

Motivating Students to Write

A Sample Dialogue

“Boy, do I have a surprise for you! Today you’re going to learn about a very important subject, and I bet none of you can guess what it is. Does anyone want to try?”

(Wait for some ideas.)

“Those are all good ideas, but actually what you’re going to learn about is *yourself*.”

(Wait for reactions.)

“Here’s the deal. With everything going on in your lives — part-time jobs, athletics, homework — sometimes you don’t have the time to examine what is important to you, what you value, what you appreciate, what ideals you hold deep in your heart... or you don’t take the time to compliment yourself for the things you do well. Don’t we all need to take the time to reflect on what is really important in our lives?”

“So how are you going to figure out what your values are, what matters to you?”

(Wait for some ideas.)

“Have you ever kept a journal or diary? If you have, you probably know that writing is a powerful tool that helps us reflect on what is meaningful to us. It helps us to figure out what is important to us. It helps us to identify who we are.”

“You all have written essays in the past, but this essay is an opportunity to write about what YOU think is important in life. This essay will be submitted to a contest. The best news is that you are going to be judged more on what you have to say than on how you say it. That is what makes this contest unique!”

“The essay you will be writing is called a *laws of life* essay.”

(Identify the contest sponsor in your community and the prizes.)

“Okay, here’s what the essay is about. Your personal *laws of life* are those principles and ideals that tell you how to live your life ... like being honest ... or trying your hardest at everything you do. Think about the people and experiences that have helped you form these laws. How many of you in the past three days have told someone whom you care about that he or she is important to you? Your essay could be written about that person’s role in helping to shape your values.”

“I WANT TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO WRITE FROM THE HEART. I know that you all have so much to say. This is your chance to be heard!”