A fourth-grade teacher developed a unit on writing designed to help his students go from oral to written text after finding that only 4 of the 22 in his classroom had the organizational and writing skills to get their ideas on paper. The basis of the unit was a unique problem which the teacher himself was trying to solve in real life: namely, how to transport a 12-foot banana plant five miles in freezing weather. Students brainstormed ideas on this "Great Banana Rescue," wrote short and simple notes on the blackboard and on index cards concerning how the "rescue" was completed, and recorded individual stories on a tape recorder. Using the format of the "Stack the Deck Program," the teacher used a prepared paragraph to illustrate proofreading techniques. Students then wrote stories based on their note cards and their tape-recorded retelling of the rescue. Students shared and discussed their stories with each other. Final copies were graded on correct order of events, then sentences, and finally spelling. Most students were able to make complete sentences, and even the weakest writers were able to recognize a few errors and correct them. Two weeks later, when students had to write a book report, almost every student chose to make notes, then a rough draft, and then a final copy. (Four "rescue" stories and two book reports written by students are attached.) (RS)
Will Taping and Replaying Their Speeches Help My Fourth Grade Students With Organizing Their Written Work?

On October 19, I started a unit on writing. These activities included writing about something each student had done, and how they would instruct others in some activity. As I read each paper, I found that only a very few, four out of 22 students, were able to sequence ideas, use complete sentences, use proper spelling, and do a reasonably good job with grammar skills. The rest had problems with some or all of these areas. Mark, Edwin, Jim, and Jonathon each gave an effort, but each had to tell me exactly what they were trying to express in their writings. Each was able to tell a good story, but, each was very limited in their organizational skills.

After a review of some skills, I assigned another paper on, "How to Make Something to Eat." This activity was more successful than either of the first two I had tried. I went over sequencing in class and tried to help each student with any problem. I allowed the papers to be taken home so each would have enough time to finish their work. The following Monday, I had each student read the composition to the class. I noticed Jim had a very good composition, and after class I commented about the quality. He said, "I told Mom what to write and she wrote it." Jim had good ideas, but no way to get them on paper successfully. I decided it might be more successful to get the students to go from oral to written than
Earlier in the year, a friend in Bone Gap, Illinois offered me a banana plant 12 feet tall with bananas. The problem was that I could not haul the plant in either my car or truck. I thought this unique problem might give my students a basis to work on skills in speaking and writing. I planned to have each student take notes on how we managed to move the banana plant from Bone Gap to West Salem-about five miles-in freezing weather. Next, we would combine ideas and develop a list of nine or 10 steps we used. I wrote the various ideas on the board, but did not allow the students to elaborate on each idea, emphasizing that each would have his or her own point of view.

After each student had copied these steps onto a 3 x 5 note card-no more than three words allowed per line-they were to use these to prepare a story about, "The Great Banana Rescue." Next, each would tell the story and record it on tape. The tape would be played back and each would follow their notes. Then, each would hear the tape a second time before trying to write a story.

I will use a program called "Stack the Deck" which I learned about at a Mt. Vernon, Illinois conference. This program is designed to take writing from the first draft through finished publication. Finally, I will again play the tape and discuss afterward how the tape compares to the written form. Hopefully, this entire activity will improve all the student's skills-both verbal and written.

As of December 7, the first of the project is completed. I took the class, over their noon hour, to get the plant. As was suggested by the students in the planning stage, we used a school bus. Since I am also a bus driver and there is a spare bus at the
school, this was no problem. We left after all had finished lunch, loaded the bus and made the trip to Bone Gap. During the trip one student saw a banana peel on the road and wondered aloud if we were too late, as King Kong might have already found the plant.

Upon arriving, I divided the group, and took six or seven students with me to retrieve the plant from the basement. The others left behind on the bus were to observe what happened while we brought the plant to the bus and guard against monkeys. They were also to assist when we loaded the plant into the bus. This accomplished, we returned to our school, unloaded, and moved the plant into our classroom. Next, we wrote out notes, very simple and short, on the board. The students copied and used these to prepare a talk. After each had been recorded, I asked, "Was it easier to talk to the recorder or to the class?" I was surprised as about half stated it was harder to talk to the recorder.

I then played the tape back and was pleased to hear how different each was. The students had used their notes and all had sequenced the events properly. Next, we discussed the overall project up to this point.

I have begun to use the format used in the "Stack the Deck"** program. I used a prepared paragraph to demonstrate how to proofread their works. The students numbered the groups of words, whether sentences or not, and listed the first word of each on a grid. Then we discussed each group as to what, if anything, we needed to do to make the sentences better. I used an enlarged version of the paragraph on a transparency. While the students discussed the possibilities, I marked on the transparency the improvements suggested. Then, I assigned each student a partner and had them cut one copy of the original paragraph into the numbered pieces. On a clean
sheet of paper, each group was to paste the sentences to make a better paragraph. While they were working, I had many questions from them which I found interesting. Emily asked, "Can we cut the sentences in two and put the last part first?" Another wondered aloud, "What do we do with the words we don't use?" Another group answered, "Just glue them at the bottom of the page." Logan asked, "Can we put in commas and periods?" I told them to use punctuation if they were sure, but, if not sure, to put a big circle and we would discuss it later. The groups took about 40 minutes to finish their cutting and pasting. I then told them we would begin writing their papers on Monday.

Monday I had each student get the note card and follow along while I replayed all their talks. Using their note cards as guides, each began writing a story. My instructions were to skip a line between each sentence, and to not worry about capitals, spelling or other rules, just get their ideas on paper. Tuesday we finished the "sloppy copy" and began to edit and revise using the previous skills presented. The students could use any means to check their work including dictionaries, other students, and me, and even their English book. This revision work was to be done on the blank line above the sentence. Most students finished this part in one period, but some needed to take it home for additional time.

Wednesday, I had each pair to read the other's story and discuss any strengths or problems. As I circulated around the room, I heard many lively discussions—both good and not so good—about the story. When all discussions were settled and corrections made, I gave each two pieces of white theme paper for the final copy. Students were allowed to use either pencil or pen, and each could use either manuscript or cursive. This final draft took approximately
one hour Wednesday, with finish time allowed on Thursday if necessary.

I then had all pages placed into a folder where I could evaluate the total project. The results were even better than I had expected! Almost all the students were able to put the events in proper order. When they made their rough draft, most were able to make complete sentences. They made many corrections on the "sloppy copy", although one boy threw his copy away after he had made a second "sloppy copy" because his first one was just too messy. Even my weakest writers were able to recognize a few errors and correct them.

The final copies were graded as I had explained I would...correct order, then sentences, and finally, spelling. To say the least, I was very pleased with the work.

About two weeks later, my class had to write a book report. The first question asked was, "Do we get to make a "sloppy copy?" Almost every student chose to make notes, then rough draft, and then, the final paper. The second time this format was used, all seemed to be very comfortable using it. The results have been better than expected!

I believe this project has been very valuable for all my students. They seemed very willing to accept any writing assignment. Hopefully, they will keep this attitude for a long time.

Overall, the project has been most encouraging and very successful.

I have enclosed some of the students projects to demonstrate what we accomplished.

**NOTE: THE "STACK THE DECK WRITING PROGRAM" REFERRED TO IN THIS ARTICLE IS CREDITED TO HERB HREBIC, PUBLISHER, TINLEY PARK, IL 60477-0429.
The Rescue

We went on a bus trip to Glovers house in Bone Gap. Your boys went into Glovers basement and came out with a banana plant. Then, we loaded it on the bus and took it back to school. Then, about seven boys carried it to the room. After that, we tied the banana plant to the wall with string. Two boys went to get some dirt. When they came back, we planted it.
We went on a bus trip to Glovers house in some city.

Four boys went into Glovers basement and got a banana plant.

Then we loaded it on the bus and took it back to school.

Then about seven boys carried it about from the ball diamond to the room.

After that, we tied it to the wall with string.

Jonathan and CJ had to get some dirt.

When they got back, we planted it.
The Rescue

All of the class got on the bus. Then we all went to Bone Gap where the love's lived. Some boys and Mr. Whirth weren't in the basement. They all had a Braun plant and put it on the bus. Some more boys and Mr. Whirth unloaded it off the bus. Then they credited it to the room. All of the class helped plant. More boys took a bucket and got some dirt. We got some string and tied it to a plant holder and arnnd the plant to a note plant holder. So it wood fall on bucket and clitty head. Now it is growing more and more everyday.
Bone Gap

Jessica

All of the class got on the bus.

Then we went to the 
love's house.

Some boys when in the basement
to get the plant.

We put the plant on the bus

Some more boys and
wth and
it off the bus.

Then we all went to the room.

Next we all help planted it.

Few girls got some dirt for the plant.

We got some string and tied it to a
plant holder and arde the plant just
to on the plant so it won't fall.

Now the boys plant is grow more and
more everyday.
The Rescue Mission

"Mr. Wirth told us that we were going on a rescue mission. On the way I got very excited, then we arrived at Glovers house. Some boys went into the basement to get the banana plant and bring it back up. Then they loaded the banana plant onto the bus. On the way back I was even more excited than before, we had to hold the banana plant still so it wouldn't snap in two. When we got back some boys had to carry it into the classroom. Then we took some very strong string and tied it to some hooks on the wall so the plant wouldn't fall on Luke Afield and me. The only thing was that none of the girls except Lindsay Goble got to help."
Mr. Wirth told us that we were going on a rescue mission.

On the way I got very excited, then we arrived at Glover's house.

Some boys went into the basement to get the banana plant and bring it back up.

Then they loaded the banana plant onto the bus.

On the way back I was even more excited than before, we had to hold the plant still so it wouldn't snap in two.
6. When we got back some boys had to carry it into the classroom.

7. Then we took some very strong string and tied it to some hooks on the wall so the plant wouldn't fall on Luke Afield and me.

8. The only thing was that none of the girls except Lindsay Goble got to help.
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14
Boy Mike and Jonathan went to get a box of the plant and the next day around the plant and two hooks on the plant, weil. With that, some string to get some more dirt to put around the room, and Cored and Jonathan went to the class. Bruce came, the dirt in at the class. Card the first and when we got back the dirt to the bus and then everyone plant to the bus and Mr. Withcard plant and all four boys got out and got the barrow. He was so Mike. He took Jonathan wanted to see if he was home and plant when we got they. Mr. With bone case and he also had the plants, bone case. Cows Board Oliver lived in the house, and we could. Get the barrow plants room. So we could get the barrow. Plants. Mr. With told us to come up to the Rescue. After we got done with lunch.
bucket of sand to put around the bottom of the banana plant.
1. After we got done with lunch, Mr. Wirth told us to come to the room so we could get the banana plant.
2. So we got on the bus and went to David Glover's house and Mike Cj. T.Cdid. when in his basement to get the banana plant.
3. Then we put the banana plant in the back of the bus.
4. We went back to school and unloaded the bus.
5. In bus! All the boys took the banana plant into the room.
6. Mr. Wirth tied a string around
the plant and to two hooks on the sides of the plant and CJ and Jonathan went out to get some dirt.
Book Report
Title: Reluctantly Alice
Author: Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

About the Book: I just finished reading this book and I haven't stopped laughing yet. Alice has a problem. She has seven bad things about 7th grade. Her goal is to go a whole year being friends with students and teachers alike. She changed her mind when she saw Denise "Mack Trunk" Whitlock.

Alice's mother had died when she only three. She now lives with her dad and her big brother Lester. Alice has two friends Elizabeth Price and Pamela Jones. They thought Lester was cute. Which Alice could not believe. She has a friend (sort of boyfriend) Patrick. They got in trouble in Mr. Hensley's class. Can Alice be Alice Likeable? Can Alice be friends with Denise "Mack Trunk" Whitlock? That's for you to find out.
My Opinion: This is a great book if you like long stories that are very funny. You will want to find out what happens in the shower and other funny things. Believe me! This story is great!
Title Reluctantly Alice
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1 I just finished reading this book and I haven’t stopped laughing yet.

2 Alice has a problem.

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13. Can Alice be Alice-likeable?

14. Can Alice be friends with Denise "Mack Truck" Whitlock?

15. That's for you to find out.
16. My Opinion: This is a great book if you like long stories that are funny. Very funny.

17. You will like to find out what happens.

18. You will want to find out what happens in the shower and other funny things.

19. Believe me! This story is great!
Book Report
Title: Rent a Third Grader
Author: B.B. Hiller
About the book: This book is about a third grade class trying to save Partner. Partner was going to be turned in to pet food until they decided to do something about it. Brad, Jenny and Louis have to find out how to earn money so they can put Partner in a pasture, but they do not have a lot of time. They have only one or two weeks. That is how it all started. Once they got the money they put Partner in a pasture. The fun started when they got to visit the pasture. The piglets got loose but they rounded them up.

My Opinion
This book was a good book. I think it was funny. I also think you should read it.

Holly Guatin
Holly Gauthorp

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Holly Gautho