

**The Writing Workshop**  
**Creating Space for Writers, Writing, and Writing Instruction**  
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**Five Initial Assertions**

- If students aren't Engaging in the Act of Writing, it's Hard to Teach them to Write.
- Writers Learn to Write by Writing.
- Real Writers would not Tolerate the Things we Have Done in the Name of Developing
- Life Long Writers.
- Writing Instruction should address the Processes, Procedures, and Products of Writing.
- Writing is an Act of Discovery, not an Act of Transcription.

**Things to Develop In Young Writers**

Willingness to engage in the act of writing  
Sense of self as a writer  
Knowledge of resources for writing  
Ability to read like a writer  
Knowledge of workshop procedures  
Understanding of purposes and audiences for writing  
Knowledge of writing conventions  
Willingness to publish / share writing

**Writers Need...**

1. **To have read enough throughout their lifetimes to have internalized the rhythms of the written word.**
2. **Enough time and support to refine the ability to mimic those internalized rhythms.**

**The Writing Workshop**

A community of learners that establishes procedures, provides resources and instructional experiences, and fosters social interactions to develop and support writers and writing.

**Workshop Procedures...**

Adapt to the Needs of Writers  
Remain Simple, Predictable & Consistent  
Develop Over Time  
Focus on Student Independence & Responsibility  
Allow Teachers to Leave the Front of the Room  
Support Students' Writing Processes

## **Essential Elements of the Writing Workshop**

Writing Demonstrations (Mini Lessons)

Writer's Notebooks

Units of Study

Access to Mentor Texts

Access to Reference Materials

Opportunities to Read Like a Writer

Blocks of Time to Write

Time to Share and Discuss Writing & Ideas for Writing

Publications & Celebrations

## **Writing Processes**

Generating Ideas, Publishing, Drafting, Proofreading

### **Generating Ideas: Focus on Ideas / Purpose**

Writer's Notebook

Observing the World

Extensive Reading

Personal Experiences

Talking & Sharing Ideas

Wonderings

Research Projects

Publishing Possibilities

Webs / Brainstorms / Outlines

### **Drafting: Focus on Structure**

Get it Down on Paper

Skip Lines - Room to Revise

Spell So You Can Read It

Be Willing to Change Ideas

Sketches

Storyboards

### **Proofreading: Focus on Conventions**

Check Spelling

Check Punctuation

Check Capital Letters

Check Every Sentence

Check Format

Teacher as Editor

Is it Ready For the World?

## **Publishing: Focus on Audience**

Author's chair  
Class Books  
Newsletters  
Writing Contests  
Share with Family  
Read to Other Classes  
Post On-Line  
Hang on Walls

## **Author's Chair Prompts**

Genre  
Audience  
Purpose  
Publishing Options  
Response From Audience  
Last Word

## **The Writing Process**

Is slightly different for every writer and every piece of writing.  
Should not be seen as a Universal, Stage-Bound Linear process, which focuses on the products of writing and not the act of writing and the writer.  
Our processes and procedures should support writers, not get in their way.  
Revision is the basic process of writing – both internal revisions (in the head) and external (on the page).

## **Literature Enters the Writing Workshop**

Introduce What Writers Do – Living Like a Writer  
Launching Writer's Notebooks  
Understanding Text Structures & Genres  
Using Author's as Mentors – Craft  
Creating Criteria for Quality Writing  
Writing Instruction

## **Writing Lessons**

Are Short Demonstrations of Effective Writing  
Call attention to particular aspects of writing and the writing process  
Often focus on actual pieces of writing (students, teachers, published)  
Should make novice writers feel they can engage in the act of writing  
Optimal blend of support and challenge

## **Possible Writing Lesson Strands**

What it Means to Be a Writer  
Writers' Notebooks  
Workshop Procedures  
Writing Processes  
Genres of Writing  
Craft & Conventions  
Publication / Distribution

## **Lesson Strand #1: Developing a Sense of Self as a Writer**

Reading Like a Writer  
Studying Other Writers  
Writer's Notebooks  
Writing Everyday  
Reading Everyday  
Observing the World  
Noticing Language  
Playing with Language

## **Using Picturebooks About Writers and Writing**

Writers Write  
Writers Read  
Writers Use Notebooks  
Writers Do Research  
Writers Revise & Publish  
Writers Write Drafts  
Writers Sketch Ideas  
Writers Gather the World  
Writers Play with Language  
Writers Have Power

## **Class Chart: What Do Writers Do?**

Writers write everyday  
Writers keep ideas in their notebook  
Writers observe things and take notes  
Writers do research  
Writers talk to other writers about ideas  
Writers write things more than once  
Writers use the dictionary and thesaurus  
Writers pay attention to language  
Writers use their imagination  
Writers play with language  
Writers draw and sketch things

## **Lesson Strand #2: Writer's Notebooks**

Share Your Own Notebook

Other Writers Share their Notebooks

Invite Students to Buy Own Notebook

Make Lists of Possible Things to Include

Provide Time Specifically for Notebooks

Lessons on Keeping a Notebook

Teacher- Student Notebook Conferences

Sharing Notebooks in Author's Chair

## **Things We Put in Our Notebook**

Memories

Things we have done

Artwork - Drawings

Lists

Ideas / Notes

Observations

Poems

Newspaper clippings

Noticings / Wonderings

Research / Inquiry Projects

Story Beginnings

## **Lesson Strand #3: Authors and Illustrators as Mentors**

Reading Like a Writer

Immersion in a Particular Author or Illustrator's Work

Considering Genre and Focus

Considering Text Structures

Considering Craft Elements

This is NOT Cheating, It is What Writers DO!

**Units of Study:** Time spent with a focus on a particular genre, topic, theme, etc. to help students develop a sense of **Preferred Vision** for what a piece of writing can be.

## **Units of Study Framework**

### ***Exposure***

Immersion - Becoming Familiar with a Particular Form of Writing / Text

### ***Exploration***

Discussing the Craft, Elements and Structures of a Form of Writing / Text

### ***Engagement***

Engaging with a Particular Form of Writing / Text

### **Creating A Unit of Study**

- Decide What the Focus Is
- Negotiate Mandated Curriculum
- Consider Students' Prior Experiences
- Possible Links to the Curriculum
- Gather Resources
- Design Writing Lessons
- Publication Opportunities

### **Planning Units of Study**

- What genres or forms of writing are required at your grade level?
- What experiences have your students had, not had each year?
- What resources are available to you?
- What texts will you use as mentor texts?
- What are the "Big" Units of Study? What might be the lesser units of study?

### **A Unit of Study on Poetry**

Misconceptions of Poetry

All poems rhyme

All poems have specific formulas to follow

Poetry is for girls

All poems have hidden meanings

Poems have to be memorized

Great poems are written by dead white men

### **Exposure Phase**

- Read-Share-Discuss Poetry
- What Poetry Is... Bulletin Board
- Access to Poetry
- Poetic Vs. Generic Language
- Create Student Poetry Collection
- Search for Poetic Language

### **Writing Lessons: Exposure 1**

Reading Aloud / Discussing Poetry

Create a Poetry Library (Access)

Poem Du Jour

Copies for Students to Keep

Poems on Tape

Invited Readers Share Favorite Poems

## **Writing Lessons: Exposure 2**

Looking in Notebooks for Poetic Language

Noticings - Picture Book Hunt

Beginning Class Collections

Biographies and Info about Poets

Discovering Anthologies

Invitations to Write Poetry

## **Class Chart: What is Poetry?**

What Does Poetry Look Like?

shorter than a story

line breaks

thin & tall

What Does Poetry Sound Like?

rhythm & rhyme

song without music

Meaning

makes sense

tells us about the world

old ideas in new ways

## **Exploration Phase**

Criteria for Quality Poetry

Forms / Formats

Apply Criteria to our Poetry

Poetry "Exercises"

Exploring Poetic Devices

"Noticings" Charts

## **Writing Lessons: Exploration**

Create Criteria for Quality Writing

Explore Elements of Poetry

Poetry "Exercises"

Poetry ToolBoxes

Possible Poetry Formats

Author's (Poet's) Chair Continues

Expectations to Write Poetry

## **Poetry Toolbox 1: Meanings**

Imagery

Using Senses

Comparing Things

Choosing Poetic Language

Expressing Feelings

## **Poetry Toolbox 2: Sounds & Shapes**

Rhyme

Rhythm

Alliteration

Onomatopoeia

Repetition / Patterns

Songs

Line breaks

Unit of Study: Poetry

## **Engagement Phase**

- Present Publishing Opportunities
- Poetry Conferences
- Publishing Class Poetry Books
- Selecting Poetry for Portfolios
- Celebrations - Young Poets Day
- Deadlines Set for Completed Poems

## **Publishing Opportunities**

Class Poetry Books

Poetry Contests

Newsletters

Author's Chair

Young Poets' Day

Publish Own Anthology

School Collections

## **Units of Study: Persuasive & Argumentative Writing**

### *Persuasive*

Select most favorable evidence

Appeal to emotions

Use style to persuade

Purpose: to be convincing

(Same as propaganda and advertising)

### *Argument*

Is the heart of critical thinking and academic discourse

Requires logical appeals

Involves claims, evidence warrants, backing, and rebuttals



## **Elements of Argument**

- Claim
- Evidence
- Warrant (that explains how the evidence supports the claim)
- Backing (supporting the warrants)
- Qualifications and rebuttals or counter arguments that refute competing claims

## **Claims**

“an assertion of the truth of something”

In argument writing, claims should be conclusions based on supporting evidence, warrants and backing

Often taught as the thesis in an argument writing piece

Should arise from a question

## **Evidence**

Examine data

Ask questions based on data

Reexamine data

Try to answer the questions

Data that supports our answer = EVIDENCE

## **Warrants**

Common sense rules that people accept as generally true

Laws, scientific principles or studies, and thoughtfully argued definitions

## **Backing**

Support for the warrants

Extended definitions of the abstract qualities involved

## **Qualifications and Counter Arguments**

Dealing with statements that cannot be proved to be absolutely true

Qualifications for stating claims could include using words like *probably, very likely, almost certainly*

Counter claims are likely to exist, so arguments must be qualified

## **Getting Started...**

Begin with a problem (like a crime to be solved) that contains data about which claims may be made and for which warrants may be developed in order to teach the strategies for making arguments:

Analyzing evidence critically in light of existing knowledge

Interpreting the evidence to explain what it shows

Developing warrants that show why the evidence is relevant

Using the evidence and the explanations to solve the problem

## **Unit of Study: Multigenre Writing**

What is Multigenre Writing?

A complex, multilayered, multivoiced blend of genres, each revealing information about the topic, each self-contained making a point of its own, unconnected to other genres by conventional transitional devices. - Tom Romano

### **Multigenre Writing: Exposure**

Read-share-discuss multigenre writing

Chart lists of genres we know and use

Examine genres used so far this year

Read aloud student published projects

Begin to think of a topic

Multigenre Writing: Exploration

Highlight how multiple genres add layers of meaning

Read aloud exemplars

Small group investigations

Chart out ideas on purposes for multigenre writing

### **Multigenre Writing Proposal**

Name

Topic

Reason for choosing genre #1?

Definition of genre?

Perspective?

Audience?

Purpose for Writing?

### **Preparing for Publishing**

Teacher and student ponder these questions:

What is the most important theme in your project?

What piece demonstrates this idea?

Do you want to open or close with this piece?

Which pieces will help the reader to understand another piece?

Which order should they go in?

Does your introduction help the reader understand your project?

Publishing and Celebrating

Students set up projects like a museum

Invite parents and administrators in

## **Unit of Study: Balloon Speeches**

Choose a person to become  
Give students outline for their speech  
Introduction  
Background on person  
5 contributions to society  
Arguments against balloon mates  
Rebuttal

### **Exposure**

Watch videos of speeches  
Read famous speeches  
Teacher researches class biography  
Read biographies  
Explore web sights  
Record ideas in writer's notebook  
Experiment with language style of person

### **Exploration**

Research person  
Research other members of group  
Form research groups  
Students need to explore historical person from a variety of perspectives:  
What would the other members of the group say about them?  
Groups for Balloon Speech

### **Experimentation**

Introduction and closing for speech  
Impromptu speeches  
Research techniques  
Persuasive writing  
Consider your audience  
Practice with classmates not in your group  
From Persuasive Writing to Multigenre Writing  
Consider person from a variety of perspectives  
Brainstorm possible genres  
Begin a discussion about historical genres

## **Assessing Writers & Writing: Focus on Processes**

Observational Records  
Student - Teacher Conferences  
Status of the Class  
Writer's Notebook Conferences  
Author's Chair Observations

### **Observational Records**

Date and label each Record  
Context of the event  
No secrets  
Simple system, what works for you  
Accounts for every child  
Describe rather than evaluate  
Note student progress

### **Teacher - Student Conferences**

Attitudinal information  
Discuss how writing is going  
Share concerns  
Teacher as literary docent  
Make small suggestions  
Don't take over writing  
Take notes

## **Assessing Writers & Writing: Focus on Products**

Portfolios  
Writing Samples  
Observational Checklists  
Rubrics  
Publishing Conferences  
Author's Chair  
Young Author Days

### **Portfolios**

Exhibition  
Work in Progress  
Self-Evaluative  
Evaluation - Standardized  
Portfolios are collections of one's work designed to provide opportunities to reflect on progress or change over a period of time.

### **Launching Portfolios**

Start by collecting one's own work  
Invite guests to share "authentic" portfolios  
Create a place to collect work  
Set aside specific times for portfolio work (ritualize)  
Extended Audience Response

### **Writing Samples**

Use "objective measure" for focusing observations  
List what the writer CAN do  
Attention to genre, structure, content, audience, and purpose as well as conventions  
Impact - Success of Piece

### **Observational Checklists**

Constructed in Classrooms or Externally Mandated  
Designed to Help Guide Observation  
Should Remain Dynamic - Changing Over Time  
Statements Concerning What We Value about Writing

### **Rubrics**

Set of guidelines for distinguishing between levels of performance  
Descriptors for defining each level  
Benchmark examples are often provided  
Can be Used for Self-Evaluation of Products

### **Negotiating Criteria for Quality Writing**

Standards documents  
Writing Awards Criteria  
Teachers' Knowledge  
Examples from Literature  
6 Traits  
Community Ideas & Norms

### **Class Chart: Criteria for Quality Writing**

Poetic language / word choice  
Unique ideas / not generic  
Makes sense  
Interesting - want to finish reading it  
Has emotional impact  
Has details / answers readers' questions  
Proper sentence structure & format  
Uses the poetic devices we have learned  
Correct writing conventions

## **Dealing with Standardized Tests: Writing for a Prompt**

Work Backwards - From Rubric to Topic

Practice BEFORE Test Day

Focus on Conventions

Not necessarily from the Heart

What do the Test Graders Want to See?

Recheck work using Rubric

Address the Prompt

KISS - Keep It Simple Stupid

Write in First Person Wherever Possible

Include Beginning, Middle & End

Be Sure Writing is Legible

Proofread at least Twice!

## **So Where Do I Begin?**

Designate a Block of Time for Writing

Discuss / Read About What Writers Do

Keep a Notebook / Share Your Writing

Organize Writing Curriculum Into Units of Study

Multiple Contexts for Writing Lessons

Introduce Author's Chair

Consider Publishing Possibilities

Organize Celebrations

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