

FCS + ELA: A Recipe for Stronger Student Writing

Melissa Evon
Elgin High School
mevon@elginps.net

Integrating Formal Writing Practices into Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Curriculum

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) education plays a crucial role in preparing students for the real-world challenges they will face. By intentionally integrating formal writing practices into the existing FCS curriculum, teachers can significantly enhance students' communication skills, reinforce critical thinking, and directly support the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum.

Quick and impactful writing assignments in FCS classrooms offer a unique opportunity to:

- **Reinforce Real-Life Writing Skills:** Students practice essential formal writing skills that are crucial for future success in various careers and daily life, including clear communication, effective organization of ideas, and persuasive language.
- **Align with National Standards in Area 13.3** - Demonstrate communication skills that contribute to positive relationships.
- **Support English Language Arts Curriculum:** These assignments provide authentic contexts for students to apply ELA concepts and strengthen their overall writing proficiency while preparing them for the ACT.

These types of assignments, while brief, can have a significant impact on student writing development when consistently implemented. They serve as valuable tools for teachers to foster a culture of strong communication in the FCS classroom.

Examples of Assignments - There are numerous ways to practice writing in a FCS classroom. Cover letters, resumes, and reports are excellent assignments to practice writing. Those lessons often take significant time to teach students. Throughout the year I try to offer quick assignments that can be done in one or two class periods that will also enhance writing skills.

Journals

Every Monday, students get a Weekly Journal paper that they bring back to class each day and complete in the first five minutes of class. I post a prompt on the Smart Board daily. It can be something simple, like, if you could only eat one thing for the rest of your life what would it be? Sometimes it is more thought provoking like how would you answer the job interview question, what is one of your weaknesses? On Thursdays, I provide a drawing prompt, it's usually something silly like draw a dinosaur at a birthday party. If they are absent, they write absent on that day, and it counts as completing that day's prompt. On Fridays, I call each student up to my podium and look over their paper. Students are not graded on their answers (or drawings), but for answering daily and completing the paper. I usually look over the answers and drawings and have a brief conversation with each student. I enjoy Fridays because I know I get to talk to every student in the room!

FCS WEEKLY JOURNAL -

You can abbreviate the prompt, but write your answers in complete sentences! If you need more space, feel free to write on the back.

Monday, Prompt _____

Response _____

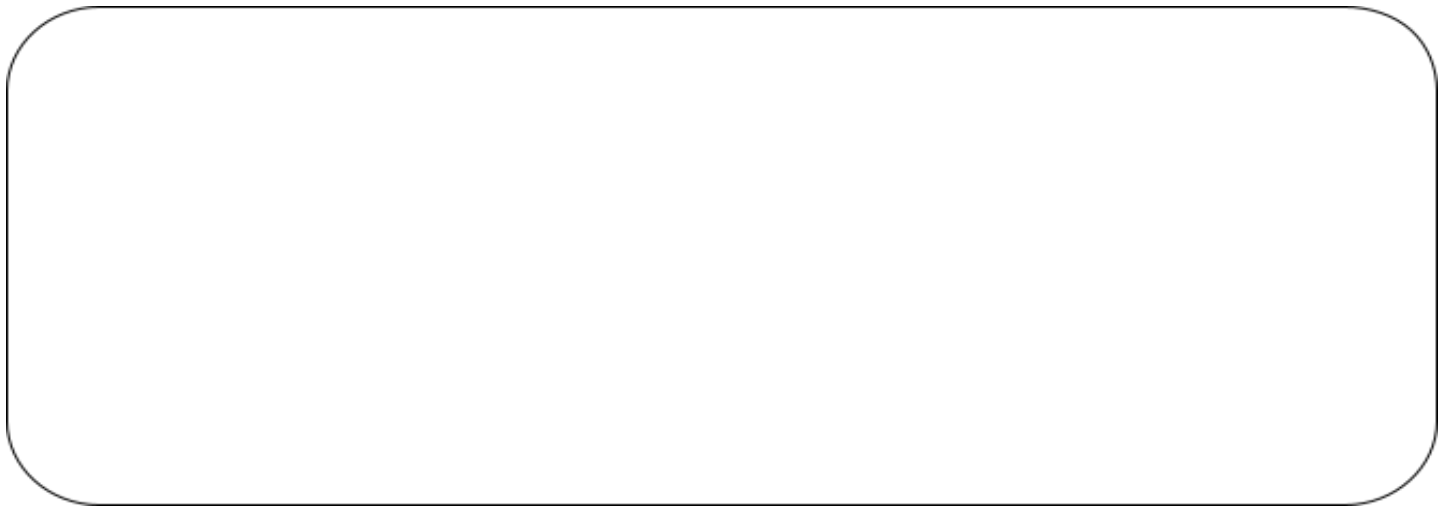
Tuesday, Prompt _____

Response _____

Wednesday, prompt _____

Response _____

Thursday - read the prompt and draw your answer below.



Friday, Prompt - What's one good thing from this week?

Response _____

Practice filling out an envelope

After demonstrating to students how to address an envelope, I let them practice with the information below:

Use the standard format by the United States Postal Service to address a letter to yourself. Use your name and our school address as the return address. Draw a heart where the stamp goes.



Letter Writing

We discuss the art of letter writing and all the reasons writing letters does not seem as prevalent as it once was. We discuss the importance of writing letters and using formal writing, while also reviewing the importance of using good grammar and spelling. I have students write a letter to themselves in the first few weeks of school. I do not read the letter. I give them an actual envelope to fill out correctly, and they can draw a stamp. They seal their letter in the envelope. I grade their envelope for correct components, capitalization, and punctuation. I hold onto the envelopes until the end of the school year and pass them out. Here is an example of what students are asked to write.

Write a letter to yourself - WRITE IN COMPLETE SENTENCES.

Start it Dear Self, (or write your name)

1. Tell one thing that has gone well so far this school year.
 2. Remind yourself of one thing you are good at.
 3. Write 2 goals for this school year
 4. Write your prediction for your future 5 years from now.
 5. Use a valediction (closing) and sign your name.
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Thank You Note to a Veteran

I read the note they wrote and give them a grade for following directions and filling out the envelope correctly. Here is an example of the instructions I give:

Start the note with the words - Dear Veteran,
Write 3 to 4 lines expressing your gratitude for their service.

Examples of thank you phrases that are appropriate to use

Thank you for serving our country and protecting our freedoms.	To all those who have served, and those who continue to serve, Happy Veterans Day.
Thank you for defending freedom and peace with courage and honor	Thank you for defending our lives and liberty.
Thank you for your service.	Thank you for serving our country.
Thank you for serving our nation. Our debt can never be repaid.	You are appreciated.
Happy Veterans Day.	Thank you from a grateful American.
	Thank you for your courage.
	I appreciate you.

Include a valediction (closing) and sign your **first name only**. Use formal writing, correct grammar, and spelling. On the envelope for the return address, put the high school name and address. For the recipient's address, write Veteran and then the address of the Veteran's Center provided in class.

Holiday Cards

In December, we talk about how many people used to or still do send holiday cards and letters. I ask students to create one. They can create one on paper or digitally.

Holiday Card/Letter Assignment

Sending cards and letters brings joy to the sender and the recipient. Your assignment is to create a holiday letter that you could send to your family and friends. Your card can celebrate New Year's, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or be a general happy holidays or season's greetings card.

You can make a digital card using two or more slides. Or you can make a paper copy using one piece of paper.

On the outside of the card (or on the first slide). You should have an image or drawing. It can be of you, you and your family, or a holiday image (see below). On the inside (or on the second slide), you need to write your message. Your drawing or photo(s) should be in color unless you are going with a black and white theme. But just drawing something quickly in pencil is not acceptable.

Write your message

- **Reflecting on 2024:** Write 4 sentences about your experiences, memories, challenges, triumphs, or feelings about the year 2024. Use specific examples and descriptive language to make your reflections interesting.
- **Looking forward to 2025:** Write 3 sentences expressing your hopes, wishes, or goals for the year 2025. Be optimistic and thoughtful about what you want to achieve or experience. If you want to write more of course you can!
- Include a valediction - sign off holiday greetings, sincerely, etc
- **For those of you in more than one of my classes, we are doing this assignment in all. You can use the same assignment BUT you will need 5 sentences of reflection and 4 sentences looking forward to 2025.**

The visual:

- **Drawing:** If you enjoy drawing, create a picture that relates to your message or the holiday season.
- **Photograph:** If you prefer, you can include a photograph of yourself, your family, a favorite place, or something that represents your hopes for the new year.

Grammar and Spelling: Proofread your message carefully! Ensure all sentences are complete and use correct capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Example Message:

"This year has been full of exciting adventures! I learned how to play the guitar, went on a family vacation to the beach, and made amazing new friends. My favorite thing is going to Sonic every day with my friend Sally Sue. The best part of my sophomore year in high school is my FCS class. In 2025, I hope to continue exploring new hobbies and improve my grades in math. I hope to make more wonderful memories with the people I care about. I want to travel to at least one new state during 2025.

Grading Rubric:

- **Content (20 points):**
 - Thoughtful reflections on 2024 (30 points)
 - Meaningful hopes for 2025 (30 points)
- **Grammar and Spelling (20 points):**
 - Correct sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization.
 - Accurate spelling.
- **Creativity and Presentation (15 points):**
 - Original and festive design.
 - Neatness and effort.
- **Valediction - 5 points**

Have fun creating your holiday cards!

Example of Student Work




This year has been exciting! I competed and placed at SkillsUSA. I also received the portfolio of the year award at the Tech Center. I made a few new friends this year which is a large feat for me. I got promoted to being a floor manager at work so I get to tell people what to do which had made me realize that being a boss isn't as fun as it sounds. Next year I am hopeful to graduate. I plan to go to college and live up in Oklahoma City. I also plan on producing my first feature film next year and submitting it to many film festivals. Ultimately I hope that next year I can better myself and further my career in a meaningful way.

Sincerely, Nathan



Thank you notes

In March, as seniors prepare to start sending graduation announcements, we go over the elements of a thank you note. We discuss instances when it is appropriate to send a thank you. There are many good resources, but a video I like to use is

 Etiquette Bites! How to Write a Thank-You Note

I like to purchase inexpensive thank you notes (I've gotten great deals at Amazon and Dollar General) and give one to each student. I explain that they can write them to friends, family members, neighbors, teachers, or anyone they want to thank. Students can mail them or personally deliver them. I remind the students of the importance of using correct grammar and spelling. I have them show me their notes and give them a grade for completion, but I do not read them.