

Writing Workshop

Description: Writing workshop utilizes modeling, guided practice and independent practice to teach the organization, strategies, skills and craft of writing. Teachers use writing lessons with whole and/or small groups based on need. Teachers provide blocks of time for students to practice the concepts independently.

Outcome: Students transfer the strategies and skills learned from the writing lessons to their own writing.

Structure:

Writing lesson – 5 to 15 minutes

Independent practice/ Conferences – 30 minutes

Sharing – 5 to 10 minutes

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| <p>Writing Lesson (5 to 15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct teaching• Modeling• Guided practice |
| <p>Independent Practice/ Conferences (30 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual guided practice• Small group guided practice• Independent practice• Individual conference• Small group conference |
| <p>Closure/ Sharing (5 to 10 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All share• Select share |

Assessment: Ongoing means of monitoring students' work and progress. A variety of tools can be used to assess student writing both formally and informally.

- Informal student self-assessment and teacher evaluation – allows students to self assess by looking for evidence of lesson focus skills in their writing, gives teachers feedback to guide instruction.
 - **Examples:** entrance/ exit slips, quick writes, note to teacher, observations, anecdotal notes, one-on-one

- Baseline writing samples – allows for teachers to assess student writing strengths and weaknesses and plan instruction accordingly.
- Teacher/ student created rubrics – informs students of writing expectations for specific assignments
- ODE Writing Scoring Guide – monitors student progress toward meeting grade level expectations in writing and provides end-of-year outcome data

Procedures: Things for teachers to consider as they set up routines and procedures that create an effective writing workshop.

Time and Materials

- Establish the physical places where your writing will live in the classroom. Consider using an easel and chart pad for anchor charts, and model writing.
- Create your own teacher version of a student writing folder and notebook. This makes a permanent home for your modeled writing, while also making explicit to students show you want them to use their writing materials.
- Create a comfortable place for everyone to write. Consider the spaces in your room where students will write independently, work with peers; also consider where you can meet with students in small groups.
- Set up a system for writing folders or writer’s notebooks
- Collect mentor text in the form of short stories, picture books, and/ or poems to use as models for writing lessons.
- Generate checklists and anchor charts that students can use to edit their work.
- Make a list of the language conventions you expect your students to learn by the end of the year.

Instruction

- Write **with** your students.
- Think about how you will provide regular opportunities for student choice in writing.
- Create an environment in which students will be willing to take risks and still feel safe.
- Ask students to share their writing process with the class. Help students become aware of how writing processes differ from student to student.

Assessment and Feedback

Devise a simple system for keeping track of student conferences.

Let students speak first in writing conferences.

Keep conferences short.

Check in with students periodically to see where they are in the writing process.

Consider how to accommodate the various skill levels in your class.

Create a way to keep track of which individual students have mastered particular skills.

During writing workshop teachers will:

- Use *think alouds* when modeling all aspects of writing instruction.
- **Model** the specific instructional focus in front of students (e.g. use of strong verbs, including dialogue in narratives, use of transitional phrases, leads and topic sentences, etc.).
- Use *mentor texts* and student and teacher *models* to demonstrate effective writing craft.
- Create, with students, *anchor charts*, to reinforce organization, skills and craft or writing.
- Post *anchor charts* in the classroom.
- Provide opportunities for *guided practice* and *independent practice*.
- Use interactive *writer's notebook* as a tool for feedback.
- Provide opportunities for *short writes*.
- Frequently *conference* with individuals and/or small groups.
- Provide additional *small group* instruction when needed.
- Use a variety of strategies that create opportunities for students to *share* work.
- Model peer conferences for revision and/or editing using *checklists*.
- Provide a variety of ways and opportunities for *publishing* student work.

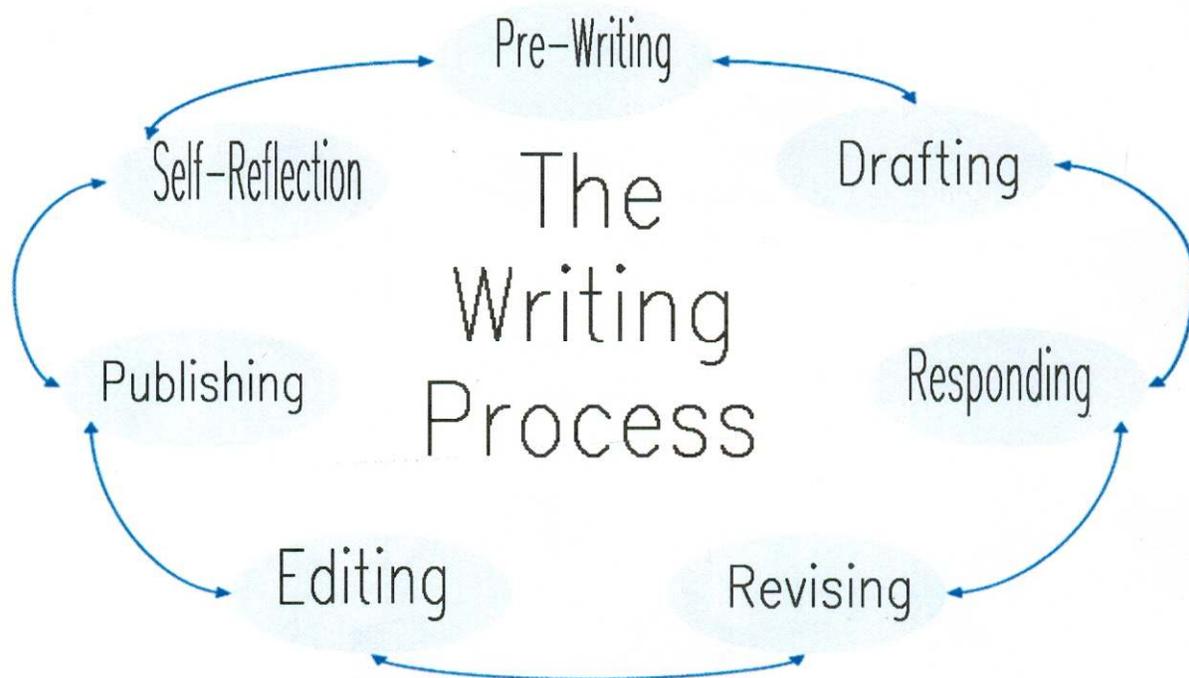
During writing workshop students will:

- Engage in various steps of the writing process.
- Apply content from writing lessons to independent writing.
- Write on self-selected topics as well as teacher directed topics.
- Write productively for sustained periods of time.
- Use interactive writing's notebook as both author and audience.
- Participate in peer conferences for revision and/or editing.
- Share various aspects of their writing.

| | Modeling I do/ Notice It | Guided Practice We do/ Practice It | Independent Practice You do/ Try it |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| What is it? | Teacher thinks aloud while modeling the writing processes and craft involved in being a writer. | Students demonstrate their grasp of writing strategies and/or skills as they practice together. Teacher moves around the room to determine the level of mastery and provide individual remediation as needed. | Students apply writing strategies and/or skills learned in the focus lesson to independent writing. |
| What does it look like? | <p>Teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Explains ✓ Introduces ✓ Models ✓ Thinks Aloud ✓ Reflects ✓ Builds schema <p>Student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Takes notes in writer’s notebook, or practice page ✓ Listens ✓ Responds to questions or contributes additional information to teacher models. | <p>Teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Checks for understanding. Adjust your teaching if understanding is not clear or student progress is not adequate. ✓ Differentiates for students who are either struggling or ready to enhance the application. ✓ Reflects and Extends by talking about various ways to apply the strategy. <p>Student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Practices the application of the strategy with pairs or small groups providing minimal support. ✓ Shares examples of how the strategy helped them in their writing. | <p>Teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Confers with students. Gives students feedback on their progress, answers individual questions, and collects data helpful for developing next steps in the lesson. ✓ Creates flexible or invitational groups that work independently under more structured support. <p>Student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Practices by working independently or in pairs to apply the strategy and/or skill. |

Writing Workshop

The writing process is made up of a series of discrete, but often overlapping, steps that writers go through from the beginning of the writing task through its completion. It is important that all students know how to access each part of the writing cycle as a tool, but it is unrealistic to think that all writers progress through the cycle in the same order and at the same time.



Pre-writing: Students understand audience for the writing, purpose of writing, and the type of writing. This is an essential place to tap into students' prior knowledge, not only about the writing topic, but also the form or genre of writing in which students will be asked to compose.

Drafting: Students organize their ideas into a piece of writing for response and revision. Whole class drafts, group drafts, and partner drafts help students generate well organized thoughtful drafts.

Responding: Students receive feedback on their writing from peers, teachers, and from the writers themselves. The purpose is not to focus on specific grammar issues but instead on how their ideas are communicated in the piece of writing. If grammar prevents the reader from understanding then it out to be addressed.

Revising: Students should revisit the audience, purpose, and type of writing. The teacher and peers can give feedback on introductions, conclusions, transitions etc. so that students are encouraged to make changes to their papers. Students can seek out commentary during this process.

Editing: Students can edit their papers for conventions and other surface-level errors. Students are taught a common set of editing marks and might participate in small groups to work on editing.

Finalizing (or Polishing) Draft: Students are asked to understand the value of the process. They should reflect on the experience, goals for future writing, and what they need to learn next. They can also be asked to make suggestions for future learning activities.

Writing Lessons

The writing lessons in this binder are short, focused and explicit. The goal of the writing lesson is to teach a specific writing skill, craft or strategy, through modeling and guided practice. Students that are ready will then practice the skill or strategy during independent writing time while the teacher can reinforce the lesson's focus through student-teacher conferences or additional small group instruction.

The amount of time allotted to the writing lesson portion of writing workshop will vary from lesson to lesson. A lesson could take anywhere from 5-15 minutes including guided practice. If necessary, additional instruction can occur during independent writing time. Teachers can move around the classroom reinforcing the use of the skill or strategy previously taught, pointing out strong writing they see, and/or identifying and addressing misconceptions or common error patterns.

The sharing and closure portion of writing workshop can also be an opportunity for instruction. Strong examples of writing can be highlighted and key teaching points revisited. Additionally, the creation of a community of writers can be created as students share/model for their peers their successes and the processes they have worked through when faced with writing challenges.

Writing lessons generally fall into the following categories:

Procedural – important information about how the workshop runs

Examples:

- how to get or use materials
- what to do if teacher is conferring with another student
- where to confer with a friend

Writer's Process – a series of steps that writers use when producing a final version of their writing

Examples:

- brainstorming
- choosing a topic
- determining the purpose for writing
- writing for different audiences
- choosing the organizational structure that works best

Craft – information that deepens the writer's understanding of literary techniques that strengthen writing

Examples:

- choosing strong verbs
- using a variety of sentence structures
- creating descriptive settings
- using figurative language
- attending to details
- creating strong leads

Editing – information that develops the writer’s understanding of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical skills

For lessons see: Anderson, Jeff. *Mechanically Inclined*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

Adapted from Scaffolding Young Writers, Linda J. Dorn and Carla Soffos, 2001.

Conferences

The Writing Conference is time to have a conversation with students about their writing. Many teachers see it as an opportunity to get to know students and as a powerful way of teaching them to be better writers.

When conferring with a student, focus on content and craft first, before conventions. Give two praises and then one “push.” Help the student evaluate progress toward the specific goal and, if the goal has been reached, set a new goal.

Keeping a record of your conference is essential. Try to conference with 3 to 5 students per day; ideally you would conference with every student each week. Remember, if multiple students are working on the same skill, you can pull several students for a small group conference.

Management

By adopting a few management techniques, conferencing can be a valuable way to connect with students and their writing. Some things to keep in mind:

- set clear expectations in the beginning for what students should be doing during independent writing time
- teach students to never interrupt when you are conferring
- create systems of dealing with daily occurrences that don't require your intervention
- teach students how to solve problems on their own
- keep moving so conferences can be short and frequent
- concentrate on the target of the daily lesson or on the student's individual goals rather than making every student's piece the best it can be
- find a specific part to praise
- create the expectation that a lot of writing will get done

Documentation

Keeping a record of your conferences is valuable information for lesson planning. There are a variety of ways to keep track of what you see in your students' writing, depending on how much information and/or detail you like. Keeping your records brief, yet essential, can keep your conferences moving while also help you track just what you need to know.

It's best for your documentation to match your daily/weekly lesson goals and student outcomes. Documenting known strength(s) and challenge(s) is a way to give balanced feedback to your students. You'll see a variety of different conference documentation methods in the following pages.

- Roving notes (with mailing labels)
- Left side/teacher side and right side/student side in the writer's notebooks
- Class lists with lesson goals as headers (check off or code while conferencing)
- Three column page (strengths, challenges, next steps)
- Spiral notebook (sectioned by student, each student has several consecutive pages); teacher makes notes as needed in format suited to teacher

Sharing

Use the last 5-10 minutes of workshop for sharing time. Listed below are a variety of ways to share.

All Share

- Pair-Share – students are directed to share a certain part of their writing (e.g., the part that reflects the writing lesson focus, a favorite sentence, a favorite strong very, or the entire piece) with a partner
- Pop-up Share – students pop-up from their seats and quickly share one aspect of their writing – student choice
- Zip Around – sharing “zips” around the room because students are asked to share a particular targeted piece of their writing, i.e., compound sentence, prepositional phrase, simile, etc.
- Small groups – students take turns sharing at their table

Select Share

- Teacher-selected Share – pick two or three students who have done a particularly nice job on the focus of the mini-lesson and ask them to share
- Author’s Chair – students are given notice the day before and come prepared with a piece of writing they’d like to share
- Volunteer – teacher asks for volunteers – low achieving students are more likely to share when a teacher has worked with them during independent practice and they are confident they have done it right
- Document Camera – rather than just having students share orally, students may wish to put their sentence and/or paragraph on the document camera so that others can follow along
- Random Sharing –
 - student names are on popsicle sticks, teacher draws 3 or 4
 - students are assigned numbers, teacher randomly calls out numbers that correspond with the students who will share
 - put card under seats, students with a dot or symbol on card share
 - Magic Clipboard – put seating chart on the clipboard, teacher holds it above student’s head; student points to a spot on the chart, whoever student points closest to, shares

Regardless of structure, sharing has certain characteristics:

- predictable structure
- opportunity for additional teaching
- opportunity to refer to anchor charts
- demonstrates what was taught in lesson
- many voices are heard
- opportunity to share success or get advise when “stuck”

Instructional Strategies

The following instructional strategies have been identified as effective strategies in helping students learn the complex set of skills needed to reach grade level standards in writing. The lessons in this binder support and include these strategies.

THINK ALOUDS – Teacher models his/her thinking process aloud to the students as they are writing or preparing to write.

MODELING – Teacher and/or student writes in front of the class on a document camera, board or chart paper ... modeling is often specific to mini-lesson.

ANCHOR CHARTS – A chart that has a single focus, is co-constructed with the students, has an organized appearance, matches the learners’ developmental level, and supports on-going learning.

GUIDED PRACTICE – Students demonstrate their grasp of new writing strategies and/or skills as they practice together. Teacher moves around the room to determine the level of mastery and provide individual remediation as needed. Students may practice in pairs, small-group or even individually.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE – Students apply writing strategies and/or skills learned in the focus lesson to independent writing. Usually follows Modeling (I do) and Guided Practice (we do).

WRITER’S NOTEBOOK – A binder, spiral, composition book, folder or combination of these that a student uses to store their collected work, writing resources, and communication feedback between themselves, the teacher, and student peers.

CONFERENCES – A time to have a conversation with students about their writing. These can be individual or small group. Conferences can be short but they should always have a predictable structure and allow for the student to participate as well.

SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION – An as-needed reteaching of a specific strategy or skill that students in the group have not yet mastered during independent writing time.

SHARING – A pre-made list of the skills that have been taught during mini-lessons which can be checked off when students have shown mastery.

PUBLISHING – the point at which a piece of writing is presented to an audience other than the writer. Formally published work usually means the writer has carefully edited the work and presents an error-free finished draft.

Writing Notebooks

A writer’s notebook is simply a container for student work. The notebook could be created using any of the following formats: binder, spiral, composition book, pocket folder, or a combination of these. Students use their writer’s notebook throughout the school year to store their collected work, writing resources, and communication feedback between themselves, the teacher, and student peers, and may either store their notebook at school or carry it with them. Students write on one side of the page so that the facing page is left blank and available to the teacher (or student peer) for written notes and communication to the student.

Purpose

A writer’s notebook is both a storage device for various lists and reference tools and a communication tool to be used between the student writer and teacher, or between the student writer and his/her peer(s).

The notebook is a place to keep all drafts, brainstorm, student-generated topic lists, and student-generated goals, action plans, and reflections. The writer’s notebook:

- Supports increased ownership, confidence, and pride in a student’s written work that is maintained in a designated place – where it may be revisited, referenced, and valued for the feedback it provides.
- Provides a personal resource for students. While anchor charts are teacher-guided and class-created on wall charts or through computer and projector during lessons, hard copies can be stored as a resource accessible by students *at their seats* at a later time.
- Reduces time spent looking for separate pieces of paper that can become scattered and lost.

Feedback Using the Writer’s Notebook

Using the writer’s notebook as a communication tool for written feedback conversations between student writers and teachers and between student writers and their peers is advantageous for several reasons. The writer’s notebook:

- Helps students write for a real audience that supports a sense of purpose and motivation for writing;
- Provides early feedback from the teacher and other students that supports revision. This early feedback is more likely to be integrated as learning than feedback that is provided after the final draft has been submitted for a score and no further revision is possible;
- Houses feedback comments and revised drafts that strengthen the writing process, and
- Maintains interaction that enlivens the writing process.

Formatting Feedback Conversations

An effective format for storing conversations about writing is similar to the format of an Interactive Notebook – two facing pages that hold the writing under discussion on the right and the conversation between teacher and student or students and student on the left (on the back of the following writing page). This allows participants:

- To keep both voices of the dialogue in the same “space” with the subject of the dialogue;
- To avoid writing directly on student work, and
- To draw lines from their comments on the left page toward specific parts of the writing being referenced on the right page.

Teachers could merely mark up the student paper instead of creating a written conversation that provides feedback in the notebook, but when teachers mark up errors on a paper, two things may happen:

- Students may become overwhelmed and disheartened;
- Students may feel that the teacher’s focus is only on errors and on the product rather than on the students’ ideas and development as writers.

When teachers respond to student writing as *readers*, as well as instructors, and converse with students on paper or in person, students feel “heard” and appreciated as writers.

Reader feedback

Feedback is important; all students need to hear what they are doing well – specifically – and they benefit from learning about a limited number of specific error patterns.

- Feedback from teachers is effective when it includes reader feedback and manageable instructional feedback.
- Providing reader feedback shows that the teacher is not interested merely in fixing mistakes but also in commenting on the content of student writing.
- Instructional feedback is manageable when it is based on *error patterns* and is supported with a lesson.
- Feedback from peers is most effective when it is *reader* feedback. Examples of student feedback may include:
 - “I became interested when you said ...”
 - “I wondered what you meant by ...”
 - “... is a ... word to use. It surprised me.”
 - “Your paper left me wanting to know more about ... Could you include more details about that?”
 - “I like the phrase ‘...’”

Error patterns

Below is a link to a guide for error patterns analysis. If you are just beginning to use this practice, it might be a good idea to narrow the types of patterns you are looking for rather than completing a full analysis of student writing, as the process becomes easier as you become accustomed to it. For example, you might begin with fragments, run-ons, and comma splices (a single sentence error pattern). <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/error/index.cfm>.

Formatting the Writer’s Notebook

| Format | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|------------------|---|---|
| Binder | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of us feel compelled to discard messy pages, and loose-leaf binders allow us to do that • Holding and adding resources, such as scoring guides, word lists, and anchor charts is easy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to discard pages encourages discarding and inadvertently may encourage students to simply copy paragraphs over and over without doing any real revision • Feedback conversations (written on the back of writing pages) may be lost • If a section of a student binder is used for Writer’s Notebook, some of the effectiveness of the Writer’s Notebook may be compromised by the other uses of the binder and habit patterns associated with the binder • A whole separate binder is bulky for backpacks, lockers, and classroom storage |
| Spiral | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to discard messy pages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, is this a good thing? • Easy to lose feedback conversations on the back of discarded pages • Storing other resources is not possible (1) unless the spiral has enough pockets to hold resources and/or (2) unless students are likely to use and not lose materials in pockets. |
| Composition Book | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are less likely to tear out pages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations and all other materials are kept intact • Storing other resources is not possible in the same place |
| Pocket Folder | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light-weight • Can be used for one writing project at a time • Includes pockets and binding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be more easily misplaced • Resource materials will need to be moved to new folders regularly |
| Combination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine two formats – composition book and binder or pocket folder: • Composition book for the essentials of Writer’s Notebook • Binder section or a pocket folder or resource materials (if they are lost, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |