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May 2012

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3 EASY ANSWERS TO THE END OF YEAR CRAZIES

You don't need a calendar to know it's the end of the school year...the kids are going crazy.

3 EASY ANSWERS TO THE END OF YEAR CRAZIES

1. Do you need a creative, but calming student lead activity - write a letter about summer plans.
2. Do you need to get the grades in - write a letter about why and how we celebrate the 4th of July.
3. Do you need a productive activity, on a rain day, or to fill in the LONG hours during the last days of school - write a letter about any of the ideas posted on our Facebook page, under the "START YOUR WEEK OFF - WRITE" headings. Here you will find lots of great letter writing ideas, and the lesson plan to back it up.

<http://www.facebook.com/OpportunityEducation>

DON'T FORGET TO MAIL IN YOUR SURVEY TO WIN!



It's not too late to WIN!

So easy -- just send in the postage paid survey card you received in last month's video promotion mailing. We will have the drawing May 31st and announce the winner in the June newsletter.

If you didn't receive our video mailer with the postage paid entry card- just send "I Want to Win" to schools@opportunityeducation.org for an email entry!

Why Write Letters Right?

Great Article on Hammer the Grammar!



In Age of Tweets, Teachers Hammer the Grammar

*BY STEPHEN J. PYTAK (STAFF WRITER SPYTAK@REPUBLICANHERALD.COM)
Published: March 4, 2012 reprinted with permission from The Republican-Herald, Pottsville, PA.*

In the age of Facebook posts, emoticons and tweets, English grammar may seem like it's on the road to extinction.

"One of the more apparent problems we see in student writing is a carry-over of 'texting' language," Leslie Kraft, a ninth-grade English teacher at Pottsville Area, said Wednesday.

Brandon Kessock, a Pottsville Area freshman, said he's experienced it.

"Texting affects us a lot. I get so used to texting that I mess up a lot of easy words. Instead of 'what' I type 'wat.' Using my phone affects my grammar more than I ever knew," Kessock said.

Meghan Cleary, a freshman at Pottsville Area, said texting and messaging on social media have an impact on the way young people use grammar.

"It has affected them negatively because people often do not fully spell out words and add extra letters when texting or messaging. Sometimes when I switch papers to edit in class, I find my partner using text messaging words. However, it has affected people positively too. I see people on Twitter and Facebook commenting to correct spelling or grammar mistakes. People often mess up 'your' and 'you're' or 'they're,' 'there' and 'their,' " Cleary said.

Today is National Grammar Day. It's held each year on March 4 to promote the use of good grammar, writing and speaking skills in everyday life. It was started in 2008 by Martha Brockenbrough, founder of the Society for the Promotion of Good Grammar, according to nationalgrammarday.com.

In observance, local teachers and other experts in education offered their perspectives last week on how grammar should be taught in public schools.

State standards are going to get tougher, said Tim Eller, press secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

"The department is preparing to release new standards for all students and they are clearly more rigorous than those of 30 years ago. In addition, these standards will apply to all students, not just college-bound," Eller said.

Beginning July 1, 2013, following full implementation of a transition plan to be developed by the department in collaboration with education stakeholders, academic standards will be based on the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects, according to The Pennsylvania Code at pacode.com.

What will remain the same, however, is teachers will still be able to develop their own curriculums, and decide whether or not to incorporate exercises like diagramming sentences, Eller said.

Mignon Fogarty, Reno, Nev., author of "Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing," said it's important for teachers to make the subject interesting.

"Keeping them engaged in whatever way you can should be the best way to teach grammar. I like to use humor in my podcasts, and we've gotten great feedback on the 'Correct the Celebrity' worksheets on the National Grammar Day website. It's more fun for a student to consider grammar in the context of a Justin Timberlake quotation than from a textbook or made-up example," Fogarty said Thursday.

Dr. Michael W. Smith, Philadelphia, a professor of literacy education at Temple University and co-writer of the book "Getting It Right: Fresh Approaches to Teaching Grammar, Usage and Correctness," isn't a fan of diagramming sentences.

"It doesn't do any good. Diagramming sentences only teaches students how to diagram sentences," Smith said.

But Breanne Frandsen, an English teacher at Pottsville Area's D.H.H. Lengel Middle School, is an advocate of that method.

When Frandsen was a student at Pottsville Area, her teachers weren't using it.

"There was a phase where there was a focus completely on writing, where we did compositions and we did grammar through writing in middle school," Frandsen said.

After graduating from Pottsville Area in 2003, she learned to diagram sentences at Shippensburg University, where she graduated in 2007.

"Now at Pottsville Area we are trying to get back to teaching the grammar first, then encourage them to do compositions and editing. They start students in elementary school with a simple plot diagram," Frandsen said.

Students can learn how to diagram sentences on a website developed by the faculty of the Wisconsin Technical College System called wisc-online.com.

"Diagramming sentences has not been much in vogue as a pedagogical device for the past 30 years or so. There are, however, many grammarians and English instructors who hold that analyzing a sentence and portraying its structure with a consistent visual scheme can be helpful," according to the online Guide to Grammar and Writing sponsored by the Capital Community College Foundation, Hartford, Conn.

Not all teachers at Pottsville Area use these diagrams.

"As a student and early in my teaching career, grammar instruction consisted mainly of memorizing grammatical elements, like gerunds, appositives and participles, and doing worksheets to practice identifying these parts," Kraft said.

"Some teachers have experimented with diagramming as a means of helping visual learners, but we pretty much stick with our philosophy of teaching the grammar and writing together," said Suzanne Sterner, an English teacher at D.H.H. Lengel.

"That allows students to use and apply what they learn, rather than just focusing on memorization," Kraft said.

Smith believes it's the best way to teach grammar.

"It's important to put students in situations where they get an immediate payoff for using grammar skills," Smith said.

While new technology brings new challenges, it also offers educators new tools, Kraft said.

"There are a variety of applications for the Apple iPad which help students to improve their writing skills. Additionally, research shows that students become better writers by reading texts they enjoy. Thus, a major component of our overall English curriculum is devoted to connecting students with appropriate texts and creating life-long readers," Kraft said.

Savvy Facebook users who like their posts to be clear and concise use a grammar checker at facebook.com/grammarly.

*BY STEPHEN J. PYTAK (STAFF WRITER SPYTAK@REPUBLICANHERALD.COM)
Published: March 4, 2012*

Whitko Middle School

FEATURED SISTER SCHOOL - GIFT CERTIFICATE WINNER

Congrats to Whitko Middle School in Larwill, Indiana

The winner of of monthly drawing for schools who send letters!

Just email schools@oppportunityeducation.org

after you mail your letters and you are entered to win!

Seventh graders at Whitko Middle School were matched to sister school pen pal, St Charles Lwanga Kyotera Primary School in Uganda. Students from both schools have exchanged letters and photos in an effort to learn more about each other's lives. Students at Whitko Middle School then researched how they could assist their sister school and decided to create a scholarship fund for their Uganda pen pals. Whitko Middle School students raised money for the scholarship fund by paying one dollar per day to participate in dress up days. This outstanding school collected \$900 dollars for the scholarship fund.

We are proud to have Whitko Middle School in our Sister School Program!



Outstanding Student Leaders from Whitko Middle School

Start Writing to This School Now!

Okorase District Assembly Experimental Primary School - Ghana

This school came into being in 1993, from the proposal of Mr. Awauh Asamoah to a non-governmental organization, World of Friends from Sweden. Local families donated land and construction was completed for opening day in October 1995. The initial enrollment was 57 students, staffed by 3 teachers. Today the school has 343 students (63 in Kindergarten, 280 in grades 1 to 6), 15 teachers and 11 classrooms. Over the years, the school has won many awards and prizes in academics and athletics. Like many of our schools, they also face difficult challenges - from a leaking roof to a shortage of space for students and facilities. Ghana is a small country, rich in history and culture. These students are very eager to share what they know and want to learn more about students overseas. If you already have a pen pal, please forward this to a friend who may be interested in joining our international pen pal program.



Okorase District Assembly Experimental Primary School

Simply email, "I want a pen pal" to schools@opportunityeducation.org and you can start writing today!

Welcome New Schools



THANK YOU BOSTON!!

We had an overwhelming response from the National Catholic Education Association Convention! Thank you to all the educators who are sharing our international pen pal program with their schools.

We are excited to welcome the following schools.

Cheverus School	Malden	MA
St. Dominic Academy	Auburn	ME
Franco American School	Lowell	MA
St. Kateri/St. Helen's School	Niskayuna	NY
St. Joseph School	Medford	MA
St. Louis School	Webster	MA
St. Francis & St. Rose of Lima	New Haven	CT
St. Louis School	Lowell	MA
St. Mary's School	Melrose	MA
St. Monica School	Methuen	MA
Our Lady of the Holy Rosary School	Gardner	MA
Saints Peter & Paul School	Fall River	MA
St. Pius X	Westerly	RI
Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy-Neponset	Dorchester	MA
Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy-Lower Mills	Dorchester	MA
All Saints Catholic School	New Bedford	MA
All Saints Catholic School	Bangor	ME
St. Agnes School	Arlington	MA
St. Bernadette School	Northboro	MA
St. Anne Elementary School	Webster	MA
Bishop Connolly High School	Fall River	MA
St. Bernard School	Enfield	CT
Bishop Hendricken High School	Warwick	RI
Blessed Sacrament School	Providence	RI
St. Casimir	Manchester	MA
St. Catherine of Genoa	Somerville	MA
Coyle & Cassidy High School	Taunton	MA
St. Francis School	Lumberton	NM
St. Francis Xavier Prep	Hyannis	MA
St. Francis Xavier School	Weymouth	MA
Holy Family of Nazareth	Irving	Texas
Holy Trinity School	Fall River	MA
Holy Rosary School	Gardner	MA
Immaculate Conception School	Revere	MA
Immaculate Conception School	Chicago	IL
St. John the Evangelist	Beverly	MA
St. John the Baptist	Ludlow	MA
St. James St. John School	New Bedford	MA
LaSalle Academy	Providence	RI
Lawrence Catholic Academy	Lawrence	MA
St. Matthew School	Forestville	CT
St. Michael School	Lowell	MA
St. Michael School	Fall River	MA
Mercymount Country Day School	Cumberland	RI
Mount Saint Mary Academy	Manchester	MA
St. Mary's School	Aiken	SC
St. Mary's School	Milford	CT
St. Mary's School	Taylorville	IL
St. Mary's School	Ponca City	OK

St. Mary's School	Westfield	MA
St. Mary's Primary School	Taunton	MA
Northwest Catholic High School	West Hartford	CT
Notre Dame Prep High School	Scottsdale	AZ
Nativity B.V.M. Elementary	Biloxi	MS
Our Lady of Perpetual Help School	Bakersfield	CA
Our Lady of Assumption School	Lynnfield	MA
St. Pius X	Broomall	PA
St. Paul/St. Patrick School	Wellesbey	MA
St. Rita	Hamden	CT
South Boston Catholic Academy	South Boston	MA
Sacred Heart	New Britain	CT
Santa Sophia Academy	Spring Valley	CA
St. Wenceslaus School	Omaha	NE
Woodlawn Catholic Regional School	Pawtucket	RI

We applaud all of our schools, who are willing to bridge the cultural divide with letters!

UGANDA EDUCATION EXPERIENCE TRIP - July 2012

**Congrats to these outstanding educators
and The Fund for Teachers Grant Winners From Kellom Elementary**



Leslie Douglas, Lisa Robinson, Lin Kulm
Grant Winners, Teachers at Kellom Elementary, Omaha, NE

Get Packing!

We are thrilled to have 23 participants from all over the USA joining us for our Uganda Education Experience Trip in July 2012.

We would like to recognize Leslie Douglas, Lisa Robinson and Lin Kulm from Kellom Elementary in Omaha, Nebraska who put together a winning grant that is funding their trip to Uganda.



They have also raised money to share with the schools we visit, doing candy sales before and after school. We celebrate both their excellence in professional achievement and humanitarian efforts.

We look forward to sharing the trip with all of our participants and will offer trip updates on our [Facebook](#) and in our newsletter.

If you couldn't make it this year...start planning for our trip in July 2013!

SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE NEWS & OUR FACEBOOK DRAWING WINNER!

Visit us on Facebook & Win a Gift Certificate!

Like us on Facebook 

We created a Facebook page just for you! With interesting ideas, stories, and links to help generate enthusiasm and discussion about education and integrating pen pal letters into your mission and curriculum.

Simply "Like" us and we will randomly select winners who show up on our Facebook for a monthly drawing for an educational supplies gift certificate!

**Congrats to Juli Jensen-Derrig, from St. Mary's School, Westfield, MA!
Winner of the gift certificate
for Liking Opportunity Education Foundation on Facebook.**

More About Opportunity Education Foundation

The mission of Opportunity Education Foundation is to make quality education accessible to all children in order to improve their standards of living and work toward a brighter future.

Opportunity Education Foundation is a international non-profit organization that provides educational curricula, teaching materials, audio-visual equipment and educational assessments at no cost to nearly 1,100 schools throughout Africa and Asia.

To further support our mission, we facilitate a **Free Sister School Pen Pal Program** that connects schools we support with schools around the world. Both students and teachers can exchange letters and learn more about each other. We have schools in our program eagerly awaiting a Sister School Pen Pal to share correspondence.

It's fun, free and easy to sign up!

Forward this to a friend!

We appreciate your help sharing our program. Your referral of a school to our pen pal program can earn you a gift certificate. Have your friend email "I want a pen pal" to schools@opportunityeducation.org

Quick Links

- [Our Website](#)
- [Sister School Program](#)
- [Our Staff](#)

- [More about us!](#)

Pen Pal Program Resources

[Click here](#) to check out our Sister School Resources page. Here you can verify mailing directions, get ideas on integrating letters into your lesson plans and more!

- [Letter Writing Guidelines](#)
- [Mailing Directions for Pen Pal Letters](#)
- [Curriculum Ideas](#)
- [Find My Target School](#)

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