

# Hamburger Writing Model

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*Francis Mallory Elementary School  
Hampton, Virginia*

Parents and students sat at a table filled with buns, beef patties, ketchup, mustard, pickles and more, while a teacher gave instructions on how to assemble the ingredients. But they weren't preparing for careers in the fast-food industry. These families at Francis Mallory Elementary School were actually learning how to write an effective essay with help from the hamburger. The dinner-time workshop, organized by the school's Title I reading specialists, gave parents a heads-up on how writing is taught, and how they might help their children at home.

The Hamburger Writing Model gives students a mental image of a well-organized essay. The topic sentence and conclusion are the top and bottom of the essay, just as the bun halves frame the burger. The meat of the essay, the three supporting ideas, is in the middle with explanatory sentences, played here by the condiments.

In this hands-on demonstration, parents and students worked together to build an effective essay and a better burger at the same time. The Title I specialists gave out topic sentences and explanations and diagrams of how the model works. As parents and students completed each segment of the essay, they received corresponding parts of the real sandwich. Finishing the essay meant they could eat.

The PTA provided the food and the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) publicized the event. The school also offered carryout materials—minus the food—for families who could not attend.

Parents indicated they enjoyed the unique workshop and felt prepared to support their children's writing skills at home. The ATP intends to sponsor another Hamburger Writing Model workshop and hopes to attract more parents this time.

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