

# Empowering Writers

Writing Instruction K - 8

Professional Development

Teacher Resources

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# Welcome



## Demands of the Common Core: Writing for a Variety of Audiences and Purposes:

Narrative Writing – to entertain

- realistic fiction
- personal narrative
- imaginative fantasy

Expository Writing – to inform

- informative essay
- compare/contrast
- how-to

Opinion Writing – to share personal opinion

- distinguishing fact from opinion
- opinion essay
- reviews (book, movies, etc)
- expressing a stand on an issue

Response to Text – to comprehend, clarify

- response to fictional stories
- response to nonfiction texts

Research – gleaning facts to inform writing

- developing research questions
- using text conventions to locate information
- accessing data from charts, graphs, etc.
- internet searches
- taking notes
- interpreting notes
- organizing information in expository format

## Challenges of Teaching Writing:

- Most teachers have **no formal instruction** in “HOW” to teach writing
- **Management** of the traditional Writers’ Workshop is difficult.
- Everyone interprets **writing as a process** differently.
- There is little **consistency** in instruction across and between grade levels.
- Rarely do we have a **common vocabulary** for discussing writing.
- **Assessment** of student writing that effectively drives instruction is challenging without knowledge of specific skills
- Many students have difficulty recognizing the differences in purpose, salient features, and organizational strategies of narrative and expository and persuasive writing.

## Empowering Writers believes:

- Reading and writing are flip sides of the same coin. There needs to be a strong literature connection.
- Students always know more than they can articulate clearly.  
(Modeling helps build vocabulary!)
- The best way to learn how to write well is through imitation.  
(literary examples and teacher modeling)
- Good writers possess specific skills and techniques that can be practiced and learned. Every student has the potential to write well.
- Consistency and basic assured experiences across and between grade levels are necessary for success. Starting in kindergarten!
- Good writing shares some attributes across all genres - but each genre also requires specific instruction in purpose, audience, organization and elaboration.



## Importance of Professional Development:

- Most teachers have not had formal training in writing.
- While teachers recognize weak writing, they usually have few *specific* strategies for moving students forward.
- Schools need **consistency** in instruction across and between grade levels. This way you experience school-wide growth and develop a writing community.
- Good writing equals clear thinking - applies to all content areas.



# Benefits for Teachers:

- have access to a comprehensive range of developmentally appropriate, teacher-ready writing resources
- receive guidelines and encourage opportunities to look critically, collegially, and prescriptively at student writing
- meet collegially to discuss, share, and reflect on their instructional practices in writing (PLC)
- receive specific strategies and intervention tools to assist struggling writers
- have access to a variety of web and technology related resources to support them on-demand, when they need help

# Empowering Writers:

- Aligns with the Common Core
- Creates an environment that scaffolds instruction, and provides basic assured writing experiences, K-8
- Offers a comprehensive range of teacher-ready resources
- Offers on-going support for successful implementation
- Delivers Measurable Results - Case Studies

How?



Imagine you are a spring flower. Write about your experience as a flower. Be sure to include lots of details.

Think about being that flower:

What did you see?

What did you hear?

What did you feel?

What did you smell?

Gently, I picked up my head and turned it toward the warm morning sun. As the sun beat down on me, I stretched my leaves upwards. The sky was clear blue with puffy white clouds. The morning dew glistened as the tiny droplets that covered me started to disappear. I could hear the nearby sound of busy buzzing bees and the happy tweeting of the birds. I took a deep breath and noticed the sweet smell of spring.

# Methodology

1) Introduce and define the skill through the use of literature (mentor text)

2) Model

3) Guided Practice


Steps 1-3 over time leads to:

4) Application



## Powerful MODELING involves:

- asking specific, productive questions
- eliciting a wide range of student responses
- providing vivid vocabulary to best represent students' intentions
- charting the revision, “talking out loud”, articulating the thought processes of an author.

 **Guided Practice:** have students try the same skill in isolation, borrowing from the modeled sample.

Let's use the detail generating questions to revise this fifth grader's draft.



TOPIC: Redecorating

M.I. #1: color scheme

M.I. #2: entertainment items

Sept 8,

Would you like to change your room.

I would like to change my room.

I wish I could have my room a different color. I would like my room painted green-crackle. It would look a lot better than it is now. Right now it's plain white which doesn't look that well.

I need more things in my room. I would like to have big fish in my room with goldfish in it. Another thing is an green and comfortable, inflatable sofa. One other thing I want in my room is an electric train that will go around my room.

I need my room decorated with some things. I would like my room decorated with glow in the dark night sky stickers on my ceiling. Another thing I would like is a disco ball hanging from the ceiling in my room. One other thing I would like is my room decorated with is...

My room has changed a lot since I changed it. It looks a lot better than before. Why don't you come to my room and see how it looks when your done.

Let's look at the first two main ideas... First, the teacher will MODEL... then, the students will practice!



- Work in groups or independently.
- Apply detail generating questions "What does it "look" like? Why is it important?" to each detail.
- Use sentence starters if you need to (right).
- BONUS: Use a word referent in place of your particular detail.

- 1.) fish tank
- 2.) green, inflatable sofa
- 3.) electric train set

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Wouldn't you love to have \_\_\_\_\_  
Another essential would be \_\_\_\_\_  
I'd love to have \_\_\_\_\_  
One thing I'd insist on \_\_\_\_\_  
And don't forget \_\_\_\_\_  
Every kid's room should be equipped  
with \_\_\_\_\_  
Another must have item is \_\_\_\_\_  
Imagine \_\_\_\_\_  
Picture this: \_\_\_\_\_



*Let's see what fifth  
graders did with this same  
activity...*



Detail:  
fish tank!

Notice the way the students began the first sentence... it adds voice and style!

DeeDec Murphy 5-C

○ What does it look like?  
Why is it important?

### Fish Tank

○ I'd die without a fishtank. It's cylinder shape with smooth edges, is just right for my room. I'd have everything from Angel fish to Chinese fighting fish. The soothing sound of the blub, blub would help me get to sleep. I would like to have freshwater in my tank so I could have a catfish and see worms.



Detail:  
inflatable  
couch



Variation on a  
theme - how did this  
group begin?!

Note the use of the  
word referent...

Jennifer Mascio's

J.G.I.S.

- What does it look like?
- Why is it important?

\*jade green  
inflatable sofa

1.) I couldn't live without a ~~g.i.s.~~ <sup>stuffed</sup> (j.g.i.s) <sup>huge</sup> A big black  
~~hair~~ gorilla would lounge on my <sup>cushions</sup>. This  
light jade ~~portable~~ <sup>portable</sup> couch can be used as a raft  
in your refreshing pool. Take it to the beach  
and use it as a lounge chair.



Let's look at a complete  
student writing piece

①  
Do you know a creature who has a spiny tail and a hard brown hat? If you guessed the horseshoe crab you are right! Let's examine their appearance, investigate its habitat, and discover its history and the incredible facts that are waiting to be uncovered.

Note the use of informative verbs for each main idea.



## Main Idea - Appearance

2.

This amazing sea animal has a unique appearance. The horseshoe crab has a crusty, brown, hard, helmet shaped shell. The shell needs to be brown to blend in with the sand and to protect it from enemies. This sea shore dweller can weigh up to about 12 lbs <sup>and</sup> grow up to 2-3 feet long. Its long spiky tail helps it steer and move. It also helps it flip right side up if it's upside-down.

why is that important?

What does it "look" like? Why is it important?



Where does the horse shoe crab live?  
In the salt water ocean and the sandy sea shore  
of course. The tall grasses of the marshes  
help the crustacean <sup>invertebrates</sup> hide from predators there.  
These also live in the warm waters of the Asian-  
Mexican seashores, I'll <sup>anecdote</sup> never forget the time  
<sup>when</sup> I went to Mystic Aquarium to touch a  
real live horse shoe crab in its manmade  
seashore habitat.

Note the use of an anecdote.



Would you believe the many amazing facts about the spiky tailed creature? Can you believe that this seashore dweller lived 100 years before dinosaurs? Its relatives are the tick, scorpion, and spider, animals my mom certainly don't want in her house. Amazingly, this invertebrate can lay 20,000 eggs at one time. Gladly it doesn't need to take care of all these babies! You'll be shocked to learn that this amazing sea creature can swim upside-down.

Use An Amazing Fact



Grade 4 author used: hypothetical anecdote, word referents, informative verbs, definitive word/phrase, restatement of general topic sentence to craft an effective conclusion.

5.

So when you are at the seashore be sure to look for a horseshoe crab. You'll recognize this beach dweller ~~with~~ <sup>by</sup> its unusual traits, identify its habitat, and study the invertebrates' history and incredible facts. It certainly is a amazing creature.

"general" thesis statement



## Providing Sustainable Support Services...

- Video Support Series available to assist in the implementation of writing instruction on an on-demand basis.
- Content based webinars available tailored to specific needs.
- Free monthly e-newsletter for teachers with seasonal lessons.
- See [www.empoweringwriters.com](http://www.empoweringwriters.com) for informative articles, lesson plans, teaching tips, literature connections/bibliography, student samples, Parent's Corner, and contact info for specific content questions
- Our **Online Store** features a wide range of additional materials to enhance instruction.

•  Q and A??



Thank you!

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