Essay Contests for EL Writing Growth

You are in the right room if:
✓ you want to think and hear about concrete 6-12 teaching practice.
✓ you’re interested in sharing what works for you in your writing classroom.

You might prefer a different session if:
✓ you’d rather hear more about theory and academic research.
✓ you want a broader scope than 6-12 writing.
Hello!

Elissa Jones

ESOL teacher, Topeka West High School
Topeka Public Schools (Kansas USD 501)
Use a student essay contest as a bridge to success in your high school classroom. Whether they win or not, students can gain confidence, strengthen their critical reading, hone their writing voices, and practice telling their authentic stories. In this presentation you will see how you can use a contest prompt to build a lesson sequence that is engaging and motivating, setting students up for success outside the ESOL classroom.
Basically, this is teacher show and tell.
1. **Context & Vision**

Who are the learners?
What are the purposes?
Topeka, KS  population ~ 125,000  
TWHS ~ 1100  grades 9-12  30-50 ELs  
51% White, 22% Hispanic, 13% African American, 13% other | ~ 58% low SES  

L1 = Spanish  
long term English learners  
grade 10 students  
intermediate writing scores  
on KELPA 2017-2018
Some Planning Elements

Spring 2019 after KELPA
before Q4

- student voice and choice
- authentic audience and purpose
- reflective writing development
- bridging to college/scholarship essays
MIDTESOL Student Essay Contest 2019

Best K-12 ELL Essay Award

The student must be a K-12 student in good standing who is enrolled in an ELL class or program in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, or Nebraska.
2. **Process**

What did we do?
How did we do it?
Reflective writing involves introspection, plus description, narration, & evaluation.
Mentor Texts

Click for 2015 Essays

I am the opportunity

Click for 2017 Essays

Click for Bottom Line webpage
Reflective Essays -- Overcoming Challenges

Read your assigned essay and fill in the following. Be ready to share out to the class!

Title: ____________________________________________

Author: __________________________________________

What is the main problem or challenge that the author described?

Give two interesting/important details the author gave that helped you understand and relate:
What is the author’s **key reflection** -- idea about how this challenge influenced/shaped their life?

What is this author’s **future focus** -- what dreams and plans does the author have next?

These are mentor texts from other students -- not perfect, but good & successful models for you to follow. What do you notice about this essay that you like/admire? What’s good about it?
Students may choose **one** of the following topics related to ... "Bridges to Success":

- how are you helping other people?
- a challenge that you overcame
- how has learning English helped you?
- a challenge you’ve had learning English
People do not become successful without other people (such as, teachers, friends, parents, etc.) helping them. **How are you helping other people** be successful in your school, community, religious group, work, sports team, etc.?

The people who are the most successful often have had many challenges in their lives. What is a **challenge that you overcame** in the path to finding success? How did this challenge make you a more successful person?

How has **learning English helped you** to build confidence and communication skills? Explain the process and skills you have acquired (such as presentation, cross-cultural, or initiating conversation). How will this help you in your future endeavors?

As lifelong learners, we sometimes come face to face with many challenges. What is one **challenge you have had learning English** and how did you change it into a success?
1. It has helped me help my parents
2. It can help me get a job.
3. It can help me with other people
4. It can help me with school

People who overcome challenges are often more successful than others.
People who grow up with more money than others don't know how to use it. For example, they might spend it on dumb things, and later on become bankrupt. They have trouble with their money because they didn't work hard for it. They just might of got it passed on by parents or grand parents.
**Task Analysis Part 2**

**Rules and Format**

- Each student may submit only **one essay** and must be a student in good academic standing who is enrolled in an ELL class or program…
- The essay must be solely the work of the student, with limited guidance from others.

**Judging:** Essays undergo blind peer review by the MIDTESOL Awards Committee.

**Scoring:** Essay submissions will be scored based on ideas/content, organization, conventions, voice, sentence fluency, and word choice. In short, judges look for writing that is clear, creative, articulate, and logically organized.

- The essay must be **500 to 700 words in length; typed (12-point Times New Roman font) and double-spaced.**
- The essay must be submitted with a cover page, which includes...
- There should be **no identifying information**...
- Failure to abide by any of the above conditions will result in immediate disqualification.
REFLECTIVE ESSAY

TOPIC CHOICES

You need to choose one of the following topics related to this year’s MIDTESOL Conference theme of “Bridges to Success”.

Put an X in the box of the topic you choose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People do not become successful without other people (such as teachers, friends, parents, etc.) helping them. How are you helping other people be successful in your school, community, religious group, work, sports team, etc.?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Think a little bit about your organization before you get started. In a reflective essay, you usually use a pattern like this:

- **Introduction**: start with a conversational voice -- you can describe a scene, ask a question, tell a little story... and share your big idea
- **Development**: give lots of memorable details to help us understand and relate, to imagine ourselves in your position
- **Reflection**: share your feelings and thoughts about what you have told us and why it matters to you, what impact it’s had on your life
- **Future Focus**: now shift your timeline to the future -- how will this impact you going forward? what are your next steps, goals, or hopes?

Copy & paste your essay topic in the green box so you can see it easily. Then begin writing your essay in the white box below. Develop a solid paragraph for each of the organization parts listed above (**Introduction**, **development**, **reflection**, **future focus**).
ELISSA JONES
Mar 20, 2019

Remember that this is your focus. You can talk about how other people inspire you and help you, but you need to connect that to how you're helping others and making the world better.

Tell the reader about a specific time this happened: show us a scene between you and your friend. Write about it like you're describing a video you saw, and you're one of the characters.

Tell the reader more here – help us understand your aunt's impact on you, on your life, and why she motivates you: so much.

ELISSA JONES
Mar 20, 2019

I think people become more successful with other people help here is why I think this because I help my friends when they have bad grades I tell her to get her grade up, and help her with her work study, so she can get a better grade and not fail. Teachers also help students to become successful, and graduate at time even attop some people don't appreciate the help of these people.

Teacher parents schools is there's a lot of good people out there who are willing to help successful and become what you want to be in life your dream job. There's sometimes when I want to give up, but I have people who tell me and gives me motivations of keep going one of the person who gives me a lot of motivation is my aunt I've always been struggling because I don't have my parents with me, and at first when I come to US it was hard not having my mother with me, but as the years pass through I start to see my aunt like a mother and my uncle like a dad I never had. Both my uncle and aunt are really supported they always telling positive things, and also how proud they feel about me the makes me feel special so I work harder, so when I become successful and graduate I want them to thank them first for always supporting me.

For me to become more successful I feel like I need to ask for more help from my teachers and stay after school. I like doing things there because I like asking for help because I'm the type of person who ask for help I expect too much from myself, and I know I can't do everything by myself. Sometimes I do ask help but the problem is the I only ask once if I don't understand it I try finding my way around it, but when I'm really stuck and I really don't understand I ask my teachers or a friend to help me they gladly help me especially two teachers and my closest friend. My ELSO teacher helps me a lot she wants to see me graduate and be successful, so she helps me help myself and everyone who in my class by making our English speaking, reading, writing in English she's preparing us for a better future, so we can get better jobs in the future Mrs. Jones is one of the people I want to thank for helping a lot. Another person I want to thank for being there when I need support is sargent ramos he has helped me in school and in my personal life gives me motivation to keep going and not give up he once told me I was a bright pretty girl to just let myself die without achieving all of those dreams I

ELISSA JONES
Mar 21, 2019

It would be good to talk about this. What skills do you have now that you did not have when you were younger? You Show more

ELISSA JONES
Mar 21, 2019

I can turn this into your second paragraph. You can tell us more about what the process has been like. Tell Show more

ELISSA JONES
Mar 21, 2019

On the first day of high school it was hard for me. It was hard because I didn't know anyone. At all my middle school friends went to another high school. I felt alone on the uphil where the main building is. All the freshmen had to go to the gym. We sat down to meet people. I didn't talk to anyone when I had a chance.

I spent 3 years at EMS. It felt like good there because I knew who was going there. I had family like Jesus, Sebastian, Alex, and Austin. But are friends were through is that I had a lot friend like Jose, Fernando, Sam and others. But the most people I hung out was Jose and Fernando they were like family. Still till this day they are. At EMS I felt like I belong there.

One way I made friends is from playing soccer. I talk to them more than anyone else because I had practices after school. I speak Spanish with him I felt like I belong there because there was 85- 85% of Mexican people. You can make friends from classes you have. Joining the soccer team made me more successful because it made me focus on my grade not failing any classes.

ELISSA JONES
Mar 21, 2019

I like how you talk about solving your problem. You can reflect on this choice - deciding to join the team, what that was like, what you thought and felt about it.

How has learning English helped you to build confidence and communication skills? Explain the process and skills you have acquired (such as presentation, cross-cultural, or initiating conversation). How will this help you in your future endeavors?

Learning a new language has been very helpful for me and my family. Learning English in America is very important. Communicating with people is a very important thing. For people who can't speak English learning English has helped me to go with them to doctor appointments and translate for them. Learning enough was a big hard me because everyone at home would speak Spanish with the help of teachers and staying after school English would start to get a bit easier. Something that would be very helpful for me was watching TV and cartoons in English. At home we would try to speak more English to help me speak it better and to memorize words. English has also built confidence in me in I can speak with friends and teachers. Learning English has most definitely help me in many way. One of the way is being able to express myself without being helped. The second important reason is English is going to help me with my future teaching and getting into colleges. Learning English is going to help me pursue my dream. English will help me get into a good college and will help me with many other opportunities. I am very thankful with parents and family for motivating me and help me keep going. Now I am a big help to my family when they need help reading important emails and they going to doctors appointments. Now I can help my family in a big way thanks to learning English.
3. **Results**

What came out of this?
ANNOUNCING THE WINNERS OF THE 2019 MIDTESOL STUDENT ESSAY AWARDS

on May 3, 2019 in Featured. News

MIDTESOL is pleased to announce the winners of the 2019 MIDTESOL Student Essay Contest. Three winners were awarded at the K-12 level and at the Adult. Congratulations to these students who demonstrated excellence in written English.

K-12 Winners

1st: Lumiere Bisimwa $100
Sponsoring Teacher: Daniel Lekin
Liberty High School
North Liberty, Iowa

2nd: Wendy Corzo $50
Sponsoring Teacher: Elissa Jones
Topeka West High School
Topeka, Kansas

3rd: Denis Mwandjulu $25
Sponsoring Teacher: Daniel Lekin
Liberty High School
North Liberty, Iowa

MIDTESOL FEATURES

Flipgrid for the ESL Classroom
May 17, 2019

Tips for Choosing the “Best” TESOL Training/Degree Program, Part 2
April 12, 2019

Tips for Choosing the “Best” TESOL Training/Degree Program, Part 1
March 29, 2019

Combating Demoralization Among ESL Teachers
March 15, 2019

Offering Students Non-Overwhelming Authenticity – Part 2
February 8, 2019
Success takes a big part of your life growing up, not only does it make you a better person but you get to live better. You grow everyday on different types of perspectives. Reaching a goal and actually achieving it is one of your greatest accomplishments. It gives you motivation to keep going but you can’t always do it alone, having a support system will always be there for you when you need it.

Growing up I didn’t get to have the same opportunities as other kids did, not knowing English was my biggest fear. My parents are from Mexico I had the Latin culture in me. I had no friends at the time and no one to teach me English, I thought I would never learn it because I couldn’t speak it and I was scared as well. People started laughing at me and they looked at me different during school and recess.

I was just like everyone else with the same rights. I looked different because of my background but I was born in United States. I talked to my parents about the situation, letting them know I feel left out because of not knowing a language. My mom got to reach to someone, teachers got involved and worked with me alone. It was difficult at times, I would cry often but I had my mom by my side and she made me stronger.

I felt alone at school and afraid to keep going on because I was actually getting it. I was to the point where I thought none of this will matter, it will still make me feel the same but I wasn’t alone. I got to meet a teacher that wanted to work with me and that’s how I got into ELL. I met kids who where like me too I wasn’t the only one struggling with English. That made me keep going I started to see that the kids with me started to get better at English.

I made new friends and I got better at English and also having someone to speak 2 languages with. I’m really glad with all the types of accomplishments I have made up to this point in life. I worked my hardest to keep growing everyday and keeping other problems away. I would take small books home and read them and try to comprehend afterwards. I was always very happy to actually understand a conversation in English. I was able to start helping my mom to translate things and help her with a little bit of English too!

I’m still learning English I’m not a professional yet, but that’ll be my goal. English is hard especially not growing around it. I’m still growing and making myself work harder, I tend to set my goals for my future now. I plan to go to college and become a nurse, being able to speak 2 languages will give me much more opportunities than those who don’t. I’m very blessed to have all my support system because if it wasn’t without them, I wouldn’t be here at this point.
“Authentic Audience”

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How have you successfully used...

› writing contests?
› authentic audience?
› assignment choice?
› student voice?