Building Bridges Between Generations

Strong lifelong bonds were forged through sharing letters with other generations. Students improved their writing tremendously and eagerly sent and received mail.

Curriculum/State Standards
This project helps students understand and use the writing process all the way from brainstorming through editing, publishing, and sharing. It also helps students learn to write correctly and with clarity using proper grammar and spelling.

Overview
Each third grade student wrote a letter to a grandparent or other elderly friend of the parent’s choice once a week. When the response letter arrived at school the child who received the letter read it to the class, and we compared and contrasted what their daily life is like as opposed to what their grandparent’s was like when she/he was a child. Strong bonds were forged between generations as we involved families in meeting our educational goals and improved writing skills through this project. The unconditional love and encouragement expressed by the grandparent will always be remembered by the students.

Objectives
The student will write a descriptive paragraph.
The student will be able to use correct capitalization.
The student will be able to use correct punctuation.
The student will be able to use correct grammar.
The student will be able to use correct sentence form.
The student will be able to use correct paragraph structure.
The student will be able to address an envelope correctly.

Materials
an envelope and postage stamp for each child every week

Readiness Activity
The first semester we taught our students how to write a paragraph that incorporates a clear and focused main idea that is supported by details and examples that are appropriate to topic, audience, and purpose. Then we taught letter writing, and practiced by writing thank you cards. In social studies we discussed communities both past and present through the lens of change in preparation for discussions comparing student’s daily life with that of their grandparent when s/he was a child.

Strategies/Activities
At the beginning of second semester we sent home a detailed letter explaining this letter writing project to the parents, and each parent signed a permission slip and provided an address of a grandparent or other elderly friend for the child to write to. Each week we guided the students through the complete writing process and mailed their letters. Our students looked forward to writing time and conscientiously completed each step carefully because they wanted their final product to be nice for their grandparent. Students also looked forward to receiving and sharing the letters that they received. I appreciated how often the grandparents reinforced the importance of doing well in school, encouraged their grandchild to listen to their teacher, and expressed their unconditional love.

THIS WINNING PROJECT IDEA SUBMITTED BY:
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The children looked forward to this time each week. Twenty to thirty minutes per day each week is needed for each child to brainstorm, draft, conference with the teacher, revise, edit, and produce the final copy of his/her letter. An additional five to fifteen minutes is needed after the mail arrives to read and discuss any letters that arrived that day.

**Culminating Activity**
The last week of school we make stationary and provide each child with three stamps so that they can continue to write their pen pal over the summer.

**Evaluation Method**
Each week the assigned descriptive paragraph in each student’s letter was graded using the standard writing rubric at our school. Weekly progress was recorded in each writing trait. Each child’s envelope is also checked each week to ensure the address is written in the correct format.