Recounting and Reporting on My Learning at the Natural History Museum
Angie Balius, Garden Grove Unified School District, Second Grade
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# Overview

Recounting and Reporting on My Learning at the Natural History Museum
From Teacher to Teacher

Science and social studies are often overlooked because they are not tested in second grade. However, if we are able to integrate them into our reading and writing, students are able to access the content-specific material that is so fascinating to them.

In the following lesson, varied learning activities culminated in a multi-paragraph informational recount about my students’ trip to the Natural History Museum. Students were able to integrate the science vocabulary, concept knowledge, writing skills, and writing strategies they had learned in an informational piece that blends narrative and informative/explanatory text types.

My class had been participating in hands-on investigations aimed at understanding the second grade earth science standards. They learned about the three different types of rocks, different types of soil, and how fossils are clues left behind to help us understand what the world was like millions of years ago. This lesson was designed to expose students to the California earth science standards, while at the same time we worked to address the ELA CCSS standards. This lesson was conducted near the end of the year to give students the opportunity to use all of the writing strategies they had learned to that point. The students were able to clarify their understanding of the material by taking notes and sharing that information with others.

We published this writing into a showcase of the writing from the entire class by hanging all the students’ pieces from the lights at our Open House. Each section of the informational narrative was color coded to emphasize the beginning (green), middle (yellow) and end (red) of the writing.
**Text Resources**
Text to increase content and language knowledge:


**Teaching Context**
This first lesson is a culminating activity showcasing the students’ academic efforts to master the earth science content for second grade. This writing lesson is designed to take about two weeks. Lessons were conducted daily in 30–45 minute intervals.
The extension lesson took almost the same length of time.

**Text Type, Genre, Writing Prompt**
- Informational Recount of Learning Experiences and Research
- **Writing Prompt**
  Think about your trip to the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles. Use the information from your brainstorm to help you retell what you did on the trip in a logical sequence. Remember to include interesting details about what you saw, touched, or learned. Please include your favorite part of the trip and why it was significant.

**Instructional Strategies**
- Writer’s Workshop
- Read-Alouds
- Graphic Organizers
- Think Alouds
- Shared Writing
- Modeled Writing
- Engagement Strategies
  - Think Pair Share
  - Stand and Share
  - Whip Around
  - Give one, Get One
  - Thumbs Up/ Thumbs Down
- Collaborative Group Work
  - Writing Groups
Standards

Common Core State Standards

CCSS Reading Informational Text
1. Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
5. Know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently.
6. Identify main purposes of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, describe.
7. Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.

CCSS Writing
2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they include a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.
3. Write narratives in which they recount a well elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.
4. With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.
5. With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.
7. Participate in shared research and writing projects.
9. Recall information from experiences or gather information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.
10. Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes and audiences.

CCSS Conventions of Standard English
1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
   a. Create readable documents with legible print.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation and spelling when writing.

California State Standards Second Grade Earth Science
3. Earth is made of materials that have distinct properties and provide resources for human activities. As a basis for understanding this concept:
   a. Students know how to compare the physical properties of different kinds of rocks and know that rock is composed of different combinations of minerals.
   b. Students know smaller rocks come from the breakage and weathering of larger rocks.
   c. Students know that soil is made partly from weathered rock and partly from organic materials and that soils differ in their color, texture, capacity to retain water, and ability to support the growth of many kinds of plants.
   d. Students know that fossils provide evidence about the plants and animals that lived long ago and that scientists learn about the past history of Earth by studying fossils.
English Language Development Standards
Grade 2: Bridging

Section 1, Part 1: Interacting in Meaningful Ways

A1. Students exchange information with others through conversations.
C9. Expressing information and ideas in formal oral presentations
C10. Writing informational text to present, describe, and explain ideas.

Section 1, Part II: Learning About How English Works

A1. Understanding text structure
A2. Understanding cohesion

B. Expanding & Enriching Ideas
3. Using verbs and verb phrases.
4. Using nouns and noun phrases
5. Modifying to add details

C6. Connecting ideas
C7. Condensing ideas
Teaching Sequence

Lesson Objectives

The goal of this project is to provide students with an opportunity to collaborate with others in creating an informational recount about a trip to the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles. Students will:

- gather info about rocks by reading informational text and using Internet resources
- gather info about fossils and dinosaurs by reading informational texts and using internet resources
- ask and answer questions to demonstrate an understanding of these texts
- participate in modeled and shared writing activities
- gather and recall information from learning experiences
- create a brainstorm listing all of the events that were memorable to them
- write narratives, in which they recount a well-elaborated event or a short sequence of events, including details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure
- extend their thinking through writing an informational/research report
- engage in peer discussion to facilitate revision.

Session One: Brainstorm Ideas

Note: In an effort to support all students, I modeled my thinking on the white board while students created their own individual graphic organizers

1. Begin with a think-aloud, discussing with the students some of the highlights of the trip to the Natural History Museum, jotting down ideas in no particular order.

2. Ask students to help add to the brainstorm. (My students were eager to share their favorite exhibits from the trip.)

3. When I have about five ideas, I stop writing.

4. Ask the students to turn to their neighbors and share what they thought was missing from the list. (What could we add to help someone who was not there feel like they were part of our adventure?) After a few minutes of discussion, I ask the students to participate in a stand and share. Each student shares something they want to add to the list. Keep the chart posted in the room, so students can refer back to the ideas if needed.

5. Give students time to add to their own brainstorm charts.
Session Two: Organize Student Ideas Sequentially

1. Revisit the brainstorming chart. Go over what was written yesterday and ask students if they thought of anything else to add.
2. Ask students questions to help them clarify their thinking: Who was in your group? Did anything exciting happen on the way to the museum? What was your favorite part?
3. Help students organize their thinking by color-coding the brainstorm. Use colored pencils to circle the important events.
4. Circle the first thing you remember doing or seeing in green. Also circle anything that happened on the way to the museum green.
5. Next, use a red pencil to circle the last thing you remember doing at the museum.
6. Finally, students are asked to use a yellow pencil to circle their favorite moment at the museum and anything else on their brainstorm that went along with that moment.

Note: Having students circle events helped them focus on what was important from the trip rather than just writing a list of all the things they did during the day. Young children often have difficulty deciding what happens in the middle. Having students do the beginning and end first helps to block chunks of time and they are able to select items for the middle.

Session Three: Create Flow Chart to Illustrate Sequence of Ideas

1. Create a flow chart to sequence the events.
2. Model for the students how to take information off the brainstorming chart and sort it onto the flow chart. Explain that this is the time to add relevant details that are meaningful to the topic.
3. Using color-coded boxes have students transfer information from their brainstorm to the flow chart.
4. Give students time to discuss their flow chart with their neighbor and make any necessary changes.
5. Conference with students to check that their flow charts are in chronological order and reflect the color-coding on the brainstorm sheet.

Note: Remind students they should be using phrases rather than sentences at this point.

Session Four: Begin Writing

1. Model for students how to turn sections of a flow chart into paragraphs.

Note: Students often struggle turning notes into complete thoughts. Use a think-aloud approach to show students that saw T-rex and triceratops could become this sentence: When I entered the museum, I was amazed to see a model of a life-sized T-rex and a Triceratops sitting in the middle of the room. The students’ sentences will vary by their abilities.

2. Allow students to contribute to each other’s suggestions to model how good writers are constantly revising their ideas.
3. Have students help you modify your notes into sentences by using a Shared Writing format.
4. As you move from each box in the flow-chart, model for students that a new box signals new ideas, new ideas should be grouped together into a new paragraph, and new paragraphs start on a new line and need to be indented.

Note: The final published writing piece will be broken up into chunks for a visual effect. The ideas in green will be written on paper that would then attached to a green piece of construction paper. When students finish with the green section, they will receive a new paper for their next paragraph. When that section of the paper is finished, it will be attached to a yellow piece of paper. Finally when the students finish their ending, it will be stapled to a red piece of construction paper. This will also allow me the opportunity to check in with each child often and to make sure they are on track as they write.
Session Five: Continue Drafting

1. Revisit the writing you did together in Session Four. Reinforce the steps you went through to turn notes into sentences. Tell students they will be doing this today.

   Note: It may be helpful to pull a small group of students that may have difficulty completing this task independently.

   Note Two: This worked really well when it was time for revision because students did not have to rewrite a whole paper. They could make changes on the sections that needed them. While some editing just required a little bit of erasing, some students did need to rewrite the whole paragraph.

   Note Two: Some children write very quickly while others take more time. The students that finished quickly were able to write in their morning journals, read quietly, or become a writing buddy for a slower working friend. Not all fast finishers make great writing buddies, so I needed to have options.

Session Six: Continue Drafting

1. Allow students time to continue to write their drafts focusing on the yellow section and then the red.
2. Continue to have mini-conferences with students about their progress by walking around the room and touching base with them.

Session Seven: Revise Writing to Include Strong Verbs

1. Use the Shared Writing piece (modeled by the teacher) to show students what revision looks like. Focus on the verbs that are used in the writing. Take out words like went, like, and saw and replace them with raced, enjoyed and investigated. Revising for strong verbs are a great way for students to improve their writing.
2. If time allows, ask students to look for boring or over-used words and replace them with a more precise word.

   Note: Throughout the year we created word banks for tired/boring words. These words were written on Popsicle sticks and kept in an easy to access location for the students. The students pull out a stick and take it to their desk, so they will know how to spell the new word. They return it to the chart after they have written it correctly.

Session Eight: Make Writing Public

1. This is the day when my students get to share their writing with each other! Have the students sit in groups of four to five. Students will go around the circle and share their writing with the other members of the group. Group members listen to the story and offer feedback to the writer.

   Note: We have set up the expectations for writing groups early in the year. Kind comments are posted on an anchor chart in the room, so students can refer back to it as needed. (I like the way you... My favorite sentence was... You really did a great job of explaining... I was confused when.... I would like to know more about...) These comments help students make any final revisions that may be needed.

Session Nine: Finalize Writing

1. Give students one last chance to read their writing and make any last-minute changes.
2. Students are then given time to illustrate their writing and turn in their final piece for display. See two student examples in the Learning From Student Work section.
Reflections

What Worked

By frontloading the students with information about rocks, fossils, and different types of dinosaurs, they were able to make the most of their trip to the museum. Students were excited and that enthusiasm was evident in their writing.

Modifications

This lesson can be easily adapted to fit a variety of concepts by using different literature or informational texts or to fit student ability levels by modifying the amount of scaffolding provided. Sentences frames could be used if students are having difficulty getting started. Thoughtful partnering can help support students with special needs as well.

Extensions / What’s Next?

An extension to this lesson would be to use the lesson format to have students write about another experience they have had with their family or friends. The expectation would be for them to do the writing independently this time.

I did decide though that this was a great writing piece to turn into a PowerPoint presentation. I thought students would be able to generate slides from their notes, focus on learning more about something they saw at the museum, and research additional facts, all of which would help students write in another informational genre.

Writing a Research Report with Second Graders

After our visit to the Natural History Museum, students were able to select one of the endangered animals they learned about at the museum. Students used EnchantedLearning.com (paid web site) and http://www.kidsplanet.org/factsheets/mpg.html (free site) to find relevant information about their endangered animals. We also had two read-aloud sessions to help the students understand the importance of using the information they had collected to write their report.

Instructional Sequence:
I read the story *Just the Facts* and discussed the important sections of a research report. I explained to the students that we would be making a PowerPoint presentation in the computer lab to share the information they found. After students selected their animal to research they were eager to get started. I modeled for the students how to find information from an Internet source. Even though the students looked up the information online in the computer lab, I printed all of the documents they would need.

Students used highlighters to find the answers to four key questions:
1. What does your animal look like? (Description)
2. Where does your animal live? (Habitat)
3. What does your animal eat? (Diet)
4. Why is your animal endangered?
I modeled first using my print-out on elephants and then walked around helping students. We did one question at a time.

Then I read When Marion Copied. This story talked about how students need to use their own words when writing a report.

Students then used their notes to fill in a simple graphic organizer. During each step I modeled the writing and met with the students to monitor their progress.

Once the students had filled in their organizers, they were ready for the computer lab. We had created two simple PowerPoint presentations earlier in the year so the students were familiar with the program. See a student example on leatherback sea turtles in the Learning From Student Work section.
Extension Resources

**Instructional Resources**

**Professional Resources**

**Digital Resources**
EnchantedLearning.com (paid web site)

[http://www.kidsplanet.org/factsheets/map.html](http://www.kidsplanet.org/factsheets/map.html) (free site)

PowerPoint or Keynote
Yesterday I went on a field trip to the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles. I was so excited I could hardly wait outside for Mrs. Butler. When we walked in the door I saw a diorama of a Triceratops and a T-Rex. We went to the Hall of Fossils and Minerals. Then we watched a show. The lady in the show was talking about seashells in the shore. Then a big Triceratops came in. The baby dinosaur was funny. Then the lady handed him a leaf and he ate it. He was also cute. Then she talked about Triceratops. The baby dinosaur was cute.

After that we went to the marsh. Then we crossed a bridge and the end of it was a rainforest. Then we felt raccoon fur and paws. After that it was lunch. Then we played a bit of tag. While we were playing the bus came. Then it was time to go home. I was excited.
**Student Sample Josephine – Narrative Nonfiction**

Yesterday, I went on a field trip to the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles. I was so excited I could hardly wait outside for Mrs. Balius. When we walked in the door I saw a diorama of a T-Rex and a Triceratops. We went to the Hall of Rocks and Minerals. Charlotte found a white fluffy rock. There was a lot of rare rocks. We saw a rock named gold nuggets. We also saw a land of crystals.

Then we watched a show. The lady in the show was talking about seashells in the shore. Then a lost baby triceratops came in. The baby dinosaur was furious. Then she talked about triceratops. The baby dinosaur was jealous because she was talking to us. So he charged her. She almost sat on Tyller’s lap. The lightning flashed and she said, “Good-bye.” Then we walked to the hall of Africa mammals. I saw elephants, giraffes, hippos, spotted hyenas, otters and lions.

After that we went to the marsh. Then we crossed a bridge and the end of it was a rainforest. Then we felt raccoon fur and paws. After that it was lunch. Then we played a bit of tag. While we were playing the bus came. Then it was time to go home. I was exciting.

**Comments:**

Student has a topic sentence to introduce her writing.

She is using emotion,

Occasionally leaves off endings.

*Verb tense – work with student to have her reread her writing to see if she can hear the difference. If not pull for a was/were mini-lesson.

She is incorporating details.

These last two sentences do not fit with the others. Encourage her to add a new paragraph.

*I* think she rushed to finish this last paragraph. Next step would be to ask her to go back and revise this section. There are more details that could be added and a few errors.

**Note:** This student meets expectations for second grade.
Yesterday Natalie, Charlotte and I squeezed into the seat. On the way there I found that there was some traffic. Yes finally got there. I was so excited go in. When we got in I saw

After that we went to the rain forest. In the rain forest there were trees as tall as skyscrapers and birds, monkeys and vines as tangled as a clump of hair. Next it was lunch. I had both
<table>
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<th>Student Sample Kylee—Narrative Nonfiction</th>
<th>Comments:</th>
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| Yesterday Natalie, Charlotte, and I squished into the seat. On the way there I found out that there was some traffic. YES we finally got there. I was so excited to go in. When we got in I saw a giant life-like diorama of a t-rex and triceratops it looked like they were fighting. Next, we were heading off to the Northern Mammal Hall all of a sudden something caught my eye they had cheetah fur and claws. I wanted to go to see all of it but we went to the mammal hall but it turns out that we went after the Northern mammal hall.

Then we checked the time. It was time for the Dino show. All of a sudden we saw cool life-like baby triceratops walk in the door. There also was a woman named Mary Anning. She was born in 1799. Did you know that she was the first female fossil collector. She told us about the triceratops. The little fellow was scared but when she gave him a leaf and he calmed down. Then she took away the leaf all of a sudden it charged at her. I ran so hard she nearly fell into my lap. The woman was very surprised. Then she gave the leaf back and it stopped chasing her.

After that we went to the rain forest. In the rain forest there were trees as tall as skyscrapers and birds, monkeys, and vines as tagled as a clump of fuzz. Next, it was lunch. I had bottled water, chips, sandwich and chocolate cake. After lunch, we went to the rocks and minerals hall. There I saw diamonds, combined minerals and a bunch of different cool rocks. Then it was 1:05, we lost track of time. We ran out of the museum. A few minutes later, we were on the bus and heading back to school. I hope I can go back again. | Great visual opening. |
| Needs to include where she is going in her topic sentence. |
| Student has great word choice and her voice is clearly evident in her writing. |
| Has great recall of details. |
| Using questions to add information. |
| * Work on editing to check for spelling and punctuation errors. |
| * Work on rereading to help with revision. Should say she ran so hard not I ran so hard. |
| Excited to see her using similes. |
| * Clump of fuzz???? |
| * Work on placing new ideas into paragraphs. |

**Note:** This student is an English only second grader.
Leatherback Sea Turtle

By:
Kylee Klinger

Description

• They are the largest living sea turtle.

• Eggs are cream color. Hatchlings are gray or black.

• Adults can weigh up to 2,000 pounds.
**Habitat**

- Leatherbacks swim in the Pacific Ocean
- They only live off the west coast of the U.S.A.

**Diet**

- They only eat jellyfish.
- Their teeth were not built for chewing.
- They choke on garbage.
Interesting Facts

• Hatchlings are 4 centimeters tall.

• They can live to be 80 years old.

Turtle Poem
By: Kylee Klinger

They love to eat jellyfish
Unless it has a healthy habitat it will die
Really good at diving
They have a leathery shell
Lives off the west coast of the U.S.A.
Endangered because they choke on plastic bags, balloons