



**EVERGREEN**

# Teacher's Corner Lesson Plans

*Helping Teachers and Students Make the Most of  
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## School Ground Newspaper Project\*†

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Grade level: 4

Provincial curriculum links: Ontario

Subject: Language

Keywords: forms of writing: report, narrative, recount, procedural,  
exposition, persuasive, interview

### Description

This is a literacy project that can be completed while studying your school ground's Habitats and Communities. The project reinforces science concepts and related outdoor activities while providing students with a meaningful way to practice various forms of writing. The school ground newspaper is an example of a rich performance task whereby students adopt the role of a reporter to create a unique product. Each student can compose an individual newspaper or all of the writing pieces can be compiled into one large class newspaper.

### Curriculum Framework

Topic: Writing

Strand: Developing and Organizing Content, Using Knowledge of Form and Style in Writing, Applying Knowledge of Language Conventions and Presenting Written Work Effectively

Specific Lesson Goals:

- Identify the topic, purpose and audience for a variety of writing forms
- Generate ideas about a potential topic using a variety of strategies and resources

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\* This exercise is adapted from *Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom*, Evergreen/TDSB Summer Institute, 2007, 82 pages.

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- Gather information to support ideas for writing using a variety of strategies and oral, print and electronic sources
- Writing more complex texts using a variety of forms
- Use sentences of different lengths and structures
- Make revisions to improve the content, clarity and interest of their written work

## Preparation

Preparation Time:

- 15 minutes

Length of lesson:

- 20-30 minutes of instruction for each lesson, then time for writing

Resources required:

- class set of newspapers, if possible (Metro is free and written at a level that is easy for grade 4 students to read)
- First Steps Writing Resource Book (blackline masters for forms of writing)
- data and notes from school ground inquiry lessons,
- clipboards (if writing outside),
- poetry resource books
- classroom reference tools for writing
- writing paper and utensils (pencils, erasers, markers, pencil crayons)
- glue
- computers for research and typing

## Procedure

### Introductory Lesson:

1. Explain to students that they will adopt the role of a reporter in order to create a newspaper about the school ground. Engage students by explaining that the newspapers will be published at the school and placed in the office and the library for the whole school to read.
2. Distribute newspapers to every student to peruse for 10 minutes, asking them to take note of the different sections.
3. As a class, record the various newspaper sections and identify which would relate to the school ground newspaper (i.e. news reports, sports, travel, advice column, comics, crosswords, etc.)

### Subsequent Writing Lessons:

At least one language class will be required for each piece of writing. Begin each lesson with an example of the form of writing (from a newspaper, if possible) and identify the necessary elements. Use blackline masters from the ***First Steps Writing Resource Book*** to guide students through each literacy activity. If weather permits, many of the lessons can be completed outside using clipboards, particularly the poetry, comic strip and travel sections. The following are some examples for each form of writing that can appear in the newspaper:

**School Ground Report:** After conducting research, students can report on the unique history of their school ground. Many students, and possibly teachers themselves, may not be familiar with their school's history. Students can seek out maps and old photographs of their school.

Many students will also enjoy writing sports reports that relate to school ground recreational activities.

**Narrative Writing:** Students can write a fictional piece using the school ground as the setting. To further their practice in role-playing, students can write from the point of view of a school ground animal, tree or other plant. *"Postcards from the Perfect Plot"* can also be included in this section.

**Descriptive Writing:** For the travel section of the newspaper, students can choose their favourite location on the school ground and describe it as a vacation hotspot.

**Persuasive Writing:** Students can argue why a certain school ground greening project should be undertaken (i.e. planting a garden, more trees, creating a butterfly habitat or pond, etc.). They can also write a piece about why certain rules should be introduced to protect school ground habitats and communities.

**Expository Writing:** Students can explain how litter affects the school ground, the importance of trees, or the human impact on school ground habitats and communities.

**Procedural Writing:** Students can describe the process of mulching and caring for trees (see *"Tree Care Guide"* and *"Mulch is Magic"* handouts after the *"Adopt-A Tree"* lesson plan), how to conduct one of the science inquiry lessons, how to create a butterfly habitat, build a birdfeeder, capture and study a worm, etc.

**Recount Writing:** Student reporters can recount an interesting recess event, an inquiry lesson, scavenger hunt, or some other outdoor activity or discovery.

**Interview:** Students can interview a teacher, a classmate or another friend about the school ground (what they like about the school ground, ideas for improvement, a favourite recess memory, etc.)

**Poetry Corner:** Students can create various types of poems that are inspired by the school ground. They can also include riddles created from the “*Who Has Been There?*” lesson.

**Comic Strips:** Incorporate art and literacy by developing comic strips that depict school ground scenarios.

**Trivia and Crosswords:** Using facts about plants and animals on the school ground.

### Newspaper Publishing

Students decide on the layout of the newspaper, either individually or as a class, depending on the final product). With teacher modeling and support, students then type their pieces of writing on the computer. Once the paper is printed, students can add finishing touches using markers and pencil crayons.

## Student Assessment and Evaluation

Provide expectations for each form of writing in the form of a checklist or rubric which can be developed with students. Conferencing with students about the project as a whole can evaluate students understanding of the various forms of writing and essential elements of each.

## Enrichment and Extension Activities

Newspapers can be shared with another grade 4 class, possibly a colleague from the institute in the form of a project exchange. A class newspaper can also be posted on the school website and sent to Evergreen’s online Teacher’s Corner and the TDSB EcoSchools website.

## Educator Notes

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## References/Resources

First Steps Writing Resource Book, Education Department of Western Australia, 1994.  
*Tree Care Guide*, Evergreen.

*Mulch is magic: spread it!* EcoSchools, 2006.