

THE JANE SCHAFFER WRITING PROGRAM™

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The Jane Schaffer Writing Program™ is a K-12 program that systematically and explicitly teaches all students how to master the elements of the paragraph and essay. Process driven and product oriented, it breaks the writing process into sequential, learnable skills that all students can follow to achieve success.

The program is based on principles established by writing process research over the last three decades. Such research shows that writing is a recursive process, one that moves students through a series of steps: prompt, rubric, prewriting, thesis and topic sentence construction, graphic organizers, first draft, revision, final draft, and publishing.

Our students begin with a structured response to literature paragraph first and move to the essay later. Structure is a place to start for those who need it. Some students rely on it for many weeks or months; others don't need it at all. When students are ready to leave the structure, we teach them to *weave*, to adapt the format to their own style. Regardless of their experience, all students learn a common vocabulary:

- *Concrete detail* (CD) means evidence, support, facts, and examples.
- *Commentary* (CM) means analysis and interpretation.
- *Ratio* means the amount of concrete detail compared to the amount of commentary in a well-written paragraph and essay.

After students master writing responses to literature, they build on that learning to write the following kinds of compositions:

- Narrative, either personal or fictional
- Summary (expository)
- Persuasive

Three classroom activities – individual conferencing, grammar in context, and color coding -- permeate all writing assignments:

- One-on-one conferencing is essential to elicit thought and help students develop their ideas. Working with students one-on-one has shown us that talking is the missing link in thinking and writing. During these think-alouds, we *scribe* for the student – taking notes while the student talks and including those notes as part of the process. For example, we might ask, “Why does Friar Lawrence marry Romeo and Juliet without telling their parents?” A student might say, “He wants to stop the hate that has been building for generations.” This is higher-order thought, what we call *commentary*, where the student “comments on” the concrete detail about Friar Lawrence’s actions. Individual conferences are the only guaranteed way we have found to produce the analytical thinking we want.
- Grammar instruction is taught within the context of the student’s own work. Grammar instruction out of context does not work. We have students correct their errors and help them in individual conferences to master the issues that are troubling them.
- Students use color coding as they learn the pieces of the paragraph and the essay. In the paragraph, topic sentences are written in blue; concrete details in red; commentary sentences in green; and concluding sentences once again in blue. In the essay, the introductory and conclusion paragraphs are written in black, and the thesis is highlighted in yellow. Students internalize the thinking behind each color and say it helps them construct thoughtful, coherent paragraphs and essays.

HOW THE PROGRAM SUPPORTS THE CALIFORNIA WRITING STANDARDS

The Jane Schaffer Writing Program™ embeds the following California Writing Standards throughout instruction as appropriate by grade level:

Writing Strategies

Organization and Focus

Write with a clear focus.

Write topic sentences with appropriate support.

Write multiparagraph compositions with an introduction, body, and conclusion.

Use a variety of traditional structures for ordering ideas.

Use clear details.

Research, including the following:

Use appropriate reference materials.

Quote and paraphrase accurately.

Evaluation and Revision

Revise early drafts (with our concept of *weaving* to leave the structure).

Improve coherence and progression of ideas within and between paragraphs.

Create more sophisticated sentences.

Writing Applications

Write narratives, personal (autobiographical and biographical) and fictional.

Write responses to literature.

Write expository descriptions.

Write information reports.

Write personal and friendly letters.

Write summaries.

Write research papers.

Write persuasive compositions.

PROCEDURES AND RESEARCH BASE

Listed below are representative samples of schools and districts implementing the Jane Schaffer Writing Program™ with score reports from state assessments.

1.

Perris Union High School District Perris, California (individual school scores also available) California High School Exit Exam Results English Language Arts 2000 vs. 2002-03 Results	
2000	2002-03
1205 students tested 59% passed	934 students tested 75% passed

2.

Cerro Villa Middle School Villa Park, California California Standards Test 7th Grade Writing 2001 vs. 2002 Results	
2001	2002
517 students 8% scored 6 or higher (8 possible)	509 students 34% scored 6 or higher (8 possible)

3.

Shasta County Schools Shasta County, California (individual school scores also available) California High School Exit Exam English Language Arts 2002 vs. 2003 results	
2002	2003
53.1% passed	71.1% passed

EXAMPLES OF CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Four sample assignments are included to illustrate the concepts described earlier. They include a model response to literature paragraph, a sample *weaving* paragraph, where students leave the structure, instruction on writing topic sentences, and a graphic organizer (called a *shaping sheet*) developed at student request to help them organize their thoughts.

The Structured One-Chunk Paragraph

This five-sentence paragraph has a topic sentence (1), a concrete detail from the story (2), two commentary sentences (3 and 4), and a concluding sentence (5). The middle of the paragraph (sentences 2, 3, and 4) is called a *chunk* and comes between the topic sentence and the concluding sentence. It is the smallest unit of coherent thought that students can write. We use it to train our classes in higher-order habits of thinking.

1) In HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S
STONE, Harry is a champion to many of the more insecure
students at Hogwarts. 2) For example, when Draco Malfoy takes
Neville's Rememberall, Harry gets it back. 3) He cannot stand
someone who picks on others. 4) He won't tolerate bullies who
take advantage of their victims. 5) Harry is a hero on campus.

The Weaving One-Chunk Paragraph

When students have internalized the structure, we offer a series of lessons to teach them how to leave it behind -- what we call *weaving* -- and develop their own style. Included below is an example of the most sophisticated level of weaving. This paragraph shows concrete details and commentary thoughts combined to produce a more mature version of the paragraph on the previous page. This is still a one-chunk product, but the CDs and CMs have been woven together:

1) In HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE, Harry is a champion to many of the more insecure students at Hogwarts. 2) For example, when Draco Malfoy assaults Neville to grab his Rememberall, his prized possession, Harry rescues it. 3) He cannot stand someone who picks on vulnerable classmates at school. 4) He won't tolerate bullies who break school rules to take advantage of their victims. 5) Harry is a hero on campus.

Writing the Topic Sentence

Students use this sequence to build thoughtful topic sentences. They do a T-chart with CDs and CMs and then draw from the CM column to create a higher-order topic sentence.

Prompt: Write a one-chunk paragraph that (choose a verb) _____

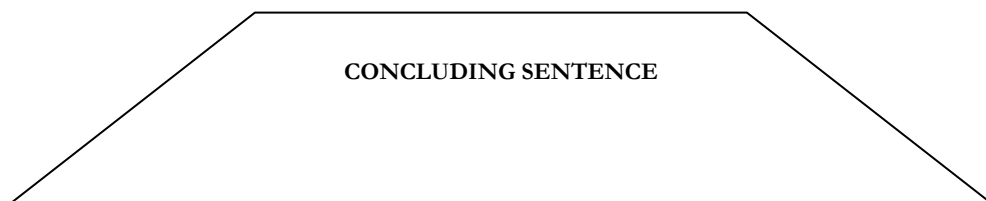
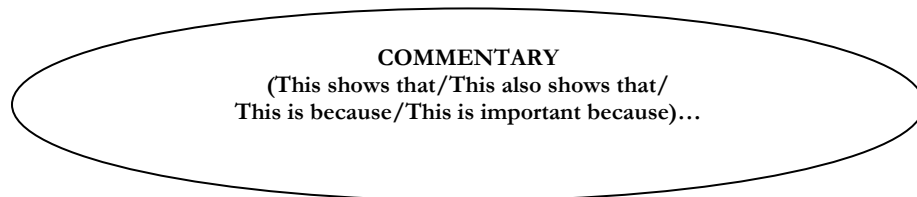
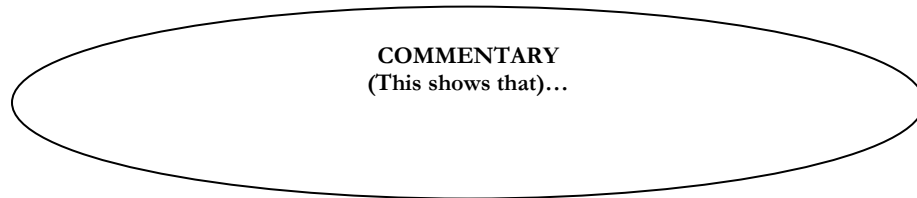
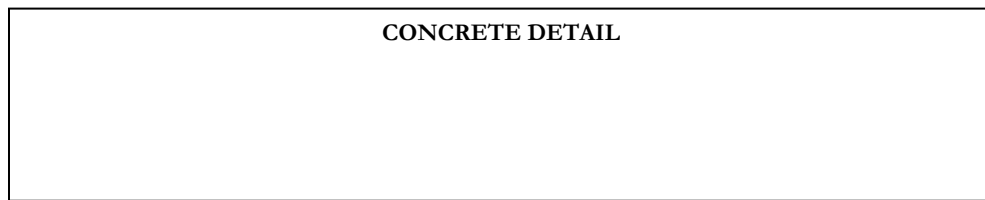
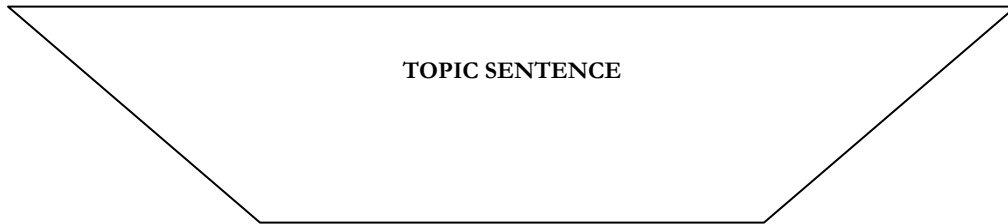
(Sample verbs: discusses, comments on, analyzes, interprets, summarizes, explains, describes...)

CDs	CMs

Topic sentence:

Using Graphic Organizers (Shaping Sheets)

Students asked us to develop a shaping sheet with different shapes for each sentence of the one-chunk paragraph. The shapes on the actual assignment sheet are larger than those below:



MODELS OF IMPLEMENTATION

We recommend the following model to implement the program:

- Unit 1: Response to literature paragraph, one chunk
- Unit 2: Response to literature essay
- Unit 3: Response to literature paragraph, two or more chunks
(body paragraphs eight or more sentences)
- Unit 4: Narrative essay
- Unit 5: Summary
- Unit 6: Persuasive essay
- Unit 7: Research paper

The length of time for each unit depends on the age and experience of the class. For example, Unit 1 – response to literature paragraph – might take a week with a gifted class and several months with an ELL class. At the end of this article is a two-page detailed scope and sequence for a comprehensive K-12 literacy plan.

HOW THE PROGRAM SUPPORTS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The program guides ELL students and other special needs populations through a scaffolding sequence to lead them to independent writing. The scaffolding chart on the next two pages illustrates a sample pacing plan for teaching the paragraph to ELL classes. Students take incremental steps toward mastery with the teacher's guidance.

SCAFFOLDING CHART

SCAFFOLDING STEP 1	SCAFFOLDING STEP 2	SCAFFOLDING STEP 3
<p>The teacher give the class a model; they copy it with the assigned color-coding and label the pieces.</p>	<p>The teacher does the paragraph except for one word in sentence #3; students supply ideas to fill in the blank.</p>	<p>The teacher does everything except one word in sentence #3 and one word in sentence #4; students supply ideas to fill in each blank.</p>
<p>Harry is a champion. For example, when Malfoy takes Neville's Rememberall, Harry gets it back. He stops the creep. He protects his friends. Harry is a hero on campus.</p>	<p>Harry Potter is a champion. For example, when Malfoy takes Neville's Rememberall, Harry gets it back. He stops the _____. He protects his friends. Harry is a hero on campus.</p>	<p>Harry Potter is a champion. For example, when Malfoy takes Neville's Rememberall, Harry gets it back. He stops the _____. He _____ his friends. Harry is a hero on campus.</p>

SCAFFOLDING STEP 4	SCAFFOLDING STEP 5	SCAFFOLDING STEP 6
The teacher does sentences 1,2,4, and 5; students supply sentence #3 with the commentary starter <i>This shows that</i> .	The teacher does sentences 1,2,and 5; students supply sentences #3 and #4, using the appropriate commentary helpers.#	The teacher does sentences 1 and 5; students do the #2 concrete detail and #3 and 4 commentary thoughts.

<p>1) Harry Potter is a champion.</p> <p>2) For example, he chases Draco Malfoy to get Neville's Rememberall back.</p> <p>3) (This shows that) _____ _____</p> <p>4) He protects his friends.</p> <p>5) Harry is a hero on campus.</p>	<p>1) Harry Potter is a champion.</p> <p>2) For example, he chases Draco Malfoy to get Neville's Rememberall back.</p> <p>3) (This shows that) _____ _____</p> <p>4) a. (This shows that)... b. (This also shows that)... c. (This is because)... d. (This is important because)... _____ _____ _____</p> <p>5) Harry is a hero on campus.</p>	<p>1) Harry Potter is a champion.</p> <p>2) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>3) (This shows that) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>4) a. (This shows that)... b. (This also shows that)... c. (This is because)... d. (This is important because)... _____ _____ _____</p> <p>5) Harry is a hero on campus.</p>
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SCAFFOLDING STEP 7*	SCAFFOLDING STEP 8	SCAFFOLDING STEP 9
<p>The teacher does sentences 1, 3, 4, and 5; students supply an appropriate CD for sentence #2.</p> <p>*This step may move earlier or later.</p>	<p>The teacher does sentence 5; students do 1,2, 3, and 4.</p>	<p>Students do the entire paragraph by themselves.</p>

SHAPING SHEET	SHAPING SHEET	SHAPING SHEET
<p>1) Harry Potter is a champion.</p> <p>2) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>3) He stops the creep.</p> <p>4) He protects his friends.</p> <p>5) Harry is a hero on campus.</p>	<p>1) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>2) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>3) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>4) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>5) Harry is a hero on campus.</p>	<p>1) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>2) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>3) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>4) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>5) _____ _____ _____</p>

The following chart shows our K-12 scope and sequence that includes the elements described in this paper:

**SCOPE AND SEQUENCE FOR WRITING K-12
THE JANE SCHAFFER WRITING PROGRAM™**

	K	1	2	3	4	5
Demo and model	Demo and model	Demo and model	Demo and model	Demo and model	Demo and model	Demo and model
Shared writing	Shared writing in response to literature; do in reading groups 2 skills: 1. Retelling the story to prepare for narrative writing 2. Commentary and concrete detail orally (not labeled by the terms)	Shared writing in response to literature; do in reading groups 2 skills: 1. Retelling the story to prepare for narrative writing 2. Commentary and concrete detail orally (not labeled by the terms)	Shared writing in response to literature; do in reading groups 2 skills: 1. Retelling the story to prepare for narrative writing 2. Commentary and concrete detail orally (not labeled by the terms)	Shared writing in response to literature; do in reading groups Introduce summary writing; reinforce response to literature; continue narrative	Shared writing in response to literature; do in reading groups Review response to literature, narrative, and summary writing	Shared writing in response to literature; do in reading groups Continue literature and narrative writing; introduce persuasive writing
Small group work	no; shared writing only	no; shared writing only	yes; start small group work after winter break	yes	yes	yes
Individual work	no	no	no	yes; start individual work after winter break	yes	yes
# of chunks; length of essay	1 chunk; no terminology; oral, How did the character feel on the inside: What really happened in the story to show this?	1 chunk; no terminology; oral, How did the character feel on the inside: What really happened in the story to show this?	1 chunk; no terminology; oral, How did the character feel on the inside: What really happened in the story to show this?	1-chunk paragraphs; introduce terminology; as appropriate, introduce 4-paragraph essays for response to literature, narrative, and summary	4-paragraph essay with 1-chunk body paragraphs	4-paragraph essay with 1-chunk body paragraphs

	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Demo and model; literature, personal, and persuasive writing	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Shared writing	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Small group work	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Individual work	yes; continue literature, personal, and persuasive writing	yes; continue literature, personal, and persuasive writing	yes; continue literature, personal, and persuasive writing	yes; continue literature, personal, and persuasive writing	yes; continue literature, personal, and persuasive writing	yes; continue literature, personal, and persuasive writing	yes; continue literature, personal, and persuasive writing
# of chunks; length of essay	4- or 5-paragraph essay with 1-chunk or 2-chunk body paragraphs	4- or 5-paragraph essay with 2-chunk body paragraphs	4- or 5-paragraph essay with 2-chunk body paragraphs	4- or 5-paragraph essay with 2-chunk body paragraphs	4- or 5-paragraph essay with 2-chunk or 3-chunk body paragraphs	4- or 5-paragraph essay with 2-chunk or 3-chunk body paragraphs	4- or 5-paragraph essay with 2 or 3 chunks in body paragraphs

