

Workshop 4

Writing

"When children move into the intermediate grades, the nature of the writing tasks that they face changes dramatically. Most children are learning new ways of writing expression. They are asked to create longer text, texts that are different in terms of their organization, their purpose, and their audience."

Nadeen Ruiz
Director of Elementary Education
Stanford University

How do students become effective writers? What challenges do they face in writing across the curriculum? In this session, literacy expert Nadeen Ruiz provides a structure for planning and implementing a writing program in the intermediate grades. You will learn how to connect specific teaching and assessment strategies to students' personal experiences and writing goals.

Learning Goals

At the end of this session, you will better understand how to:

- plan a framework for designing and managing an effective writing program
- use oral language and reading to support writing
- provide meaningful feedback to your students on their writing
- include students in the assessment of their writing
- foster independent writing

Materials Needed

- the Writing Instruction Chart found at the end of this chapter
- the Examine the Literature Response Chart found at the end of this chapter
- articles: "Struggling Readers Get Hooked on Writing" and "Children's Books as Models to Teach Writing Skills" found on the *Teaching Reading 3-5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/teachreading35
- the Using Exemplary Writing Chart found at the end of this chapter
- the Supporting Struggling Writers Chart found at the end of this chapter
- a journal or notebook

Facilitator: You may want to have several copies of charts and articles available for participants without Internet access.

Before You Watch

Session Preparation

To prepare for this workshop session, you will review the key terms, identify the strategies that you already use, and then read two articles on effective writing instruction.

Facilitator: Have participants complete these activities before arriving for the session.

Key Terms

- Editing
- High-stakes assessment
- Interactive journal
- Kid culture
- Portfolio
- Revision
- Text types

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary in the Appendix.



Notebook

What Do You Do?

To complete this activity, use the Writing Instruction Chart found at the end of this chapter.

Writing is critical to understanding the content and concepts of the intermediate-grade curriculum. Consider the ways you ask your students to write each day to demonstrate their understanding and personal response to the curriculum. Take notes on the Writing Instruction Chart, outlining how your students write in different subject areas and what strategies you use to help students improve in each area. You may want to include an additional curriculum area. Some examples are provided. If you are taking this workshop for credit, save the chart for your Literacy Practices Portfolio.

Think about these questions before completing the chart:

1. How do you integrate reading and writing?
2. How do you connect your writing assignments with your students' experiences?
3. What challenges do your students face in completing writing tasks?



Assignment

Examine the Literature

To complete this activity, use the Examine the Literature Response Chart found at the end of this chapter.

Read each article listed below, recording your ideas on the chart during and after reading. When you have finished, save your chart to submit as an assignment.

These articles can be found as downloadable PDFs on the *Teaching Reading 3-5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/teachreading35.

Before You Watch, cont'd.

Struggling Readers Get Hooked on Writing

In this article, Derek Furr suggests ways to support struggling writers as they write reports.

Furr, Derek. "Struggling Readers Get Hooked on Writing." *The Reading Teacher* 56, no. 6 (2003): 518-525.

Children's Books as Models to Teach Writing Skills

This article describes how teachers can use children's books to model the writing skills they are teaching.

McElveen, S. A., and C. C. Dierking. "Children's Books as Models to Teach Writing Skills." *The Reading Teacher* 54, no. 4 (2000-2001): 362-364.

Analyze the Video

Facilitator: When the workshop session begins, you may want to spend a few minutes discussing the key terms, participants' prior knowledge, and the readings.

Video Summary

In this video, Professor Nadeen Ruiz discusses components of an effective writing program, strategies teachers can use to help students improve, and effective assessment practices. You will also see classroom examples that illustrate the strategies and research Professor Ruiz describes. As you watch the video, consider the following questions:

- What contributes to an effective writing program?
- How can teachers foster independent writing?
- How is writing effectively assessed?



Notebook

Watch the Video

Watch the video, "Writing," taking notes as you watch. After you watch, jot down your answers to the questions below. If you prefer to watch the video in segments, pause the video when you see the next session heading.

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

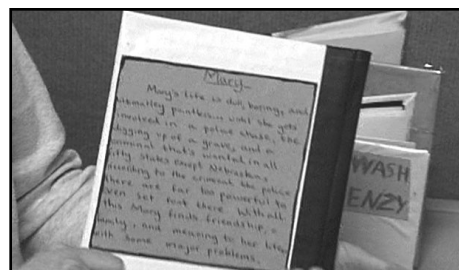
Video Segment 1: What Contributes to an Effective Writing Program? (approximate times: 00:00-13:00): If you are watching the video in segments, you will find this image at the beginning of the video.



In this segment, Professor Ruiz focuses on three components of an effective writing program: personal connections, conventions, and inventions.

- Discuss the components of an effective writing program and why they are important.
- How might you rearrange your schedule to create more time for students to write in general and, in particular, for students to write about their personal experiences?
- How can you create ways for students to make personal connections in different subject areas through writing?
- How can student work help you decide which conventions to teach?
- When can you promote student inventions and experimentation with different formats in writing?

Video Segment 2: How Can Teachers Foster Independent Writing? (approximate times: 13:00-21:00): If you are watching the video in segments, you will find this image approximately 13 minutes into the video.



In this segment, Professor Ruiz discusses the importance of personalized response to the content of student writing, the value of student discussion before writing, and the significance of using books as models of effective writing.

- What factors support student growth in writing?
- How does a personalized response encourage students in writing? What changes might you consider based on Professor Ruiz's comments and the classroom examples?
- Consider the opportunities you provide for student discussion before writing. How could you increase those opportunities? What kinds of writing exercises lend themselves to discussion?
- How can you provide models of writing for your students?
- How can you enhance the use of oral language to promote students' writing skills?

Video Segment 3: How Is Writing Effectively Assessed? (approximate times: 21:00-end): If you are watching the video in segments, you will find this image approximately 21 minutes into the video.



In the last video segment, Professor Ruiz suggests two different ways of assessing student writing: creating and maintaining an ongoing portfolio of student work, and monthly writing assessments.

- What are the benefits of the assessment strategies Professor Ruiz proposes?
- What benefits and challenges do portfolios present?
- Describe your experience with more formal assessments such as the monthly writing assessment Professor Ruiz describes. What are the challenges of incorporating formal assessments into your curriculum? How might you address them?

Extend Your Knowledge

Examine the Topic

The amount of time students have to write—in Writing Workshop and throughout the day—is a critical factor in students’ writing development. Read the following statements by Nadeen Ruiz, and by Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi. Think about how these statements relate to your classroom writing program and what questions you have about providing appropriate time for instruction and practice in writing.

Every writing expert, from Donald Graves to Lucy Calkins and Nanci Atwell, talks about time. We must have regular times for our students to write. We would hope that this is true on a daily basis, but, if it’s not possible, there will be certain days that are dedicated for writing. And children know when those writing times are going to occur.

Nadeen Ruiz

Through his books and his research, Donald Graves has had a major impact on the teaching of writing. One day a teacher asked Don, “How should I teach writing if I can only sandwich it in one day a week?” “Don’t bother,” Don replied bluntly. “One day a week will teach them to hate it. They’ll never get inside writing.”

It is crucial for students to have frequent, predictable time set aside for them to write. Plan to schedule a minimum of three days a week for about an hour each day. Four or five days is even better. It’s important that students know when the workshop is scheduled so that they are ready to meet it. When students know they’ll have a specific time to return to a piece of writing in progress, they think about that work when they are away from their desks.

You may be thinking, with a sense of panic, “Okay, but I don’t have three hours a week to spare!” Of course not. Yet many successful writing teachers have found ways to hurdle the time issue. They’ve done this by scrutinizing their schedules and pruning out other, less effective methods they are using to teach students writing skills.

Let’s assume you have tackled the time demon and carved out regular class time for the workshop. It’s also important for students to plan how they will use their time. The wording here is deliberate. When we suggest you schedule time to write, three days a week, we are referring to a workshop environment where student choice is prevalent; where students decide when a piece of writing is finished; where students set their own agendas and their own pace.

While individual teachers have added their own rituals and routines, three basic components should be present in your workshop: (1) time for whole-group instruction (often referred to as a mini-lesson), (2) time for writing, and (3) time for structured response.

Excerpted from Fletcher, R. and J. Portalupi, *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.



Notebook

Consider a typical week in your class, and answer the following questions:

- How much time do you schedule for student writing? Based on what you have read and viewed, should you add time to your daily or weekly schedule?
- How do you structure this time to support and advance student writing? How might you change it to increase opportunities for students to improve their writing?
- How do you balance student choice with teacher choice of writing topics?
- What challenges/questions do you have in scheduling adequate time for writing?
- What changes can you make?

Extend Your Knowledge, cont'd.



Interactive Activity

Evaluate Student Writing

Go to the *Teaching Reading 3-5* Web site at
www.learner.org/channel/workshops/teachreading35

Young writers often need equal amounts of encouragement and constructive criticism in order to stay motivated and improve their writing skills. This activity is designed to help you evaluate a piece of student writing, weigh the student's strengths and weaknesses, and decide which content and conventions are the most important things to address.

Tips for New Teachers



Tip

Supporting Young Writers

- Be positive. Emphasize first, and more frequently, what works in a piece, rather than what doesn't.
- Your first sentence gives a very clear introduction.
- I really like the way you used this specific word to let your reader know exactly what you meant.
- Choose the most important strengths and weaknesses in students' work when giving feedback.
- Be sure to comment on pieces in first-draft form, so that students have a chance to make changes. Comments given after a final draft is completed get less attention.
- Address the content of students' writing first, then deal with mechanics.
- Carve out time for students to read and respond to one another's writing, so that they learn how to be effective peer respondents.

Adapted from Graves, M. F., C. Juel, and B. B. Graves. *Teaching Reading in the 21st Century*, 446-448. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001.

Put It Into Practice

Choose Activities

In this section, you will build on what you have learned and develop strategies you can use in your own classroom. The following activities are designed to help you promote the writing development of all of your students. Choose one or both of the activities from the list below.

Activity 1: Using Exemplary Writing

In this activity, you will learn how to identify and use examples of good writing to help students improve specific skills.

Activity 2: Supporting Struggling Writers

In this activity, you will consider each stage of the writing process, the difficulties some of your students encounter, and specific teaching strategies you can use to help them improve.



Assignment

1. Using Exemplary Writing

To complete this activity, use the Using Exemplary Writing Chart found at the end of this chapter.

In order to learn how to write well, students need to be provided with a wide range of models for each of the writing skills that are taught. In this activity, you will begin to create a reference collection of children's books to use as models for teaching writing. When you have finished, save your written work to submit as an assignment.

1. Reread the article by McElveen and Dierking, focusing on the following ideas:
 - writing skills
 - books used as models
 - the structure of a mini-lesson
2. Choose three target writing skills that are important in your writing program, such as good leads, use of dialogue, and use of adjectives.
3. Find three books (or portions of books) that present clear examples of each target skill.
4. Fill in the Using Exemplary Writing Chart.
5. Develop a lesson with three parts:
 - a. Model and Demonstration
 - b. Guided Practice
 - c. Independent Application

For example, if your target skill is creating an engaging lead, you could read the first page of several books and discuss how they hook the reader. For guided practice, put a piece of writing on an overhead and have the group rewrite several different opening sentences and discuss how they improve readers' engagement. Finally, have students take a sample of their own writing and revise the lead.

Put It Into Practice, cont'd.



Assignment

2. Supporting Struggling Writers

To complete this activity, use the Supporting Struggling Writers Chart found at the end of this chapter.

During a writing workshop, students engage in various stages of the writing process: planning, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing/publishing. Students who struggle with writing often encounter difficulties in one or more of these stages. In this activity, you will consider each stage of the writing process, the difficulties some of your students encounter, and specific instructional supports you can provide. You may want to collaborate with a colleague in completing this activity. When you have finished, save your written work to submit as an assignment.

1. First, review the article by Derek Furr, "Struggling Readers Get Hooked on Writing."
2. Next, think about two or three of your students who struggle to compose a written piece. What specific difficulties do they have in each stage of the writing process?
3. Now, based on your readings and on the workshop video, what instructional strategies will assist your students during writing? Complete the Supporting Struggling Writers Chart to document your answers. Some examples are provided to assist you in your thinking.
4. Keep this list of instructional practices for planning writing activities in all subject areas. You may add to this list throughout the year.

Reflect on Your Learning



Assignment

What Did You Learn?

Consider what you have learned about effective writing instruction from Professor Ruiz's statements and the classroom examples. Write a summary of what you have learned. Use the questions below to guide your thinking. When you have finished, save your written work to submit as an assignment and, if you are taking this workshop for credit, include it in your Literacy Practices Portfolio.

- Which classroom practices from the video on writing instruction and assessment reflected what you currently do?
- Which practices or ideas were new to you?
- What changes do you plan to make?
- What support and/or resources will you need to implement these ideas?

Reflect on Your Learning, cont'd.



Assignment

Create a Literacy Practices Portfolio

Continue to build your portfolio of instructional practices. Your portfolio for this workshop session will include the following:

- current practices in place in your classroom
- a description of one change you have implemented
- changes you would like to make
- evidence of student learning

1. Current practices

Include your written response from What Do You Do? Then, describe how you teach writing throughout the day. Consider the following questions:

- How much time do students spend engaged in personal writing? How often do students have opportunities to respond to their reading during the literacy block?
- How do students respond in writing to math, science, and social studies content?
- What specific text types do you teach?
- How do you assess your students' writing?
- How do you provide feedback to students on their writing?
- How do you document your students' growth in writing throughout the year?

2. Changes you would like to make

Include your written response from What Did You Learn?

3. One change you have implemented

a. Make a change

Choose one instructional change that you described in What Did You Learn? to implement now. What is your thinking behind making this change? Describe in detail how it will be implemented (e.g., an instructional practice, a lesson plan, a plan for modeling writing with trade books, etc.). What are the expected outcomes for student learning with this change? Design a lesson in which you implement this change.

b. Reflect on the change

Write a brief reflection about what worked when you implemented this change and what you will change the next time you teach this lesson. (If you are taking this workshop during the summer, describe the learning goals and expected outcomes of this change.)

4. Evidence of student learning

Include evidence demonstrating student learning as a result of the change. Include writing samples from three students: a high-performing student, a grade-appropriate student, and a struggling writer. For each student, submit one writing sample completed before your lesson and one completed after your lesson. Explain how students demonstrated improved writing through your instruction. Listed below are suggested pieces of evidence:

- a journal entry
- a written response to reading
- a personal narrative
- expository writing (e.g., summary, research report, explanation of science or math problem, etc.)
- authentic writing (e.g., letters)

Assignments

If you are taking this workshop for graduate credit, submit the following assignments for Workshop 4: Writing:

1. Literature Response Chart

Read two articles on teaching writing and complete the Examine the Literature Response Chart.

2. Using Exemplary Writing

Learn how to identify and use examples of good writing to help students improve specific skills. Complete the Using Exemplary Writing Chart to document new strategies you plan to use.

3. Supporting Struggling Writers

Consider each stage of the writing process, the difficulties some of your students encounter, and specific teaching strategies you can use to help them improve. Then complete the Supporting Struggling Writers Chart to document new strategies you plan to use.

4. What Did You Learn?

Write a summary of the ideas and strategies you explored in this session.

5. Create a Literacy Practices Portfolio

If you are taking this workshop for credit, you will continue constructing your portfolio of instructional practices.

Related Resources

Print Resources

Bromley, K. "Building a Sound Writing Program." In *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction*, edited by L. M. Morrow, L. B. Gambrell, and M. Pressley, 143-165. New York: Guilford Press, 2003.

Calkins, L. M. *The Art of Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994.

Fletcher, R., and J. Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

Fountas, I., and G. S. Pinnell. *Guiding Readers and Writers, Grades 3-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

Graves, D. H. *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* (20th anniversary edition). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.

Routman, R. *Writing Essentials*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.

Rubin, R., and V. G. Carlan. "Using Writing to Understand Bilingual Children's Literacy Development." *The Reading Teacher* 58, no. 8 (May 2005): 728-739.

Web Resources

National Writing Project

<http://writingproject.org>

This site provides teachers with research-based information on writing instruction, ideas for using writing workshops, and sample units for teaching writing.

Write On Reader

<http://library.thinkquest.org/J001156/index.htm>

This site provides information on the history of writing, the writing process, forms of writing, a glossary of terms, different languages, and punctuation.

Writing with Writers: Scholastic Series

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/index.htm>

Children's authors of a variety of genres provide advice to students on moving through the writing process. Teacher guides and resources are available for writing units.

Young Writer Resources

<http://elisacarbhone.com/index.2ts?page-youngwriters>

This site includes a comprehensive list of children's magazines that publish student writing.

Teaching Reading 3-5

Writing > Before You Watch

Writing Instruction Chart

Components	Writing Tasks	Instruction
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> character description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using explicit adjectives
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning a personal narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using a graphic organizer to organize ideas
Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> writing a summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying key information
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Teaching Reading 3-5

Writing > Before You Watch

Examine the Literature Response Chart

Title	Big Ideas	Notes and Questions
1.		
2.		

Teaching Reading 3-5

Writing > Put It Into Practice

Using Exemplary Writing

Target Skill	Book Title	Pages
1.	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
2.	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
3.	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

Teaching Reading 3-5

Writing > Put It Into Practice

Supporting Struggling Writers

Stage of the Writing Process	Student Difficulties	Writing Tasks
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can't think of a topic • difficulty organizing ideas • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • administer interest inventory • list topics of interest in writing folder • provide partially completed graphic organizer with main ideas •
Drafting		
Revising		
Editing		
Sharing/Publishing		

Notes
