

January 1, 2014

Dear Carolyn,

First of all, thank you so much for including all my students in being allowed to attend the Ballet Folklorico performance in November. They enjoyed it immensely, and I think they all "got it," as you will see in their essays.

I am sorry that it took us so long to get these to you, but some of us have been working on them right up until the day before Christmas vacation!

Here was our process:

1. The afternoon we returned from the performance, they "brainstormed" everything they could think of about the show, and I listed all their ideas on a big chart tablet.
2. The next day, they added on some ideas they hadn't thought of during our first brainstorming session.
3. Then I introduced them to what an essay is and how to organize one. Some of the older (3rd-5th graders) remembered writing essays about their trip to CSI two years ago to the Arts on Tour acrobat show..."Cirque de...?). We wrote a group essay that day on the topic of "Dogs are the best pet." I drew a big caterpillar graph on the board (sample attached), and they came up with their 3 main reasons(the circles) to support the topic sentence and details(the legs) for each reason. I "read" the graph as if it were an essay, turning their single words and phrases into complete sentences.
4. The next day, I gave them each a blank caterpillar graph, and explained how to use our brainstorming chart to pick(at least) 3 big ideas of why they enjoyed the performance, and had them decide on a topic sentence and a concluding sentence.
5. Then we worked on details for the legs, as children finished their "bodies." The older and more advanced students were able to do these two steps quickly and were ready to write. For the First

graders and others who struggle more with writing, this took several days.

6. As they were ready, I gave them a choice of using my "form" essay" (copy attached) to write their essay, or to start writing on the computers or their Alphasmarts, using the caterpillar graph as their plan.
7. Even if they chose to first hand write their ideas down on a "form essay," eventually, all of the children typed out their essay on a computer or Alphasmart. The older students used the Spell Check and I helped the others individually to make corrections on the final draft, and I helped all of them who needed it with indentation and form.

And now all their essays are ready to send to you with our sincere thanks for letting us attend, and also my thanks for giving me an opportunity to introduce them to a new form of writing!

Sincerely,

Chris Mannen
Acorn Learning Center

The Ballet Folklorica

① The Ballet Folklorica was

②

③

④

⑤ I

the Ballet Folklorica.

The Ballet Folklorico

① The Ballet Folklorico was _____

② { I liked the _____
 The _____ was/were _____
 When _____, it was _____

It/They/The _____

It/They/the _____

③ { I liked the _____
 The _____ was/were _____
 When _____, it was _____

It/They/The _____

It/They/the _____

④ My favorite part was _____

because _____

It/They/The _____

It/They/the _____

⑤ I _____ the Ballet Folklorico.