

Learning to Write and Writing to Learn

By Joan Sedita

Classroom Scenario

In a middle school history class, the students are writing about several pieces of text that include a primary source, a textbook section, and a history magazine article. The writing assignment is to answer an extended response question by synthesizing information and using text evidence from the three sources. The teacher has given the students a set of guidelines that describes the purpose and type of the writing, the suggested length of the piece, and specific requirements such as how many main ideas should be included. The teacher has differentiated the assignment to meet the needs of students with a variety of writing skills. Scaffolds such as a pre-writing template have been provided for students who struggle with planning strategies. The teacher has provided models of good writing samples and has also provided opportunities for students to collaborate at various stages of the writing process. This is a classroom where the teacher is teaching students to write and also using writing to help them learn content. Unfortunately, classrooms like this are rare.

Along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic achievement and essential for success in post-secondary education. Students need and use writing for many purposes (e.g., to communicate and share knowledge, to support comprehension and learning, to explore feelings and beliefs). Writing skill is also becoming a more necessary skill for success in a number of occupations. ¹

Unfortunately, there are far too many students in the United States today who do not write well enough to meet grade-level demands. The writing assessment scores for grades 8 and 12 of the 2011 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) show that the number of students who do *not* reach proficient for their grade level remains at very high levels: 73% of eighth graders and 73% of twelve graders. ² About a third of high school students intending to enter higher education do not meet readiness benchmarks for college-level English composition courses, and among certain ethnic groups, the percent is higher: 50%.³ Once in college, 20% of first-year college students require a remedial writing class and more than half of them are unable to write a paper relatively free of errors. ⁴ At least a quarter of new community college students enroll in remedial writing courses. ⁵ Compounding the problem, remedial enrollments appear to underestimate the number of students with reading and writing difficulties.

The good news is that we have a very good idea of what students need to acquire in order to become good writers. There is a significant amount of research that has been conducted and reviewed on effective writing instruction ⁶. The Common Core literacy standards place a significant emphasis on teaching students in all subjects how to write and how to use writing to learn. ⁷ The key is getting this information to teachers, including teachers of science, social studies, math, English and other content areas.

As the title suggests, this chapter addresses two goals for writing instruction. The first is teaching students how to write (*learning to write*); the second is teaching students how to use writing to learn content (*writing to learn*). Although the goals for each are different, instruction for both needs to happen simultaneously.

It is often assumed that the job of teaching students how to write belongs to English language arts teachers. However, the truth is that they cannot do it alone and content teachers are needed to support learning to write. Writing to learn skills in particular are best taught by content teachers because they understand how to show examples of subject-specific writing, teach students how to write about subject-specific text, and provide feedback to students about content-based writing assignments. From grades six through twelve, content teachers are in a unique

position to teach students how to write like a scientist, mathematician, historian, or literary author. This is described in the literature as *disciplinary* literacy.

In this chapter you will learn research-based instructional practices for teaching writing and writing to learn skills. You will also learn how writing can be used as a tool for assessing content learning.

Objectives

In this chapter, you will:

- Learn the difference between teaching students how to write and how to use writing to learn content
- Review the research on effective writing instruction practices
- Become familiar with the Common Core State Standards related to writing instruction
- Learn the differences among informational, argument, and narrative types of writing
- Learn how assessment can be used to determine student writing ability, and how writing can be used to assess student knowledge of content
- Learn what students need to be taught about writing, including the stages of the writing process, specific writing strategies, and text structure
- Become familiar with components of a writing teaching routine

What is it? Why is it important?

Learning to write includes learning two sets of skills: composing skills using the writing process (pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising), and transcription skills (punctuation, capitalization, spelling, handwriting/keyboarding). A foundational composing skill is the ability to apply knowledge of text structure to write sentences (i.e., knowledge of grammar), paragraphs, and longer passages of text. Knowledge of text structure also includes recognizing the differences among narrative, informational, and argument types of writing. Composing requires a great deal of thinking at the pre-writing, planning and drafting stages.

Transcription skills, on the other hand, should be sufficiently developed for students by the time they reach middle school. That is, they can automatically apply spelling and handwriting/keyboarding skills and use proper punctuation and capitalization. Fluency in transcription skills enables students to focus their thinking on the composing aspects of writing. However, there are some students who struggle with these basic skills. When you teach students who struggle with writing, it is important to determine if they are having difficulty with composing skills, transcription skills, and in some cases, both. By providing instruction in both transcription skills and composing strategies, writing will improve by a greater degree than a focus only on improving content quality, or only on mechanical aspects of writing.

Writing to learn means using writing as a tool to promote content learning; when students write they think on paper. Content teachers assign writing activities to help students learn subject matter, clarify and organize their thoughts, and improve their retention of content. Writing to learn tasks can be based on reading, classroom discussion, teacher presentation, media such as video, or hands-on activities. Being able to write is as important to learning as being able to read.

Subject-area teachers sometimes feel overwhelmed with all of the content they must cover during a school year, and it is understandable if at some point you feel there is not enough time to teach writing. Using a plate of food as a metaphor, content teachers may view writing instruction as one more thing to add to an already crowded plate. However, content teachers need to recognize that teaching students how to write about what they are learning gives the students a strong foundation upon which they can access and add more content. When students have strong literacy skills, they have a solid plate to hold all of the content that must be learned.

What does the research say?

There are three broad findings that are consistent in the research on effective writing instruction: 8

1. Teach the steps in the writing process
2. Explicitly teach writing strategies that are used at each step of the writing process
3. Increase how much students write – the more they write the better they get at writing

You will learn more about how to teach the writing process and writing strategies later in this chapter. The Common Core writing anchor standard #10 is directly aligned with the third finding: “Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. 9

In their seminal report *Writing Next*, Graham and Perin 10 identified eleven elements of writing instruction that were found to be effective for helping students in grades four through twelve learn to write well and to use writing as a tool for learning. These elements were recommended based on a large-scale statistical review of research (called a meta-analysis). Figure 1 identifies these elements.

(insert Figure 1 here)

A second report, by Graham and Hebert, based on meta-analysis of research was *Writing to Read*. 11 (Graham & The authors reviewed research to determine answers to these three questions:

1. Does writing about material students read enhance their reading comprehension?
2. Does teaching writing strengthen students’ reading skills?
3. Does increasing how much students write improve how well they read?

The report presented three recommendations in their report. Figure 2 lists the recommendations.

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What should students know and be able to do to be prepared for college and career?

Common Core State Standards

The Common Core standards related to writing are organized into several categories: Text Types and Purposes, Production and Distribution of Writing, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, and Range of Writing 12 The specific ELA anchor writing and related reading standards are listed in Figure 3. Writing standard #5 (*Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.*) is directly aligned to the research finding noted above that students need to be taught to apply the writing process. 13 Writing standard #4 (*Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.*) addresses the importance of the prewriting and planning stages in order to produce organized writing pieces. 14

(insert Figure 3 here)

The Common Core writing standards focus on three types of writing: argument, informational, and narrative. However, as this quote from the Common Core State Standards Appendix A points out, there is less emphasis on narrative:

“While all three text types are important, the Standards put particular emphasis on students’ ability to write sound arguments on substantive topics and issues, as this ability is critical to college and career readiness.”

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The extra focus on argument and informational writing is also evident in the fact that details for standard #3 regarding narrative writing are provided only in the ELA standards for grades 6-12, but not in the standards for history,

social studies, science and technical subjects. For these subjects, the Common Core describes standard #3 as “not applicable as a separate requirement” and provides this note:

“Students’ narrative skills continue to grow in these grades. The Standards require that students be able to incorporate narrative elements effectively into arguments and informative/explanatory texts. In history/social studies, students must be able to incorporate narrative accounts into their analyses of individuals or events of historical import. In science and technical subjects, students must be able to write precise enough descriptions of the step-by-step procedures they use in their investigations or technical work that others can replicate them and (possibly) reach the same results.” 16

The Common Core literacy standards also place a premium on students writing to sources, using evidence from print and digital material in their writing pieces. Rather than asking students to write based only on their own knowledge or experience, they should analyze and synthesize information from sources in order to answer questions and writing prompts. 17 There are a number of reading and writing standards that indicate strong expectations that students combine reading comprehension and writing strategies. See the writing standards # 7, #8, and #9, as well as reading standards #1 and #2 in Figure 3 for examples. 18

More About Types of Writing

Students need to learn the differences among the three types of writing, as well as the writing structure of each. Narrative writing typically tells a story of a real or imaginary experience, event, or sequence of events. Narrative text uses time as its main structure and the information and ideas can be organized around literary elements such as characters, setting, problem/solution, and theme. Examples of narrative writing genres include: diary, biography and autobiography, personal narrative, memoir, folktales, fables, myths, creative fictional stories, science fiction, poems, plays, and eyewitness accounts.

Informational writing typically examines previously learned information or provides new information. Informational text structure tends to be hierarchical, with information being organized into topics, sub-topics, and paragraph-level main ideas. Writers use headings for topic sections to help a reader recognize the organization of information. Examples of informational writing genres include: textbook, article, letter, speech, instructions, manual, directions, summary, subject-area reports, and workplace writing such as memo, application, resume.

Like informational writing, argument provides information, but for a different reason. Argument writing uses selected information to make people believe that something is true, while informational writing includes all of the information to make people understand. Argument writing is used to change someone’s point of view, bring about some action, or ask someone to accept the writer’s evaluation of an issue or problem. Argument structure is based on the sequenced presentation of the following elements: statement of claim (position), reasons and evidence, counterclaim (possible opposing view), and rebuttal (refuting the counterclaim). Examples of argument writing genres include: persuasive letters, editorials, argument essays, reviews of books or movies, and literary analysis.

How do we assess writing?

Assessment is used to gather information about a student’s writing. There are three types of assessment, each with its own purpose:

- **Screening or Summative:** typically a formal assessment that is group-administered and norm-referenced (i.e., compares one student’s writing in comparison with a large group of peers); used to determine if a student’s writing meets grade-level standards
- **Diagnostic:** can be formal or informal; administered to determine the specific strengths and weaknesses of a student’s writing
- **Formative:** can be formal or informal; used to determine if a student is responding to instruction and if writing skills are improving as they should

Content teachers should focus on informal, formative assessments that are used on a regular basis in their classrooms. Formative writing assessment is valuable because it helps determine which writing skills and strategies are problematic for students so that the teacher can target writing instruction to the specific needs of students. It is also valuable because it enables the teacher to give specific feedback to individual students about what they need to improve their writing.

In many ways, the feedback you give students about how to improve their writing matters as much as the writing instruction you provide. Without effective feedback, students will not engage in the substantive self-assessment and revision that is essential to learning to improve their writing. 19 After conducting a meta-analysis of the research regarding the effectiveness of formative assessment to enhance student writing, the authors of the report *Informing Writing: The Benefits of Formative Assessment* 20 made the following recommendations:

Use Formative Assessment to Enhance Students' Writing

- **Provide feedback.** Writing improves when teachers and peers provide students with feedback about the effectiveness of their writing.
- **Teach student how to assess their own writing.** Writing improves when students are taught to evaluate the effectiveness of their own writing.
- **Monitor students' writing progress.** Writing improves when teachers monitor students' progress on an ongoing basis.

Revision checklists and writing rubrics are common types of formative assessment. With a revision checklist, the teacher, student writer, or a peer student reviews a piece of writing to determine if specific writing criteria listed on the checklist have been met. Figure 4 is an example of a checklist that addresses composing, text structure, and conventions. 21 A writing rubric is a chart or grid that lists a set of writing criteria (e.g., ideas, organization, voice, conventions) and then offers descriptions to classify the quality of a piece of writing according to categories that typically range from 4 to 0 points. The scoring rubrics used for most state writing assessments are examples of this type of rubric.

(insert Figure 4 here)

How do we use writing to assess learning?

Writing is a primary instrument that teachers use to determine how much students have learned and evaluate academic performance. Various kinds of writing can be used for this purpose, ranging from minimal (e.g., fill-in-the-blank activities or short-answer questions) to considerable (e.g., essay tests or research papers). 22 Written summaries provide insight regarding a student's identification of main ideas. Written answers to questions at all levels of thinking (i.e., understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating) and inquiry writing tasks such as constructed and extended response help teachers determine if students have achieved a deep level of knowledge and have applied critical thinking.

How do we teach writing and writing to learn skills effectively, efficiently, and appropriately?

Teach the Steps in the Writing Process

It was noted earlier that teaching students the steps of the writing process was one of the eleven recommendations of the Writing Next report. 23 It is also one of the Common Core anchor standards (Standard # 5). 24 What is the writing process? In 1980, Hayes and Flower published their seminal book chapter titled *Identifying the Organization of Writing Processes* in which they identified the actual mental behaviors of experienced writers at work. 25 Building upon the work of previous writing researchers, they identified three levels of individual sub-skills, or stages, of the composing process: *planning*, *translating*, and *reviewing*. Their cognitive processing model helped teachers understand what their student writers might need to be taught and practice in order to become better writers. Over the years, the model was informed by new research and substantially reconceptualized, 26 resulting in four major stages:

1. **Pre-Writing** (reflection, selecting a topic, planning what to say)
2. **Text Production** (writing a draft)
3. **Revising** (reflection, making changes to improve the writing)
4. **Editing** (proofreading)

The writing process is dynamic and recursive – writers repeat and revisit the stages several times as they develop a piece of writing. For example, a student may discover while he is writing a first draft that he needs to go back to the pre-writing stage to gather and organize more information about the topic. Similarly, while revising the draft, the student may discover he needs to change the way he originally planned to organize the content. Figure 5 is an example of a student writing routine based on the writing process. 27

(insert figure 5 here)

Students need to be taught what each stage is, the skills and strategies they need to apply at each stage, and to make sure they do not skip any of the stages when they write. The more effort they put into pre-writing, the better the finished product will be. Students also need to know that in some cases a piece of writing is never finished – further thinking and editing can always improve the piece. While students should know that it is not practical to develop multiple drafts for every writing piece (e.g., an email message or a note to a family member), but for important writing assignments, such as key homework assignments and research reports, students need to get in the habit of revising and rewriting.

Explicitly Teach Writing Strategies That are Used at Each Stage of the Writing Process

Explicitly teaching strategies for each stage of the writing process has a strong impact on the quality of all students' writing, and it has been found especially effective for students who have difficulty writing. Strategy instruction can include teaching generic skills such as brainstorming a topic or how to use transition words, or it can include teaching strategies for a specific writing task such as how to write a summary or an argument. 28 Figure 6 lists examples of strategies that often require instruction before students can use them independently.

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Teach Text Structure

Students need to understand text structures in order to write well. When students write, they have to work through four structural levels: word structure, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and overall text structure. Difficulties on any level may cause writing to suffer. 29 Knowledge of word structure includes the ability to spell words correctly and join suffixes and prefixes to root words. Students need knowledge of the other three levels of text structure in order to organize and express their ideas in writing. In this sense, text structure represents thinking. 30

Sentence Structure

This level of text consists of propositions (ideas) that convey information sentence by sentence. One by one, sentences communicate ideas that add up to make meaning. Crafting sentences that accurately convey the intended meaning is challenging, especially for struggling writers and English language learners.

Syntax is the study of the rules for the formation of grammatical sentences – that is, how words are combined and arranged to make phrases and sentences. When a student has *syntactic awareness*, it means he understands the rules of grammar and is aware when a sentence does not follow those rules. Many students have good syntactic awareness and can tell that there is something grammatically wrong with a sentence even if they cannot explain the problem in grammatical terms. It just “sounds wrong” to them, and they intuitively have the ability to add, delete, or change the word order to make it “sound right”. Young children build syntactic awareness by listening to spoken sentences. As students move through the elementary grades and listen to read aloud or read themselves, they are exposed to more complex sentences typically found in written text. As their syntactic awareness grows, they are able

to monitor the relationships among the words in a sentence they are reading and also that they are writing. 31 Students with weak syntactic awareness tend to write short, simple, sentence that are generally lower in quality, error filled, and contain less varied vocabulary.

Grammar instruction that involves explicit instruction in identifying parts of speech was not found in the research to improve students' writing. Graham and Perin explain it this way:

“Overall, the findings on grammar instruction suggest that, although teaching grammar is important, alternative procedures, such as *sentence combining*, are more effective than traditional approaches for improving the quality of students' writing.” 32 “Sentence combining involves teaching students to construct more complex and sophisticated sentences through exercises in which two or more basic sentences are combined into a single sentence.” 33

Instructional methods that involve practice with writing and manipulating parts of sentences, such as sentence combining, have been found to improve students' writing quality more than simply labeling parts of speech. This does not mean that all grammar instruction is bad – just that teachers need to provide this instruction in a way that is most useful for students. Teachers should focus on the function and practical application of grammar within the context of writing. 34 Prichard and Honeycutt provide this suggestion: “teachers should pull out common grammatical errors from students' drafts and develop mini-lessons around them, rather than turning to the next lesson in the grammar book 35 ... the best grammar lessons are based on sentences derived from students' own writing.” 36

Paragraph Structure

The detailed meaning from sentences is combined to develop a paragraph that represents a main idea. Content teachers assume that upon entering middle grades students already know how to write a good paragraph. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Content teachers should teach students that a paragraph is built around a major idea, that the main idea can be stated in a topic sentence, and that the supporting sentences contain details related to the main idea. Each time the writer shifts to another main idea, he should indent or skip a line before starting a new paragraph.

There are three basic types of paragraphs: introductory (introduces the topic of the writing piece and may also preview the main ideas that will follow), concluding (sums up the writing piece) and body paragraphs (present the main ideas and supporting details).

Overall Text Structure

Each type and genre of writing has a different overall structure for how the ideas and information are organized. Earlier in this chapter you learned how narrative, informational, and argument text are typically organized. Some genres within these writing types also have unique structure, such as poetry, plays, and certain types of content-writing tasks such as a science lab report or a biography. It is important to make a distinction between text features and text structure. Text features includes thing such as headings, glossary, table of contents, and captions for illustrations. Text structure focuses more on how ideas and information are organized at the sentence, paragraph, and overall text levels.

The Common Core Standards require that students learn to use several text structures regardless of the writing type: introductions (Common Core Standards #1a, #2a, #3a) 37 conclusions (Common Core Standards #1e, #2f, #3e), 38 and transition words and phrases (Common Core Standards #1c, #2c, #3c). 39 Transition words and phrases can do a lot to help students make connections among sentences and paragraphs. Content teachers can play an important role in teaching students how to use them for content writing. Figure 7 is a chart of transition words organized around writing purpose. 40

(insert Figure 7 here)

It should be noted that knowledge of text structure also aids comprehension. Text structure refers to how a piece of text is built. When students are writing, they use text structure to *construct*, and when they are reading they use text structure to *deconstruct* in order to make meaning. Increasing student knowledge of text structure improves reading comprehension and writing ability. 41

Have Student Write Often

It was noted earlier that a major research finding is that students need to write often in order to improve writing skills, and that Common Core writing anchor standard #10 calls for students to routinely write short and long writing pieces. 42 Writing to learn activities can be based on information from reading or from classroom instructional practices such as group discussions, teacher presentations, or use of media such as video. Writing tasks can be general (e.g., summarizing, note taking, personal reflection, compare and contrast) as well as subject-specific (e.g., science lab report, explanation of how to solve a math problem, literary analysis for English). Figure 8 provides suggestions for short writing tasks (quick writes that can be completed in less than five minutes) and longer writing tasks completed in one class or over several days. 43

(insert Figure 8 here)

How do we develop instructional plans that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards and evidence-based instructional practices? How can we best engage all students in writing instruction?

Follow a Teaching Routine

There are a number of best practices that teachers of any subject should incorporate when they assign writing tasks to students. Taken together, these practices constitute a *teaching routine*. Research finds that establishing a predictable routine that permits ample practice with skills and strategies should be an essential component of a strong writing curriculum, regardless of grade or student writing ability. 44 Sedita has developed a teaching routine that includes six components: Set Writing Goals; Show Models; Provide Scaffolds; Provide Opportunities for Collaboration; Provide Feedback; and Provide Opportunities for Revision. 45 This routine embeds the most important research findings about effective writing instruction. Figure 9 provides details about each component of the routine. 46

(insert Figure 9 here)

Provide Scaffolds

Scaffolding describes a type of assistance offered by a teacher to support learning. It is one of the principles of effective instruction that enables teachers to accommodate individual student needs. When you scaffold, you help a student master a task or concept that the student is initially unable to grasp independently. The amount of scaffolding is gradually released as the student becomes independent with his ability to complete the task or understand the concept. 47

There are several types of scaffolding: 48

Content Scaffolding: The teacher introduces simpler concepts and skills and slowly guides students through more challenging concepts and skills.

Task Scaffolding: The student proceeds from easier to more difficult tasks and activities.

Material Scaffolding: A variety of materials are used to guide student's thinking, including partially completed graphic organizers or templates.

Instructional Scaffolding: The teacher demonstrates, models through the use of a think aloud, provides prompts, questions, or a set of steps that students can follow by instructing themselves through the steps.

Application Assignments

In-Class Assignments

1. Explain to a partner the difference between *Learning to Write* and *Writing to Learn*.
2. Review the Common Core standards in Figure 3 and identify those standards that are in some way related to writing about reading.
3. Discuss how having weak transcription skills (i.e., handwriting or keyboarding, spelling, use of capitalization/punctuation) might affect a student's ability and motivation to complete a lengthy writing assignment.
4. With a partner, write notes that describe each type of writing (i.e., narrative, informational, argument), including the differences among them.

Tutoring Assignments

1. Create 4 examples of "quick writes" you can assign a student that are related to something he/she is reading.
2. Based on a student writing sample that is at least 6 sentences long, try and determine if the students has strong or weak syntactic awareness.
3. Create a poster that includes a list of common transition words that you can make available to the student(s) you teach.

Homework Assignments

1. Refer to *The Key Writing Teaching Routine* in Figure 9. Develop a lesson plan for a subject-based writing assignment (e.g., science, social studies, English) that includes specifics for each of the six components of the routine. Be sure to do the following:
 - a. Set clear goals for the audience, purpose, length, and other requirements
 - b. Determine what models of good writing you will show students
 - c. Identify a planning scaffold (e.g., a graphic organizer, writing template)
 - d. Determine how you will provide at least one opportunity for students to collaborate at the THINK, PLAN, WRITE, or REVISE stage of the writing process.
 - e. Determine how you will provide feedback that students can use to revise the piece of writing
2. Writing Assignment
 - a. Write a 300 to 500 word piece that supports this statement: "Teachers of all subjects need to play a role in teaching writing." Include relevant text evidence from this chapter in your response.
 - b. When you are finished, write a brief description of how you applied the writing process. That is, what did you do at the THINK, PLAN, WRITE, and REVISE stages, and were you recursive (revisiting an earlier stage) at any point in the process.

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FIGURES

Figure 1

Writing Next: Eleven Elements of Effective Writing Instruction

(Graham & Perin, 2007) (p. 4-5)

1. **Writing Strategies**, which involves teaching students strategies for planning, revising, and editing their compositions
2. **Summarization**, which involves explicitly and systematically teaching students how to summarize texts
3. **Collaborative Writing**, which uses instructional arrangements in which adolescents work together to plan, draft, revise, and edit their compositions
4. **Specific Product Goals**, which assigns students specific, reachable goals for the writing they are to complete
5. **Word Processing**, which uses computers and word processors as instructional supports for writing assignments
6. **Sentence Combining**, which involves teaching students to construct more complex, sophisticated sentences
7. **Prewriting**, which engages students in activities designed to help them generate or organize ideas for their composition
8. **Inquiry Activities**, which engages students in analyzing immediate, concrete data to help them develop ideas and content for a particular writing task
9. **Process Writing Approach**, which interweaves a number of writing instructional activities in a workshop environment that stresses extended writing opportunities, writing for authentic audiences, personalized instruction, and cycles of writing
10. **Study of Models**, which provides students with opportunities to read, analyze, and emulate models of good writing
11. **Writing for Content Learning**, which uses writing as a tool for learning content material

Figure 2

Recommendations: Writing Practices That Enhance Students' Reading

(Graham & Hebert, 2010) (p. 5)

- I. HAVE STUDENTS WRITE ABOUT THE TEXTS THEY READ. Students' comprehension of science, social studies, and language arts texts is improved when they write about what they read, specifically when they
 - Respond to a Text in Writing (Writing Personal Reactions, Analyzing and Interpreting the Text)
 - Write Summaries of a Text
 - Write Notes About a Text
 - Answer Questions About a Text in Writing, or Create and Answer Written Questions About a Text

II. TEACH STUDENTS THE WRITING SKILLS AND PROCESSES THAT GO INTO CREATING TEXT. Students' reading skills and comprehension are improved by learning the skills and processes that go into creating text, specifically when teachers

- Teach the Process of Writing, Text Structures for Writing, Paragraph or Sentence Construction Skills (Improves Reading Comprehension)
- Teach Spelling and Sentence Construction Skills (Improves Reading Fluency)
- Teach Spelling Skills (Improves Word Reading Skills)

III. INCREASE HOW MUCH STUDENTS WRITE. Students' reading comprehension is improved by having them increase how often they produce their own texts.

Figure 3

Common Core Anchor Standards Related to Writing

WRITING STANDARDS: Grades 6-12 All Subjects

Text Types and Purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences. (Note: for Grades 6-12 ELA Only)

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

READING STANDARDS: Grades 6-12 All Subjects

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS: Grades 6-12 ELA Only

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

LANGUAGE STANDARDS: Grades 6-12 ELA Only

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Figure 4

Revising Checklist

Content

	Yes	No
Did I meet the demands of the writing assignment?		
Did I meet the needs of my audience?		
If I read my writing out loud, does it sound good to me?		
Are there some parts of the writing where my ideas are not clear?		
Can I improve the overall organization of the writing piece?		
Can I use more interesting, specific, or varied vocabulary?		

Text Structure

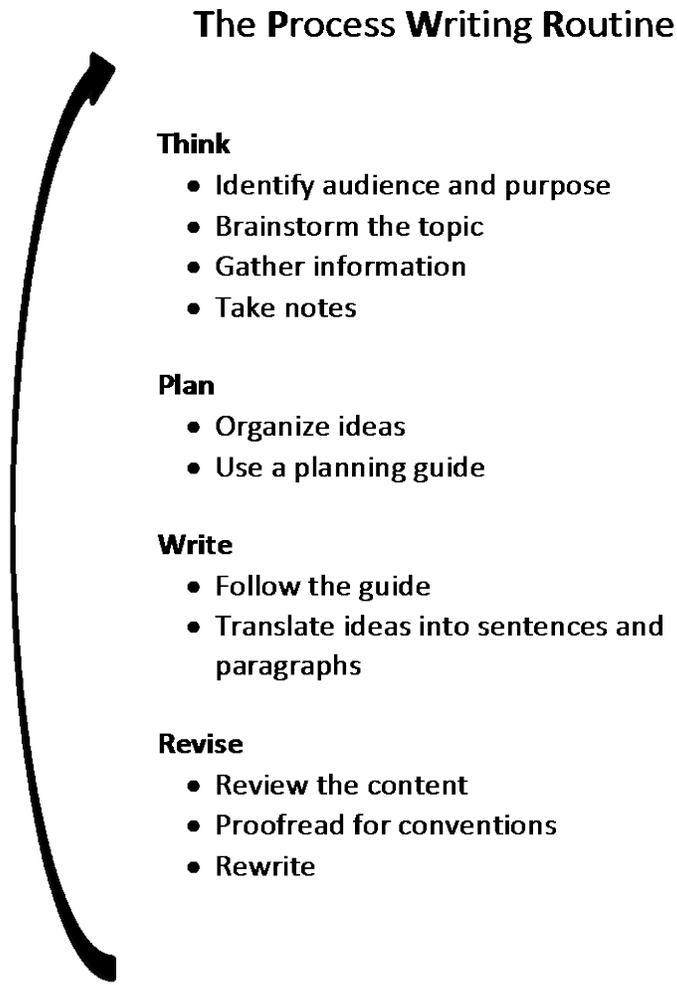
Sentences: Do I have any sentence fragments, sentence run-ons, or short, choppy sentences?		
Sentences: Can I add more information, better explain, or rearrange my wording to make my ideas clearer?		
Paragraphs: Did I use good paragraph structure, including indenting?		
Paragraphs: Are my main ideas represented by changes in paragraphs?		
Can I add transition words to make better connections?		

Conventions

Did I use correct capitalization?		
Did I use correct punctuation?		
Are there some words I might have spelled incorrectly?		
Other:		
Other:		

Source: Sedita, J. (2012) *The key writing routine*. Rowley, MA: Keys to Literacy.

Figure 5



Source: Source: Sedita, J. (2012) *The key writing routine*. Rowley, MA: Keys to Literacy.

Figure 6

Examples of Writing Strategies That Require Explicit Instruction

How to Apply These Pre-Writing Strategies:

- Identify the audience and purpose
- Brainstorm and narrow down a topic
- Gather information and take notes about a topic
- Generate a graphic organizer to plan before writing

How to Apply These Text-Production Strategies:

- Write complete sentences and organized paragraphs
- Apply text structure specific to narrative, informational, or argument writing
- Write introductions and conclusions
- Use transition words and phrases to make connections among sentences and paragraphs
- Use proper capitalization and punctuation

How to Apply These Revising and Editing Strategies:

- Review and revise a written draft for content
- Proofread and edit conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation)

Figure 7

Transition Words and Phrases

To indicate a time relationship	after, afterward, after that, at first, at this time, before, beginning with, beyond, during, earlier, ending with, eventually, finally, following, from then on, in the meantime, last, later, meanwhile, next, now, since, soon, then, until, while
To indicate spatial placement	below, beside, between, beyond, farther on, here, next to, parallel with
To list or present a series of ideas	after, after that, finally, first, lastly, next, second, third
To add information or continue a line of thought	also, another, besides, further, furthermore, in addition, likewise, moreover, similarly
To summarize or show conclusion	accordingly, finally, in conclusion, in other words, in short, to conclude, to sum up, to summarize
To show comparison	by comparison, compared to, in like manner, likewise, similarly
To show contrast	although, but, however, in contrast, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, unlike
To repeat information or stress a point	above all, in fact, in other words, most important, once again, to repeat
To provide an example or illustrate a point	for example, for instance, such as, to illustrate, that is
To show cause and effect	as a result, because, because of, caused by, consequently, for that reason, that is why, therefore, thus
To state the obvious	certainly, granted that, in fact, most certainly, naturally, obviously, of course, surely, undoubtedly, without a doubt

Source: Sedita, J. (2003) *The key comprehension routine*. Rowley, MA: Keys to Literacy.

Figure 8

Examples of Quick Writes

- Admit and exit tickets
- Informal notes/scribbles
- Margin notes while reading
- Lists of facts, steps, ideas
- Set of instructions or directions
- Filling in a graphic organizer, complete a set of notes
- Free-writing – write on a topic for a short, specified amount of time
- One-paragraph summary
- Write a definition in your own words
- Draw, label, or explain pictures/diagrams
- Short-answer questions
- 1- to 2-sentence reflections
- Sentence combining
- Short communication with someone else (note, email, tweet, text message)

Examples of Longer Writing Tasks

- Notes from reading, lecture, or classroom activity
- Multi-paragraph summary
- Compare and contrast compositions
- Answering open response questions requiring analysis and interpretation
- Essays
- News article
- Set of instructions
- Profile: detailed report or outline of an event or incident
- Reflection or analysis of information or events
- Letter
- Brochure
- Interview using prepared questions; write-up from an interview
- Journals or learning logs
 - Information logs – collecting and identifying material that can help students focus on, compare, and classify information
 - Content journals/response logs – record information learned about topics through reading, hands-on experiences, video, demonstrations, projects, field trips, etc.
 - “What are you thinking” journals
 - Dialogue journals with a partner or the teacher – sharing reflections
- Re-writing text from other points of view
- Creative writing – using short stories or poetry that provide personal and imaginative ways of exploring ideas and experiences.

Figure 9

The Key Writing Teaching Routine

<p>Set Writing Goals</p>	<p><u>Identify and clarify the writing task</u>: set specific product goals that include characteristics of the finished product. This includes identifying the audience and purpose, providing guidelines about length, suggestions about the type of writing to be used (e.g., narrative, informational, argument), suggested format, and requirements for the finished product.</p> <p><u>Identify specific student goals</u>: when possible, provide students individual objectives to focus on a particular aspect of their writing.</p> <p>Goal-setting can be the basis for grading writing assignments.</p>
<p>Show Models</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with opportunities to read, analyze, and emulate models of good writing. • Show models of every step in the writing process. • Provide models of what the completed writing assignment should look like.
<p>Provide Scaffolds</p>	<p>Provide supports for completing a writing task such as assignment guides, steps to follow, graphic organizers, two-column notes, or writing templates.</p>
<p>Provide Opportunities for Collaboration</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for students to work together and with the teacher to plan, draft, revise, and edit their writing. Collaboration engages students more in the writing process because writing is a social activity that is best learned in a community.</p>
<p>Provide Feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The feedback you give students matters as much as the writing instruction you provide. Without feedback, students won't learn how to improve their writing. • Students need to know if their writing is accurate and conveying the message. • Feedback can be from the teacher, peers, or the student himself. • Feedback should be more than marking mechanical errors on final drafts. • Teachers should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – provide feedback throughout the writing process – focus on the content of the writing first, mechanics later – provide feedback that is descriptive, specific, and based on the individual needs of the student – provide feedback checklists
<p>Provide Opportunities for Revision</p>	<p>Students need time to reflect on self-assessment and feedback from others, and then improve their drafts through revision. Students need explicit instruction in how to incorporate feedback to revise their writing. Not every writing task has to be revised to the point of "publication ready", but students will not improve their writing skills if they do not have some opportunities to revise based on feedback.</p>

Source: Sedita, J. (2012). *The key writing routine*. Rowley, MA: Keys to Literacy.