

COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY GUIDES

Grades K-6

Read Alouds | Shared Reading | Small Group Reading Instruction
| Vocabulary | Fluency | **Writing** | Phonological Awareness |
Phonics | Oral Language | Independent Reading



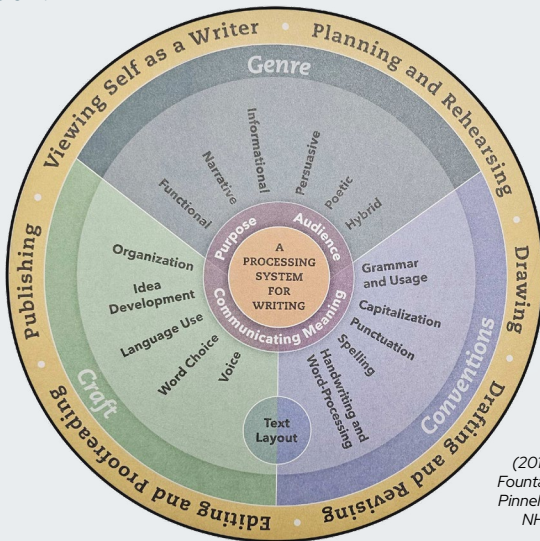
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OVERVIEW

Writing is a fundamental skill. It is important for students to develop a foundation in writing so they can communicate, represent, and share their ideas. Effective instruction in through writing processes and conventions, and adequate time to write to apply what they have learned are key in helping students gain confidence in their abilities.

Writing can serve a number of purposes: communicating a message, to entertain, persuade, or inform, respond to others and share thinking. Modeling and guided practice are essential to writing instruction so that students can generate ideas, organize their writing, hone craft skills, explore genres, and apply conventions in authentic text creation.



CURRICULUM CORRELATIONS

While writing instruction has the potential to correlate to several Organizing Ideas, for this resource the ones with the strongest correlations are Writing and Conventions.

Writing Organizing Idea

Ideas and information can be articulated accurately and imaginatively through the use of writing processes and an understanding of the author's craft.

- **Kindergarten Learning Outcome:** Children experiment with written expression of ideas and information.

- **Grade 1 Learning Outcome:** Students create messages through the application of writing processes.
- **Grade 2 Learning Outcome:** Students create and enhance ideas and information by applying a variety of writing processes.
- **Grade 3 Learning Outcome:** Students investigate writing and research processes that support informed written expression.
- **Grade 4 Learning Outcome:** Students construct and organize text to share perspectives and develop creative expression.
- **Grade 5 Learning Outcome:** Students enhance the accuracy and artistry of expression through creative and critical thinking processes.
- **Grade 6 Learning Outcome:** Students create texts that reflect personal voice and style through creative and critical thinking processes.

Conventions

Understanding grammar, spelling, and punctuation makes it easier to communicate clearly, to organize thinking, and to use language for desired effects.

- **Kindergarten Learning Outcome:** Children develop appropriate grammar in oral language and experiment with spelling and punctuation in written messages.
- **Grade 1 Learning Outcome:** Students examine and apply use of grammar, spelling, and punctuation in oral and written language.
- **Grade 2 Learning Outcome:** Students examine and use grammar, spelling, and punctuation in a variety of contexts to develop effective communication.
- **Grade 3 Learning Outcome:** Students investigate and demonstrate how conventions support written communication.
- **Grade 4 Learning Outcome:** Students examine and apply conventions to develop effective written communication.
- **Grade 5 Learning Outcome:** Students apply and experiment with conventions to enhance precision and artistry of communication.

- **Grade 6 Learning Outcome:** Students apply and analyze conventions that support accuracy or enhance creative expression.

KEY INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENTS

One way to structure writing in the classroom is by implementing a Writer's Workshop model. This framework provides a predictable structure for writing instruction and practice. The components of Writer's Workshop are:

- Mini Lesson
- Independent Writing
 - Small Group Instruction
 - Conferencing
- Sharing



KEY INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENTS

Mini Lessons are typically taught to the whole group (e.g. carpet time in front of a whiteboard or chart paper). The instruction focuses on an identified area of need or KUSP from the curriculum. These lessons usually involve the teacher doing the following:

- Activating students' prior knowledge
- Directly instructing a skill
- Modeling the skill (e.g., shared/interactive writing)
- Engaging the students in discussing or practicing the skill
- Connecting the skill to other learned writing skills

Independent Writing takes up most of the Writer's Workshop time. Students need frequent and

predictable periods of time set aside to write.

Small Group Instruction is an opportunity for the teacher to work intensively with a small group of students who share similar learning needs while the rest of the class is working on independent writing. These small group lessons help scaffold learners at all levels. Small group instruction gives students the opportunity to review a recently taught writing skill in a small-group setting and then to apply the skill through independent writing. A lesson usually comes about when a teacher determines that a group of students could benefit from further support in a certain area.

Small group instruction should foster development of the writing process, author's craft, and conventions in a structured, layered way that includes mentor texts and related instruction. Small groups are typically organized by student developmental levels.

Strategy Groups are similar to guided writing groups, but in this approach, a group of students from across development levels are linked together for instruction on a specific writing skill or strategy.

The teacher

- may focus group work on developing writing skills and strategies (forming paragraphs, etc), on using writing as a tool for inquiry, on learning to write in different genres, on the writing process;
- may form small temporary (usually short term) strategy groups of students that meet to discuss aspects of writing and learn more about the writer's craft and conventions;
- selects strategy groups that are flexible and are based on what the teacher learns as he/she reads the student's writing;
- meets with guided writing/strategy groups several times per week as needed;
- plans for students to work individually for most of the period, then has selected students move into the group for 7-12 min of small group instructional time.

The **student's role** is to work on their own pieces of writing during independent and guided writing times integrating research and key content as directed.

Students learn to evaluate their own work and participate in peer feedback processes.

Conferencing occurs while other students are working on their independent writing. It allows the teacher to engage in a conversation with one student writer, to focus on the writer's needs and to help them solve problems related to their particular piece of writing. A writing conference should focus on one aspect of their writing and provide just enough help to keep the student moving forward. It should last approximately 2-10 minutes; it is not the time to edit or revise an entire piece of writing.

Sharing is a short time at the end of the workshop in which we affirm the learning from the day and the work students have done. Students may share a short part of their work from the day with a partner, group of four, or in a symphony share.

Occasionally, we may have longer blocks of time to celebrate the work students have done over a period of time. This is a more extended share time in which students can share their entire piece with other students asking questions and offering feedback.

SNAPSHOT

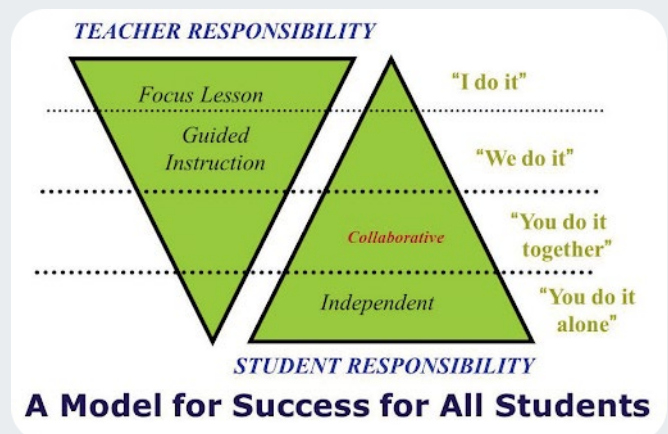
Writing instruction should follow a gradual release of responsibility model. It is an instructional framework that has been documented as an effective approach for improving literacy achievement (Fisher & Frey, 2007), reading comprehension (Lloyd, 2004), and literacy outcomes for English language learners (Kong & Pearson, 2003). It emphasizes instruction that mentors students into becoming capable thinkers and learners when handling the tasks with which they have not yet developed expertise (Buehl, 2005).

It is not uncommon for teachers to rush past the stages of 'we do' and 'you do', but this is a prime opportunity for students to develop and refine their writing and editing skills before they are expected to use them independently.

This model is not linear; teachers may cycle back to focus lessons and guided instruction when students need additional support. There should be continual flow between guided writing instruction (skills taught),

coaching, conferring and goal-setting (individualized support) and independent writing (skills practiced).

Nancy Frey in this video briefly describes how to implement the Gradual Release of Responsibility model during writing instruction: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwB1qX9PK-w>



Source: www.epd-mh.com/mhpd_assets/Effective_Use_Douglas_Fisher.pdf

CONSIDERATIONS - PLANNING TIPS - CLASSROOM DESIGN

- Writing should be a regular, ongoing component of literacy instruction as opposed to a random event that takes place from time to time in an isolated manner. In order to maximize teaching time, writing instruction should support learning across the curriculum.
- Post or share exemplars of student writing so students can see what is expected of them and compare their writing to the exemplars.
- Consider flexible classroom seating options to honour different writing styles including collaborative writing/peer editing tables and quiet spaces.
- Make available a wide range of writing tools: clipboards, pencils/gel pens, graphic organizers, different types of paper, staplers, folders, reference books and writers' notebooks.
- Post support materials on the wall: anchor charts, visuals/pictures, banned words, colourful words, other options for 'said', writing strategies, interactive word wall so students can access words, etc.

THE WRITING PROCESS

Morphology is the study of words and their parts, often thought of as the base and affixes including spelling changes. They are the smallest units of words that have meaning.



Mentor Texts

Mentor texts are, "...a well written text you show students to help them see how they can craft their own writing and also how to use writing conventions effectively" (Anderson, p. 2, 2022). The texts can be published works such as trade books, texts that you have written, or writing done by students. They provide concrete examples of what you are trying to teach.

When choosing a mentor text, make it one you and your students love and enjoy as readers first. Depending upon your purpose, you'll want it to be an example of author's craft, use of conventions, or illustrations. Be sure to include a variety of genres, text forms, and diverse texts.

A FEW THOUGHTS FROM EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS:

- The quality of writing instruction will rise dramatically not only when teachers study the teaching of writing but also when teachers study their own children's intentions and progress as writers. Strong writing is always tailored for and

responsive to the writer. (Lucy Calkins)

- When students write from experience, they can breathe those specifics into their writing dialect, odd smells, precise names of plant - that can animate even the most tired and tedious text. (Ralph Fletcher, What a Writer Needs)
- Reading is like breathing in. Writing is like breathing out. Reading brings new ideas, perspectives and worldviews. Writing is how we send our own voice, hopes, wonderings and opinions into the world. Captivating books act as mentors for a child's own writing and provide valuable guidance on how to tell stories and craft strong ideas. This is why writing and reading are most impactful when practiced together. (Pam Allyn 2015, ILA Conference)
- What students have been missing for years is seeing their teacher write...Write yourself...You can't ask someone to sing a duet with you until you know the tune yourself. (Donald Graves)

DESIGNERS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TIPS

- Mini-lessons: could involve whole class or small group; could reinforce a skill or strategy; might demonstrate a new move for students who are ready for additional challenge; could be designed to guide students who have trouble getting started; same skill would typically be practiced during independent writing time or in literacy stations;
- Help students learn to value the entire writing process including revision and editing. However, not all texts need to be fully polished. Writing folders and notebooks should be filled with personally meaningful content, lists, rich ideas, writing attempts with varying levels of success, and ideally learning goals that indicate self-awareness of their strengths and goals. Students should be able to describe how they are honing their craft.
- Make time for quick writes. This is a versatile strategy where students write rapidly and without stopping in response to literature, a prompt or as a formative check-in before or after a lesson. Quick writes provide students with a means of quickly representing their thinking. Rather than being concerned with correct spelling, punctuation, and

word usage, the student is able to focus on their message. Typically, quick writes are timed (approx. 2-5 minutes) and students are given a chance to share their writing with peers.

- Writing is not simply an academic exercise. It can also help students reflect, calm down, and express emotions. Invite students to write any time they need to process something that happened or they may benefit from quiet reflective time.
- Build in lessons where students 'hold' the pen and help create short texts as a class. Interactive and Shared Writing is an important step towards building independent writers.

WRITING BILL OF RIGHTS

- *Lucy Calkins*

- Writing needs to be taught like any other basic skills with explicit instruction and ample opportunities for practice.
- Students deserve to write for real, to write the kinds of texts they see in the world and to write for an audience of readers.
- Writers write to put meaning on the page. Teach children to choose their own topics most of the time and write about subjects that are important to them.
- Children deserve to be explicitly taught how to write including instruction in spelling and conventions as well as qualities and strategies of good writing.
- Students deserve the opportunity and instruction necessary for them to cycle through the writing process as they write.
- Writers read. To read and hear texts read, and to read as insiders, studying what other authors have done that they, too, could try.
- Students deserve clear goals and frequent feedback. The need to hear ways their writing is getting better and to know what their next steps might be.

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...

- Students who feel like writers. They know what they are 'working on' and approach writing confidently. They have a purpose and look forward to sharing with a real audience (not just the teacher).
- Students who look forward to writing time and quickly become absorbed in their writing because it is personally meaningful to them.
- Students who collaborate with peers, seek feedback and are willing to revise and compare to exemplars, refining content, organization, voice, vocabulary, etc. to improve their texts.
- Students are given choice and are willing to take risks because of the supportive environment.
- Teachers who provide short, targeted interventions, directly coaching students in various groupings and providing feedback. Less students getting "stuck", facing blank pages and becoming frustrated.
- Teacher has a strategic plan. Writing links to outcomes and is tied to reading, mentor texts and content areas. Clear evidence of strategies, tools and anchor charts in use.
- A teacher who also writes. Teacher is passionate about writing; modeling and thinking aloud to share own process.



CHALLENGES

Managing the classroom while teaching guided writing groups:

- Establish routines early on.
- Foster independence (teach strategies, allow students to collaborate with peers, post anchor charts, "see 3 before me").
- Ensure that students have an identified purpose and writing goals.
- Teach students how to conference together on their own.

Finding the time to teach small groups effectively:

- Consult sample writing workshop schedules to see how others have structured their time.
- Work strategically with grade partners and aides to create flexible groupings across classrooms.
- Focus lessons on identified areas of student need (focused on specific strategies and skills). Rather than grouping students by developmental level or following a lock-step program (one size fits all).

Finding lessons:

- Assess the learners and identify areas of need. Use data from assessment tools such as and rubrics.
- Refer to student outcomes and a developmental continuum to create a roadmap.

Lack of student engagement and reluctance to write:

- Provide choice and meaningful topics.
- Use discussions and pre-writing activities to shape ideas.
- Learn from and emulate mentor texts.
- Build background knowledge.
- Offer feedback in the midst of the work (not after writing is complete).
- Provide an authentic audience and purpose for writing.

PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

Develop common language with students around writing. Instruction, exemplars and simple, timely feedback can help students focus on their strengths and set goals for what they want to work on next as writers. Consider focusing on one skill or aspect of a writing rubric before adding on.

Consider asking students to do an on-demand assessment a few times during the year where students are given a prompt and asked to write as well as they know how in a particular genre for a set period of time. It is their chance to highlight what they have learned and teachers can see how well students have mastered the learning, what has been transferred to new genres and what still needs to be reinforced. This should be a chance for students to show what they know, not feel intimidating like a summative assessment. While students are writing, teachers could take note of stamina, volume of writing, who is distracted/focused, writing habits, etc.

Here are some ideas for providing feedback:

- [Single point rubric](#)
- [English Writing Exemplars, Rubrics, & Scoring Rationale](#)
- Calkins, L. (2014). Writing pathways: Performance assessments and learning progressions, Grades K-8. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

SEE IT IN ACTION



- [Structure of a Mini Lesson](#)
- [Grade 1 Mini Lesson](#)
- [Grade 4 Mini Lesson](#)
- [Grade 5 Small Group Instruction](#)
- [Grade 1 Small Group Instruction](#)
- [Grade 2 Writing Conference](#)
- [Grade 5 Writing Conference](#)
- [Using Mentor Texts](#)



RESOURCES

Anderson, C. (2022). A teacher's guide to mentor texts, K-5. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Anderson, C. & Glover, M. (2024). How to become a better writing teacher. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Boswell, K. (2016). Write this way: How modeling transforms the writing classroom. North Mankato, MN: Maupin House Publishing.

Empowering Writers - online resources, professional books and workshops: <https://empoweringwriters.com>

Gear, A. (2011). Writing power: Engaging thinking through writing. Markham, ON: Pembroke.

Gear, A. (2014). Nonfiction writing power: Engaging thinking through writing. Markham, ON: Pembroke.

Linder, R. (2016). The big book of details: 46 moves for teaching writers to elaborate. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Marchetti, A. & O'Dell, R. (2021). A teacher's guide to mentor texts, grades 6-12. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

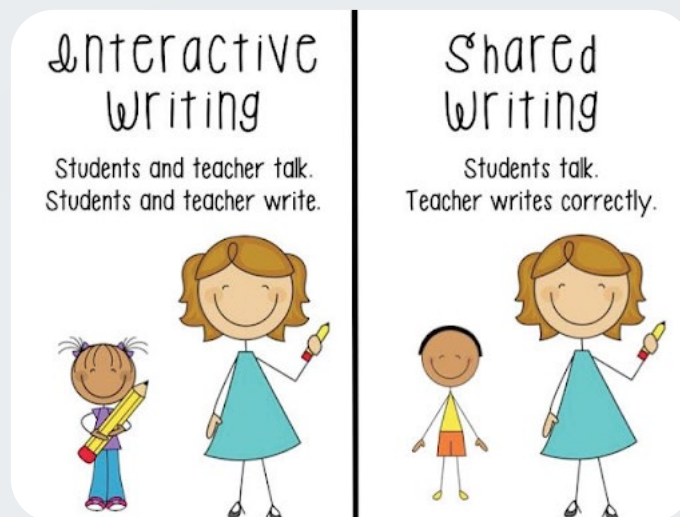
Serravallo, J. (2021). Teaching writing in small groups, grade K-8. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Serravallo, J. (2017). The writing strategies book: Your everything guide to developing skilled writers. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Lucy Calkins: Units of Study - Writing: <http://www.heinemann.com/unitsofstudy/writing/default.aspx>

Ruth Culham - Writing Resources, using mentor text, 6 Traits Writing Program, scoring guides:
www.culhamwriting.com

Matt Glover - Author to Author - a website with videos of the writing process for students and tips for teachers:
<https://www.authortoauthor.org/>



Overview of Instructional Procedures

Modelled Writing		Language Experience	Shared Writing	Interactive Writing
Definition	Demonstrating writing behaviours and verbalising the thinking processes involved with those behaviours	Using a shared experience as a basis for jointly composing a text	Working with students to compose and construct a piece of writing, with the teacher acting as scribe	Working with students to compose and construct a text collaboratively, using a 'shared pen'
Key Features	- Brief sessions from 5 to 10 minutes - Each session has a clear, singular focus - Use clear 'think aloud' statements - Writing occurs in front of students - The composed text can be seen by all students	- Based on a shared experience - Text composed as a result of the experience - Use students' language when creating the text	- Sessions kept brief and lively, from 10 to 20 minutes - Teacher scribes, students contribute ideas - Teacher thinks aloud, invites questions and discussion - Each session has a planned explicit focus based on students' needs	- Sessions kept brief and lively, from 10 to 20 minutes - Usually small group - Teacher and students share the pen - Each session has a planned explicit focus based on students' needs - Students participate actively

Guided Writing		Independent Writing	Author's Chair
Definition	Teacher scaffolds and supports a group of students with similar needs as they develop writing behaviours and understandings	Students independently apply previously learnt writing processes, understandings and strategies to own texts	An opportunity for students to voluntarily share their writing and receive constructive feedback
Key Features	- Students grouped to focus on an identified need - Most writing is done as individuals - Teacher is the guide and supporter - Sessions are about 10 to 20 minutes - Students receive support and feedback when required	- Students take responsibility for their writing - Students apply previous learning - All students engaged in a writing-related task - Sustained period for writing - Students write for authentic purposes	- Writing is shared with peers - Feedback is explicit and constructive - Sessions are 10 to 15 minutes - Can be used daily at the end of writing sessions

Figure 1.3 Overview of Instructional Procedures

Source:

https://myresources.education.wa.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/first-steps-literacy/first007.pdf?sfvrsn=db5906ce_3/1000