
THE INVERTED PYRAMID

In this week's Teacher's Corner, students will work on understanding the parts of a news story. This week's activity uses a graphic organizer about the *inverted pyramid*. The inverted pyramid is a journalistic writing style that places the important information at the beginning of the news story and more general information at the end of the story.

LEVEL

Intermediate to Advanced

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Reading, speaking (primary focus); listening (secondary focus)

GOALS

During this activity students will:

- learn the structure of a news article
- practice listening and note-taking skills

MATERIALS

- Teacher: whiteboard/chalkboard, markers or chalk, computer with speakers, printer
- Students: pencils or pens, notebooks or writing paper

PREPARATION

1. Read through all the materials carefully.
2. Read the article [Experimental School in California Has No Homework](#) and listen to the audio version of the story.
3. Print out the *Inverted Pyramid* worksheet in Appendix 1. Make enough copies so that each pair of students in class has a worksheet.
4. Print out the news article [Experimental School in California Has No Homework](#) in Appendix 2. Make enough copies so that each pair of students has a copy.

ACTIVITY PART ONE: PRE-READING ACTIVITY

1. Begin the class by telling the students they will read a news article about a school with no grade levels and no homework. Ask the class, "What would a school with no grade levels or no homework look like?" Have the students do a think, pair, share.
 - a. Have the students think about their own answer to the question. (2 minutes)
 - b. Next, have them form pairs. Students should share their answer with their partner. (2 minutes)
 - c. Finally, call on pairs to share their answers with the entire class. (4 minutes)

2. Next, instruct the students to get out a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Play the audio version of the article [Experimental School in California Has No Homework](#). As the students listen to the article, have them take notes on the information in the article.
3. After listening to the article, have the students form pairs. In pairs, have the students compare the notes they took about the article.

Have the pairs share their notes with the class. The goal in this part of the activity is to understand what details the students understood in the article, so answers may differ among the pairs. This is okay.

ACTIVITY PART TWO: READING THE STORY

1. Begin this section of the activity by having the students form pairs.
2. Next, give each pair a copy of the article [Experimental School in California Has No Homework](#) found in Appendix 1.
3. Have the pairs read the article. As students read, circulate around the room to help students with any vocabulary questions they may have.

ACTIVITY PART THREE: UNDERSTANDING THE STRUCTURE

1. Once the students have completed the reading, give each pair a copy of the *Inverted Pyramid* worksheet in Appendix 2.
2. Have the students work in pairs to answer the questions on the worksheet.
 - a. Note: The worksheet has four sections that match the sections of the news article.
 - i. **The lead:** This is the text between the main title and the first subtitle.
 - ii. **The Facts:** Most of the major facts of the story can be found under the subtitle **No Homework**.
 - iii. **Important Details:** The subheading **Personalized learning** contains the important details of the story that explain the information in **the facts** section of the story.
 - iv. **General Information:** The subheading **Work in progress** contains the general information about the story. This information adds extra details, which are not critical to understanding the story.
3. Once the pairs have completed the worksheet, have them join another pair to form a small group. Have the pairs compare their answers to the worksheet questions. Once all the small groups have compared their answers, have them share their answers with the entire class.

For more on journalism vocabulary, check out [The Lighter Side – Journalism Crossword!](#)

Appendix 1: News Story

Experimental School in California Has No Homework

Khan Lab School is bringing back the one-room model to teach young students in Mountain View, California.

The school is a laboratory for an experimental kind of learning.

Silicon Valley, known for its technology companies, is also the birthplace of the school.

Twelve-year-old Mishal Junaid loves the Khan Lab School's untraditional methods.

"When I wake up in the morning, I want to wake up, unlike my last school where I want to sleep in and not go to school..."

Junaid and her sister's reactions to the school surprise their parents.

The girls' father, Junaid Qurashi, told VOA: "Our children, they love going to school, to the point that even if they are tired or sick or have the **flu**," they will not stay home from school. "To the point that we worry why kids come home so happy. Are they really learning things?"

No homework

Students ages 5 to 15 attend the experimental Khan Lab School. It has no **grade** levels and no homework. The students are in school from 8:30 in the morning until six o'clock at night. And, the school is open all year long, with small breaks here and there.

Nine-year-old Holly Thompson enjoys going there.

"You get to choose what you learn, and it's not just a teacher hands you a worksheet and tells you what to do. You get to set your own goals. You have a schedule. You go to different classes."

The school is the idea of Salman Khan, the founder of Khan Academy — famous for its educational videos. The videos are available on the internet free of charge and have millions of users around the world.

Khan said he started Khan Lab School because he thinks the current education system has problems. He hopes to create a better learning model.

"Where I see the future going is somewhat revisiting the past. There's a lot of really good things about the one-room schoolhouse that you might have had in the rural areas that you still have today in a lot of places where you have mixed-age classrooms..."

He said this system lets the older students take responsibility and help younger students. That means the younger children get a lot of help. They get the help of the teacher and the older students.

Personalized learning



Khan said students also learn the study material at their own speed through videos. And, they get more attention through one-on-one discussions with teachers. They also learn by doing projects.

Malika Junaid noted a change in her daughters after they began attending the school. She said that, after six months, they seemed sure of their abilities. They are now not afraid to talk to adults and other students and now they always want to help.

The school's director, Dominic Liechti, said this way of learning better prepares students for the future. He said the duties of a teacher need to change from leading the class to being someone who guides students in their learning, and provides individual support. A teacher is also a life-long learner, he said, not just someone who gives presentations.

Liechti also said the role of students is becoming more creative.

Work in progress

Salman Khan describes his Khan Lab School as a work in progress.

"Like a R-and-D lab [research and development lab], the first time that you make the drug or the first time that you make the material," Khan said. "It's not **scalable** yet, but you need to make it the first time and say 'that's a pretty strong material.' And then you can think about how do you make it so that it's more affordable and more scalable."

Dominic Liechti says the community in the Mountain View area has been open to this new method to educating students.

"Especially in Silicon Valley because that's the culture that you can start something," he said. "You can **pioneer** something, and people join that movement, and I feel that amongst my staff."

Liechti says he has that same feeling amongst his students and members of the community.

Elizabeth Lee wrote this story for VOANews.com. Alice Bryant adapted her report for Learning English. George Grow was the editor.

Words in This Story

flu - n. the flu, also called influenza, is common disease that is used by a virus. It causes high body temperature, weakness, and breathing problems

grade - n. a level of study that is completed by a student during one year

scalable - adj. easy to make larger or more powerful

pioneer - n. a person who helps create or develop new ideas or methods

Appendix 2: Inverted Pyramid

Directions: Read the article [Experimental School in California Has No Homework](#). After reading the article, answer the questions in the graphic organizer below.

