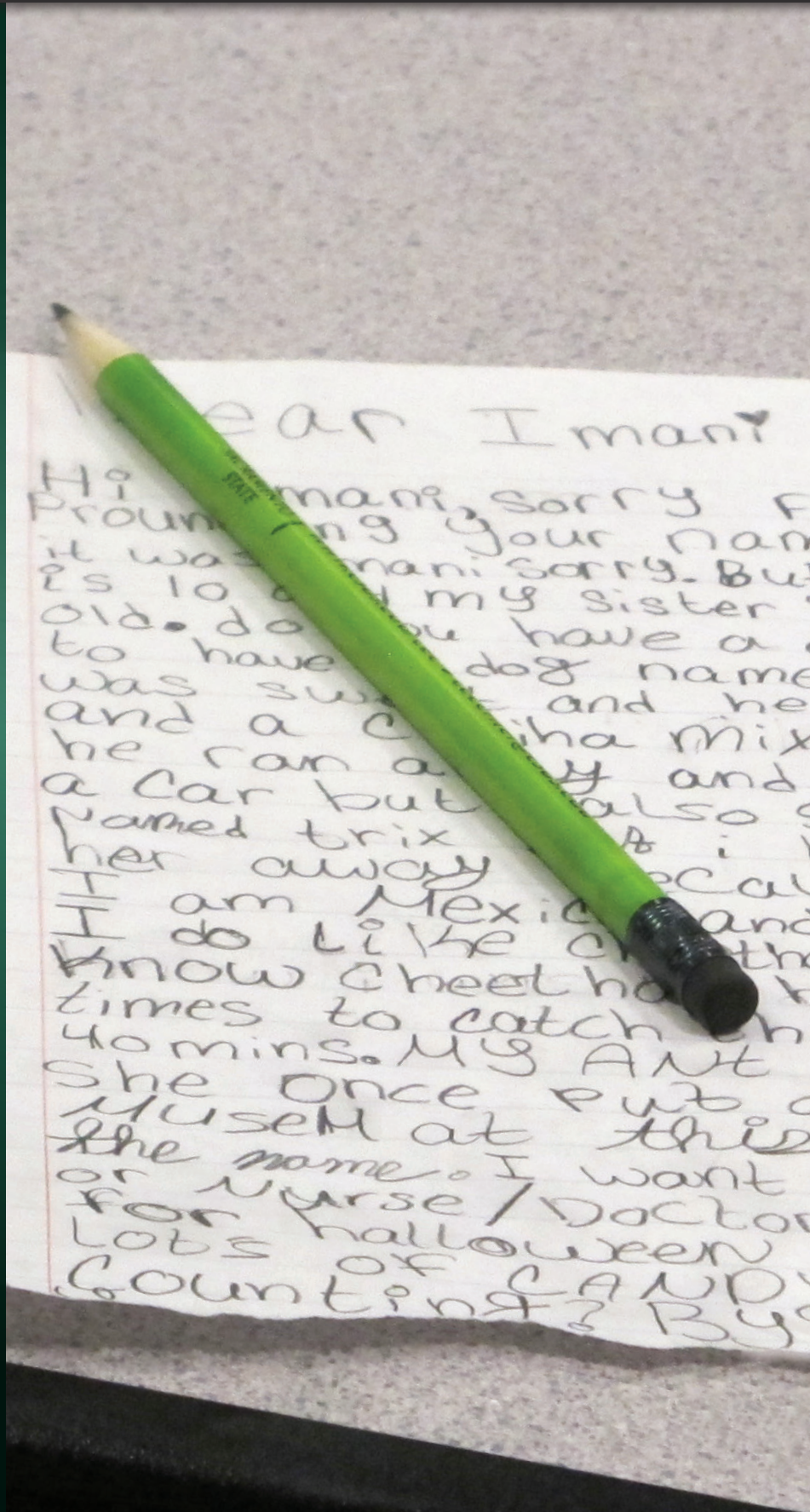




Community
Engagement Center
writing Partners



SACRAMENTO
STATE
Redefine the Possible



PART I – INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW:

Writing Partners @ Sac State (WP) is a program of the Community Engagement Center and a service learning experience that provides Sac State students an opportunity to teach and learn through a letter exchange with students from elementary schools in the Sacramento region. Service Learning engages students and faculty in experiences that:

- enable students to enhance their learning while engaging in hands-on service in the community;
- provide service that benefits the community partner and the student;
- engage students in reflection and critical thinking that link learning from service to learning in the classroom; and
- promote social and civic responsibility by relating service experiences to issues of public concern and to the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.

Since 2005, Sac State students have participated in the Writing Partners letter exchange program that culminates in their elementary-school students visiting Sac State to see what life is like on a college campus. More than 3,000 university and elementary-school students have participated in the program since it began.

Writing Partners @ Sac State is designed to foster mentor-like relationships between college and elementary-school students through literacy and it was created from Write to Succeed, Inc., a program designed by graduate students in Rhetoric and Composition and an elementary-school teacher.

WRITING PARTNERS @ SAC STATE:

Writing Partners @ Sac State began in the summer of 2005 in conjunction with the Community Engagement Center. Former English Department faculty member Dr. Catherine Gabor, also a co-creator of the original Writing Partners Program, piloted WP with one of her classes, and the CEC has since been involved by facilitating partnerships between Sac State faculty and elementary-school teachers. For the past 10 years, faculty across campus – Nursing, Teacher Education, EOP, First Year Experience (FYE) Seminars, Composition – have incorporated this pedagogical tool into their

courses. Many First Year Experience (FYE) faculty have included WP because it works well with the overall FYE curriculum that focuses on “becoming an educated person”. WP is also a great first “Service Learning” experience for college students because it introduces them to the idea of working in the community and participating in a reciprocal activity – a letter exchange – that results in enhancing the literacy skills of both college and elementary-school students.

GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

We encourage you to include information about “what” the Writing Partners program is all about and also include these goals and learning outcomes in your course syllabus.

The overall goals of Writing Partners @ Sac State include:

- building and/or strengthening literacy;
- enhancing knowledge of writing through a letter exchange with a real audience;
- connecting Sacramento State students with students in K-12 in the Sacramento region;
- using this letter exchange to help Sac State students articulate and reinforce their identities as ‘college students’;
- building relationships through writing; and
- encouraging elementary-school students to begin to prepare for college and see themselves as college eligible.

BY THE END OF THE SEMESTER, SACRAMENTO STATE STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE:

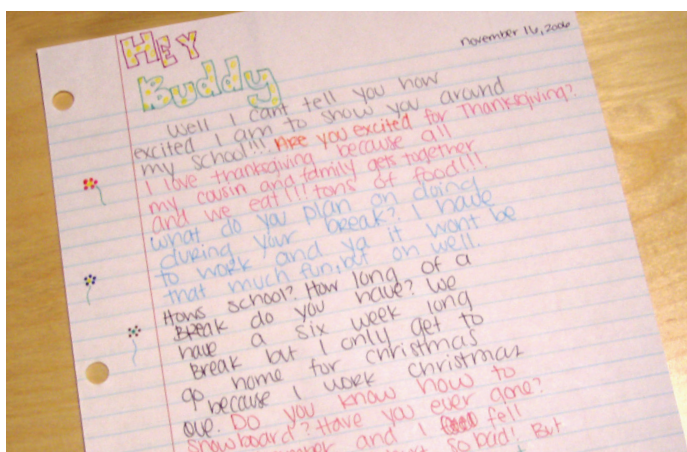
- the ability to compose, draft and write letters;
- the ability to analyze the audience;
- the importance of tone and “voice” as a writer;
- the ability to use various writing strategies in terms of drafting a letter (e.g., use of analogy, amplification, hyperbole, metaphor, etc.); and
- the understanding of their participation in this activity as having an impact on young people in their community.

HOW DOES WRITING PARTNERS WORK?

Writing Partners matches university-student writers with elementary-school student writers in a collaborative letter exchange. Through Writing Partners, students learn that writing has the power to help them make connections across communities and within their community.

Unlike pen pals, Writing Partners incorporates **academic and social learning goals, and intentionally helps foster literacy skills.**

Both university and elementary-school students are asked to think about more than just the basic letter format and to consider how to build relationships through writing, basic document design, and the nature of the audience. Writing Partners enhances creative and critical thinking skills and fosters a sense of authority in students as writers and as members of the campus community.



PART II – WRITING PARTNERS PLANNING LOGISTICS OUTLINE:

	Time Frame	University Faculty	Elementary School Teachers
Step 1: Connect with the CEC	Pre-Semester	Faculty, teachers, and/or administrators should contact CEC Partnership/Program Coordinator to express interest in the program and to schedule an introduction with a partner teacher at 916.278.4610 or CEC@csus.edu	
Step 2: Meet partner teacher	Pre-Semester	The CEC will facilitate an introduction between faculty and elementary school teachers to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share contact information (email, phone numbers, mailing address for letter exchange) • Review academic calendars to plan dates for letter exchanges (generally 2-3 per semester) • Exchange student rosters (first-names only) • Mention any student needs or preferences (i.e. language issues, learning challenges) • Share course outlines and/or syllabi • Determine scope, focus, and goals of the letter exchange • Determine which class will write the initial letters • Develop a system for the letter exchanges (in person, pick up/drop off locations, etc.) • Discuss end of the semester event (ideas for the visit and set a date for the event) 	
Step 3: Develop Course Materials/Planning	Pre-Semester	Include the following in the course syllabus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Partners goals and learning outcomes • Explanation of Writing Partners as part of a service learning curriculum • Letter exchange dates in the course calendar • Define the Writing Partners activities as course assignments and the degree to which these assignments count toward the students' overall grade • If needed, include a time for the CEC Partnership/Program Coordinator to visit class early in the semester to answer questions about WP 	Discuss involvement in Writing Partners with the principal/administrator to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure funding and make reservations for bus travel to Sac State for the end of semester event.
Step 4: Implementation Logistics	During the semester up to the 8th or 9th Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce students to the project and assign each student a writing partner (students may have to write to more than one elementary school partner) • Establish ground rules • Have students complete Writing Partners pre-survey during first 2 weeks of semester • Students should draft letters integrating information about themselves and about the course (if relevant) • CSUS students typically write the first letter • Students should use basic materials such as paper and pens/pencils (materials not provided by the CEC) • Clarify dates for exchange and how to exchange with the partner teacher (contact CEC with difficulties) • Collect letters from students (consider requiring students to submit two copies of the letter for record keeping purposes) • Thoroughly read the letters before exchanging them with the partner students • Maintain consistent contact with the partner teacher to discuss problems, questions, or concerns • Finalize end of semester event date and headcount of elementary school students for site visit materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce student to the project and assign each student a writing partner • Model letter-writing techniques and discuss aspects of a typical letter • Establish ground rules • Have students begin drafting letters in response to college writing partners to meet deadline for letter exchange • Collect letters from students (consider requiring students to submit two copies of the letter for record keeping purposes) • Thoroughly read the letters before exchanging them with the partner students • Maintain consistent contact with the partner teacher to discuss problems, questions, concerns • Finalize end of semester event date and head count of elementary school students with partner teacher and the CEC
Step 5: Planning the end of semester event/site visit	Roughly the middle to the end of the Semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify scheduling conflicts for CSUS students for the end of semester event – help students to make scheduling arrangements to attend • Help students to create the campus visit (students should take lead and they should begin planning as early in the semester as possible) • Partner with elementary teacher to understand students' interests (what to see on campus) • Help students consider where to meet with the partner students, make room reservations, etc. • Contact CEC (one week prior to visit) to arrange transportation logistics including parking permits, bus drop off point, etc. • Have students complete Writing Partners post-survey before finals week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with CSUS faculty to understand students' interests (what to see on campus) • Arrange bus reservation • Arrange permissions for campus visits • Arrange for chaperones • Arrange lunches for students prior to the visit

PARTNERS PROGRAM PLANNING PROCESS

University Faculty	Elementary-School Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce students to the project and announce who their Writing Partners will be. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Emphasize their very important role as both authors and readers. » Be sure to talk with your students about the elementary school (e.g., location, socioeconomic status, its history, etc.); and also the potential impact that your students have as role models. » Engage in audience analysis as a class and determine what is appropriate tone, voice and subject matter for the age group with which they will be corresponding. » Have students brainstorm topics for the letters. Depending on content, students can write about their experiences regarding the major and/or college life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce students to the project and announce who their Writing Partners will be. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Emphasize their very important role as both authors and readers. If these will be graded assignments, clarify for students what the criteria will be for compliance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify for students the degree to which the Writing Partners assignments will count toward students' grade. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » You may choose to grade the letters individually or as part of a larger writing portfolio. » In general, we recommend that these be graded assignments with clear goals and evaluation criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model letter-writing techniques and discuss aspects of a typical letter. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Salutation, date, body paragraphs, conclusion, name and signature; might also discuss visual components and effects of stationary versus lined paper, graphics and drawings versus white space. » As the correspondence progresses, sometimes students become excited and include drawings and illustrations in their letters.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish ground rules. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Students should not trade email addresses or attempt to meet each other outside of class. » Because of liability concerns, no photographs should be exchanged and students should not make any attempts to connect through Social Media -- FaceBook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish ground rules. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Students should not share email addresses or attempt to meet each other outside of class. The relationship should remain solely through writing. » Because of liability concerns, no photographs should be exchanged and students should not make any attempts to connect through Social Media -- FaceBook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students draft response to initial letters. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Encourage students to share their letters (and their partners' letters in class) to heighten class enthusiasm and provide for revision strategies and audience analysis skills to be practiced. » Clarify if letters must be a specific length. For example, requiring 8.5 x 11 size paper, two pages typed and double-spaced of text (not including visuals) or 3 pages if handwritten. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students begin drafting letters to college writing partner in order to meet deadline for first letter exchange. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Prompt students to draft initial letters integrating information from their interests and inspirations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have student turn in their original letter plus one copy, unsealed and unfolded. You will forward the originals and use the copies to grade from. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » <u>Be sure to read all the letters before forwarding them to the elementary-school students. Please note any inappropriate language and/or content. You will want to have the student revise his or her letter before sending.</u> » Set clear deadlines so if there are revisions needed, it will not delay the letter exchange process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After collecting and reading student letters, make copies to create a record of student correspondences. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » <u>Be sure to read all the letters before forwarding them to the college students. Please note any inappropriate language and/or content. You will want to have the student revise his or her letter before sending.</u> » It is an interesting and worthwhile opportunity to see student interest and writing enthusiasm grow over the course of the correspondence. » These files are also helpful as assessment tools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of semester event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Once end of semester date is set, reserve room(s) at University Union or The WELL as early as possible. Room availability toward the end of the semester can be challenging due to a high number of events. » No photography of their elementary-school partners is allowed. Selfies with students are also prohibited. » Students are encouraged to bring their lunch since no food will be provided for health (potential allergies) and safety reasons (legal liability). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of semester event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Once end of semester date is set, confirm bus reservations, coordinate field trip forms and chaperones, etc. Please let the Community Engagement Center know at least two weeks prior to your event if you will need parking permits for the bus and/or chaperones. » Please note that college students cannot be left alone with elementary-school students at any time. Teacher and/or chaperone must be present. » In terms of food, students are encouraged to bring their lunch since no food will be provided for health (potential allergies) and safety reasons (legal liability).

PART III – WRITING PARTNERS: GOALS, SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Remember your audience—you are writing to a fifth or sixth grade student. Your subject matter and language should be appropriate to your reader.
- In participating in this project, you represent Sacramento State.
- Your purpose in writing is to get to know your writing partner and to

SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

All letters should be 1-2 pages long. They may be hand-written or typed.

- Your first letter will be a letter of introduction. You may also share some of your experiences and reflections about Sacramento State with your writing partner. If you are starting the conversation, feel free to ask questions to which your partner might respond.
- You may decorate the letter and the envelope. Be creative.
- In writing about your experiences or interests, develop your ideas fully. Talk about “why” and “how.” Move beyond simple statements like “I recently saw the ‘The Lego Movie,’ and thought it was good.”

TIPS FOR WRITING TO THE ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL STUDENTS

You will be writing to fifth and sixth graders, some of whom may have challenges with reading and writing. They are 10 to 12 years old and they enjoy reading and writing about their favorite things. Some ideas of what they like to talk about include:

- Sports, especially basketball and football (Kings and Raiders)
- Music
- *Television shows and movies
- Animals
- Food and candy
- Games, especially cards, bingo, kickball, basketball, recess games and video games

model some of the academic and personal behaviors that are appropriate to becoming an educated person and a college graduate.

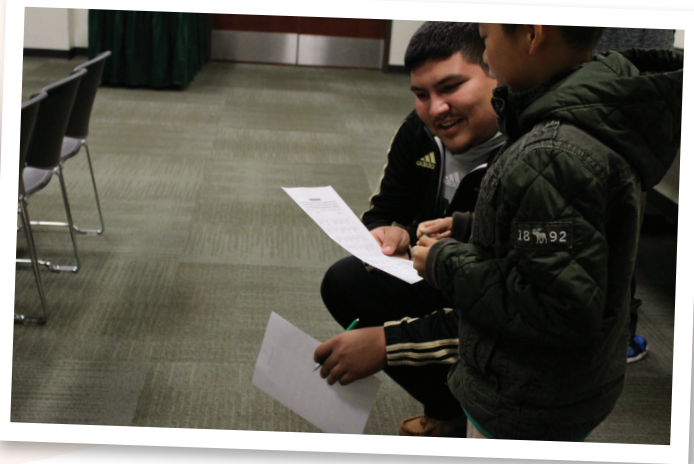
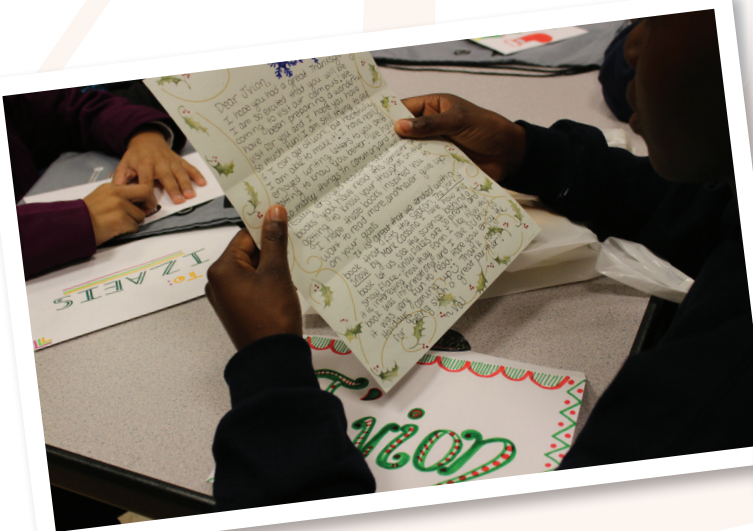
- **No contact between you and your elementary-school writing partner outside of the project is permitted.** Please do not exchange phone numbers, email addresses, or social media information, e.g., FaceBook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.

Tell your writing partner a little bit about the movie and explain why you thought it was good.

- Be responsive in your second and third letters to what your writing partner has written to you. Ask follow-up questions, offer words of encouragement, recall similar situations from your elementary years, etc.
- One of your last letters should include an invitation to the Writing Partners @ Sac State culminating event.

- Clothes, mostly sports related
- Books, easy to read like Diary of a Wimpy Kid, or Goosebumps
- Drawing, mostly cars and cartoon characters
- Celebrities – they LOVE anything to do with celebrities

**Please remember to be age-appropriate in your discussions of entertainment – music, celebrities, T.V. and movies.*



PART III – WRITING PARTNERS: GOALS, SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

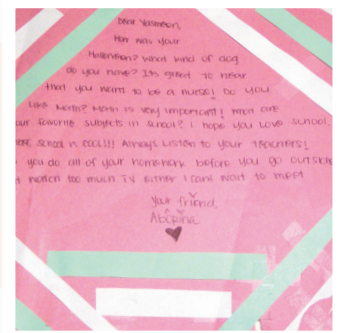
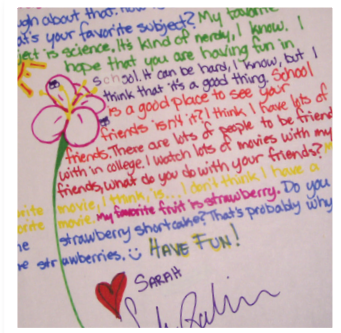
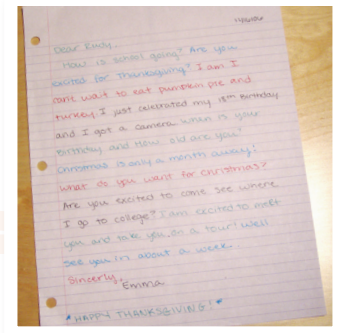
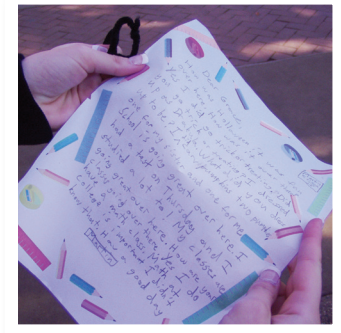
IDEAS TO WRITE ABOUT:

Tell them about your college experience so far, especially your first day or first week experiences.

- Did you have first day jitters?
- Tell them about the process of applying for college and remind them that you had to start thinking about applying for college while still in high school.
- Talk about your favorite classes in high school, what led you to choose Sac State, what you are interested in studying at Sac State, and tell about your professors.
- You may want to talk about what you wanted to grow up to be when you were a child, and how college is going to make that dream a reality.
- Talk about your job if you have one, and how you get to campus.
- How much time do you spend in class?
- If you attend summer school, talk about that.

On a personal note, the students would like to hear about you.

- What kinds of movies, sports, TV shows, games and books do you like?
- Ask the students lots of questions so that they can use these questions as guidelines in writing their own letters to you.



DO'S AND DON'TS

DO

- Use simple print to write the letters.
- Draw pictures, use colors, attach stickers to the letters.
- Talk about your transition to college and what you want to be.
- Encourage studying, especially reading and math. Remind them how important these skills are.
- Make sure to be present during the end of semester visit.

DON'T

- Share your home address or private information about yourself (ALL letters will be reviewed by your professor and the elementary-school teacher before your elementary-school partner receives them).
- Talk about mature topics (e.g. movies with a PG rating, dangerous activities, foul language). This rule also applies if the student brings up these topics.
- Write in cursive, or use complex wording.
- Be alone with your elementary-school Writing Partner. On field trip day, stay in a group.

WRITING PARTNERS CAMPUS VISIT IDEAS

- » Campus Tours
- » Residential Halls
- » Arboretum
- » Library
- » Scheduled Campus Activities
- » Outdoor Activities (Weather Permitting)
- » Tea Garden
- » Class Visits
- » Guy West Bridge
- » The Well
- » Guest Speakers
- » Museum/Art Exhibits
- » Scavenger Hunt
- » Strawberry Shortcake

QUOTES FROM TEACHERS AND STUDENTS:

ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL TEACHERS:

“I enjoyed seeing my students read closely and want to write. This enthusiasm for writing carried over to our classwork, so our collective writing improved as a result of our participation in the Writing Partners program.”

“The kids really applied their communication skills to an authentic audience. They seemed to better understand how letter writing works. They did hand written letters and now they have a tangible record of the experience.”

One elementary-school teacher noticed that one “very reserved English learner student engaged in dialogue with her writing partner for an extended period of time. The Writing Partners program allowed her to express herself through written and oral communication in a less intimidating but still very academic environment.”

“My students don't have parents or family who encourage them to think about going to college. I am so happy that we can give them this experience to help them see what their future can be.”

SACRAMENTO STATE FACULTY:

“I noticed that my Sac State students really got excited when they received their letters from the 5th graders – more than I expected. I think they felt like they were really making a difference with prospective students.”

“My students always bond quickly with their writing partners. They greatly enjoy the program and the 5th graders love it too, especially meeting their partners and touring the campus.”

According to one Sac State faculty, the students enjoyed “the satisfaction of giving something back, of facilitating an extremely life changing program for all involved. I could see the light in the eyes of my students and the 5th graders. I am proud to be involved.”

“I can't say enough about the impact of the program on both populations. The 5th graders were inspired and hopeful about attending college and the college students were inspired about paying forward their own experiences. This encouraged them to reflect on their own successes and the pride they felt by all was very valuable.”

SACRAMENTO STATE STUDENTS:

“Because of my service learning experience in the Writing Partners program, I am much more open-minded to becoming a teacher - it has been something that has always been in the back of my head but this has really opened my eyes and is a possible career field option. This program was really fun and exciting to get to know the future of this world and society. I am very happy that I did do this because this experience will be one for the books and I learned that service learning can be just as easy as guiding another student and mentoring and answering questions and it turned out to be a lot of fun. I would do this again. It was a great experience.”

“Because of my service learning experience in the Writing Partners program, I am a better person. [After] giving a tour to the

kids, it has made me think of being an orientation leader. I really enjoyed my time. Being able to send and receive cards from the fifth graders has given me the opportunity to sit back and think of my dreams and goals. If anything, I learned so much with the kids, and I truly would do this again.”

According to two students, they are now “aware of inner city school students and their struggles in nearby areas” and “more confident with working with people. Not only did I make connections with kids, but they really made me feel good within myself. Their letters were very inspiring, both my writing partners had big dreams and goals.”

HISTORY OF THE CEC

- Since 1996, approximately 25,000+ students have worked with the CEC to contribute at least 1 million hours of volunteer work at more than 300 community partner sites.
- In a typical year, more than 60+ campus classes incorporate a Service Learning component.
- More than 3,000 students participate in service-related activities and contribute approximately 60,000 hours of service each year.
- The economic impact of this labor over the past 20 years is valued at close to \$25 million. Yet, the impact of this work on the students who engaged in it, and whose agency or organization benefited from it, is priceless.

MISSION:

To engage members of the Sacramento State campus through their educational experiences to become aware of and respond to local and global community concerns through Service Learning, Volunteerism and Academic Internships.

VISION:

To create a campus climate that promotes community awareness and involvement and supports students to become civically minded graduates who are actively engaged in making a difference both locally and globally.



**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
CENTER**

AT SAC STATE

connected. engaged. committed.

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Community Engagement Center (CEC)

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SACRAMENTO

Community Engagement Center