking a perspective, in a few days.  
• Share the personal essay, **“The Genuine Van Gogh,”** and examine the introduction to identify the important idea. Explain how the body of the essay includes evidence for this important idea in the form of an experience.  
• Record the **important idea** and the **evidence** on a class-sized *Examining the Structure of Essays* chart. |
| --- | --- |
| Active Engagement | • Have students help you do this same work that you just demonstrated using the essay, **“Lessons in Friendship.”**  
• Summarize the process for the students. |
| Link | **Writers, you will be working in groups today to explore two other personal essays. You will be reading them to determine the **important ideas** and the **evidence** that supports the important ideas. You will be recording this information on a two-column chart for each group.** |
| Writing and Conferring | • Conduct small group conferences. Listen to and help students identify the **important ideas** and understand how the **evidence** relates to each important idea. |
| Mid-Workshop Teaching Point | • Have two or three groups of students share the **important ideas** and **evidence** from their personal essays and add them to the class chart. Summarize the thinking the students used. |
| Share | • Convene students in the meeting area.  
• Bring closure to today’s workshop by using the *Comparing Narratives and Essays* chart to do a side-by-side comparison of a narrative and an essay.  
• Review each characteristic of narratives using a familiar narrative text as an example.  
• Review each characteristic of essays using an essay as an example.  
• Students should be able to identify texts that are read aloud as narrative or essay and explain why.  
• Explain that although there are differences between these two kinds of writing, there are also similarities. Both kinds of writing are made from ideas and stories. In narrative writing, the story comes forward, and in essay writing, the idea comes forward. A writer could write a narrative or an essay about any given experience. |
## Examining the Structure of Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Titles/Important ideas</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The Genuine Van Gogh” People who help others in little ways are heroes.</td>
<td>Austin went out of his way to help return a cat to its owners, and they thought he was a hero.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lessons in Friendship” Real friends stick with each other no matter what.</td>
<td>Tatiana’s friend Sayla decided she wanted “cooler” friends, so she ditched Tatiana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Power of Attitude” Work is easier with the right attitude.</td>
<td>Melea found that yard work was easier once she changed her attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Things are Not Always Black or White” Stand in other people’s shoes to understand their perspective.</td>
<td>Judie got in an argument at school, and her teacher taught her that there are two sides to every story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing Narratives and Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Organized in sequence.</td>
<td>• Organized around an important idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Begins with character, setting, and</td>
<td>• Begins with an important idea and an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem.</td>
<td>opinion, or perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Characters are developed across the</td>
<td>• Important idea is developed across the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whole text.</td>
<td>whole text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ends with a resolution to the</td>
<td>• Ends by returning to the important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem.</td>
<td>idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Written so the reader can participate</td>
<td>• Written so the reader can think about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the experience.</td>
<td>the important idea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Session 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Writers generate ideas for writing personal essays.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>Writers brainstorm essay ideas from the important ideas in personal essays.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### References

- *Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays*, Lucy Calkins

### Materials

- Writer’s notebooks
- Anchor charts:
  - Examining the Structure of Essays
  - Comparing Narratives and Essays
  - Possible Essay Ideas

### Note

- Post on the daily schedule or verbally ask students to bring their writer’s notebook and a pencil to the meeting area.

### Connection

- Explain that students will be thinking about the important ideas from the essays they read yesterday to help them come up with their own essay ideas.

### Demonstration/Teaching

- Review the *Examining the Structure of Essays* chart from yesterday’s session.
- Explain that you and the students are going to start thinking about possible essay ideas and jotting them down today and for the next couple of days.
- Demonstrate how to focus in on one important idea from the chart, think about what this idea means to you, and recall when an experience related to this idea occurred in your own life. Also suggest that students consider observations, facts, and events that have occurred outside of their lives as evidence that can support the important ideas in essays.
- Begin a T-chart on the board with the title *Possible Essay Ideas* and the headings Important Ideas and Evidence from My Life or the World. Write the important idea in the box and a few words that tell about the experience, observation, fact, or event next to the first bullet on the chart. Then see if you can think of a second experience, observation, fact, or event related to the same important idea and record it next to the second bullet on the chart.

### Active Engagement

- Have students create a T-chart with the same title and headings on a clean page in their writer’s notebooks.
- Give students time to think of two experiences, observations, facts, or events related to the same important idea and then share their ideas with a partner.
- Have a few students share their ideas with the class. Explain that students should listen carefully to the ideas of other students because they often spark memories of other experiences, observations, facts, or events that can be used as evidence to support the important idea.
- Have students jot down the important idea and the evidence on their T-charts.
- Have students continue to do this same work using one more important idea from the chart.

### Link

*Writers, today you will continue this work independently. You will look at two other important ideas listed on the Examining the Structure of Essays chart, think about experiences, observations, facts, or events that can be used as evidence, and jot down these ideas in your writer’s notebooks. Talk about your ideas with a partner today. Your ideas might spark memories for others, and their ideas might spark memories for you.*
Writing and Conferring

- Conduct individual conferences to support students’ efforts at thinking of their own ideas related to the important ideas.

Share

- Convene students in the meeting area.
- Bring closure to today’s workshop by having several students share essay ideas from their notebooks. Summarize the thinking the students used.
- Have students recall and share one thing that they learned.

Possible Essay Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important ideas</th>
<th>Evidence from My Life or the World (Personal Experiences, Observations, Facts, Events)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• People who help others in little ways are heroes.</td>
<td>• Once my friend thought I was a hero because I helped her when her car ran out of gas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Another time I thought my mom was a hero because she took care of me when I was really sick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Real friends stick with each other no matter what.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work is easier with the right attitude.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stand in other people’s shoes to understand their perspective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Session 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Writers generate ideas for writing personal essays.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>Writers brainstorm essay ideas from the important ideas in narrative texts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References

### Materials
### Personal Essay: Grade 4
### Writing Unit 2

#### Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays, Lucy Calkins

- **Writer’s notebooks**
- **Anchor charts:**
  - Comparing Narratives and Essays
  - Possible Essay Ideas
- *The Summer My Father Was Ten*, Pat Brisson (accept responsibility for your actions)
- *Miss Rumphius*, Barbara Cooney (leave things better than the way you found them)
- *Thunder Cake*, Patricia Polacco (overcome your fears)
- *An Angel for Solomon Singer*, Cynthia Rylant (accept things the way they are)
- *Owl Moon*, Jane Yolen (have patience)

### Note

- Post on the daily schedule or verbally ask students to bring their writer's notebook and a pencil to the meeting area.

### Connection

- Remind students that they have been studying personal essays to determine the important ideas and to generate their own possible essay ideas. Another source for collecting entries that can become essay ideas is narrative text.

### Demonstration/Teaching

- Explain that narratives often have important ideas, too, and that essay writers sometimes focus on an important idea from a story to help them think of possible essay ideas.
- Demonstrate how to focus in on an important idea from one story, think about what this idea means to you, and recall two experiences, observations, facts, or events that can be used as evidence to support this important idea.
- Record the important idea and evidence on your Possible Essay Ideas T-chart.

### Active Engagement

- Explain to students that this important idea might remind them of experiences, observations, facts, or events, too. Give students time to think about what this idea means to them and share their ideas with a partner.
- Have two or three students share their ideas with the class. Remind students to listen carefully because these ideas might spark other memories.
- Have students open their writer’s notebooks and add the important idea and the related experiences, observations, facts, or events to their T-charts.
- Have students continue to do this same work using one other narrative. Write the important idea from a familiar narrative on the Possible Essay Ideas chart and have students jot down this evidence in their writer’s notebooks.

### Link

*Writers, today you will continue this work independently. You will look at two other stories, think about the important ideas, and recall related experiences, observations, facts, or events of your own. Then you will jot down these important ideas and evidence in your writer’s notebooks. Talk about your ideas with a partner today. Your ideas might spark memories for others, and their ideas might spark memories for you.*

### Writing and Conferring

- Conduct individual conferences to support students’ efforts at thinking of their own examples related to the important ideas in stories.
**Mid-Workshop Teaching Point**

Writers, as you read other narrative texts, consider the important ideas in those stories, too. You may want to add these important ideas to your Possible Essay Ideas chart and see if you can think of related evidence to support the ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Convene students in the meeting area.  
• Bring closure to today's workshop by having several students share essay ideas from their notebooks. Summarize the thinking the students used. 
• Have students recall and share one thing that they learned. |
### Personal Essay: Grade 4

**Writing Unit 2**

#### Session 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Writers generate ideas for writing personal essays.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>Writers brainstorm essay ideas from the important ideas in their writer’s notebooks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Materials</th>
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</table>
| * Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays, Lucy Calkins | * Writer’s notebooks  
* Anchor charts:  
  ➢ Comparing Narratives and Essays  
  ➢ Possible Essay Ideas |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>• Post on the daily schedule or verbally ask students to bring their writer’s notebook and a pencil to the meeting area.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>• Remind students that they have been studying narrative texts to determine the important ideas and generate their own possible essay ideas. Another source for collecting entries that can become essay ideas is their own writer’s notebooks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Demonstration/Teaching | • Explain that students will look back in their writer’s notebooks today and look for important ideas that can become possible essay ideas. They can think of an important idea related to a notebook entry that they have already written to help them think of other possible essay ideas.  
• Demonstrate how you look through your own writer’s notebook, focus in on one entry, think of an important idea related to that entry, and recall two experiences, observations, facts, or events that can be used as evidence to support this important idea.  
• Record the important idea and evidence on your Possible Essay Ideas T-chart. |
| Active Engagement | • Explain to students that this important idea might remind them of two experiences, observations, facts, or events of their own. Give students time to think about what this idea means to them and share their ideas with a partner.  
• Have two or three students share their ideas with the class. Remind students to listen carefully because these ideas might spark other memories.  
• Have students add the important idea and their own related experiences, observations, facts, or events to their T-charts.  
• Demonstrate this process one more time with another example from your own writer’s notebook. |
| Link | Writers, today you will continue this work independently. You will look at the entries in your own writer’s notebooks, think about the important idea related to these entries, and recall other related experiences, observations, facts, or events. Then you will jot down these important ideas and evidence in your writer’s notebooks. Talk about your ideas with a partner today. Your ideas might spark memories for others, and their ideas might spark memories for you. |
| Writing and Conferring | • Conduct individual conferences to support students’ efforts at thinking of new examples of experiences, observations, facts, or events related to the important ideas in their notebook entries.  
• You might need to guide students in table conferences to do this work. Have them turn to a page where they wrote about events related to a person, place, or thing and about a strong feeling and help them think of related important ideas. |
| Mid-Workshop Teaching Point | Writers, in order to keep you thinking of more ideas, take a few minutes to share your important ideas and related evidence with the other students at your tables. Add any new ideas that spark a memory to your own list. |
| Share | • Convene students in the meeting area.  
• Bring closure to today’s workshop by having several students share essay ideas from their notebooks. Summarize the thinking the students used.  
• Have students recall and share one thing that they learned. |
Personal Essay: Grade 4
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Session 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Writers generate ideas for writing personal essays.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>Writers choose ideas and write <strong>opinion statements</strong> for their own personal essays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays, Lucy Calkins | • Writer’s notebooks  
• Anchor charts:  
➢ Comparing Narratives and Essays  
➢ Possible Essay Ideas  
➢ Thought Prompts |

| Note | * Post on the daily schedule or verbally ask students to bring their writer’s notebook and a pencil to the meeting area. |
| Connection | * Remind students that they have been studying many different texts to determine the important ideas and generate their own possible essay ideas. Today they will choose an important idea and related evidence from their Possible Essay Ideas T-chart to develop into a personal essay. |
| Demonstratio n/Teaching | * Explain to students that they will be choosing an important idea that matters the most to them, one in which they have two different examples that they can use as evidence.  
• Demonstrate how you look through your list of Possible Essay Ideas and focus in on one important idea at a time. Then look at two related examples and think about how they support the important idea.  
• Position yourself as a “thinker” and a student as a “prompter” to demonstrate how you can push your thinking about your important idea. Begin by thinking aloud whatever thoughts you have about the important idea or the evidence. When you get stuck, the student suggests a thought prompt from the list to help you continue thinking in new ways about your ideas.  
• In this same way, students will be working with partners to help each other push their thinking about their important ideas and evidence.  
• Choose the idea that matters the most to you and record the important idea and the two related examples on a clean page in your writer’s notebook. |
| Active Engagement | * Have students open up their writer’s notebooks to their own Possible Essay Ideas T-chart.  
• Have students look at their first important idea on their Possible Essay Ideas page and think about how the two related examples support the important idea.  
• Encourage students to use thought prompts with a partner to push their thinking.  
• Have one or two students share their ideas with the class. |
| Link | Writers, today you will continue to look at the ideas and related examples from your own Possible Essay Ideas chart and think about the one that matters the most to you. Then you will record this important idea and two related examples on a clean page in your own writer’s notebooks. |
| Writing and Conferring | * Conduct individual conferences to support students’ efforts at choosing the important idea that matters most to them. |
Mid-Workshop Teaching Point

Writers, now that you have all decided on an idea for your personal essay, you need to think of your own opinion, or perspective, related to that important idea. Remember, an opinion is an important part of a personal essay. We need to turn our important ideas into opinion statements. As writers we can zoom in on an important idea and say, The idea I have about this is... For example:

✓ Important idea: Overcome your fears. Opinion statement: People need to find a way to overcome their fears.
✓ Important idea: Have patience. Opinion statement: I think people should have more patience.

Now it is time for you to turn your important ideas into your own opinion statements. Try writing your opinion statements three or four different ways until you find one that matches specifically what you want to say in your essay.

Share

• Convene students in the meeting area.
• Bring closure to today’s workshop by having several students share their important ideas and opinion statements, or perspectives, with the class. Summarize the thinking the students used.
• Have students recall and share one thing that they learned.

Thought Prompts

• The thought I have about this is ...
• In other words ...
• The surprising thing about this is ...
• This makes me realize ...
• Another way to look at this is ...
• In my experience ...
**Session 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Writers generate ideas for writing personal essays.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>Writers use <strong>Boxes and Bullets</strong> to organize their ideas for a personal essay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • *Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays*, Lucy Calkins | • Writer’s notebooks  
• Anchor charts:  
  ➢ *Comparing Narratives and Essays*  
  ➢ *Boxes and Bullets*  
  ➢ *Parallel Structures* |

**Connection**  
• Explain that writers need to know how an essay is organized in order to be able to write an essay of their own.
### Personal Essay: Grade 4
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| Demonstrating Teaching | • Introduce *Boxes and Bullets* as a way for students to organize their ideas for their personal essays.  
| | • Demonstrate how to record your position statement, or point of view, in the box and the two parallel supporting reasons next to the bullets on the organizer. Choose linking words and phrases from the *Parallel Structures* chart for recording your reasons. |
| Active Engagement | • Do this same work using the essay ideas from a student volunteer. Have the class work together with you to record the point of view and reasons on a *Boxes and Bullets* organizer. |
| Link | Writers, today you will do this same work independently using your own ideas. Make them big enough to hold your ideas. Write your point of view in the box and then list your two reasons using a parallel structure next to the bullets. |
| Writing and Conferring | • Conduct individual conferences to support students’ efforts at using *Boxes and Bullets* to organize their ideas. |
| Share | • Convene students in the meeting area.  
| | • Bring closure to today’s workshop by having several students read their point of view and two parallel supporting reasons with the class. Summarize the thinking the students used.  
| | • Have students recall and share one thing that they learned. |
Boxes and Bullets

•

•

Parallel Structures
Personal Essay: Grade 4  
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• One reason why I think/believe this is because …  
  Another reason why I think/believe this is because…  

• One example of … is …  
  Another examples of … is …  

• One time I …  
  Another time I …  

• One way that …  
  Another way that …  

• One person who …  
  Another person who …  

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Session 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Writers learn strategies for good personal essay writing.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>Writers use their point of view to create essay introductions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays, Lucy Calkins | • Writer’s notebooks  
• Writing folders and writing paper  
• Anchor charts:  
  ➢ Comparing Narratives and Essays  
  ➢ Boxes and Bullets  
  ➢ Ways to Start an Essay  
• Sample essay “Doing the Right Thing” |
**Personal Essay: Grade 4**  
**Writing Unit 2**

| Connection | • Explain to students that they will be using their writing folders and paper instead of their writer’s notebook as they begin writing their essay today.  
• Explain that essay writers use the *introduction* to convey to readers that the ideas in the essay are important. It is essential that writers reach for precise words to capture their thoughts. We will use the following structure in our introductions:  
➢ The first sentence focuses the reader’s attention on the important idea.  
➢ The middle sentence(s) elaborate on the important idea.  
➢ The last sentence states the point of view.  
• Refer to the sample essay, *“Doing the Right Thing.”* |
| --- | --- |
| Demonstration/Teaching | • Introduce the *Ways to Start an Essay* chart.  
• Demonstrate how to write the first sentence of your own essay several ways by using each essay starter.  
• Decide which essay starter works the best for the first sentence of your essay.  
• Write two or three more sentences that elaborate on your important idea.  
• End your introduction with a sentence that states your point of view.  
• Read your introduction to make sure that you like the way it sounds. Rewrite the parts that need revision. |
| Active Engagement | • Do this same work using the important idea from a student volunteer. Have the class work together with you to try out different essay starters, choose the one that works the best, elaborate on the important idea, and then state the point of view. Read it over and rewrite parts that need revision. |
| Link | *Writers, today you will do this same work independently using your own essay ideas. Remember, try out different essay starters and choose the one that works the best. Elaborate by writing two or more sentences and then state your point of view. Read over your introduction to make sure that you like the way it sounds. Rewrite the parts that need revision.* |
| Writing and Conferring | • Conduct individual conferences to support students’ efforts at writing their introductions. |
| Mid-Workshop Teaching Point | • Have students share their introductions with a partner. |
| Share | • Convene students in the meeting area.  
• Bring closure to today’s workshop by having several students read their introductions. Summarize the thinking the students used.  
• Have students recall and share one thing that they learned. |

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**Ways to Start an Essay**

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Personal Essay: Grade 4
Writing Unit 2

- Many people think ... I think ...
- Many people (do) ... I (do) ...
- I used to think ... Now I realize ...
- I used to (do) ... Now I (do) ...
- In the world, people often ... People should ...
- I used to wonder why ... Now I know ...
Some people in the world judge others by what they look like instead of what is on the inside. Kids are sometimes treated unfairly or avoided because they look different. Some kids even get their friends to treat them badly, too. When people say and do mean things to others because of how they look, it hurts them deep inside.

One time a boy I know had a stain on his shirt, and he was sitting by himself at lunch. I saw that other kids were making fun of him. They said he should go out and get some new clothes. He was really sad that kids were making fun of him. I just sat there
and felt bad for him. But then another boy I know went up and sat next to him, and pretty soon they were talking and laughing. I wish I had been the one who chose to do the right thing.

Another time a boy who wore glasses wanted to play basketball with some of us kids who were already playing. A couple of my friends made fun of him just because he was wearing glasses. I could tell that his feelings were hurt. I hurried over and said that I knew he was good at basketball and that he could play on my side. His face lit up, and my friends stopped teasing him. Later he told me how happy he was that I stood up for him. It made me feel so good to do the right thing.

Now I realize how important it is to help others who are being treated unfairly. I have talked to some of my friends about how we should include everyone who wants to be included and stick up for people who are being teased. It is not that hard to do the right thing. In fact, it makes you and everyone around you feel really good inside.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Materials</th>
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</thead>
</table>

This document is the property of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA).
Personal Essay: Grade 4
Writing Unit 2

• Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays, Lucy Calkins

• Writing folders
• Anchor charts:
  ➢ Comparing Narratives and Essays
  ➢ Boxes and Bullets
• Sample essay “Doing the Right Thing”

Note
• Post on the daily schedule or verbally ask students to bring their writing folders and a pencil to the meeting area.
• Plan to spend two days on this session. You will devote one day for each angled body paragraph.
• You might also decide to spend one day on each of the four types of evidence: experiences, observations, facts, and events.

Connection
• Explain that essay writers use their evidence to support their point of view in the two body paragraphs. Writers don’t just retell these experiences, observations, facts, or events; they angle them to support their point of view.

Demonstration/Teaching
• Remind students how to write focused stories and demonstrate as follows:
  ➢ Make a movie in your mind, indent, and write a paragraph that explains how the experience, observation, fact, or event unfolds step-by-step.
  ➢ Highlight only the parts that closely support your point of view. This is how you angle your evidence.
  ➢ Include a sentence or two at the end of the paragraph that explains how the evidence illustrates the point of view.
  ➢ Keep the evidence brief by including just the most relevant parts of the experiences, observations, facts, or events and by leaving out details.
• Refer to the sample essay, “Doing the Right Thing,” which uses observations as evidence.

Active Engagement
• Do this same work using the essay idea from a student volunteer. Have the class work together with you and the volunteer to compose angled evidence that supports the point of view.

Link
Writers, today you will do this same work independently using your own essay ideas. Remember that when you compose your angled evidence, you need to keep the evidence brief by including just the most relevant parts of the experiences, observations, facts, or events.

Writing and Conferring
• Conduct individual conferences to support students’ efforts at composing their angled evidence.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point
• Have students share their angled evidence with a partner.

Share
• Convene students in the meeting area.
• Bring closure to today’s workshop by having several students read their angled evidence. Summarize the thinking the students used.
• Have students recall and share one thing that they learned.
### Personal Essay: Grade 4  
**Writing Unit 2**

#### Session 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Writers learn strategies for good personal essay writing.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>Writers create essay conclusions that link back to their point of view.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| * Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays, Lucy Calkins* | * Writing folders  
* Anchor charts:  
  ➢ *Comparing Narratives and Essays*  
  ➢ *Ways to End an Essay*  
* Sample essay “Doing the Right Thing” |

#### Connection

- Explain that essay writers use the conclusion to link back to their point of view. Use the following structure in your conclusions:
  - The first sentence links back to the evidence.
  - The middle sentences elaborate by reflecting back or looking ahead.
  - The last sentence leaves the reader with a memorable thought.
- Refer to the *Ways to End an Essay* chart.
- Refer to the sample essay “Doing the Right Thing.”

#### Demonstration/Teaching

- Demonstrate how to write each sentence in the conclusion using your own essay.

#### Active Engagement

- Do this same work using the essay idea from a student volunteer. Have the class work together with you and the volunteer to create a conclusion that links back to the student’s point of view.

#### Link

*Writers, today you will do this same work independently using your own essay ideas. Remember, try out different essay conclusions and choose the one that works the best. Make sure that your conclusion links back to your point of view.*

#### Writing and Conferring

- Conduct individual conferences to support students’ efforts at writing their conclusions.

#### Mid-Workshop Teaching Point

- Have students share their conclusions with a partner.

#### Share

- Convene students in the meeting area.
- Bring closure to today’s workshop by having several students read their conclusions. Summarize the thinking the students used.
- Have students recall and share one thing that they learned.
### Ways to End an Essay

| • As I look back on these experiences, I realize ... |
| • I learned that ... |
| • Now I know that ... |
| • I know one thing for sure ... |
| • From now on ... |
| • I will always ... |
| • I finally understand why ... |
| • Therefore ... |
**Session 10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Writers learn strategies for revising and editing personal essays.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>Writers revise their personal essays for meaning and clarity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| * Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays, Lucy Calkins* | * Writing folders  
|                  | * Anchor chart:  
|                  | ➢ *Comparing Narratives and Essays* |

| Connection       | • Honor student writing by complimenting their focused efforts in creating their personal essays.  
|                  | • Explain that today students will be rereading their essays to make sure that their point of view is clearly stated and that their evidence supports their point of view. |
**Personal Essay: Grade 4**

**Writing Unit 2**

| Demonstratio n/Teaching | • Demonstrate how to revise for meaning and clarity as you:
  ➢ Reread your essay aloud to yourself one paragraph at a time. Make sure that the information in each paragraph all goes together and all supports the point of view. **Rewrite parts that need revision.**
  ➢ Then read your essay aloud to a partner. Have your partner identify the **point of view** after listening to your introduction. Then, have your partner explain how the evidence supports the point of view after listening to each body paragraph. **Rewrite parts that need revision.**

| Active Engagement | • Do this same work using the essay idea from a student volunteer. Have the class work together with you and the volunteer to rewrite parts that need revision.

| Link | **So writers, today you will read your essay twice. Read it first to yourself to make sure that your evidence supports your point of view. Then read it to your partner. Your partner will identify the point of view and explain how the evidence supports the point of view. Rewrite parts that need revision.**

| Writing and Conferring | • Conduct individual student conferences to make sure that the students are **rewriting the parts that need revision.**

| Share Choose one | • Bring closure to today’s workshop by having one or two students who revised a part of their essay that lacked clarity and meaning share with the class.
• Have students recall and share one thing that they learned.
# Personal Essay: Grade 4
## Writing Unit 2
### Session 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Writers learn strategies for revising and editing their personal essays.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>Writers use revision/editing checklists to edit their writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • *Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5, Book 3: Breathing Life Into Essays*, Lucy Calkins | • Writing folders  
• *Personal Essay Revision/Editing Checklist* for each student  
• Chart-sized *Personal Essay Revision/Editing Checklist* |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>• Put a <em>Personal Essay Revision/Editing Checklist</em> inside each student’s writing folder.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>• Explain that students have been learning strategies that writers use to write personal essays. Today students will learn strategies they can use to edit their writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Demonstration/Teaching | • Demonstrate how to use each item on a checklist as a *lens* by rereading your own essay through that *lens*.  
➢ Read the first item on the checklist (Will this make sense to a stranger?)  
➢ Pretend you know nothing about the essay idea. Read and mark places that are confusing.  
➢ Go back and rewrite parts that need revision so those parts are clearer. |
| Active Engagement | • Continue reading through the *lens* of each item on the *Personal Essay Revision/Editing Checklist*, and then edit your essay with the students’ input. |
| Link | So writers, as you work today, find the *Personal Essay Revision/Editing Checklist* in your writing folders and use each item as a *lens* when you edit your own essays. Reread with that *lens* and revise or edit your work. This is your last chance to make the writing as perfect as you can get it. |
| Writing and Conferring | • Conduct individual student conferences to support students’ efforts using a checklist to edit your work. |
| Share | • Have students show each other what they’ve done, what they’ve learned, and what they’ve resolved to do next. |
| Note | Say, *Tonight I’m going to look over the personal essays that you’ve edited today. I’ll be your copy editor. Tomorrow, every minute of the day will be reserved for making final copies of our personal essays.* |
Personal Essay Revision/Editing Checklist

Name_________________________________________ Date__________________

Title________________________________________________________________

Reread your writing carefully. Put a check in each box under Author as you complete each item. Once all the boxes are checked, give this checklist to the teacher for the final edit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revise and edit for the following:</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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1. **Clarity.** Ask yourself,  
   "Is my point of view clearly stated?"  
   "Does my evidence support my point of view?"  
   Rewrite parts that need revision.

2. **Effective use of words and phrases.** Ask yourself,  
   "Have I used the most effective words and phrases?"  
   Rewrite parts to make your writing better.  
   Choose more effective words and add details.

3. **Complete sentences.**  
   Check to make sure that each sentence is complete.  
   Rewrite fragments and run-on sentences so they are complete.

4. **Capitalization.**  
   Use capitals at the beginning of each sentence and for every name.  
   Make corrections if necessary.

5. **Punctuation.**  
   Use periods, exclamation points, and question marks.  
   Use commas with conjunctions.  
   Make corrections if necessary.

6. **Spelling of high-frequency words.**  
   Refer to various resources.  
   Make corrections if necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Concept</strong></th>
<th>Writers publish and share their personal essays.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Point</strong></td>
<td>A writing community celebrates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day 12 Publishing

• Have students rewrite their revised and edited personal essays.

Day 13 Celebration

• Plan to celebrate the fact that writing gives us new eyes to see and understand ourselves. Students have grown taller as writers. Their notebooks are fuller. Their texts are longer. Their voices are stronger. Take a moment to look all students in the eyes and help them feel celebrated.
• Have authors read their essays aloud in small groups, leave a little bit of time for silence to let the essay sink in, and then have the authors answer just one writing question.
• Post student writing to celebrate the achievements of each student.
• Assess students' personal essays using the *Personal Essay Assessment Rubric*. Consider assessing the students' writer’s notebooks.
## Personal Essay Conferring Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generating ideas: Lists important ideas and evidence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generating ideas: Brainstorms essay ideas from personal essays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Strategy: Brainstorms essay ideas from narrative texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Strategy: Brainstorms essay ideas from writer's notebook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Strategy: Chooses an idea and writes an opinion statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Strategy: Uses Boxes and Bullets to organize essay ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision Strategy: Tries out different introductions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Strategy: Angles evidence to support a point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision Strategy: Tries out different conclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision Strategy: Revises essay for meaning and clarity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Personal Essay Assessment Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas/Content</strong></td>
<td>The writer creates an exceptionally clear and relevant point of view about a meaningful idea. The writer includes relevant stories, quotes, lists, and observations, and a conclusion that are clearly angled to support and develop the idea.</td>
<td>The writer creates a generally clear point of view about a meaningful idea. The writer includes some stories, quotes, lists, and observations, and a conclusion that are angled to support and develop the idea.</td>
<td>The writer creates a point of view about an idea. The writer includes stories, quotes, lists, and observations, and a conclusion that are underdeveloped and weakly supported.</td>
<td>The writer develops a weak point of view about an idea. The writer includes little or no stories, quotes, lists, and observations and a conclusion to support or develop the idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>The writing is exceptionally clear and organized. The writer groups related ideas to support the writer’s purpose. Linking words and phrases and parallel structure are used effectively to connect point of view and evidence.</td>
<td>The writing is generally clear and organized. The writer groups related ideas to support the writer’s purpose most of the time. Linking words and phrases and parallel structure are used to connect point of view and evidence.</td>
<td>The writing shows little evidence of organization. Parts of the essay may be missing. Few linking words and phrases and/or minimal parallel structure are used to connect point of view and evidence.</td>
<td>The writing lacks recognizable organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Personal Essay: Grade 4

#### Writing Unit 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>The writing includes an effective use of words and phrases and precise language.</th>
<th>The writing includes a somewhat effective use of words and phrases and precise language.</th>
<th>The writing includes a basic use of words and phrases.</th>
<th>The writing includes an ineffective use of words and phrases.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convention s</td>
<td>Conventions of Standard English* for grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation for the grade level are consistently used. Paragraphs are indented.</td>
<td>Conventions of Standard English* for grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation for the grade level are usually used. Paragraphs are indented.</td>
<td>Conventions of Standard English* for grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation for the grade level are rarely used. Few paragraphs are indented.</td>
<td>Conventions of Standard English* for grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation for the grade level are not used. Paragraphs are not indented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Standard English is the form of English most widely accepted as being clear and proper.*