

A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction

Grades 4 to 6

Grades 4 to 6



Volume Six

VOLUME SIX
Writing

2008

A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6

Volume One: Foundations of Literacy Instruction for the Junior Learner

1. The Junior Learner
2. Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy
3. Principles of Effective Literacy Instruction

Volume Two: Assessment

Volume Three: Planning and Classroom Management

1. Planning
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Volume Four: Oral Language

1. An Overview of Oral Language in the Junior Grades
2. Talking, Listening, and Thinking
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Volume Five: Reading

1. Reading in the Junior Grades
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Volume Six: Writing

1. Writing in the Junior Grades
2. Writing Instruction
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Volume 7: Media Literacy

1. An Overview of Media Literacy in the Junior Grades
2. Approaches to Teaching Media Literacy
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A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6

A Multi-volume Resource from the Ministry of Education

VOLUME SIX
Writing

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INTRODUCTION

A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6 is organized into several volumes. The first three volumes provide the foundation for effective literacy instruction and literacy learning in the junior grades. Subsequent volumes go more deeply into what to teach – and how – in order to help all students experience success.

Volume 6, “Writing”, builds on and extends the research findings and best practices in *Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario*. It provides a framework to support the implementation of learning activities that address the expectations in the Writing strand of the Language curriculum (revised, 2006). In addition, it provides in-depth discussion of writing theory and practice as used in classroom instruction and learning in the junior grades.

In Grades 4 to 6, writing starts to play an increasingly important role in *all* aspects of learning. The information in this volume therefore also addresses learning expectations in other Language strands – Oral Language, Reading, and Media Literacy – and in other subject areas, including science, social studies, mathematics, and health and physical education.

The pedagogical approach to writing instruction presented in this volume is based on Vygotsky’s theory of zones of cognitive development. Through modelling, demonstration, support, and guidance, teachers lead students from their zone of proximal development to a new zone of actual development in which they can work independently. (For a discussion of Vygotsky’s theory and its application, see “Zones of Cognitive Development” in Volume 1, Chapter 3 [pp. 78–79].) These instructional approaches provide the means for all students to participate in writing activities that involve higher-order thinking skills. Students who may struggle with the demands of writing will benefit from being offered more opportunities to make reading– writing–talking connections in a variety of forms and contexts. They need encouragement to use their full range of skills, talents, and abilities to gain new learning.

Students in the junior grades seek to make meaningful connections between what they learn in the classroom and what they experience in their lives outside school. They are eager to engage in discussions about issues that relate to their cultural backgrounds, their school, their local community, and the world. They are highly motivated to develop critical literacy skills that will help them understand the variables that influence all the *how*, *what*, and *why* ideas they encounter in books, in the media, and over the Internet. They thrive when exposed to a rich, literate environment and have easy access to high-quality reading materials. Daily opportunities to engage in writing tasks (recounting, requesting, explaining, persuading) help junior students develop literacy skills that are vital to success in all curriculum areas. A classroom environment that provides them with authentic writing tasks increases their motivation and gives intellectual stimulation. Allowing students sufficient time to engage in meaningful reflection and thoughtful responses is also an essential aspect of the balanced writing program.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS VOLUME

This volume is organized into four chapters. Each chapter integrates theory with practical application in order to build instructional knowledge on research-based principles. Sample lessons offer detailed plans that teachers may use as models or resources for classroom teaching and learning. These sample lessons acknowledge the complex and recursive nature of writing, and ensure that students use many skills within any one learning activity. Within each learning activity, teachers use modelling, demonstration, support, and guided practice to gradually shift to students the responsibility to use skills and strategies independently.

Chapter 1 examines the characteristics of junior writers – why, how, and what they write – and the implications of these characteristics for the planning and development of a writing program in the junior grades.

Chapter 2 discusses important aspects of an effective writing program and suggests how a writing workshop can be organized as a practical structure for writing lessons. The chapter describes the writing process and key instructional approaches and strategies.

Chapter 3 addresses how to plan the assessment of writing at different development stages and how to evaluate student achievement in writing. The chapter also discusses the assessment strategies that can be used before, during, and after teaching.

Chapter 4 offers sample lessons on the writing process and on focus and voice in writing. It also discusses in detail the benefits of focused study. This section provides day-by-day suggestions for conducting a number of focused studies, ranging from book reviews and explanatory writing to poetry writing and report writing.

KEY MESSAGES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

In each volume of the *Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction*, teachers are reminded of the key messages, listed in the chart on page 4, that are intended to help them address the goals of the junior literacy program. The key messages are fundamental ideas that underlie all the approaches, strategies, and tools described in this guide. They answer the question, “Why am I teaching this material, in this way, to this group of students, at this time?” Teachers can use these key messages to guide their practice.

WORKING TOWARDS EQUITABLE OUTCOMES FOR DIVERSE STUDENTS

All students, inclusive of their socio-economic, ethnocultural, or linguistic background, must have opportunities to learn and to grow, both cognitively and socially. When students can make personal connections to their learning, and when they feel secure in their learning environment, their true capacity will be realized in their achievement. A commitment to equity and inclusive instruction in Ontario classrooms is therefore critical to enabling all students to succeed in school and, consequently, to become productive and contributing members of society.

To create effective conditions for learning, teachers must take care to avoid all forms of bias and stereotyping in resources and learning activities, which can quickly alienate students and limit their learning. Teachers should be aware of the need to provide a variety of experiences and to encourage multiple perspectives, to promote an inclusive learning environment that recognizes the contributions of all students and ensures that each member of the class feels respected and valued. Learning activities and resources for teaching language should include examples, illustrations, and approaches that are diverse and that reflect the wide range of interests, knowledge, experiences, backgrounds, and learning styles of the students.

The following are some strategies for creating a learning environment that acknowledges and values the diversity of students and enables them to participate fully in the learning experience:

- providing writing opportunities with contexts that are meaningful to all students (e.g., literature that reflects students’ interests, home-life experiences, and cultural backgrounds, and writing activities that encourage students to draw from their personal experiences);
- using language resources and writing activities that reflect diverse ethnocultural groups, including Aboriginal peoples;
- using children’s literature that reflects various cultures and customs to engage students in meaningful writing experiences;

Key Messages for Teachers and Students

Effective literacy teachers in Grades 4 to 6 understand that:		Successful students in Grades 4 to 6 understand that:
Literacy instruction must be driven by equitable ongoing assessment.	→	Assessments are a way for the teacher and for me to understand how well I am learning.
Literacy instruction must be explicit and relevant to students' lives.	→	I learn best when I am reading and writing for a real purpose.
Literacy instruction must be differentiated, inclusive, and respectful of all students.	→	Some tasks will be difficult, but I can learn the strategies that I need to succeed.
Students' unique identities and diverse experiences can contribute greatly to a rich learning environment.	→	I have valuable knowledge and experiences that I can share with my classmates.
Talk is the foundation for literacy.	→	Accountable talk helps me to improve my reading, writing, and thinking.
Reading, writing, talking, listening, thinking, viewing, and representing are reciprocal literacy processes.	→	Reading will make me a better writer, and writing will make me a better reader. Talking, listening, and thinking will make me a better reader and writer.
Students need to become proficient in "multiliteracies", involving texts of all types.	→	I need to use my literacy skills to work with texts of all types.
Students need to learn that their literacy skills are transferable to all content areas.	→	I can apply the strategies and skills that I learn in Language to all subjects.
Students learn best when they are motivated and actively engaged in their learning.	→	If I am actively involved in making meaning when I read and write, I will improve my learning.
Explicit feedback given immediately after assessment leads to improved levels of student achievement.	→	The teacher's feedback will help me to improve my learning.
By gradually releasing responsibility for learning to students, teachers help students improve their learning and develop a greater level of independence.	→	The strategies I am learning will help me become a proficient and independent reader, writer, and communicator.
When students are encouraged to assess their own work and set their own goals, they take ownership of their learning.	→	I need to think about my learning and set goals for my learning.
Authentic literacy experiences help students develop skills and attitudes that will serve them throughout their lives and improve the quality of their lives.	→	Knowing how to read, write, and communicate effectively will help me be successful during my school years and throughout my future.
Metacognitive skills give students a growing awareness of themselves as learners and a greater degree of independence.	→	Thinking about my thinking will help me understand what I have learned, make decisions about my learning, and become a more independent learner.
Critical-thinking and critical-literacy skills are the tools students need in order to develop into active, responsible participants in the global community.	→	I need to think critically about all the texts I encounter, and ask myself questions about the accuracy and fairness of the stories or information in these texts.
Professional collaboration and ongoing learning help teachers develop a deeper, broader, more reflective understanding of effective instruction.	→	Working with others gives me new ideas and helps me to reflect on and expand my own thinking and learning.

- understanding and acknowledging customs and adjusting teaching strategies as necessary. For example, a student may come from a culture in which it is considered inappropriate for a child to ask for help, express opinions openly, or make direct eye contact with an adult;
- considering the appropriateness of references to holidays, celebrations, and traditions, and avoiding writing tasks that may pose a conflict with cultural beliefs or customs;
- providing clarification if the context of a learning activity is unfamiliar to students (e.g., defining idioms and explaining idiosyncratic terminology);
- evaluating the content of textbooks, children’s literature, and supplementary materials for cultural or gender bias;
- designing learning and assessment activities that allow students with various learning styles (e.g., auditory, visual, tactile/kinaesthetic) to fully demonstrate their knowledge and abilities;
- providing opportunities for students to engage in writing activities and conferences both independently and with others;
- providing opportunities for students to communicate orally and in writing in their home language (e.g., pairing English language learners with a first-language peer who also speaks English);
- using diagrams, pictures, manipulatives, sounds, and gestures to clarify and define vocabulary that may be new or challenging to English language learners.

For a full discussion of equity and diversity in the classroom, as well as a detailed checklist for providing inclusive language instruction, see pages 1 and 3–8 in Volume 3 of *A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction*.

PLANNING LANGUAGE PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Planning language programs to provide differentiated instruction and assessment for students with special education needs is a fundamental aspect of inclusive instruction. For a detailed discussion of the considerations involved in planning programs for students with special education needs, including the provision of accommodations and modified expectations, see the following:

- Volume 3 of this guide, *Planning and Classroom Management*, pages 9–10;
- *Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students With Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6, 2005*, pages. 117–122;
- *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language, 2006*, pages 24–26.

1

WRITING IN THE JUNIOR GRADES

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WRITING AND THE JUNIOR LEARNER

“When we explore conditions that allow students to learn about the writer’s craft, we cannot leave out the presence of literature: stories, songs, poems, and book. This may be the most crucial condition of all. The writing you get out of your students can only be as good as the classroom literature that surrounds and sustains it.”

(Fletcher and Portalupi, 1998, p. 10)

The junior grades are a time of excitement, new possibilities, and expanding horizons. Students enter the junior grades with a broad range of interests, questions, needs, and experiences. Writing becomes an important way for them to organize and express their thoughts, both inside the classroom and beyond it.

For teachers, the challenge is to plan broadly for all students across the junior grades while, at the same time, addressing the needs of specific students who bring unique experiences, interests, and abilities to the classroom.

Students in the junior grades have a greater chance of becoming proficient writers if they:

- know why they are writing;
- understand how texts are structured;
- participate actively in the writing process;
- build on prior experiences;
- extend their knowledge through experimentation;
- use effective writing strategies;
- self-monitor while writing; and
- learn to enjoy writing.

The more writing that students do and the more success they have in their writing, the more they will want to write and the better writers they will become.

Junior students need to learn that the ability to write proficiently goes beyond being able to compose a friendly note or a formal letter, an e-mail or a report – although proficiency in these areas is, of course, important. They must learn to see that writing can be creative, experimental, challenging, exciting, fun. Writing experiences can open up whole new worlds of self-expression.

Why Junior Students Write

Junior students write to:

- communicate with others for a variety of specific purposes;
- record and retain information;
- express thoughts, ideas, and feelings;
- respond to material they have read;
- identify and solve problems;
- reflect on their own learning.

The chart below lists reasons why junior students write and the ways in which teachers provide support.

Reasons Why Junior Students Write

Students Write:	Teachers Provide:
<p>For enjoyment</p> <p>Junior writers like to express their ideas and opinions in writing. Their written stories are imaginative and as students learn to master narrative elements their stories become increasingly complex.</p> <p>They enjoy non-fiction writing when it relates to their own interests and pursuits.</p>	<p>Resources and time for independent writing</p> <p>Teachers offer a range of support materials, high-quality learning resources, and rich literature as exemplary models of writing genres.</p> <p>They provide students with many and varied opportunities to engage in fiction and non-fiction writing.</p>
<p>For self-expression</p> <p>As junior writers begin to develop an understanding of the world and their place in it, their writing reflects their curiosity, interpretations, experiences, analyses, and judgements.</p>	<p>Demonstrations of writing, using content that is relevant and inclusive</p> <p>Teachers model the process of writing as a vehicle for personal expression. The writing may be a response to literature that reflects cultural or social backgrounds with which students are familiar, or it might stem from personal experiences.</p>
<p>To explore issues</p> <p>As students learn about the world around them, they need opportunities to reflect on, discuss, and record their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs and to research issues.</p> <p>Students deepen their understandings and raise their level of awareness when they write to comment on, compare, contrast, and evaluate.</p>	<p>Critical literacy strategies to help explore social issues</p> <p>Teachers expose students to social issues that require them to think critically, discuss logically, and draw conclusions. They guide this process by giving time for reflection, by teaching questioning skills, and by encouraging students to take action. Through carefully constructed writing activities, students develop their own perspectives and learn to support and defend their points of view.</p>

(continued)

Reasons Why Junior Students Write – Continued

Students Write:	Teachers Provide:
<p>To synthesize information</p> <p>Junior students are eager for knowledge and want to learn more about topics that excite their interest. By synthesizing information, they are able to make meaningful connections between text and their personal understanding and, in doing so, build their skills as writers and increase their knowledge.</p>	<p>Skills and strategies to manage and produce information</p> <p>Teachers teach students how to access, evaluate, and use information from a variety of sources for fiction and non-fiction writing, presentations, and reviews. They ensure that students gather relevant and inclusive information that uses unbiased language and provides balanced perspectives.</p>
<p>To inform</p> <p>Junior students read more-complex informational text, related both to academic subjects and to personal interests. They adapt and apply new knowledge to their non-fiction and fictional writing. As they develop confidence in their abilities as writers, they seek many opportunities to use writing as a tool to inform.</p>	<p>Opportunities for students to create informative text</p> <p>Teachers give students opportunities to develop text that informs or educates readers about a particular concept, situation, or event. Students are guided in the creation of informational text. What junior students write about and how it is expressed should have the capacity to inform and transform readers.</p>
<p>To persuade others</p> <p>Junior students are able to think critically about the local community and the world at large. They can construct meaningful letters, essays, posters, and web pages that convey messages intended to effect change and improve society.</p>	<p>Appropriate contexts for persuasive writing</p> <p>Teachers help students to develop persuasive skills by teaching them how to identify and strengthen their point of view. Through lessons on the craft of writing, teachers make students aware of the importance of voice, word choice, and flow. Teachers provide appropriate contexts for students to explore their perspectives while respecting other points of view.</p>
<p>To initiate social change</p> <p>By using writing to, for instance, make requests or launch petitions on behalf of others, junior student are empowered to embrace the role of responsible and active citizens. They are eager to use their writing to effect change for the betterment and protection of people, animals, and the environment.</p>	<p>Strategies for enabling responsive action</p> <p>Teachers use literature to introduce situations that require responsive action. Using various written text forms, they provide opportunities for students to request corrective action for situations that seem unsafe or unjust. Students learn that such requests can initiate, reinforce, and advance social change.</p>

Junior writers thrive when they have opportunities during peer and class conferencing to share their writing discoveries, challenges, and triumphs. They write best when they write with a clear purpose, for a specified audience, and with a thorough understanding of the writing form they are using. They soon realize that the ability to write for a variety of purposes is a life skill they must acquire.

How Junior Students Write

Junior writers draw on their experiences with a rich variety of texts to generate ideas, organize their thinking, and compose their writing pieces. The process of composition begins with having many opportunities to listen to, read, and discuss mentor texts. Junior students need time to talk about what they will write about. Talking allows them to plan and assess their ideas, apply their thinking, and experiment with the content of

phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Feedback during conferencing can equip them with information and strategies that lead to revisions and improvements to the written piece. When junior writers listen to and read high-quality literature before they begin to write, they internalize much more than content. Rich texts influence *what* students write about and *how* they write. Carefully selected texts can establish a solid foundation for the writing of the junior student.

What Junior Students Write

When junior students make personal connections with what they are hearing, seeing, or learning, they become motivated to write. When engaged in writing, they organize their thoughts, think critically, make personal connections, and learn how to express their opinions and ideas with clarity. Through daily writing opportunities and by studying writing as a craft, they are able to improve and extend their skills. As they gain mastery over the writing process, they begin to develop voice, perspective, and style in their writing and are motivated to experiment with the written word. Junior writers will devote significant amounts of time to writing about their thoughts, feelings, opinions, and imaginings when they can make a connection between writing activities and their personal interests and experiences. Timely feedback from teachers helps students to stay committed to the task.

Research has shown that the study and mastery of various forms of non-fiction writing can have a positive impact on student achievement.

What Junior Students Write

Form of Writing	Characteristics of the Form
Explanation: to explain an experience or event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – describes a cause-and-effect relationship; – progresses sequentially; – uses the timeless present tense; – uses an impersonal, objective tone.
Feature article: to impart factual information to readers in order to inform them about a topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – presents information in an organized, logical way; – includes facts, statistics, examples, anecdotes, and/or quotes from experts on the topic; – often breaks up the text with subheadings; – organizes and presents information in an accessible and interesting way.
Letter: to communicate with an individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – may be informal (to a friend) or formal (to a business or organization); – follows a specific format: heading (a letterhead, the sender's address, and the date), inside address (the recipient's address), salutation, body, complimentary closing, signature; – may share or ask for information.

(continued)

What Junior Students Write – Continued

Form of Writing	Characteristics of the Form
<p>Narrative: to entertain, engage, provide an escape into a different world or time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – may be fictitious or true; – progresses sequentially; – features one or more characters; – contains dialogue or descriptive language; – is usually written in the past tense; – tends to have a defined setting; – describes a storyline, plot, or problem that is usually resolved by the end of the story.
<p>Personal narrative: to tell a story about an event in one’s own life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – establishes a situation or problem early in the story and usually resolves it by the end; – develops the characters; – develops the setting; – states or implies the importance of the story.
<p>Persuasive text: to present an argument or point of view, to influence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – begins with a position statement supported by evidence and examples; – attempts to persuade by using logic and appealing to the reader’s emotions or sense of moral justice; – may include research data; – may compare or contrast.
<p>Poetry: to express thoughts, feelings, imaginings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – may be in informal or formal verse; – may rhyme; – may follow a specific rhythm or pattern; – is expressive: uses descriptive, emotive, and/or figurative language; – may include personification; – creates imagery, using vivid and powerful but concise language.
<p>Presentation: to explain a topic with the help of slides containing images and short text blocks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – allows writer to use visual images to communicate ideas; – may involve the use of visual, written, and digital elements; – combines an oral explanation with visual information.
<p>Procedure: to give instructions for how to do something</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – organizes information in logical, step-by-step sequence; – progresses sequentially; – uses words that relate to time (e.g., <i>first, then, next, before</i>); – presents factual content in an objective manner.

What Junior Students Write – Continued

Form of Writing	Characteristics of the Form
<p>Recount: to retell an event or situation (<i>Note:</i> Biography is a recount of all or part of another person’s life.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – uses the past tense; – progresses sequentially; – includes a setting, events, and a summary; – uses active verbs; – uses words that relate to time (e.g., <i>when, then, later, before</i>); – contains defined characters or participants.
<p>Report: to provide a precise, organized, factual record on a specific topic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – uses precise, subject-specific language; – uses an impersonal, objective tone; – uses a logical organization of ideas; – includes a definition, description, or summary of the topic as clarification for the audience; – documents primary and secondary sources of information; – cites evidence to support arguments or claims.
<p>Review: to provide an evaluation or judgement of a text, presentation, or event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – explains what a text, presentation, or event is about; – lists features and summarizes content; – includes an evaluation that describes what was liked/disliked about the text, presentation, or event; – may include personal feelings; – uses the past tense; – gives reasons why the reviewer arrived at a positive, negative, or indifferent evaluation or judgement.
<p>Short story: to relate an event in a fictional character’s life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – establishes a situation or problem early in the writing and usually resolves it by the end; – focuses on one or more happenings, in time sequence; – introduces and develops characters over time; – develops a setting over time; – states or implies the importance of the story.
<p>Storyboarding: to give a rough idea of the content and the sequence of events in a story</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – communicates ideas by way of images while telling a story in sequence; – involves selecting and summarizing the important information in a story; – can be a combination of quick sketches and notes.
<p>Summary: to provide a brief synopsis of the main ideas in a text</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – progresses sequentially; – uses specific words and phrases from the text being summarized; – involves distilling the information to arrive at the main points, and capturing the most important ideas.

THE WRITING PROGRAM

“Decades of research (Langer & Arlington, 1992) have made it clear that, if the goal of ... instruction is to improve writing, instruction must take place in the context of real writing ... We have far more children who know how to spell and punctuate than know how to write thoughtfully and precisely. There is no shortcut to good writing.”

(Cunningham and Allington, 2003, p. 133)

An effective writing program does many things. It ensures that students develop and apply strategies that allow them to write with understanding, skill, and confidence in a variety of genres and styles. It offers many opportunities for students to write independently. It encourages them to question and think critically, and to reflect on what they and others have written. It motivates them to express their ideas, feelings, beliefs, and opinions and empowers them to become writers who take risks. It promotes the continuous development of writing skills and, in doing so, fosters a love of writing.

An effective writing program includes **instruction** that:

- is differentiated to meet the learning needs of all students and to accommodate a variety of learning styles;
- balances teacher-directed instruction and independent writing;
- develops strategies to support writing;
- scaffolds learning to provide appropriate levels of support before, during, and after writing;
- integrates writing instruction across the curriculum;
- encourages higher-order thinking;
- promotes critical literacy;
- encourages cooperative learning;
- values student talk, engagement, and reflection;
- creates a climate of inquiry;
- includes frequent opportunities to experience high-quality literary and informational texts (mentor texts) through teacher read-alouds; and
- provides opportunities to learn to write in many different forms or genres (e.g., explanatory writing, narrative, recounts, reviews).

The program includes **assessment** that:

- is varied, equitable, and ongoing;
- provides immediate, explicit feedback with appropriate interventions;
- involves the students in self- and peer assessment and in the development of assessment criteria;
- helps students reflect on how to improve their writing;
- provides strategies for improving.

The program also includes **resources** that:

- meet the learning needs of all students;
- rouse the interest of all students;
- reflect the multimedia and technological world of the students;
- reflect both genders;
- reflect cultural diversity;
- include a variety of forms, genres, and topics.

Instruction and **assessment** are discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively.

A rich selection of **resources** (mentor texts) is an invaluable asset in the junior classroom. When developing writing tasks and activities, teachers begin by selecting mentor texts that reflect the needs, interests, learning styles, background knowledge, and diversity of cultural experiences that their students bring to the classroom. These texts motivate students to explore their own writing skills, take risks, and engage in the process of creating compositions. The sample lessons in Chapter 4 make reference to specific mentor texts and sometimes include an appendix of suggested texts.

2

WRITING INSTRUCTION

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WRITER'S WORKSHOP

Writing is an essential literacy tool. It is used to convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas, as well as opinions on, and responses to, what has been read, seen, or experienced. Explicit writing instruction enables junior students to learn to think critically about their writing, and to improve their writing skills. Students learn to communicate clearly, increase their understanding of different forms, genres, and formats of writing, and strengthen their voice as writers.

Effective writing instruction includes opportunities to read, speak, and write.

"The purpose of the writing workshop is to give students opportunities to write within the school day and to provide appropriate, intensive, targeted instruction to the whole group, small groups and individuals."

(Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 50)

Writer's workshop is an instructional strategy and organizational framework for language arts instruction. The workshop consists of a *mini-lesson* by the teacher, *independent writing time*, during which students are given opportunities to write during the school day while being supported by the teacher, and a *sharing session*. During the sustained writing time, students write and respond to reading while the teacher provides precise writing instruction and feedback to individuals and small groups.

Benefits

Writer's workshop:

- provides in-depth writing experiences;
- enables students to develop a command of spelling, phraseology, paragraph construction, and other writing skills;
- helps students develop an awareness of audience while they are writing;
- develops students' ability to conceptualize, tell stories, question, persuade, and synthesize their thoughts in text;
- improves writing fluency and confidence;
- fosters a genuine feel for the power and purpose of writing;
- produces independent writers.

Structure of Writer’s Workshop

1. *Mini-lesson* (10–20 minutes)

Students are gathered together for explicit instruction on a specific writing strategy.

May include: modelled writing, shared writing, guided writing, a teacher read-aloud, the use of mentor texts.

2. *Status of the Class* (2–3 minutes)

The teacher quickly determines the status of each student’s writing work and current needs.

3. *Independent Work Time/Conferring* (25–40 minutes)

Students work at all stages of the writing process and participate in peer and teacher conferences.

Always includes: sustained writing time of at least 30 minutes.

May include: independent writing, “quick writes” (see p. 46), writer’s notebooks (see p. 47), writing partners, writing response groups, shared writing, guided writing, the use of mentor texts, writing celebration.

4. *Sharing Sessions* (5–15 minutes)

Students gather to read what they have written or to share ideas that occurred to them during the workshop.

May include: sharing what was written, sharing how the writing was developed, help with problem solving.

May focus on: one student’s work, several students’ work, the results of teacher observation during conferences.

Teaching During Writer’s Workshop

“Your passion, patience, humour, your faith in the writers you work with will be crucial to making your writing workshop come alive.”

(Fletcher and Portalupi, 2001, p. xii)

To start a writer’s workshop session, the teacher gives a **mini-lesson** to the entire class, explicitly teaching or demonstrating a selected topic. Routines and expectations, the conventions of writing (skills and strategies), and the craft of writing are all prime candidates for mini-lessons.

Some Ideas for Teaching Points

Classroom Routines or Expectations	
<p><i>The teacher explains and/or models:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the purpose of mini-lessons • the purpose of Status of the Class • good work habits • getting supplies • using classroom supplies/writing resources • working independently • asking for help during writing • talking during writer’s workshop • expectations of quality work • the expectation of daily writing • why conversation about writing is important • the value of conferences • giving feedback to peers • asking for help • using the writer’s notebook • using the notebook during conferences with teacher and peers to monitor progress • cooperating during writer’s workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problem solving • sharing the workspace • respecting the working style of others • getting help with editing • using editing checklists and anchor charts • using editing tools in the classroom • how a thesaurus and dictionary work • technical support options available to students for writing (e.g., computer programs) • using a computer to edit • ways to celebrate writing • ways to reflect on writing to examine growth • what goes into the literacy portfolio • publishing • publishing routines • storing and managing writing materials and written work • organizing and dating writing collections
Craft of Writing	
<p><i>The teacher explicitly teaches and models:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ways to find a writing topic • how to narrow the topic • rehearsing a topic by sketching • using graphic organizers to develop a topic • writing a first draft • doing “quick writes” to get ideas down • the writing process • thinking while composing • reasons for revising • revising while writing • using rereading as a tool to improve writing • the importance of using action verbs and concrete nouns • how to use action verbs and concrete nouns • qualities of good writing • ways to explore voice, content/ideas, structure, sentence flow, word choice, conventions, presentation • how to focus content, reorganize, and revise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to help the reader visualize the setting, characters, and action • how to add feeling to writing • how to develop the setting (“show, don’t tell”) • how to explore structure • how to start in the middle of the action • how to narrate in writing • how to zoom in on important events • how to back up statements with examples • meeting the needs of the audience • how to use a writer’s notebook and why • different genres • selecting an appropriate form for the purpose • using mentor texts • using stories as springboards to explore forms of writing • using stories as springboards to explore voice in writing

Some Ideas for Teaching Points – Continued

Conventions of Writing (skills and strategies)

The teacher explicitly teaches:

- the importance of legible handwriting
- the use of the dictionary, thesaurus
- using anchor charts to check skills and strategies
- how to add dialogue and conversation to writing
- how to use quotation marks
- developing a coherent flow in sentences and paragraphs
- rules of grammar
- rules of punctuation
- how to use apostrophes in contractions and possessives
- rules of capitalization
- note-taking, highlighting, and summarizing as inquiry
- how to create a bibliography
- how to make language more precise
- keeping the audience in mind
- spelling of high-frequency words
- choosing illustrations to match the story
- using rubrics, checklists to improve writing
- using templates or organizers to help explore different writing forms
- using mentor texts to explore different forms and styles of writing
- using mentor texts to explore conventions used by authors
- using common symbols and signs while revising
- matching language to text types and forms
- creating organization and meaning for the reader by using bold or italic text, boxes, captions for images, etc.
- what to look for when doing a final edit
- format options for publishing
- title page, dedication page, author information

For **Status of the Class**, the teacher uses a tally sheet to record where individual students have got to in the writing process and what they will be working on that day during independent writing time. The teacher then determines which students need assistance and which may be grouped for conferencing or additional teaching.

For **independent writing time**, the teacher schedules at least 30 minutes of sustained, silent writing time for students, during which they plan, draft, revise, or edit their writing while the teacher monitors their work. The students' writer's notebooks are often used as a source of inspiration and as a place to accumulate research findings. Students choose topics and genres that interest them and that they understand and/or want to explore, and then they write for real audiences. During this time, the teacher confers with individual students or with groups of students who need further support.

Independent writing time is followed by a **sharing session** in which the students read what they have written and celebrate their writing progress. The teacher supports students by acknowledging their progress and providing explicit feedback based on observed strengths and needs. During the sharing session, students discuss the new strategies they learned and the challenges they faced as they attempted to apply the strategies. The teacher celebrates the risks students have taken as they created new pieces of writing. Good questions to ask during a sharing session are:

Who tried something new?

Who rewrote a part that didn't work?

Who has a great lead?

Who has a sentence that really works well?

Who wrote a “very best piece ever” today?

Who is experiencing a block and would like some ideas or strategies to help you work through it?

Student writing may be celebrated in various ways. It might be shared orally with younger children in the school or might be published in school newspapers, either online or in hard copy. Such sharing provides students with an authentic audience and with further feedback. When students see the kinds of achievements that are celebrated during sharing time, they come to understand what is valued in writing. Students need to learn that writers celebrate both the process and the publishing of writing.

Student-selected “best work” and other pieces showing evidence of progress in writing are collected in students’ literacy portfolios, to which they and the teacher have access.

“The share time and the minilesson are our best opportunities to reach the whole class and to reinforce successful teaching strategies.”

(Davis and Hill, 2003, p. 35)

Managing Independent Writing Time

It is easier for students to learn to write independently if the teacher:

- explicitly teaches the classroom routines and behaviours expected during independent writing time. Most students work best in a relatively quiet classroom, and teachers need to be clear about what a relatively quiet classroom means. Model how to get supplies, confer with a peer, listen and give helpful responses, research a topic, sharpen pencils, request a conference, and brainstorm and share with a partner.
- develops and posts anchor charts related to the work the students will be doing independently. Anchor charts should include:
 - expected rules of behaviour;
 - instructions for independently handling tasks (e.g., getting materials and supplies during the workshop time period);
 - writing reminders (e.g., the structures and characteristics of specific kinds of writing).

Sample Anchor Chart

Independent Writing Time

...looks like:	...sounds like:
<p>Students are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• focusing on the task at hand• following instructions• working collaboratively with a partner• working on different phases of the writing process• making progress• being courteous, not distracting others• following pre-established routines• exercising good judgement and solving problems independently• working on writing during the entire time• rereading entries in their writer's notebook, finding a theme or beginning point, drafting a piece, or adding to a piece to be taken through to publication.	<p>Students are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• talking in a quiet hum• maintaining the quiet that students need for creative work• exploring topics, discussing writing, sharing, getting feedback• conferencing with individuals or groups• possibly asking: <i>Can you explain this to me?</i> <i>May I ask you a question?</i> <i>Do you have a moment to listen to my writing?</i>

Conducting Teacher Read-Alouds

"... the teacher reads aloud to students; but both the teacher and the students think about, talk about, and respond to the text. Both the reader (in this case, the teacher) and the listeners are active. The teacher is reading the words aloud, but in every other way the students are processing the language, ideas and meaning of the text."

(Fountas and Pinnell, 2006, p. 216)

Teacher read-alouds are a critical component of the writing program and play an important role in writer's workshop. During a mini-lesson, the teacher reads aloud from literature and informational texts that have been expressly chosen to provide junior writers with examples of well-crafted work by accomplished authors and writers.

Benefits

The teacher read-aloud:

- introduces students to selected mentor texts;
- provides models for different writing genres;
- contributes to the development of reading comprehension, literary knowledge, fluency, thinking, and vocabulary development, and demonstrates the characteristics of good writing;
- enables junior writers to learn from other writers.

Providing Feedback

“A successful writing program requires a knowledgeable, organized teacher with excellent classroom management skills. Mostly, students need lots of time in which to write, a say in what they write about, strategies that allow them to problem solve independently (plan, revise, edit), and helpful response.”

(Routman, 2005, p. 173)

Teachers can provide feedback to students by:

- *modelling what students need to work on next.* Feedback in the form of further explicit instruction allows students to improve skills and clarify ideas and understandings.
- *asking students to summarize, review, or reflect on the main points of the lessons, using classroom-developed tools.* After the lesson and practice time, the teacher might direct students to think about the main points of the lesson. Students can summarize their thinking by using graphic organizers to capture the important concepts or by writing in a response journal to record the key ideas in the lesson.
- *giving written or oral feedback on successes in writing.* The teacher might provide specific feedback on a successful writing attempt. For a good piece of persuasive writing, feedback comments might be:
 - *The lead position statement is clearly stated and the position is maintained throughout the piece.*
 - *The evidence you have provided clearly supports the position taken. You have cited three or more examples of supporting evidence, which is very good.*
 - *The writing is clearly organized and coherently developed.*
 - *The concluding statement paraphrases the main points, restates the position, and invites action.*
 - *The sentences make sense and the punctuation, spelling, and capitalization are correct. Good work!*
- *reflecting with the students on how they met the specific criteria for the writing pieces.* The teacher should make the connection between criteria that were met and those that were not, and explain the next steps to be taken.

Conducting Teacher–Student Conferences

Conferencing gives the teacher the opportunity to work one-on-one with a student and focus on the process and the student’s next steps. The explicit instruction during a writing conference is designed to promote student reflection and to plant a seed that may be cultivated in future writing. By interacting with the writer, teachers discover what it is that the writer is trying to do and say, and can then decide on a teaching point to help the writer improve the next piece of writing.

Teachers have many options for conferencing. They might do roving or scheduled conferences during independent writing, or else use a “sign-up” sheet that allows students to request a conference when they are in need of help. The teacher might also schedule specific students for a conference when there is a need to “tune in” to their progress, or when several students demonstrate similar instructional needs.

Many conferences are short, lasting three to four minutes; others may require more time. During a conference, teachers:

- ask questions to get writers to talk about their work.
- focus first on the message of the written piece, and ignore errors.
- point out what the writer has done well.
- provide suggestions for revising, editing, and improving the written piece.
- determine whether any further explicit instruction is necessary, and provide it.
- allow writers the time to take careful notes.
- suggest mentor texts.

(Adapted from Davis and Hill, 2003, p. 31–32)

Questioning During a Conference

Davis and Hill (2003) suggest that the kinds of questions teachers ask during a conference determine the success of the conference. Teachers should always allow students time to think about their responses before answering.

“Conferences can have a number of different purposes – to celebrate, validate, encourage, nudge, teach, assess, set goals – and they can take different forms.”

(Routman, 2005, p. 206)

“A conference is not a time to check up on kids; rather, it’s a time to provide targeted, precise teaching.”

(Angelillo, 2005, p. 43)

Some questions that help to get writers talking about their work are:

How's it going?

What are you doing as a writer today?

Where did you get the idea for this piece of writing?

Who is your audience?

What's your purpose for writing this piece?

What are you trying to do as a writer?

What will you be doing today in your writing?

Have you read your writing as a reader?

Have you shared your writing with a friend?

What changes have you made to this piece of writing?

What are you trying to convey in this paragraph?

What part of the writing are you finding challenging?

Determining Student Needs

Before deciding on a teaching point for a conference, it is important to discuss the student's process and personal writing concerns, so as to determine the writer's greatest need.

The conference should serve to increase skill levels and add to the repertoire of strategies that the writer will later be able to employ with other writing tasks (Calkins, 1994). Calkins suggests that teachers use the following framework to guide their discussion and instruction:

Hold content conferences. When teachers confer with writers about content, it is generally for the purpose of finding out more about the writer's topic and reasons for writing, and to help writers discover what else they might add. A content-focused conference allows the writer to teach the reader about the topic and, in doing so, clarifies and extends his or her own thinking. Such a focus is especially helpful when the writer is having difficulty getting started or is omitting important details.

Hold design conferences. Teachers confer with students about design to coach them to think about the "shape" of their writing. During a design conference, a teacher might ask:

Why did you start your piece that way?

Are you looking at this topic from close up or from far away?

What might be the best way to represent your ideas? As a poem, a report, a letter?

A design conference is helpful when students are having difficulty organizing and sorting ideas, finding an appropriate text form, or deciding on a voice or point of view.

Hold process conferences. A process conference focuses on the student's use of problem-solving strategies while writing. Students are asked to describe how they write, what they do when they get stuck at various points in the process, and what assistance they need. These conferences get students to think about their personal writing process and also help them to develop effective problem-solving strategies.

Hold assessment conferences. During an assessment conference, the teacher encourages the student to adopt the role of reader/critic of his or her own writing. Students might use highlighters to identify the parts of their writing that work well and the parts that need more work. They might be asked to rate their drafts or finished products and to provide rationales for the ratings they assigned. They might also be asked to check their writing against a rubric or prepared checklist to determine if the writing is in need of further polishing. As students engage in guided self-assessment they internalize the process, become more reflective as they write, and learn to set personal goals for their writing.

Hold editing conferences. An editing focus is useful when students have already edited their own work, have used an editor's checklist, and have had a peer editor give the material a second check. The editing conference begins by celebrating what the student has done well and then provides explicit instruction on one or two points where improvement is needed. The teaching point should be linked to items on the editor's checklist or to items taught in recent mini-lessons.

"It is unrealistic to expect children to locate and correct every mechanical error in their compositions. Not even published books are error-free!"

(Tompkins, 2004, p. 24)

Encouraging Peer Conferencing

Peers can be an excellent source of feedback and support for students, if they have seen respectful, constructive feedback modelled and have been guided through the process. Teachers need to stress the importance of speaking quietly during a peer conference and should model:

- questions students can ask as a way of providing support;
- ways to comment on the strong points in a piece of writing;
- ways to make suggestions for areas needing further work;
- ways to share strategies that have worked for them.

Peer conferences can occur on a routine basis or can be scheduled when needed. They can be held with partners or in small groups. Students should have an opportunity to confer with a number of different classmates over the year.

The following charts provide guidelines and sentence stems for conferring with peers:

Peer Conferencing Guidelines

The Writer:	The Feedback Peer:
<p>Shares a piece of written work with another writer. Reads the written piece to a peer and asks for help with a particular aspect (e.g., asks: “Do you think I’ve been too wordy?”).</p> <p>Listens carefully to the comments of the peer. May make notes of the suggestions.</p> <p>Decides whether to use the conferencing suggestions and, if so, how to use them. Remembers that the purpose of conferencing is to lead the writer to find ways of making the text better.</p>	<p>Looks at and listens to the writer who is sharing. Listens carefully and make notes about where the writing works well. Asks for a rereading, if necessary, to clarify any questions.</p> <p>Tells the writer what was heard. Shares details about what was liked. Provides examples of what was liked (e.g., says: “I liked the way you described your school’s locker room as ‘pungent with the odour of old sweat socks.’”).</p> <p>Seeks clarification. Asks the writer to explain anything that is unclear in the piece of writing (e.g., says: “Tell me more about....” or “I’m confused by”).</p> <p>Makes suggestions but avoids telling the writer what to do. Never says “you should.” Does not take away the writer’s ownership.</p>

Feedback Tips for Peer Writing Conferences

Manner:	Sounds Like:
Positive	I like...
Honest	I get confused when...
Specific	This writing reminds me of...
Interested	Tell me more about...
Encouraging	I like the way you...
Constructive	Have you thought about...

THE KEY INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES

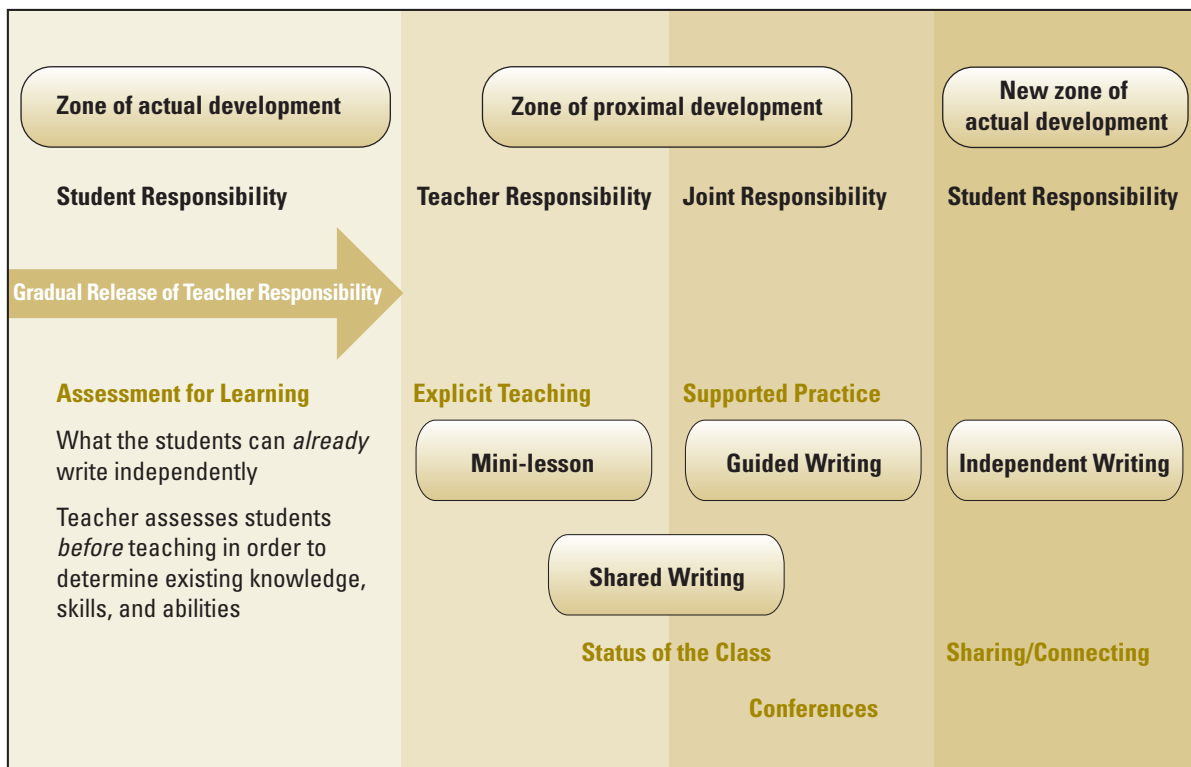
The Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 clearly indicated that writing instruction in Ontario’s schools must be built on best practice. The more we apply proven principles of successful teaching, the more we will succeed in engaging our students in successful learning.

Best practice involves strong teacher instruction, support, coaching, and encouragement, and these can best be delivered to students by using the key instructional approaches and the strategies described in detail in this chapter. The key instructional approaches for writing are:

- modelled writing
- shared writing
- guided writing
- independent writing.

Instruction is based on the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983, and Vygotsky, 1978). In this learning model, teachers gradually release responsibility to the students, supporting students’ efforts as they learn and enabling them to be successful. Knowing when to use modelling, when to share writing responsibilities, when to guide, and when to let students work independently is what makes an effective teacher and ensures students’ success in writing.

Learning to Write Within Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development



Gradual release of responsibility is as critical for writing as it is for reading. To become proficient writers, students first need opportunities to observe and understand the physical and metacognitive processes involved in writing. The teacher provides explicit instruction through modelling and guided practice, and then invites students to try the lesson strategies and techniques for themselves, first through collaborative practice and then through independent practice and application.

The essential elements of language and word study are incorporated into each key approach and apply to all curriculum subjects.

Teachers use the key instructional approaches to:

- scaffold learning, modelling and explicitly teaching the strategies, behaviours, and responses that students need to learn if they are to become proficient communicators;
- coach and guide students as a whole class, in small groups, and through individual differentiated instruction, as appropriate;
- provide students with multiple opportunities to write, talk, ask questions, practise strategies, and demonstrate their thinking;
- help students see how reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking are interconnected, and teach them learn to read like writers and write like readers;
- assess individual students to determine their strengths and identify those areas in which they require further instruction and practice.

Modelled Writing

“Teachers write and share their writing, processes and products, with their students. They personally experience what they ask of student writers, from finding a topic through going public. Teachers do not require student writers to do anything they don’t do themselves as writers.”

(Atwell, 1987, p. 283)

Modelled writing provides explicit demonstrations and teaching by a proficient, experienced writer, and shows:

- the process of writing;
- the revision and crafting that can make writing better;
- the conventions that improve the writing for the reader;
- the preparation of a piece of writing for publication;
- the different kinds of writing for different purposes and audiences;
- the metacognitive process of reflecting on what was done well and how it was done.

Before modelling writing, effective teachers observe, monitor, and assess the students' Zone of Actual Development during writing sessions. They then develop mini-lessons designed to meet observed and assessed writing needs. They explicitly model aspects of the writing process. During each mini-lesson, they explain, think aloud, and write aloud to demonstrate what a proficient writer does. Students are then given time to discuss with a partner what they have learned during the lesson.

Benefits

The modelled writing approach:

- demonstrates an actual writing experience. Students gain insight into the teacher's writing process and learn that the teacher is a writer who follows the same process they do and faces the same challenges they face in writer's workshop.
- shows that a writer always writes with an audience – a reader or readers – in mind; the teacher emphasizes this aspect while thinking aloud during the writing demonstration.
- shows students that, when choosing words and working with language, trial and error is an accepted strategy. Students learn how to incorporate new information, reject information, and add or modify details. They see how good writers think and how they craft their writing to make it more effective.
- explicitly teaches students strategies that help them plan, draft, revise, edit, polish, and publish, with the ultimate goal of making their writing clearer, more precise, more effective, and more powerful.
- allows everyone in the class to participate and learn from the demonstration.
- enables the teacher to meet observed and assessed needs by giving explicit, focused demonstrations of real writing.
- helps students learn to value the risk-taking that is part of writing.

Conducting a Modelled Writing Session

All aspects of the writing process can be demonstrated and scaffolded through modelled writing.

One of the best ways for teachers to encourage junior students to write is by example. Teachers who share their own writing with students provide them with first-hand, genuine demonstrations of the writing process and, in doing so, convey writing's importance, its complexity, its beauty and artistic qualities, and its power. Students need to be able to observe the process and see for themselves the benefits of being able to write well. When they experience the way in which a practiced writer thinks while working on a text, they share the passion, joy, and frustrations, and feel the satisfaction of success.

While modelling writing in a mini-lesson, the teacher gives a powerful demonstration of how writing can involve risk-taking, and shows that writing can be challenging, exciting, and gratifying. This sort of apprenticeship is critical if junior students are to become proficient writers.

In a modelled writing session, the teacher drafts the piece of writing in front of the students, working on a large surface so that all students will be able to observe the writing as it is being done. Using a think-aloud, the teacher shows how he or she chooses a topic, generates and clusters ideas, selects vocabulary, makes changes in midstream, and connects one idea to the next. This approach reveals the thinking and processing that are typical of any experienced writer, and shows students that rethinking and problem-solving are natural steps in the composing of a piece of writing.

While modelling the writing process, the teacher repeatedly rereads what he or she has written, to see whether it serves the stated purpose. The teacher also thinks aloud about what the reader needs to know and why, and shows how to add more details.

In modelled writing sessions, the teacher:

- adheres to a specific teaching focus, based on assessment data and observations;
- chooses a topic of interest to the teacher as a writer, or a topic linked to an area of the curriculum or to a specific text form or genre;
- demonstrates writing in response to a poem, reading, or event;
- models, after completion of the first draft, how an effective writer evaluates the quality of the draft, asking questions such as:

Have I kept my purpose and audience in mind?

Will my message be clear to my readers?

Have I repeated myself?

Have I left anything out?

Are things presented in the right order?

- models how to revise the piece of writing by adding, cutting, moving things around, choosing a more precise word, and so on.
- models, after completion of the revised draft, how to use an editing checklist to ensure that the draft is usable. Checklist questions might include:

Is this draft easy to read?

Is the grammar correct?

Are there spellings I need to check?

Does the punctuation help to convey the message?

Is this a draft that I could consider taking to publication?

- uses the piece of writing generated during modelled writing as a tool for teaching conventions – aspects of grammar, spelling, punctuation – or for explaining the importance of conventions and how they help to convey meaning.

Tip for Teachers

Developing a Comfort Level for Teaching Modelled Writing

“What they [students] have been missing for years is seeing their teacher write. They need to see you wrestle with a piece you care about: delete and rethink and add details. They want to hear your wish for a funny piece you are working on and then celebrate with you when you finally write a draft that shows what you mean. Mostly they want to understand what prewriting really is and what revision tools are useful. They need to see you craft your writing so they can develop a vision for how to craft their own. You are the only one who can show them. They’re counting on you.”

(Graves and Kittle, 2005, p. 85)

Writing a draft in front of an audience can be stressful. Teachers who have never modelled writing for their students should begin where they themselves feel most comfortable. The first few times, they might draft a piece of writing beforehand and bring it to school. They might also choose to model short, informal pieces of writing, called “quick writes” (described on p. 46), which can be produced in three to five minutes. “Quick writes” help writers generate ideas and get words on paper, and also help develop fluency and voice. After drafting eight to ten “quick writes” in front of the class, many teachers begin to feel much more comfortable with the process of sharing drafts in modelled writing. Engaging in these experiences benefits the teacher as writer and the benefits are passed on to the students. The gains far outweigh the initial discomfort.

Shared Writing

In shared writing, the teacher works *with* the students to construct a piece of writing. The teacher and students first discuss, and then collaborate to compose, a text. Shared writing enables the teacher to support and scaffold young writers. It is a powerful teaching tool in all areas of the curriculum.

The teacher observes students’ understanding of writing during the mini-lesson and, based on these observations or on current knowledge of students’ needs, works with a small group in a shared writing session during independent writing time.

In the shared writing session, the teacher:

- demonstrates the key learning from the mini-lesson;
- explicitly teaches strategies for making meaning with written language;

- demonstrates the writing process while collaborating with the students;
- suggests and explains possibilities and seeks input from the students;
- responds to student suggestions, showing how they contribute to the writing;
- makes ongoing observations and assessments of students' progress.

In shared writing sessions teachers might also:

- review or extend a writing skill or strategy;
- teach students how to write for a new genre or format (e.g., a report or recount; a journal) so as to facilitate learning in other subject areas.

Benefits

The shared writing approach:

- provides an authentic writing experience, as teacher and students collaborate to compose a draft;
- can be used for small-group instruction and tailored to student needs;
- explicitly teaches students strategies for planning, drafting, revising, editing, polishing, and publishing their written work;
- can motivate students to write more;
- can improve student's writing vocabularies.

Guided Writing

In guided writing, the teacher gathers together a small, temporary group of writers and provides them with explicit teaching based on their needs at a particular point in time.

During the shared writing sessions the teacher:

- discusses the key learning from the mini-lesson on writing;
- guides, supports, and gives feedback to students in the group;
- suggests and explains possibilities;
- teaches the writer's craft, strategies, and skills;
- makes ongoing observations and assesses students' progress.

Benefits

The guided writing approach:

- enables the teacher to provide support to small groups or to individual students who need help before they can write texts independently;

- can be used with students at any achievement level;
- helps students to hone specific writing strategies and to practise writing, with guidance, for a variety of forms.

Independent Writing

“... [R]emember that students need to spend most of their time writing independently. If they are to become excellent writers they have to spend most of a writing lesson composing continuous text, not participating in lessons and activities about writing.”

(Routman, 2005, p. 75)

In independent writing, students do the writing themselves, drawing on the knowledge and skills learned during the modelled, shared, and guided lessons, as well as from feedback received from the teacher. During independent writing time (a minimum of 30 minutes per day of sustained writing), some students might be recording entries in their writer’s notebook, others might be mining their entries for material to use in drafts they plan to craft for a particular audience, still others might be writing drafts, revising, editing, and preparing for sharing or publication. A student might be reading a draft to a classmate to obtain a response, while other students might be discussing a draft in a peer conference. During this time, the teacher can be conducting a shared or guided writing lesson with a small group of students in need of additional instruction, or may be conferencing with individuals or small groups. Five or so minutes before the end of independent writing time, students should be encouraged to reread the writing they did that day.

During independent writing time, teachers:

- confer with students;
- suggest ideas to improve the student’s writing piece;
- provide support as students try the strategies they have learned;
- explain, respond to needs, coach, and re-teach when necessary;
- encourage;
- observe student progress and use the information when planning future teaching.

Benefits

The independent writing approach:

- enables the teacher to provide feedback to individual students;
- helps students to develop writing strategies for various written forms;
- helps writers become clearer, more focused, and more concise in their writing;
- allows students to try out new ways of writing, based on their strengths;
- encourages enjoyment and confidence in writing.

For suggestions on managing independent writing time during writer’s workshop see page 22.

Effective teachers use these key instructional approaches daily, selecting the best approach for the needs of the students at the time. They may focus on one approach or use a combination, as appropriate. (The approaches are used *to meet students’ needs*, and are not necessarily used in a linear fashion.) Teachers may involve the whole class in the lesson, may work with a small group of students with similar learning needs, or may monitor and guide individual students as they work on independent writing activities. Effective teachers use the key instructional approaches for all writing, not just for the writing done during writer’s workshop. They also incorporate language and word study into all key instructional approaches and into all subjects across the curriculum.

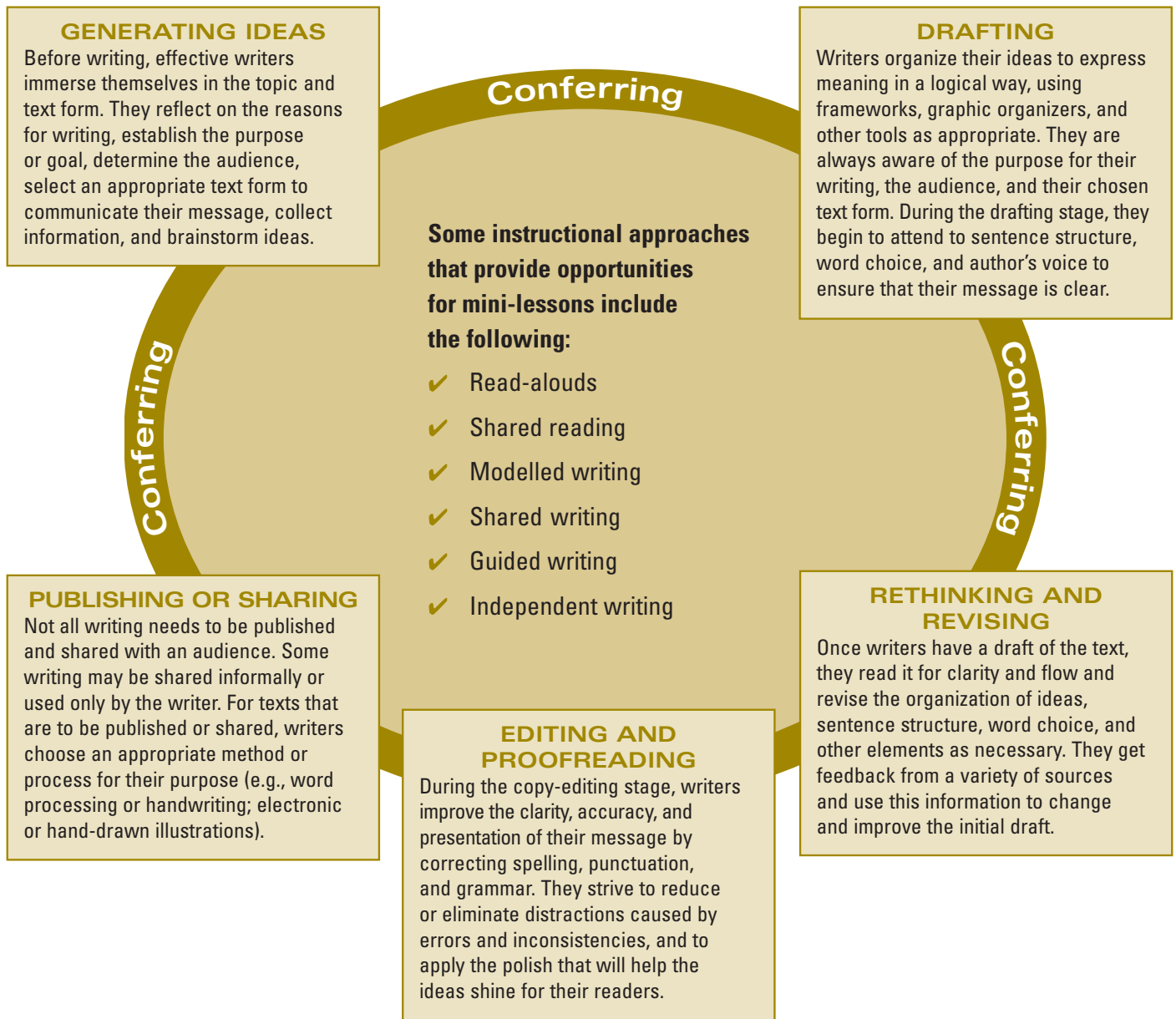
TEACHING THE WRITING PROCESS

The challenge in describing or articulating the writing process is that the steps or phases are always presented in the following order: generating ideas, drafting, revising, and editing for sharing or going public. However, in actual application, the process is seldom – if ever – linear. Writers move into and out of the phases, overlapping them, restarting, returning, rethinking, revisiting. Each writer approaches the process in a unique manner, orchestrating the components in his or her own way and as needed for a particular purpose. Throughout the process the teacher acts as mentor to the apprentice writers, by modelling, coaching, conferring, and encouraging.

“The recursive writing process involves several stages that can overlap and that students revisit as necessary: generating ideas, drafting text, rethinking and revising, editing and proofreading, and publishing or sharing the text with others. Writers work through these stages in a recursive fashion, filling in blanks and refining their thinking and their texts as they acquire greater clarity about what they know and need to do to accomplish the writing task.”

(Literacy for Learning, p. 83)

The Recursive Writing Process in the Junior Classroom



(Adapted from Literacy for Learning, p. 84)

Phases of the Writing Process

1. Generating and Selecting Ideas

Before writing, writers must collect and organize ideas. “Prewriting” is the thinking work we do with ideas before we start to write. Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) describe it as a “cognitive warm-up.” Athletes warm up before running, and writers warm up before writing. Planning for writing might include brainstorming, researching a topic, rereading, referring to anchor charts, listing ideas, drafting an outline, using visual organizers, discussing the topic, sketching, and noting down plans in a writer’s notebook (see p. 47).

Where Writers Find Their Ideas:

- Trips and walks
- Events, activities
- Observations
- Family, friends
- Books, newspapers, magazines, movies, the Internet
- Dreams
- Their own feelings, opinions

Class anchor charts can be good sources of ideas for writers. A basic anchor chart can be created during a class brainstorming session, but students should be encouraged to keep adding to the chart as new ideas occur to them.

Students need to know that real-life authors very often get their ideas from their own life experiences. Many authors keep journals, recording anything that interests them, and are then able to draw on these records and jottings for later writing.

2. Drafting

Drafting means getting ideas down, rereading, changing, crossing out, adding, reorganizing, more rereading, and so on, until a satisfactory version of the written piece is completed. Drafting is a back-and-forth process. It is usually done on loose sheets, to allow for cutting, pasting, stapling, and reworking. For some students, a computer and word-processing software are the best tools for this phase, as electronic drafts are easy to revise.

“Students are able to write richer, more detailed and more interesting stories when their stories are based on their own experiences. The process of creating an idea bank helps stir up memories of interesting personal experiences. A classroom where students tell stories about their lives helps student writers come up with ideas to create other stories and provides a motivation to write.”

(Peterson, 2003, p. 16)

Once students have completed a reasonable draft, they should ask themselves:

What is my main topic?

Will my lead sentence capture the interest of my audience?

Is my writing accessible to my target audience?

What idea am I developing in each paragraph?

Does each paragraph support the topic?

Do I have effective links between paragraphs?

How am I ending my piece of writing?

Teachers can provide support to students by:

- creating anchor charts, writing templates, and graphic organizers to help them organize their thinking;

- giving modelled or shared mini-lessons on the topics of effective leads, use of voice, complex sentence structure, idea sequencing, plagiarism, word-processing software;
- conferencing with individuals or groups to guide the drafting process;
- circulating during writing time to provide coaching to individual students;
- recording and using observations to plan mini-lessons and coaching sessions.

3. Revision

Revision means “seeing again”. During the revision process, students revisit the draft with a view to rethinking, refining, and improving the writing. They focus on the organization and clarity of the message. They review their work to make the content of the writing match their purpose for writing.

During revision, students:

- circle the main idea and other key lines or phrases;
- use picture books as resources to help them craft leads and endings;
- make changes based on audience and the purpose for writing;
- clarify meaning, add supporting statements, make connections;
- reread to see what needs to be added, changed, or deleted; use strategies to delete and add text (e.g., cross-outs, arrows, asterisks, numbers, letters, cutting-and-pasting, stapling in new parts, circling, underlining);
- check to see if the writing contains too much explaining and not enough showing through detail or images;
- add details so that the reader can feel what is happening;
- reread to check the flow and sequence of the information, and work on transitions in the text so that the ideas flow smoothly;
- listen to the voice and style and revise if necessary;
- request feedback from peers and teacher.

“If we expect our students to revise, we must provide them with specific strategies with which to revise. We can teach and demonstrate specific revision strategies by modelling our own and professional writers’ writing and revision processes and by teaching mini-lessons that include specific revision strategies.”

(Heard, 2002, p. 4)

Seeing and hearing the teacher model the revision of a text shows students how writers revise. They hear the teacher thinking aloud, they hear the language of the writing, and they see what revision looks like. Students need to understand the value of revising through rereading, and that the writer rereads to:

- check the position of the main idea;
- check if the meaning is expressed with clarity;
- hear how the text sounds;
- check the power or pleasure of phrases;
- check beginnings, middles, and endings of sentences, paragraphs, pages.

Teachers should focus on a single strategy or teaching point during a mini-lesson. Students need to be clear on the strategy that is being used, and why and how writers use it. Once they understand the why and how, they will be able to use the strategy on their own and with confidence.

In mini-lessons, teachers demonstrate the tools of revision by using sticky notes, coloured pencils, arrows, cutting-and-pasting, writing between the lines, crossing out, and stapling on inserts or additional sheets. They demonstrate how writers add words, substitute sentences, delete or move whole paragraphs, move phrases, choose synonyms to avoid the repetition of words (unless used for effect), move a main-idea sentence to the beginning, replace a word with a better one, and rewrite – all revision strategies for improving the written piece.

Students learn to reread to make sure that their writing makes sense, marking places that need revision as they go. Students ask peers to read their work as a way of receiving reader feedback and of learning where writing needs to be clearer. A useful revision strategy is to ask students to reread their writing and to note any changes or comments in the margins. Rereading a draft aloud can also bring to light problems in the text and help students see where their work needs revision.

Sample Mini-Lessons on Revision Strategies

Strategy	Why writers use it	How to use it
Change the title.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be sure to get the reader's attention. To better represent the contents of the written piece. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List some alternative titles. Show the list and piece of writing to a partner and ask which title most interested or intrigued him or her. <p><i>Tip:</i> Explore how published authors choose titles for their texts.</p>
Change the introduction (or opening) of the piece.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To entice the reader. To reveal necessary information about the topic. To introduce the story in a more interesting way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin with a quote, a question, or dialogue. Begin with the main-idea sentence. Begin with a sentence from the end or the middle of the action. <p><i>Tip:</i> Examine mentor texts for ideas.</p>
Add dialogue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make a character more authentic. To add credibility or reality. To break up or replace a section of text. To move the story along. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to imagine the character talking. Think of the scene around the speaker. Think about the words and tone of voice the speaker would use. Say the line out loud to see if it sounds natural. <p><i>Tip:</i> Examine a mentor text for dialogue.</p>
Stretch out a section of a writing piece.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To give something more importance or make it clearer. To help the reader visualize the content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In your mind, make a picture of the topic and describe what you see. Use powerful nouns and verbs to help the reader visualize the content.
Find effective and vivid language to create meaning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help the reader visualize details and specifics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substitute more-precise language to help the reader visualize. Work with descriptive nouns and with action verbs.
Delete unnecessary words, phrases, or sentences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To lighten the writing. To make the meaning clearer. To keep the reader interested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take out long descriptions that <i>tell</i>. Try to <i>show</i> rather than tell.
Change the ending of the piece.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make the ending more interesting. To give the reader a sense of completion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think about how you want the reader to feel at the end: satisfied? curious? <p><i>Tip:</i> Examine endings in mentor texts.</p>

Mentor texts are extremely helpful tools for teachers and students to use when exploring author’s craft. When teachers use mentor texts – picture books, magazines, novels – to model an introduction, a setting, descriptive language, or characterization, they influence students to use the same strategy during their own revisions. It is also helpful to create anchor charts of the writing strategies demonstrated in these mentor texts.

Suggested Mentor Texts

<i>All the Places to Love</i> , by Patricia MacLachlan	<i>Miz Berlin Walks</i> , by Jane Yolen
<i>Amos & Boris</i> , by William Steig	<i>Night in the Country</i> , by Cynthia Rylant
<i>The Barn</i> , by Avi	<i>The Other Side</i> , by Jacqueline Woodson
<i>Bigmama’s</i> , by Donald Crews	<i>Owl Moon</i> , by Jane Yolen
<i>Charlie Anderson</i> , by Barbara Abercrombie	<i>Poppy</i> , by Avi
<i>A Day’s Work</i> , by Eve Bunting	<i>The Rabbits</i> , by John Marsden
<i>Diary of a Spider</i> , by Doreen Cronin	<i>Shortcut</i> , by Donald Crews
<i>Fly Away Home</i> , by Eve Bunting	<i>Smoky Night</i> , by Eve Bunting
<i>Going Home</i> , by Eve Bunting	<i>Solomon’s Tree</i> , by Andrea Spalding
<i>Koala Lou</i> , by Mem Fox	<i>The Three Questions</i> , by Jon J. Muth
<i>Louis the Fish</i> , by Arthur Yorinks	<i>Tree of Life: The Incredible Biodiversity of Life on Earth</i> , by Rochelle Strauss
<i>Miss Rumphius</i> , by Barbara Cooney	

Memorable Authors

Andrew Clements	Angela Johnson	Allen Say
Anthony Browne	Arnold Lobel	Chris Van Allsburg
Byrd Baylor	E.L. Konigsburg	Ian Wallace
Doreen Cronin	Jonathan London	Jon Scieszka
Gail Gibbons	Karen Hesse	Patricia Polacco
Lynne Cherry	Katherine Paterson	
Ralph Fletcher	Kevin Henkes	

4. Final Revisions: Craft and Technique

In the final part of revision, the writer polishes the language to give the piece of writing its style, voice, and effectiveness. If the teacher helps students to *read like writers*, the students will soon begin to notice the various techniques used by authors to craft their texts. Teachers can help students see how the text was intentionally constructed to create coherence, particular effects, and so on. See p. 20 for a list of possible teaching points on craft and technique.

5. Editing and Proofreading

Students need to learn that, while revising is part of composition, the steps of editing and proofreading involve different skills and require the writer to pay close attention to the surface features of writing. Writers edit and proofread to ensure that their sentences are clear and error-free and that their writing will make sense to the reader. They polish their writing further to make sure that it is expressed in a smooth and interesting way. They look for sentences that are too long to be clear, and split them up into shorter, crisper, more focused ones. They check to make sure that their sentences vary in length and structure across the piece of writing. They look for words that have been repeated and alter them. They look for unnecessary words or phrases and take them out. They also fix errors in grammar, and they proofread to be sure that all words are accurately spelled and that all punctuation is correct.

Teachers can demonstrate editing and proofreading by performing these functions on their own writing and showing that, when they attend to sentence length and variety, a smooth flow of words, and accurate grammar, spelling, and punctuation, they make their writing better, clearer, and easier for the reader to follow. During demonstrations, it is best to focus on one editing or proofreading task at a time until students have a thorough understanding of why it is done and how to do it.

Editing guidelines, checklists, and anchor charts all help students produce published work that is legible, technically accurate, and “reader friendly”. The example below shows an anchor chart that will grow during further demonstrations.

Punctuation Mark	What It Does	How It Is Used
Period	Marks the end of a sentence, the end of a statement.	The dog trotted up the street.
Period	Is used in abbreviations and to replace parts of words.	Mr. Mrs. e.g. ed.

The teacher works with a particular convention, talks about and demonstrates its use, then gives students opportunities to use the convention in their writing. Students are shown how to recognize the convention in published text and the various ways in which it has been used to help readers understand what has been written.

During this phase, the teacher:

- gives mini-lessons that demonstrate how to edit and proofread;
- provides students with editing guidelines/checklists;
- creates and posts anchor charts for student reference;
- ensures that students have access to appropriate resources (e.g., dictionaries, a thesaurus, mentor texts);
- conferences with individuals or small groups to check their understanding of what editing involves and why it is important;
- circulates during writing time to provide further instruction to students in need;
- records observations to guide next steps.

Readers read with the expectation that the piece of writing will be comprehensible, easy to follow, and free of errors. It is the writer's job to fulfil these expectations as far as possible.

Editing checklists can be created in collaboration with students, and updated after mini-lessons and demonstrations of techniques. Teachers should remind students that, during the editing and proofreading phase, they need to reread their writing in a different way, focusing first on one aspect from the checklist, and then on another. For instance, they would read through the piece to examine punctuation, asking: “Does this sentence sound the way I want it to?” “Should I break this long sentence into two sentences?” “Have I put quotation marks around all dialogue?”

6. Sharing/Publishing

Not all writing needs to be published in print form and shared formally with an audience. Some writing may be shared informally within the classroom writing community (e.g., through Author's Chair). Both formal and informal publishing are appropriate and effective choices for junior students. Knowing that their work has a real purpose and will be read by a real audience makes the revision and editing processes authentic and worthwhile for them.

“Going public” is what drives the process of writing; the purpose and the intended audience influence both the style of the writing and the format, and are therefore prime considerations for the writer. In writing destined for publication, students are required to pay attention to the visual layout of their text as well as its legibility. They may take a writing project to its published format by using word processing programs, incorporating illustrations from free clip-art banks or adding their own drawings.

During this phase, the teacher:

- conducts modelled or shared writing mini-lessons or provides guided lessons to small groups to explain the publishing process (e.g., selecting a font, determining the layout, integrating graphics);
- provides resources in the classroom to facilitate the publishing process;
- ensures that students have opportunities to share and discuss their work;
- displays student work for a wider audience to appreciate.

At the end of a unit there are many ways in which student work can be published:

- class stories can be bound into a booklet for the school library;
- a piece of writing can be framed for parents to display at home or at work;
- writing can be read over the school’s public address system, featured in the school newspaper, or posted on the school website;
- writing can be shared during a writers’ exhibition;
- writing can be posted in the class, in the library, or in the halls or auditorium for parent night;
- written pieces can be sent to a pen pal, shared with younger children or seniors, or exchanged with students from another class.

In sharing their writing, students celebrate the achievement of being an author.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR WRITING

“Quick Writes”

“Asking students to write for just a few minutes seemed safe for even the most recalcitrant writer.”

(Linda Barbieri in the foreword of 100 Quick Writes, by Linda Rief, 2003, p. 5)

To do a “quick write”, the teacher and students write for three to five minutes about an idea or a line borrowed from a text (perhaps a favourite author’s piece of vivid prose or poetry) and presented on an overhead. The writers respond to some aspect of the text that catches their attention. They write whatever comes to mind, without concern for structure, conventions, good handwriting, or a logical sequence of thoughts. The strategy helps writers to generate ideas and get thoughts and words down on paper. The writer can then review them, make selections from them, and craft the selections into pieces of writing (adapted from Rief, 2003).

Quick writing is a way to overcome the intimidation felt by many students who find themselves unable to put pencil to paper for a whole writing period out of fear that they will be unable to think of something to write about, or that their writing won’t be good enough. After several “quick write” sessions, hesitant writers are less worried and better able to focus, and they find themselves writing quite readily.

Students keep their collection of “quick writes” in their writer’s notebook, where they can review them at any time, add to entries or rewrite them, reorder information, and draw on these entries as useful sources of ideas when planning new pieces of writing.

The teacher may ask students to present their best “quick write” for evaluation. The teacher identifies those that show potential for elaboration, and helps the writer take the next steps, making connections to demonstrations given in mini-lessons. The invitation to “tell me more” can result in an expanded and detailed draft.

Using this strategy, students:

- are free to write down whatever comes to mind;
- can explore their own experiences, opinions, dreams, and frustrations;
- learn that they have experiences worth sharing, and that writing can come from their own lives;
- realize that they often know more about a topic than they initially thought;
- become more confident writers.

Note: Some students may find it easier to do a “quick sketch” before their “quick write”, and the teacher may decide to model this process for students.

Writer's Notebook

"Keeping a notebook is the single best way I know to survive as a writer. It encourages you to pay attention to your world, inside and out. It serves as a container to keep together all the seeds you gather until you're ready to plant them. It gives you a quiet place to catch your breath and begin to write."

(Fletcher, 1996, p. 1)

The writer's notebook is a repository for things noticed, experienced, and thought about. When students keep a writer's notebook, they use it as a place to record writing ideas or try out new ideas, rethink a piece of writing, revise, and make idea connections. The notebook is also used for collecting interesting words – those that conjure up memories or strong images, evoke feelings, or prompt laughter. Students collect phrases or expressions that appeal to them and that can later be woven into the tapestry of their own writing. A writer gathers material in the notebook but the ultimate goal is to publish from that gathered material.

Teachers launch the notebook at the beginning of the year, modelling its creation and use and encouraging students to write in their notebook every day (and every night at home). They explain that frequent writing will generate a wide variety of entries, giving students an abundance of ideas from which to choose when they plan to develop and publish a piece of writing. Students are advised to review their entries from time to time to identify recurring themes or ideas that could be used as a foundation for new writing. Teachers model how a recorded idea can grow very naturally into an example of a text form or genre. For instance, various pieces of information can be brought together to create an article or part of a report; an emotional entry or a piece of sensory description can be turned into a poem.

Tips for Teachers

- Ask students to use only the right-hand side of the page for new entries, leaving the left side blank for later writing.
- Make sure students understand that they are accountable for the work they do in their notebooks.

The teacher elaborates on the sorts of things writers put into their notebooks. These might be:

- observations on things that are happening around them (freezing moments in time or focusing on a tiny detail);
- descriptions of people, places, and things that are important to them;
- opinions, wonderings, wishes, thoughts, feelings, memories, dreams;
- family stories;
- useful and/or interesting information on any topic;
- interviews;
- responses to literature;
- responses to the news, music, or conversations;
- plans for a project;
- experiences;
- words and language they particularly like;
- favourite quotations or poems (or fragments of poems);
- experiments in writing;
- drawings or sketches;
- webs of ideas or concepts;
- “quick writes”.

Students learn that writers write about the things that are important to them. They write about what they know and have experienced. Often, this involves paying attention to the little everyday things in life that tend to go unnoticed and unrecorded. If the teacher keeps a writer’s notebook, showing it to the class can be a powerful demonstration of how an experienced writer uses the notebook and what is expected of the students.

“Your writer’s notebook gives you a safe place to ask: *What really matters? What haunts me? What in my life, in this world, do I never want to forget?* Your notebook is an open invitation to care ... about the world, and to bring those concerns into the full light of consciousness.”

(Fletcher, 1996, p. 13)

The teacher reviews five or six writer’s notebooks each week and holds conferences with those writers the following week. Mini-lessons are planned around needs observed in the notebooks. Feedback might include:

- the thoughtfulness of the writing;
- the regularity of the entries;
- the variety of topics covered;
- the amount of writing done.

Writers may be asked to choose three entries for the teacher’s close reading, marking, and posting. Entries should be those that best reflect the student’s growth as a writer over the past month, those that were the most difficult to write, or those the students consider their best entries of the month.

Students benefit from having a notebook checklist to fill out just before handing in their notebook for teacher reading and response. A checklist helps to demonstrate to students what is valued.

Writer’s Notebook Checklist

	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Regularity Did you write every day? Are you writing on a regular basis?					
Variety Did you write about different things in your notebook?					
Thoughtfulness Is there reflection in your writing? Is there evidence that you are thinking about your entries and rereading them and adding to them or revising?					
Volume Have you done extensive writing at school and at home?					
What could help you improve? _____ _____ _____ _____					

(Adapted from Davis and Hill, The No-Nonsense Guide to Teaching Writing (2003), p. 216).

Writing Templates

Writing templates can be particularly helpful when students are producing their first procedural, explanatory, or persuasive texts.

Writing templates (also called writing frames or text frames) are used when students are working with a new text form. The templates provide skeleton outlines of each form of writing and help students understand the text structure they are expected to follow. Use of a template always begins with exploration of mentor texts, discussion, and teacher modelling. These are followed by collaborative (teacher and students) construction of a piece of writing and then independent student writing, using the template as a guide. Once students have a solid understanding of how a particular kind of writing works, the templates are no longer necessary.

Sample Template

Explanatory Writing
I want to explain why...
There are several reasons for this. The main reason is...
Another reason is...
In addition,...
So now you can see why...

See also Organizational Patterns Found in Informational Texts, in Volume 1 of this series, pp. 39–40.

Graphic Writing

Today's students are bombarded by visual information. The sources are many and varied, and include:

- books, magazines, newspapers, atlases, maps;
- calendars, catalogues, directories, pamphlets;
- posters, billboards, signs, advertising;
- cards, letters, e-mails;
- clothing, packaging;
- television, movies;
- the Internet.

Students need to examine many forms of graphic texts and consider when and how graphic features might be incorporated into their own written pieces. As they come to understand the use and value of graphic elements in the various text forms and genres, they begin to use diagrams, labels, charts, and other visual means to represent their thinking and complement their text.

The teacher asks students to examine graphics such as maps, legends, timelines, drawings, tables, diagrams, and cross-sections. (Social studies, science, or mathematics textbooks are excellent sources.) Discussion prompts might be:

Let's look at the graphics and see what information is conveyed. How has the writer labelled information?

How has the writer tried to make the information more interesting?

Do the illustrations/graphics show the information in a different way? How?

Do the illustrations/graphics add more information? How?

What particular information is conveyed in photographs, drawings, and paintings?

How might graphics help you convey information in your writing?

The teacher models the creation of an authentic graphic text with a real purpose and audience, such as a sign for the classroom or a poster that explains, persuades, or shows how to do something. The audience and purpose are clearly defined before the teacher starts the demonstration.

Students then sift through entries in their writer's notebook to find an idea for a topic, and work to create a text that weaves words and graphics together to convey information. Sufficient time should be provided for talk, research, and collaboration.

Teaching Spelling

“A good speller is not a person who has successfully memorized the most words, but rather someone who knows ways to figure out the logic of words and can construct them as needed. Spelling is problem-solving with letters, sounds, patterns, and meanings.”

(Phenix and Scott-Dunne, 1991, p. 17–18)

Becoming a skilful speller requires an understanding of phonology (the sound system of language), orthography (the correct letter sequence of written words), and morphology (the patterns and structure of words, including derivation, inflection, and composition). Skilful spellers use complex, higher-order skills to identify, analyse, and consolidate their understanding of spelling systems. A student’s ability to spell accurately reflects memory, experience with language, and the ability to problem solve. In order to improve spelling accuracy, students need to learn specific skills and strategies.

As stated by the Expert Panel in *Literacy for Learning*:

The knowledge of how language and words work empowers students to become independent and proficient writers. Word knowledge encompasses spelling, grammar, language conventions, literary devices, and word choice. Instruction that promotes word knowledge helps students to become problem solvers and word detectives who monitor and adjust their use of words to enhance their writing. The instruction must be developmentally appropriate, interactive, and constructive, providing students with genuine opportunities to make meaning with words and to use them in real-world situations.

Teachers help students to develop their word knowledge by modelling strategies for deconstructing and rebuilding words (e.g., using prefixes, suffixes, roots, derivatives, knowledge of compound structures, pattern detection, analogy) and by demonstrating how to choose words for specific purposes in writing (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, descriptive words). Word charts of interesting and nice-to-know words can help students develop their writing vocabulary. Words that convey critical concepts can be studied in more depth by examining the origins of the word (e.g., Latin roots), letter patterns (e.g., *tion* endings), and semantic connections (e.g., descriptive words, action words).

Spelling correctly is a problem-solving process for writers and a practical courtesy for readers. Junior students need to develop a “spelling conscience” that guides them to spell words correctly for the benefit of their readers. Most published spelling programs provide a sequential, developmentally appropriate, problem-solving approach to spelling and grammar, but they do not always offer help in meeting the on-the-spot instructional needs of students or involve authentic writing tasks.

Spelling instruction has traditionally focused on memory work, drills, and weekly tests of 10 to 20 words from predetermined lists arranged in a developmental sequence. These lists, usually limited to 3000 words, often fail to recognize the organic and evolving nature of the English language. In addition, commercially produced, graded spelling lists and programs are applied homogenously to diverse groups of students with different learning needs. The approach also assumes that spelling skills progress in a unidirectional manner with a fixed order; it does not take into account students who are able to accurately spell more challenging words but have difficulty spelling high-frequency, phonetically consistent words. Weekly dictation, another strategy for improving spelling skills, although widely used, does not have lasting effects on a student's ability to spell accurately.

To improve the spelling skills of the junior student, spelling instruction should be an extension of authentic and meaningful writing. Writing gives purpose to spelling instruction. Writers want their writing to be understood by others, and junior students quickly come to realize that using conventional spelling in their writing helps them to achieve that goal.

Spelling instruction that incorporates the words students need to learn for self-expression, creativity, and writing compositions has the greatest capacity to influence spelling ability. Research suggests that spelling instruction should not focus on memory work. Students benefit far more from learning how to identify correct endings (e.g., *ance* or *ence*, *able* or *ible*), apply rules, recognize patterns, and associate various letters or digraphs with common sounds (e.g., the /f/ sound is found in *phone*, *laugh*, *off*, and *fact*).

Students need to learn that spelling errors not only make a text difficult to understand but also call into question the writer's credibility and his or her regard for the reader.

Three key conditions are necessary for spelling development:

1. Students must have ample opportunities to read and to use reading strategies to learn about words. The more students read, the better they become at spelling. When they have repeated opportunities, during shared, guided, or independent reading, to read texts containing words that pose a spelling challenge, they acquire information about the words that they can later use to improve spelling accuracy.
2. Students must have daily opportunities to write, reflect on their writing, and respond to feedback about their writing. During the writing and revising process, students receive direct instruction on the rules for conventional spelling patterns and on how to spell specific words. Should a number of students require instruction on a particular concept, a shared or guided writing lesson can be developed to address specific needs.

3. Students' spelling skills improve with direct and focused instruction. Thoughtfully developed lessons build on what students know and support the development of the skills students need in order to learn specific concepts at a developmentally appropriate time. Among the many spelling concepts and word elements that junior students should explore, experience, investigate, and master are: abbreviations, acronyms, affixes, blended words, derivatives, eponyms, and homonyms. (See pp. 57–58 for brief explanations of all these terms.)

Formative spelling assessments provide teachers with information on what students know, what they need to learn, and how well they are mastering individual concepts. Information gathered during frequent assessments will indicate the concepts that are under the student's control and those still posing a challenge. Rather than assessing spelling development through the use of dictation lists of words without a context, spelling assessment should occur as an integral part of literacy development, focusing on how well each student is understanding and applying strategies, rules, pattern knowledge, and spelling structures, in a variety of situations across content areas.

Facilitating the development of spelling competence requires both informal and formal teaching. Students need a variety of approaches and learning experiences in order to broaden and reinforce their spelling skills. Their ability to spell correctly improves when they have opportunities to:

- be immersed in a word-rich environment;
- read rich and varied text;
- explore many forms of writing;
- write for different audiences and purposes;
- investigate word patterns;
- explore word origins;
- learn, practise, and apply spelling strategies.

(For strategies and suggestions for teaching spelling to students with learning disabilities, see *The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner*, Special Education Companion, 2002, pp. 48–9, 54, 56, 65, 74, and 85.)

Word Study

Word Study is a systematic approach to teaching students about how words work. It improves word recognition, builds vocabulary, and increases spelling skills. Students investigate word patterns, learn about derivatives, and experiment with word sounds, affixes, compound words, antonyms, synonyms and homonyms. Words selected for study are based on student needs, curricular content, or topics under study. Through exploratory assignments students learn about the structure, rules, and patterns of the English language.

Word Study is an integral part of a comprehensive literacy program that focuses on the gradual release of responsibility. It can take a variety of forms during a literacy block, including carefully constructed large-group lessons or small-group writing lessons. Word Study lessons have four basic components:

1. Introduction and explanation of a spelling pattern, feature, or rule.
2. Exploration of the spelling concept, using professional texts and student writing.
3. Demonstration of the spelling concept in action.
4. Application and reinforcement of the concept, through activities that help students consolidate, master, and transfer their learning.

At the completion of a Word Study cycle, the teacher might choose to test students on their comprehension of the concept just taught. The focus should not be on how well students were able to memorize a list of words but rather on how effectively they could apply their new understanding to unfamiliar words.

Word Sort

Word Sort encourages students to attend to the features and patterns of words, by comparing and contrasting a set of words and then grouping them into distinct categories.

Students are provided with a set of word cards or a list of words which they can record in their Word Book (see below). They examine the words and identify common patterns, sounds, or features. After discussing the words, students group them into categories determined by the teacher (closed word sort) or by the students (open word sort).

Word Hunt

In Word Hunt, students are introduced to a word pattern or spelling feature and are asked to find samples of the pattern or feature in books, the classroom, or their own writing. The words can be recorded in the student's Word Book and used for more in-depth study. For example, after introducing students to the concept of suffixes the teacher might ask them to find words ending in *er*. The teacher then demonstrates how to develop a list of *er* words, reading the list and categorizing the words according to their underlying meaning. Students then organize their own lists into the categories modelled by the teacher.

<i>er</i> Suffix		
One who does something	An action or process	More (comparative)
teacher	register	happier
breadwinner	flounder	smarter

Students discuss their words, noting patterns and variations in the meaning. This process can be followed for a variety of spelling concepts. It can remain as an independent focus or may be integrated into the study of a novel a science topic.

Spelling Stumpers

Spelling Stumpers are challenging words that are commonly misspelled. Some of these words are homophones, words with silent letters, exceptions to rules, or words that don't look right even when they are written with the correct spelling. One strategy to help students master these words is to put the words on anchor charts around the classroom. Students can develop mnemonics strategies (i.e., strategies for improving memory) to help them recall the spelling pattern of the most challenging words.

Think-Alouds

Proofreading requires that the writer slow down the rereading of a piece of writing so as to focus on each word and ask: "Am I absolutely certain that this is the correct spelling?"

Think-alouds are used to show students how writers determine the correct spelling for a word they need to use. This strategy works best at editing and proofreading stages. The teacher reads aloud text he or she has written, and applies a number of strategies to determine the correct spelling of a word, articulating what he or she is doing and why. Students have the benefit of seeing how an experienced writer deals with challenging words and they also learn how a repertoire of strategies can be used effectively to determine the correct spelling of words.

Concrete Materials

Concrete materials, such as letter tiles and magnetic letters, encourage kinaesthetic exploration of spelling rules and patterns. Words selected for this type of experience should include these that students need and want to learn. Students receive a set of letters that can be combined to spell a number of different words. They must find the correct arrangement of letters to create one large word, and also create as many smaller words as possible. For example, the letters *t e m o n s i h g* can be combined to spell *something*, but they also spell *some, things, the, might, mite, stem, nest, gist, net, sight, no, on, in, heist*, etc. Exploring words in this manner demystifies spelling, sparks interest, and motivates students to learn more about words. Boys, in particular, benefit from such hands-on learning activities.

Word of the Day

Word of the Day is a strategy used to build vocabulary, address spelling stumpers, and target specific spelling patterns or structures. Each day, a new word is introduced to students. The teacher models how to decipher its meaning and how to separate it into its component parts by noting particular patterns or affixes. Students record the word in their Word Book, define it, use it in a sentence, or build new words using the letters from the word of the day.

Word Books

A Word Book provides an organized and structured way for every student to record word work. Students can use their Word Books as a personal dictionary in which to catalogue words they use frequently in their writing, or to note words that pose a personal spelling challenge. Formal lessons might require students to use their Word Book for writing down information, completing exercises, and compiling lists of significant words. A Word Book can be a tremendous tool for recording experiences with words and for charting progress.

Spelling Resources

Spelling resources – dictionaries and thesauruses – are invaluable tools for the careful and accurate crafting of writing. Students must develop and maintain good dictionary skills. Effective modelling by the teacher can demonstrate both the use and the benefits of dictionaries and thesauruses. Games that require students to apply their dictionary skills to find words, gather examples of spelling patterns, or locate specific affixes, acronyms, or abbreviations all help to consolidate learning.

Note: When drafting and editing on the computer, many students believe that they can rely for spelling accuracy on the spell-check feature found in most word processing programs. However, students need to be cautioned that the software, while increasingly sophisticated, cannot identify misplaced homophones. In other cases, it may not recognize (or may override) Canadian spellings.

Spelling Concepts and Word Elements

Abbreviations are shortened words or phrases. They are becoming increasingly popular in the English language as people seek faster ways of communicating. Writing, in particular, is greatly affected by the shortening of words. To create abbreviations, letters from the original word are removed. *Burger* (*hamburger*) and *Net* (*Internet*) are abbreviations, as are *RSVP* (*répondez s'il vous plaît*) and *FYI* (*for your information*). When students learn about abbreviations they need to discuss the creation of new terms, appropriate use, and the impact on spelling.

Acronyms are created by joining together the first letters of other words. An acronym is pronounced as a single word (e.g., *NATO* for *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*) rather than letter by letter. It may be composed from capital letters, as in *WHO* (*World Health Organization*) or from lower-case letters, as in *laser* (*light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation*). The latter word will be familiar to most junior students, but few will recognize it as an acronym. Acronyms permeate our language and students will know a number of them (e.g., *UNICEF*, *PIN*, *ASAP*, *scuba*). To promote the use and understanding of acronyms, students can be asked to track the acronyms they encounter in reading, listening to the news, watching informative programming, or completing homework assignments. They might also investigate how new words are created and the societal conditions that promote the use of acronyms.

(continued)

Spelling Concepts and Word Elements

Affixes are word elements that can be attached to a base, stem, or root word, either at the front (as a prefix) or at the end (as a suffix). When prefixes and suffixes are added to words, they change the meaning of the word. Frequently used prefixes include: *a, ab, ad, anti, auto, be, bi, co, con, de, dis, en, in, mis, non, pre, post, super, tri,* and *un*. Common suffixes include: *able, age, ance, ant, ation, en, ence, er, ful, ian, ish, ive, ify, ism ly, ment, ness, ous, ture,* and *y*. Suffixes and prefixes are associated with specific meanings. By learning the meaning of specific affixes students become better decoders and more competent spellers. Creating class charts of word lists with affixes generates interest in how words work.

Blended words are formed by adding the beginning of one word to the ending of another. Students frequently use such words (e.g., *brunch, modem, sci-fi, smog, twirl, walkathon*). They enjoy the challenge of creating their own blended words and incorporating them into both non-fiction and fictional writing.

Derivatives are words derived from another word or word part that may have Greek or Latin as its origin. The study of derivatives helps students understand relationships between words and also helps them determine the meaning of unfamiliar words. An examination of the most common derivatives will improve both vocabulary and spelling skills.

Eponyms are words derived from the names of people, places, or institutions. Without knowing it, students will be familiar with many common eponyms (e.g., *atlas, boycott, Braille, cereal, guppy, March, watt*). By investigating where and how words originate, students can discover informative facts about the ways in which the English language evolved and how words are used. This type of information reinforces students' understanding of spelling structures, exceptions to rules, and word usage.

Homonyms are words with the same sound or same spelling but different meanings, and are further subdivided into homophones and homographs:

- Homophones are words with the same sound but a different spelling pattern and a different meaning (e.g., *principle/principal; rote/wrote; they're, their, there*). They are often challenging for junior writers because they involve not only learning different spelling patterns for the same sound but also different rules of application. Students need to develop strategies that will help them select the correct homophone for the context and intended meaning.
- Homographs are words with the same spelling pattern and sound but with different meanings (e.g., *date* (fruit) or *date* (day, month, year)). Similar to homographs are heteronyms, which have the same spelling pattern but different meanings and pronunciations (e.g., *object* (a thing) or *object* (to protest)). Many students enjoy using these words in their creative writing to challenge the reader's use of contextual cues.

3

ASSESSMENT OF WRITING

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ASSESSMENT BEFORE LEARNING

“Assessment allows us to have a ‘minds-on approach’ to all our teaching. Without it we can’t design mini-lessons that extend what our students do, nor can we intervene to lift up the level of our students’ peer conferring. Assessment is not an optional add-on to our teaching; it is not an afterthought. Assessment is where the action lies. It is the main event.”

(Calkins, 1994, p. 334)

At the outset of the school year or term, before teaching a new unit of study or providing any new instruction, teachers conduct diagnostic assessments to learn about individual students’ prior learning, strengths, and needs. This information, used in conjunction with the curriculum expectations for Language, directs teachers’ planning, determines student groupings, and suggests which instructional strategies will best meet individual needs. Effective assessment techniques will determine what students know and can do, and address the question: *What do students need to learn about writing?*

ASSESSMENT DURING LEARNING

Once the year or term is under way, teachers continue to conduct assessments to monitor student progress. Formative assessments during learning give students multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate their learning, help teachers determine next instructional steps, and provide individual learners with immediate feedback. As students engage in independent writing, the teacher identifies those who might benefit from additional teaching in a shared or guided writing session. Assessment information gathered during writing conferences is considered when planning next lessons. Status of the Class provides the teacher with an overview of progress as students work on drafting, revising, crafting, editing, and publishing their writing. Throughout each unit of study, teachers give as much helpful feedback as possible to each student.

“Teachers understand the difference between assessing student learning and evaluating independent student work, and they delay the judgement associated with evaluation until students have had frequent opportunities to practise and apply new learning and to refine their control of the skills and strategies they are developing.”

(Literacy for Learning, p. 13)

ASSESSMENT AFTER LEARNING

At the completion of a unit or term, teachers conduct summative assessments to obtain information about each student's achievement. This assessment information may be used to help plan further teaching and next steps and/or for evaluating student learning in relation to curriculum expectations and performance standards.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN STUDENT WRITING

When assessing student learning in writing, teachers look for indications of understanding and skill development in the following areas:

- attitudes toward writing;
- interests and preferences for topics or forms;
- ability to express meaning and information;
- use of writing for a variety of purposes;
- ability to write in a variety of forms;
- use of the writing process from the planning stage to the final product;
- use of writing resources (e.g., writer's notebook, mentor texts, anchor charts);
- use of conventions in final draft;
- qualities of writing, including voice, organization, techniques, and craft.

The qualities of writing are the various aspects of writing that help to make meaning. Teachers must assess the degree to which students have applied their understanding of the qualities of writing. In students' written pieces, it is important to look for the following qualities:

- ideas are clearly expressed;
- details are focused and support the main ideas;
- the organization is logical and sequential;
- the voice is authentic and effective;
- appropriate words are used to convey the message;
- the sentences are structured so as to better communicate meaning and hold the reader's interest;
- writing conventions are used;
- the form is appropriate and the presentation facilitates comprehension of the message.

To help students meet these quality-of-writing objectives, effective teachers explicitly plan opportunities for students to:

- learn how words and sentences work;
- write each day for a variety of purposes and audiences;
- choose topics of personal interest;
- write in a variety of genres;
- develop skill in drafting, revising, editing, and publishing;
- learn how to select a writing format to suit purpose and audience;
- learn the writing behaviours of a proficient writer through modelled and shared writing and teacher think-alouds that make the process accessible to learners;
- record their feelings, memories, and experiences;
- participate in conferences and reflection with the teacher and other students;
- share their writing with varied audiences (classmates, teacher, family, others);
- use writing as a tool for thinking and reflecting;
- see themselves as writers in all areas of the curriculum;
- develop metacognitive skills to think critically about the choices they make as writers.

STRATEGIES FOR ASSESSING STUDENT WRITING

Developmental Continuum

A developmental continuum is a tool for tracking students' progress and development over time. Indicators describe the knowledge, skills, and behaviours of the learner at each stage of learning. Teachers assess and monitor the understandings and skills of students by observing behaviour in the course of regular teaching and then matching the understandings and skills to the various stages in the continuum. Continuum information helps the teacher to group students for teaching and provides instructional direction for whole-class mini-lessons. (See Volume 1, pp. 70–71, for a sample developmental continuum in writing)

Direct Observation

Direct observation is used to assess skills and strategies that have been taught and that students have had multiple opportunities to practise. To be effective as an assessment tool, observations should be focused on specific aspects of the skills, strategies, or writing behaviours. Focused observation of individuals, groups, and the class as a whole provides teachers with invaluable information for use in future instruction. Whenever possible,

students should be informed of what the teacher will be observing. Observations recorded regularly, in an assessment journal or individual student log, or on a sticky-note chart, provide an on-going record of class or student work and can facilitate instructional decisions.

Writer's Notebook Checklist

Area observed	Teacher focuses on...
The student's initiative as a writer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – how the student begins to work at writing after the mini-lesson – the student's activity during the writer's workshop (Does the student stay focused on writing? Does the student seek support from peers?)
What the student understands about good writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the student's ability to apply what was taught in the mini-lesson – how the student works at making his or her writing effective – student reflection; how the student sees himself or herself as a writer – the student's view of quality in writing – the student's ability to transfer what has been learned to different contexts.
The student's writing process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the student's use of mentor texts and anchor charts to inform writing – the writing strategies used; for instance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drafting from entries in the writer's notebook • rereading writing to see if it makes sense, and reworking the initial draft • seeking feedback on drafts • the degree to which the student makes use of supports for editing and revising • rereading aloud for grammar, spelling, punctuation; using editing checklists • considering the audience while writing and publishing
What the student is writing or has written	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the use of the writer's notebook to find topics, gather information about a topic – the range of topics about which the student writes – the purposes and audiences for which the student is writing – the student's ways of rehearsing for writing: using sketches, webs, "quick writes", writer's notebook – the quality of the student's writing

At-a-Glance Charts

Observations can be recorded with the help of an at-a-glance chart that lists all students in the class. The teacher's observations and comments are recorded under each student's name. Using at-a-glance charts helps to ensure that every student is observed and the student's work examined with a particular focus. Assessing a few students daily makes the task manageable. Information gathered during these observations may inform future mini-lessons or conferencing sessions.

Anecdotal Records

Teachers record their observational notes in brief, anecdotal, dated records, describing what they noticed about student behaviour and performance in a particular context at a particular time.

They make these notes while students are writing or sharing their writing. When anecdotal notes have a direct link to the teaching emphasis of a writing unit or to the teaching points in a series of mini-lessons, teachers can determine the effectiveness of recent instruction and can plan appropriately for instructional next steps. For example, after a series of mini-lessons on the use of dialogue in narrative writing, anecdotal records may show that a small group of students continues to have difficulty applying the new learning. A shared writing session can be planned for the small group in order to provide further instruction to meet their specific needs.

Sample Anecdotal Record

Anecdotal Comments		WRITING		Week of _____
John – includes dialogue but makes limited use of punctuation, so it's difficult to discern the speakers	Justin – no evidence of dialogue use; needs support	Sarena – extensive use of dialogue, but overused in this case; limited punctuation; confusion between speakers	Emma – no evidence of dialogue; recounts what the character was thinking	

Checklists

Checklists focus the teacher's observation on specific instructional components. Teacher-generated checklists that reflect the goals of recent instruction are most effective in providing detailed information about student demonstrations of learning. Checklists can describe a wide variety of writing behaviours and conventions, including:

- paying attention to the writing process;
- use of support resources for writing;
- application of the structure and features of a text form;
- generation of writing topics;
- revising and editing skills.

Checklists generated in collaboration with students and posted in the classroom as anchor charts can be effectively used by writers as self-monitoring tools. The reason a writer writes is to communicate meaning to an intended audience, and since the clear transmission of meaning is the most important quality of writing, this clarity is what we look for when

examining writing. For example, as an aid to the drafting process, the teacher and students might generate a checklist to describe the structure and list the language features of a persuasive letter. In such a letter, it is expected that the writer will offer opinion or state a position, and will then provide arguments to support that position. The students and teacher would use the checklist as a focus for discussion and observation during writing conferences. Conference observations would then be used to plan mini-lessons and shared or guided writing sessions for students ready to begin the revision process.

PERSUASIVE LETTER CHECKLIST		
	Yes	No
Was your letter addressed to a specific individual or audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
At the beginning of the letter, did you clearly state your position or opinion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you include at least three pieces of evidence to support your position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you use persuasive verbs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you use transitional words to indicate order (e.g., <i>first</i> , <i>second</i> , <i>next</i> , <i>finally</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you anticipate arguments against your position and did you include one or more counter-arguments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you summarize your viewpoint?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Teacher Moderation

Teacher moderation of writing is when teachers meet to assess a range of student writing samples and reach consensus on the level of performance shown in each piece. Many teachers in Ontario are familiar with teacher moderation because of their work with Ontario's Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). Teachers assess student writing using the Achievement Chart for Language. Discussion among teachers produces the rationale for the assessment.

"The difference between assessment that is busywork and assessment that reflects the essence of our teaching is what we and our students make of what we collect."

(Calkins, 1994, p. 325)

Teacher moderation is effective at the school level, where groups of teachers from the same grade or division gather to discuss student progress in writing and to assign marks, grades, or levels to each written piece. Developing common criteria can help to bring consistency and fairness to how teachers assess writing.

Teacher moderation of writing results in:

- greater consistency in writing assessment across classes, grades, divisions, and schools;
- common understandings of the various elements of the Language Achievement Chart;
- rich professional development for teachers participating in the moderation;
- comprehensive perspectives on how the student population is progressing in writing and the next steps needed to advance learning.

The exemplars created as a result of the teacher moderation process provide teachers and students with valuable insight into what quality writing looks like, and also act as clear guidelines for assessment.

Ministry Exemplars

These documents were created to support the new Ontario curriculum during the early days of its implementation. As a result of the ongoing revision and renewal process, the curriculum has continued to evolve since the exemplars were published. In some instances, changes have been made to the curriculum that are not reflected in the original exemplar documents. The exemplars nevertheless remain valuable resource documents for teachers and students. They provide samples of all four levels of achievement, demonstrate the characteristics of good writing, give the teacher's rationale for assigning a particular level, and discuss aspects to consider when assessing student work.

Teachers may use the ministry exemplars as models for creating classroom exemplars, and for determining the criteria to use in rubrics. The samples of student writing may also be useful in the classroom: by working with students to examine the task, the rubric, the piece of student writing, and the rationale for assigning the level, teachers can help students learn to judge their own progress and develop a clearer idea of the characteristics of good writing.

Literacy Portfolios

The Literacy portfolio should contain a collection of selected, varied samples of a student's writing, documenting growth over time. The written contents of the portfolio can be used by the teacher to spot patterns, identify turning points, and determine future teaching points. Students should be encouraged to regularly review their own portfolios, as a way to monitor the development of their writing, identify strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for themselves. Portfolio conferences provide teachers with insight into each student's progress and inform the planning of writing instruction for all students.

The portfolio might contain:

- a small number of dated samples, kept from year to year in a cumulative folder;
- student-selected “best pieces”, each comprising (a) a cover sheet briefly explaining the context for the writing, what the writing is about, and why the piece was included in the portfolio; (b) the published piece of writing; (c) the drafts; and (d) any assessed pre-writing tasks completed for a culminating writing piece;
- specific anecdotal notes from conferences;
- the student’s assessments of his or her own written work;
- writing rubrics and checklists.

The portfolio provides:

- evidence of a student’s progress in learning writing strategies and acquiring writing skills. (The teacher maintains the portfolio in order to track student progress, communicate writing growth and development to parents, and obtain data for planning future writing instruction.)
- a “showcase” for the student’s published pieces. (The pieces are chosen by the student as representing his or her best efforts.)
- a collection of examples of writing chosen by the student and teacher in collaboration. (The examples may be published work, pieces being considered for publication, or pieces that exemplify a particular skill.)

For an in-depth discussion on assessment, see Volume 2 of this series.

4

SAMPLE WRITING LESSONS

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains:

- **Lesson 4.1 – The Writing Process** (a complete 5-day lesson plan)
- **Lesson 4.2 – Focus in Writing** (a complete 3-day lesson plan)
- **Lesson 4.3 – Voice in Writing** (Instruction section only)

The chapter also offers a series of focused study lessons. Focused study is a strategy for increasing students' understanding of various forms and genres of writing. The lessons in the series are:

- **Lesson 4.4 – Book Review Writing** (complete lesson plan)
- **Lesson 4.5 – Explanatory Writing** (Instruction section only)
- **Lesson 4.6 – Persuasive Writing** (Instruction section only)
- **Lesson 4.7 – Poetry Writing** (Instruction section only)
- **Lesson 4.8 – Procedural Writing** (Instruction section only)
- **Lesson 4.9 – Report Writing** (Instruction section only)

Each sample lesson is based on a 60-minute daily writing workshop. The lesson plans either appear in full or present the suggested instructional sequence. **Teacher Reproducibles** are included, where applicable.

Note: The lessons provide suggestions that teachers may adapt or change to respond to the needs of students. Times suggested are flexible and can be altered. The lessons are adaptable across the junior grades and may be changed to accommodate other grade expectations/resources/materials.

Sample Lesson 4.1 – The Writing Process

PLAN AT A GLANCE

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
Mini-lesson: Drafting a piece of writing 20 min.	Mini-lesson: Rereading as a start to revising 20 min.	Mini-lesson: Developing a “Rereading to Begin Revision” anchor chart 20 min.	Mini-lesson: Crafting writing 20 min.	Mini-lesson: Editing writing with a view to publishing 20 min.
Independent writing Teacher roving conferences 30 min.	Independent writing Teacher roving conferences 30 min.	Independent writing Teacher roving conferences Small-group shared writing 30 min.	Independent writing Teacher roving conferences Small-group shared writing 30 min.	Independent writing Peer and teacher conferencing 30 min.
Whole-class sharing 10 min.	Whole-class sharing 10 min.	Whole-class sharing 10 min.	Whole-class sharing 10 min.	Whole-class sharing 10 min.

Note: This lesson plan can be extended to take a piece of writing through to publication.

LESSON FOCUS

What is the focus of this set of lessons? How will I teach them?

Mini-lessons over 5 days, modelling the writing process and its recursive nature.

Teaching Strategies

- Choose a purpose and audience for the writing.
- Draft a piece of writing in front of the students, using a “quick write” and keeping purpose and audience in mind (model the process using a think-aloud, reread the draft, change text, etc.).
- Crafting, revising, and editing the piece.

RATIONALE

Why am I teaching these lessons?

To demonstrate the writing process to students. To help students gain insights into how the writing process works for all writers. To let students see the teacher, as a writer, using the same process and experiencing the same struggles, obstacles, and successes as the students do themselves.

ASSESSMENT

How will I know when my students are successful?

- Observations of students as they use the writing process during independent writing. For example, observing how the students chose a topic; whether they determined a purpose and audience; whether they reread and revised to make the meaning clear, added details, edited, shared, and used writing conventions; whether they sought and listened to feedback, and whether they responded to the feedback during writer's workshop.
- A checklist or rubric that identifies the specific skills students should master.
- Student reflection comments during sharing time.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

What prior knowledge do my students need in order to be successful with the focus of these lessons?

Prior to these lessons, students need to:

- talk about their understanding of the writing process;
- talk about their understanding of the recursive characteristics of the writing process.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Which expectations will I address?

- Produce revised, draft pieces of writing to meet identified criteria based on the expectations related to content, organization, style, and use of conventions
- Proofread and correct their writing using guidelines developed with peers and the teacher

MATERIALS/PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

What do I need to know, have, or prepare before I can begin the lessons?

- overhead projector, overheads, markers
- OR
- materials to create an anchor chart
 - student writing folders

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

How can I ensure that I am meeting the needs of all my students?

Observe student performance and record anecdotal notes that will help determine which students need more time, alternative content, or a different learning process. Students who require a different approach will be brought together for a shared writing experience during Day 3 and Day 4 of the independent writing portion of the writer's workshop.

INSTRUCTION**DAY 1****Mini-lesson: Drafting a Piece of Writing**

- Articulate the purpose for the day's writing (e.g., capturing a moment from the summer, recounting a significant event in your life).
- Determine your audience (in this case, the students in your class).
- Give some thought to what you will write about; consider including what happened, why you remember it, how it made you feel. Have three or four points to put into the draft.
- Explain *purpose* and *audience* to the students.
- Begin the lesson using a think-aloud and explore some of your ideas. Engage in a “quick write” without regard to anything other than getting your thoughts down. Model the speed of a “quick write”. Do not stop and ask for student input; this is *your* writing. The piece doesn't have to be lengthy; it's much easier to craft pieces that are shorter. Model reading the “quick write”, model rereading, then start to fashion the material into a draft, thinking aloud as you hesitate, change, write in spurts. Keep talking and sharing your thinking until you have a short draft.

Independent Writing Time

- Provide sustained writing time during which students will draft a piece of writing.
- Discuss how they might get started. Do they have a topic? Encourage them to think about a purpose and to determine their audience.
- Observe and interact with individual students, encouraging them to get ideas down using a “quick write”.

Sharing

- For this first lesson, the sharing is with the whole class. At other times, sharing might be done between partners or in small groups. Questions to begin a writing discussion might be:
Did something in your writing today surprise you? What was it?
Who can share the main idea from their writing today?

DAY 2**Mini-lesson: Rereading as a Start to Revising**

It is very important to teach students to read a piece over and over with an eye to making the writing better. Model how to reread, each time identifying more strengths and weaknesses in the piece. Write in the margin, scratch things out.

- Begin by rereading the modelled draft from the previous day.
- Talk about how rereading out loud can help a writer to improve a piece of writing.
- Read the text a second time and cross out any parts that don't belong.
- Find a sentence that surprises you. Put a bracket around it.
- Find three words you like. Circle the words. Underline the sentence you like the best.
- Find the sentence that contains the main idea. Underline it.
- Circle the words that are rich and express a thought or idea very well.
- Find verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that are strong, precise, and clear.

Independent Writing Time

- Circulate among students as they practise rereading their drafts and start to revise them. Ask: *How's your writing going? What are you working on? What are some of the challenges?*

Sharing

- To launch a writing discussion, ask: *Today, when you reread your draft, did something in it surprise you? What was it? What sorts of things did you find to revise?*

DAY 3

Mini-lesson: Developing a "Rereading to Begin Revision" Anchor Chart

- Work with the students to create an anchor chart that captures the process of rereading a piece of writing to make it better. Students will be able to refer to this chart when they are using their independent writing time for revising and editing.

Entries on the chart might include:

- Read over and over to help your thinking and to make sure that what you have written makes sense.
- Reread out loud to really hear what the piece of writing is saying.
- Cross out the parts of the piece that do not belong.
- Find a sentence you really like and underline it.
- Find 3 words you like and circle them.
- Find a sentence or paragraph that surprises you. Put a bracket around it.
- Look for the main idea sentence in your writing. Underline it.
- Find nouns and verbs that are precise and that convey meaning clearly and create mental images.

Independent Writing Time

- Observe and conference with students. You may want to take note, during roving conferences, of where students have got to in their planning, drafting, and revision. Option: At the beginning of the independent writing time, do a Status of the Class.
- Gather together for a shared writing session students who need support to determine purpose and audience.

Sharing

- To launch a writing discussion, you might start this way: *A group of us were involved in shared writing and were trying to think of clear purposes and audiences for writing. Can one of you share your topic and audience with us to give others some ideas to consider?*
- Then ask: *Can one of you tell us about something you discovered about your writing by rereading it?*

DAY 4

Mini-lesson: Crafting Writing

- Use the draft from Day 2 to demonstrate for students how to craft a piece of writing. Take the main idea and flesh it out. Put in details that are really important. Explain that details help to slow down the writing so that the reader can picture things and make connections. Emphasize that to determine which details to add, the writer must predict what the reader needs to know.
- Reread and revise the writing, or cut out any parts of the writing that do not belong, so that the piece is shaped and does not stray from the main topic.

Independent Writing Time

- Observe and conference with students.
- Gather together for a shared writing session a group of students needing help with rereading and starting their revision. Involve the students in the process of rereading their draft of the day before, encouraging them to refer to the anchor chart as they work to make their piece of writing better.

Sharing

- Remind the students of the purpose of today's mini-lesson. Ask: *Who now has a piece of writing that is quite different from yesterday's draft? Who added detail to slow down the pace of the writing and make the story clearer for the reader?*

DAY 5

Mini-lesson: Editing Writing With a View to Publishing

- Begin by rereading aloud the piece of writing produced on Day 4, and share your thinking. Ask the students: *What strikes you about this piece of writing now? Where do you think more details need to be added?* Using the student responses, clarify and flesh out the message in your piece of writing. Explain that, by doing this, you are further crafting the writing and are showing how reader feedback can help a writer produce a better piece of writing.
- As you finish the piece with student input, introduce the topic of conventions. Ask: *Is this piece neat enough to be put on display for others to read? Does it need to be rewritten? Are any words misspelled or used incorrectly? Is the punctuation correct?*
- Read the piece aloud a last time, pointing out where writing conventions have been used to help the reader understand the writing.
- Discuss the advantages of partner editing and how students can help each other with the editing task. Demonstrate the process with a student.

Independent Writing Time

- Observe and conference with students.

Sharing

- During your conferences with students you may have noticed work that could be shared with the whole group. Ask the writers of these pieces to read their writing to the class.

REFLECTION

Were my students successful? Did my instructional decision meet the needs of all students? What worked well? What will I do differently in the future? What are my next steps?

- As a result of these sessions, do the students now have some of the tools they need to draft, revise, craft, and edit?
- Is there evidence of rereading and reworking to improve pieces of writing?
- What additional demonstrations will reinforce student learning?

Sample Lesson 4.2 – Focus in Writing

PLAN AT A GLANCE

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3
Mini-lesson: Bringing focus to a piece of writing 20 min.	Mini-lesson: Exploring focus in writing 20 min.	Mini-lesson: Finding the focus in mentor texts 20 min.
Independent writing: Students review their writer's notebooks to find writing that is focused Teacher roving conferences 30 min.	Independent writing Shared/guided writing sessions for students who need support Teacher roving conferences 30 min.	Independent writing Pair-share to examine focus in peer writing Teacher roving conferences 30 min.
Whole-class sharing 10 min.	Whole-class sharing 10 min.	Whole-class sharing 10 min.

LESSON FOCUS

What is the focus of the lessons? How will I teach them?

Junior writers need to learn about focus in writing and how to maintain it, so that they can make their own writing clearer, more effective, and more powerful.

RATIONALE

Why am I teaching these lessons?

To help students develop and maintain focus in their writing and improve the quality of their written work.

ASSESSMENT

How will I know when my students are successful?

- When the writer can express the purpose for the writing, as well as the intended audience, and when the purpose and audience for the writing are obvious to the reader.
- When writing produced by students maintains a clear focus throughout the written piece.
- When the writer is able to discuss focus as a quality in writing.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

What prior knowledge do my students need in order to be successful with the focus of this lesson?

Prior to these lessons, student need to:

- be comfortable with writing daily
- be writing regularly about personal experience and interests
- have a collection of draft writing, either in a writer's notebook or in a writing folder.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Which expectations will I address?

- I identify the topic, purpose, and audience for a variety of writing forms
- Generate ideas about a potential topic using a variety of strategies and resources
- I identify what strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after writing and what steps they can take to improve as writers.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

What do I need to know, have, or prepare before I can begin the lesson?

- the students' writer's notebooks or writing folders
- copies of the "Focus in Writing Conference Sheet"

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION

How can I ensure that I am meeting the needs of all my students?

Observe student performance and record anecdotal notes that will help determine which students need more time, alternative content, or a different learning process. Those students needing further support to understand the concept of focus in writing will be given additional instruction in small-group shared writing sessions or in guided writing lessons.

INSTRUCTION

DAY 1

Mini-lesson: Bringing Focus to a Piece of Writing

- Explain to students that when we think about what to write, we often forget to narrow the focus. Instead, we choose topics that are large and difficult to manage.
- Introduce the mini-lesson:

Today we are going to explore focus in writing. Having a clear focus makes it easier for a writer to make the writing come alive.

Suppose I want to write about a particular person. I want to write something special about that person, to capture what makes that person unique. What could I say? I could talk about the person's appearance, accomplishments, habits, hobbies, eccentricities. I could write about an anecdote we shared, and so on.

- On the board use a graphic organizer, such as an idea web, as you brainstorm possibilities.
- Choose one possibility on which to focus, then demonstrate how to develop detail to make the writing more vivid.
- Think aloud while composing the piece of writing in front of the students.
- Discuss the draft, asking questions as prompts:

What did I do in this piece of writing?

What is the purpose and who is the intended audience?

What did I tell you about the person?

How do I feel about that person? How can you tell?

What did I focus on when telling you about this person?

Independent Writing Time

- Explain the task: *Today you will read over your entries in your writer's notebook and look for one or more pieces of writing that could be used alone or in combination to form the basis for a piece of focused writing. While you are looking for an appropriate entry, keep asking yourself:*
What angle do I want to take?
What is my focus going to be?
What is my purpose and who is my audience for this piece of writing?
- Post the questions in the classroom so that students can refer to them during independent writing.
- Confer with individual students or with small groups to help them find potential pieces for the writing task. Encourage students to look for themes in their writing, as a way of locating fragments that could be combined for use in one piece of focused writing.

Sharing

- Invite three or four students to share their process for finding notebook entries that could be turned into a focused piece of writing.

DAY 2

Mini-Lesson: Exploring Focus in Writing

- Using the modelled writing from Day 1, explore focus in writing, asking students the following questions:
Do you understand what the author has written? Does the writing make sense?
What is the purpose of the writing? Who is the intended audience?
What topic or subject has the author written about? (Refer to the title and first sentence for this information.)
Does all the writing remain on that topic? What has the author done to maintain this focus?
Does each sentence contribute to the topic? Are there any phrases or sentences that do not maintain the focus?
 As the writing is discussed, look at it from the reader's point of view to see if it could be improved. Make changes, if necessary.
- Create a "Focus in Writing" anchor chart of the questions and post it for use during independent writing time and for Day 3 of the lesson.

Independent Writing Time

- Have students work independently to craft their piece of focused writing.
- Conference with individual students or with small groups to help them understand focus and develop their ability to bring focus to their writing.

Sharing

- Ask several students to share their writing and to explain how it shows focus.

DAY 3**Mini-lesson: Finding the Focus in Mentor Texts**

- Explain to students that mentor texts can show us how professional authors write with focus. Choose one of the following texts (which may be found in your school library) and either read aloud a passage that particularly demonstrates focus, or read aloud the entire story.

Owl Moon, by Jane Yolen

When the Relatives Came, by Cynthia Rylant

Birthday Presents, by Cynthia Rylant

Fireflies, by Julie Brinkloe

Amazing Grace, by Mary Hoffman

Something from Nothing, Phoebe Gilman

Something Beautiful, by Sharon Dennis Wyeth

- Pose questions from the “Focus in Writing” anchor chart from Day 2 and have students mine the mentor text for answers.

Independent Writing Time

- Have students work independently to complete their piece of focused writing.
- Work with individual students or small groups who need help with the process.
- Ask students to participate in a pair-share with a partner, during which they will read each other’s writing and answer the “Focus in Writing” questions. During the pair-share, ask each partner to complete a “Focus in Writing Conference Sheet” (Appendix 4.2A) on the partner’s piece of writing.
- Ask students to be prepared, by the end of the week, to submit a completed piece of focused writing for evaluation.

Sharing

- On this day, sharing may take a number of forms:
 - Some students may have discovered something about focus in writing that they want to share.
 - Some students may have completed a piece of focused writing that they are ready to share.
 - Others may want to share their plans for publishing their piece of writing.

REFLECTION

Were my students successful? Did my instructional decisions meet the needs of all students? What worked well? What will I do differently in the future? What are my next steps?

- Use each student’s completed writing piece, the pair-share conference sheets, and anecdotal observations to analyse how well students did and to evaluate how successful the lessons were.

APPENDIX 4.2A – FOCUS IN WRITING CONFERENCE SHEET

My partner wrote about: _____

I read the whole piece to see if all of it focused on the same topic.

It maintained the focus in the beginning.

It maintained the focus in the middle.

It maintained the focus in the end.

It didn't maintain the focus.

To help my partner, I made the following suggestions: _____

My name is: _____

My partner's name is: _____

Sample Lesson 4.3 – Voice in Writing

Voice is the author’s personality coming through in the writing. It is a quality that helps to make the writing unique to that writer. Donald Murray (1995) tells us that voice in writing is “what allows the reader’s eyes to move over silent print and hear the writer speaking.”

During read-alouds, teachers need to pause and point out, or let students discover and point out, those details that reveal voice. Voice is found in the details. Voiceless writing lacks the seasoning that gives it taste. Directed observations, such as those in this lesson, will help students to focus on the concept of voice. Students need to hear and read a wide variety of literature and to discuss what it is that creates or hinders voice.

Giving students the opportunity to take on the roles of different characters in drama is a particularly effective way of helping them develop an understanding of voice. See *Oral Language*, volume 4 of this series, for activities such as fairytale monologues and character conversations. It is important to explain that voice is found in non-fiction as well, but it is different in that it comes from knowing a topic well and discussing it, often passionately, from a particular point of view.

A writer’s voice develops over time and is difficult to teach step by step. The concept of voice should be woven into instruction in different forms of writing; for instance, students can be helped to develop their feelings for a topic when working on persuasive writing or on narrative or poetry. Constantly pointing out and celebrating the use of voice (in sharing sessions, when using mentor texts) will help students understand the concept and begin to notice places in the writing they read where they feel a particularly strong connection with the writer.

“Here are a few suggestions when teaching a sense of voice:

- Students should write daily. The only way to develop voice is by becoming comfortable with writing and letting your words flow without being self-conscious.
- Students should write regularly about personal experience and interests so that their words come from their hearts.
- Students shouldn’t worry too much about the skills of writing until they become more comfortable letting their words flow.
- Encourage students to write letters to the newspaper or to a politician about issues that they are concerned about. Letter writing can help students come to know their own voices.”

(Heard, 2002, p. 50)

PLAN AT A GLANCE

<p>DAY 1</p> <p>Mini-lesson: Finding voice in a mentor text</p> <p>20 min.</p>	<p>DAY 2</p> <p>Mini-lesson: How voice differs from author to author</p> <p>Developing a “Types of Voice in Writing” anchor chart</p> <p>20 min.</p>	<p>DAY 3</p> <p>Mini-lesson: Emotion and passion in voice</p> <p>20 min.</p>
<p>Independent writing: Students review their writer’s notebooks to find writing with voice (or they draft new writing)</p> <p>Teacher roving conferences</p> <p>30 min.</p>	<p>Independent writing</p> <p>Shared/guided sessions with students needing support</p> <p>Teacher roving conferences</p> <p>30 min.</p>	<p>Independent writing</p> <p>Teacher roving conferences</p> <p>30 min.</p>
<p>Whole-class sharing</p> <p>10 min.</p>	<p>Whole-class sharing</p> <p>10 min.</p>	<p>Whole-class sharing</p> <p>10 min.</p>

INSTRUCTION

DAY 1**Mini-Lesson: Finding Voice in a Mentor Text**

- Read aloud a mentor text that demonstrates voice. (See Appendix 4.3A for suggested texts.) First, read the text without a break to allow students to simply enjoy the story. Do the second reading as a think-aloud, focusing on voice in the text.
- Discuss the writing, using the questions below as a framework. Discussion provides students with the experience, vocabulary, and knowledge they will need if they are to identify voice in their own writing or in the writing of others. Ask questions such as:
 - What do you hear the writer saying in the text?*
 - What kind of voice do you hear in the story?*
 - Is the voice joyful, thoughtful, hesitant, remorseful, annoyed, doubtful, elated, ecstatic, bold, furious, frustrated, brave, jubilant, undecided, spirited, daring, apologetic, defiant, playful, silly, content, nostalgic, whimsical, eerie, angry, sarcastic, passionate, clever, rude, entertaining, critical, concerned, courteous, authoritative?* (These words help students “zero in” on voice. Link appropriate words to situations and characters’ actions in the story. Start a brainstorm chart of words that describe the author’s voice and use it as a basis for creating a “Types of Voice in Writing” anchor chart on Day 2.)
 - Where does author’s voice come through most clearly?*
 - Where do you hear the passion of the author?*
 - How did the author allow his or her personality to come through in his or her own writing?*
- Observe students while they are answering these questions. Depending on your observations, you may decide to conduct a similar lesson the following day, choosing a mentor text with a different kind of voice. If you feel that your students have a good sense of voice from this initial work, move on to Day 2.

DAY 2**Mini-lesson: How Voice Differs From Author to Author**

- Explain to students that reading and discussing different mentor texts will give them a chance to hear a range of powerful voices.
- Read aloud two or three short passages from different books with very different voices. Ask students to describe the voice they hear in each text.
- Have students, in a pair-share context, read a mentor text of their choice and discuss the voice they hear in the text.
- As a class, develop a “Types of Voice in Writing” anchor chart of words that describe voice. Because students often find it a challenge to precisely describe the feelings found in voice, an anchor chart of such words (see Day 1 for examples) can be very useful to them. Read two or three passages from texts to show how particular voices sound; link back to the anchor chart.

DAY 3**Mini-Lesson: Emotion and Passion in Voice**

- Begin the mini-lesson by asking: *Would all of us have the same feelings and reactions if we wrote about being in bed right now and something was crawling across our arm?*
- Encourage students to share their thoughts and experiences. They will have many different experiences and details to share and their personal voice will come out in the discussions. Some students might consider this a frightening experience, others might shrug it off as insignificant, individual students might describe a spider or a feather or a trick played on them by a sibling.
- After two or three minutes of discussion, say: *So, even if we all wrote about the same experience, our words would be influenced by our own experiences, knowledge, and emotions. Given what you have said, I can see that all your voices would be quite different. When we describe voice, we give a name to that tone or sound we hear in the writing. Let me give you an example.*
Here, model writing a piece about some incident in your life that involved emotion and passion. Use a situation that students can identify with (e.g., the loss of a piece of writing you were working on, finding a cat near the bird feeder). Include dialogue in the piece of writing you are doing, to help show feelings and emotions.
- Have students describe the voice they hear in the piece. Remind them that there is no single correct response. A reader and a writer connect through a piece of writing and each reader brings his or her knowledge and experiences to the reading of the text.
- Explain to students that action verbs and precise nouns make writing come alive. As the students describe their ideas, help them to express those ideas with action verbs and precise nouns (e.g., “heat waves shimmered over the tar patches,” “dogs panted in the heat,” “clouds bulged in the sky.”)

APPENDIX 4.3A – SUGGESTED MENTOR TEXTS FOR EXPLORING VOICE

Note: In the junior division, teachers are encouraged to use a variety of mentor texts to support the teaching of voice in writing. Voice is conveyed to the reader through the interplay of illustrations and text.

- | | |
|--|---|
| Any poetry book by Michael Rosen | <i>Owl Moon</i> , by Jane Yolen |
| <i>Amos & Boris</i> , by William Steig | <i>Sadako</i> , by Eleanor Coerr |
| <i>Aunt Chip and the Great Triple Creek Dam Affair</i> , by Patricia Polacco | <i>Squids Will Be Squids</i> , by Jon Scieszka |
| <i>Baby</i> , by Patricia MacLachlan | <i>The Story of Ruby Bridges</i> , by Robert Coles |
| <i>A Chair for My Mother</i> , by Vera B. Williams | <i>Thank You Mr. Falker</i> , by Patricia Polacco |
| <i>Dandelions</i> , by Eve Bunting | <i>The True Story of the Three Little Pigs!</i> , by Jon Scieszka |
| <i>Diary of a Spider</i> , by Doreen Cronin | <i>The True Story of Trapper Jack's Left Big Toe</i> , by Ian Wallace |
| <i>Encounter</i> , by Jane Yolen | <i>Two Bad Ants</i> , by Chris Van Allsburg |
| <i>The Frog Prince Continued</i> , by Jon Scieszka | <i>The Van Gogh Café</i> , by Cynthia Rylant |
| <i>Julius the Baby of the World</i> , by Kevin Henkes | <i>Very Last First Time</i> , by Jan Andrews |
| <i>Mr. Kneebone's New Digs</i> , by Ian Wallace | <i>Voices in the Park</i> , by Anthony Browne |
| <i>Mrs. Katz and Tush</i> , by Patricia Polacco | <i>When Jessie Came Across the Sea</i> , by Amy Hest |
| <i>No David</i> , by David Shannon | |
| <i>Out of the Dust</i> , by Karen Hesse | |

FOCUSED STUDY IN WRITING

Focused Study in Writing is a series of lessons dedicated to helping students develop the skills and knowledge necessary to write successfully in a particular form or genre. Focused study lessons are taught in writer's workshop, during which students are engaging with teacher read-alouds, discussing and sharing their thinking, reading and researching topics of interest, developing ideas in their writer's notebook, working independently to draft and craft pieces of writing, participating in peer and teacher conferencing and teacher demonstrations, revising, editing, publishing, and sharing their writing and the process they used. A series of mini-lessons with a single focus allows for deeper engagement and is more likely to have a significant impact on student writing.

The goal of focused study is to increase the student's understanding of the various forms of writing and help the student use these forms appropriately to communicate messages. A focused study might concentrate on how to use a writer's notebook or it might involve the study of key forms and genres of writing:

- literary writing (e.g., memoirs, personal narrative, poetry);
- information writing (e.g., book reviews, explanatory writing, feature article writing, persuasive writing, procedural writing, reports);
- graphic writing (e.g., book covers, persuasive posters).

Students need varied experiences with different types of writing if they are to improve their ability to tackle challenging writing tasks across all curriculum areas. If many students tend to write only personal narratives in writer's workshop, the teacher might decide to introduce an information genre for focused study. If students use only commas and periods in their writing, the teacher might do a focused unit on punctuation and on how published authors use a wider repertoire of punctuation to help the reader understand the writing and the writer's intent.

Tip for Teachers

Be sure to balance genre studies with other kinds of writing. Students need time each week to express personal thoughts in writing and to record events in their life. They need time to write for their own purposes.

The Framework of a Focused Study

At the start of a focused study unit, students are informed that they will be using focused study in their writing and that, at the end of the unit, they will be publishing a piece of writing in the text form or genre studied.

The focused study framework has four main components:

- **Immersion** (becoming familiar with a text form or genre of writing; hearing and reading texts in this form or genre):

Students are immersed in the text form or genre. They read to see how the mentor texts are written. The teacher reads samples aloud so that students can hear what the writing sounds like. Students record on sticky notes or in their writer's notebooks whatever they are noticing as the teacher reads. By reading many examples and by discussing them, students begin to identify the kinds of topics typically dealt with, the type of research required, and how the writers crafted the writing to make it interesting to the reader.

- **Exploration** (discussing the structure, features, and craft):

Students examine how the texts have actually been written. They “dig into” the writing and read like a writer. They explore craft elements that seem central to the text form or genre, study the structure and the kind of language used. As they read, write about, and study the mentor texts, they begin to develop a working definition of the text form or genre. Key mentor texts may be used for shared reading and discussion. Teachers use anchor charts, writing templates, and instruction from mini-lessons (e.g., introductions and endings, text structure, appropriate language) to scaffold the development of writing skills particular to the form or genre under study. An inquiry approach is used to explore the features. Students are asked: *What do you notice about how these texts are written?*

- **Demonstration** (teacher modelling):

During a modelled or shared writing lesson, the teacher demonstrates writing in the form or genre, paying particular attention to the characteristics. Students are asked: *What kind of writing is this? What is the purpose of this writing? Who is the intended audience? What is included in the focus of this writing? What is left out? What does the author do for the introduction and ending? How is the writing structured? Are graphics helpful with this type of writing?*

- **Guided practice** (exploring and creating in the form or genre, with the teacher's guidance):

Students jot down ideas in their writer's notebook, do research, draft pieces of writing, do “try-its”, and revise and edit their more promising pieces of writing. At the end of the focused study, students and teachers reflect upon and assess the process they followed for the writing, and the products that resulted.

While a focused study may be about a particular text form or genre of writing, the intent is to have students use the knowledge acquired during the focused study in other areas of the curriculum and in their daily lives. For example, students who have studied the characteristics of persuasive writing can go on to use persuasive writing in narrative, in letter-writing, in science or social studies, or in media productions.

There is an expectation that all students will publish a piece of writing at the end of every study.

Planning for Focused Studies

Teachers in the junior division may design their own year-long plan for focused studies or may collaborate with grade-level partners to determine the most useful and meaningful focus areas. *Note:* Throughout the year, focused study is intermingled with other kinds of writing.

Sample Year-long Plan

Focused study	Start date	Expected publication
Introducing the writer’s notebook as a tool for rehearsing, researching, and collecting poems, memories, observations, wonderings, etc.	Sept. 6	Various genres
Using the writing process	Sept. 20	Various genres
Information writing: the report	Nov. 6	Reports
Information writing: the book review	Dec. 4	Book reviews
Personal narrative writing	Jan. 10	Personal narratives
Information writing: explanatory writing	Feb. 14	Explanations
Revising and crafting writing	Mar. 1	Various genres
Information writing: persuasive writing	April 5	Persuasive and opinion pieces, including letters and posters
Reflective writing and “quick writes”	May 3	Various genres
Literary writing: poetry	June 5	Poems

When planning a focused study for the class, the teacher considers:

- students' prior experience;
- the skills students need to have in order to be successful;
- the length of the focused study;
- the number of days that will be devoted to immersion in and exploration of the text form or genre;
- the number of days needed for drafting, revision, editing, and publishing;
- the specific areas to be covered in this focused study to meet the curriculum expectations;
- the topics and sequence of the mini-lessons.

Assessing Student Writing in a Focused Study

Assessment of writing, whether from one study or from several focused studies over a term, involves evaluating the qualities of the writing, the elements or features incorporated into the writing, and the success with which the writers have conveyed meaning to the reader. It is useful to gather several pieces of writing, in various genres, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of a student's writing development. Information gathered from these assessments will guide the planning of the next focused study.

The assessment tools on pages 89 and 90, the first a general checklist and the second a tool for a more in-depth look, may be used when examining a single piece of writing in any of the genres or when assessing several examples of a student's writing in various genres.

A student self-assessment form or checklist follows the Instruction section of each focused study in this chapter.

FOCUSED STUDY: ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

Focused study: _____

Did the writer:

- make a topic selection with care and deliberation?
- use the writer's notebook as a tool to help generate ideas?
- engage in the necessary preparatory work (e.g., research, gathering information, discussing the topic) prior to writing?
- make a careful plan before drafting?
- engage in strategic revision (e.g., rereading several times, reading aloud, reading to get feedback, trying things out)?
- use the teaching from mini-lessons or conferencing to improve the writing?
- use the mentor texts and anchor charts as guides?
- make changes during drafting and revision that helped to craft a better piece of writing?
- pay close attention to editing and proofreading the piece for errors in spelling and usage?
- attend to the finished look of the piece?

FOCUSED STUDY: DETAILED ASSESSMENT

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

Focused study: _____

Assessment Focus	Observations and Comments	Further Teaching Needed
What message is the student developing in this piece of writing? Does the introduction give the reader hints about the message? Does the ending help convey the writer's intentions?		
Do I have difficulty understanding what the writer is trying to convey? What seems to be contributing to this difficulty?		
Does each part of the writing help to develop the message? What does the writing reveal about what this student knows about writing in this text form or genre?		
Is the student able to use the genre's features and structure to effectively communicate meaning about the topic?		
Is the writing structured in a way that makes it easy for the reader to progress through the various parts? Does the writer use transitions in the text? Has the writer ordered the information in a way that makes sense?		
Do the details in the writing help to develop the message? Are the details appropriate for this type of writing? Does the writer use varied sentence structure and precise words to convey meaning?		
What conventions are used consistently by the writer? Are there errors that should be addressed in future teaching?		
<i>If examining this student's writing over several genres:</i> Are there indications and examples of writer's voice in the writing? (<i>Note:</i> Voice may be more evident in some genres.)		

(Adapted from Assessing Writers, by Carl Anderson)

Sample Lesson 4.4 – Book Review Writing

DESCRIPTION

The Purpose of a Book Review

A book review is an account of one reader's experience of reading a particular book and includes an evaluation or judgement of the text. The book review is written to let prospective readers know whether or not a particular book is one they will want to (or should) read. Students have a real audience and purpose for this writing – namely, other students, who will read the review and decide whether or not to read the book.

Characteristics

Book reviews are written for literary texts, information texts, or graphic texts. They can vary considerably in style and format: some are formal, others almost chatty, some are short, and some are long. Most are written in the past tense and tell what was liked or disliked about the text. They may include personal feelings. Most importantly, the author provides reasons for his or her evaluation.

Book reviews:

- start with a lead that catches the reader's attention and that may suggest the theme of the book.
- include a retelling or summary of the plot, perhaps hinting at the resolution but never revealing it.
- introduce the main character and relevant details about his or her life, including problems and emotions, and also provide insights into other characters.
- provide a brief background into the relationships between the characters.
- describe the setting where the story takes place.
- refer to specifics in the text (story elements, events).
- tell if the book is part of a series.
- recommend the age and kind of reader for whom the book is appropriate, and why.
- provide specific information about the book (e.g., title, author, genre, number of pages, ISBN, price).
- compare the text to others by the same author.
- give the reviewer's opinions and reactions to the book.
- suggest ways to improve the book, give constructive criticism.
- describe what sets the text apart from others.
- use quotations and ideas from the book to support statements and opinions.
- demonstrate all the qualities we expect to see in any good writing.

IMMERSION

The teacher collects samples of published book reviews from magazines, the weekend newspaper, or review periodicals such as *The Canadian Review of Materials* (online) or *The Horn Book*. Several book reviews are read aloud to the class and their content and effectiveness are discussed. Copies of the reviews are made available for students to read and study. Students are also advised that they can read book reviews posted in book stores or posted online by major bookstores.

EXPLORATION

Students read a number of reviews and then discuss and identify book-review characteristics. They look for what reviewers did in their reviews. They work to answer the question: *What sets this genre of writing apart from the others?* In small groups, they explore the reviews in more depth, reading, discussing, and listing characteristics. The class is reconvened to talk about findings and to compile a master list of book-review characteristics. The main characteristics are recorded on an anchor chart.

DEMONSTRATION

The teacher chooses a book review (or writes one) that closely matches the type of review that students are expected to write. The review is put onto a transparency and the teacher points out and names some of the parts and features of the review, emphasizing what the reviewer has chosen to include. Reference is made to the anchor chart developed the day before, and any new characteristics found in today's book review are added to it.

GUIDED PRACTICE

Students write their own book reviews while the teacher guides their work and builds on the teaching done during mini-lessons, demonstrations, and conferences.

During this phase, students are directed to look through their writer's and reader's notebooks to find possibilities for book reviews. They discuss book reviews they have read and find the best mentor texts for that genre. They choose a topic for their own book review, begin to organize their data, gather more information if they need it, discuss and read further, and then draft their review, using as guides a mentor text and, if necessary, a writing template. They revise their writing, collaborate, conference, and do further research. Finally, they edit, proofread, and publish their work.

During this phase, students increase their understanding of reviews by reading restaurant, movie, and music reviews. Many students will have read movie reviews, so they will already have some familiarity with the review genre.

Learning to write book reviews allows students to write in a crafted way about the literature they are reading, and lets them explain what the text is about, list features, and summarize events.

There is an expectation that each student will publish a book review at the end of the study.

STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

At the end of the study, students and teachers reflect on the process and assess the product. The intent is to have students use in their everyday lives the knowledge they acquired during this focused study.

A student self-assessment form for book review writing can be found on p. 96.

INSTRUCTION

(adapted from *Writing About Reading*, by Janet Angelillo)

DAY 1**Mini-lesson: Introduction to Book Review Writing**

- Using an overhead, discuss a book review, exploring author stance, purpose, audience, and what the reviewer has chosen to include.
- Have students begin reading, exploring, and discussing book reviews, noting the audience, purpose, stance, and obvious characteristics.
- Work together to create a “Characteristics of Reviews” anchor chart.

DAY 2**Mini-lesson: Choosing a Book to Review**

- Discuss why an author would choose to write a review.
- Have students search through their reading notebook or writer’s notebook to find a compelling and engaging book they would like to review.
- Have students research the book they want to review and make notes in their writer’s notebook.

DAY 3**Mini-lesson: Exploring Stance and Voice in Book Reviews**

- Explain that writers of reviews assume a stance when preparing their message for readers.
- Explore stance in several book reviews the students have read.
- Explore the tone of several reviews and talk about how writers add voice to their writing.
- Have students begin to note the purpose and audience for their book review, the stance they will take, and the information they will include.

DAY 4**Mini-lesson: Drafting a Book Review (Shared Writing Session)**

- Explain that good writers plan before they write and sometimes use an organization chart to help sort out their ideas.
- Together with students, draft a book review of a recent teacher read-aloud. Before you start the draft, decide on purpose, audience, stance, and information to include (determined by the kind of book).
- Have students begin drafting their own reviews.

DAY 5**Mini-lesson: Rereading as a Start to Revision**

- Explain that good writers always reread, many times over, what they have written, and that this is how they make sure that their writing says what they want it to say.
- Use the draft from Day 4 to explore these revision questions:

What do I want to communicate about this book?

Did I say what I meant to say?

Is my writing clear to others?

Have I provided evidence from the text to support my opinions?

- Decide with the students whether the information needs to be reorganized or clarified, and demonstrate how this should be done.
- Give students time to complete their own draft book reviews.

DAY 6**Mini-lesson: Revising With the Reader in Mind**

- Using the class-composed book review or a mentor text, discuss the following questions on revising and improving writing:

Does the writing flow? Does the structure help the reader understand the message?

Does the text use appropriate transitions? Does the order of the text make sense?

Does the introduction help the reader get a glimpse of the meaning? Does it spark the reader's interest?

Does the ending pull the book review together?

- Have the students start revising their own book reviews.

DAY 7**Mini-lesson: Revising the Book Review With Reader Feedback**

- Explain that writers want to be sure that readers will comprehend the text and be able to read it easily. It is always helpful to have someone else read the written material in order to provide a reader's response/reaction to the writing.
- Review the kinds of questions a writer might ask the person who has read a draft of his or her book review:

Will readers have a clear sense of the features of this book from my review?

What is my intention in this book review? Is my intention clear?

Is my review directed to a particular audience?

What are my feelings about the book and are they clearly communicated to the reader?

Am I being fair to this author?

Did I use examples to support my points?

- Have students work with others, talking about their drafts and using the questions from the mini-lesson to guide their dialogue.

DAY 8**Mini-lesson: Editing the Book Review**

- Tell students that writers use conventions to ensure that their writing is clear and unambiguous, and to be sure that readers will be able to understand what they have written.
- Explain the importance of close editing and how to reread only for spelling (e.g., circling any word whose spelling needs checking), then for punctuation, then for other conventions. Emphasize that it is the writer's responsibility to check any word that he or she is unsure of. Be sure that dictionaries and thesauri are always available in the classroom.
- Read the class-composed draft aloud, listening to see if what you are reading "sounds right". Read it aloud again, this time paying careful attention to a particular convention (e.g., punctuation).
- Have students reread their own drafts, using editing anchor charts as guides, to check the grammar, capitalization, and other conventions in their writing.

DAY 9**Mini-lesson: Publishing the Book Reviews**

- Review the purpose of book reviews. Explain that book reviews inform or warn others about a text and, as such, are intended to reach a larger audience. Knowing that their published book reviews will be read by many others will encourage students to take review writing seriously.
- Consider some of the following as publishing possibilities:
 - Create a class file with reviews categorized by genre, title, and author.
 - Display reviews in the library.
 - Encourage more than one student to read the same title and then discuss the importance of reader differences and preferences.
 - Encourage readers to respond to reviews.
 - Start a book review club.

APPENDIX 4.4A – STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR BOOK REVIEW WRITING

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The strengths of my book review are:
2. If I could do further work on this book review, I would:
3. While writing this book review, I learned to do the following things:
4. The strategies I found helpful before, during, and after the writing were:
5. I need to work on:

Sample Lesson 4.5 – Explanatory Writing

DESCRIPTION

The Purpose of Explanatory Writing

Explanatory writing explains how something is done or made or how something works. Explanations are fairly procedural in nature, presenting the information in an organized way. However, the writer isn't trying to teach readers *how* to do something. The aim is to teach *about* something.

Characteristics

Explanatory writing tends to start with a definition or statement to introduce the topic (e.g., A butterfly goes through several stages in its life cycle.). Sometimes, the introduction or opening is a question (e.g., How is rain formed?). The opening is followed by a series of logical steps explaining how or why something occurs or works. The writing may be in chronological sequence, but uses causal statements to explain *how* (e.g., how a kite flies). Explanations deal with the cause and effect of a topic (e.g., the effects of pollution on the environment). The author lists one or more causes and the resulting effect or effects. Explanations may include visual images, such as flow charts or diagrams. A summing-up statement or ending closes the piece.

Explanatory writing usually consists of:

- a title that clearly indicates what is being written about. Using the words *how* or *why* in the title helps to alert the reader to the kind of writing that follows.
- a first paragraph that introduces the subject to the reader and draws the reader in by stating that what follows will answer questions the reader might have.
- writing and illustrations that are organized and that explain the *how* or *why* and might include information on *when* and *where*, depending on the topic of the piece of writing.
- text that is written in the present tense and that uses temporal transitions (*then, next, after*) and/or causal conjunctions (*because, therefore, as a result, since, so that, for this reason, this led to, consequently, nevertheless, owing to*) to show the relationship between the cause and the effect.
- charts, diagrams, illustrations, or a flow chart, if they help to clarify the explanation.
- an ending that may directly address the reader (e.g., if you...), and that usually refers to the intention expressed in the opening statement.

INSTRUCTION

DAY 1

Mini-lesson: Introducing Explanatory Writing

- Tell students why this type of writing is done and where it can be found.
- Present several examples of explanatory writing (e.g., magazine articles, any other texts that tell how something works or why things happen the way they do). Briefly comment on each example.

- Choose two or three short pieces and read them aloud, stopping now and then to discuss various characteristics with the students.
- Have students read several examples on their own. There are many excellent mentor texts in the school library that can be used for this purpose; for example:
 - Stanley Coren's *Why Do Dogs Have Wet Noses?*
 - Christina Coster-Longman's books (e.g., *The Human Body*, *Planet Earth*)
 - David Feldman's *Why Do Dogs Have Wet Noses? and Other Imponderables*
 - Bobbie Kalman's books on endangered animals, on life cycles, and on extreme sports (mountain biking, skydiving, wakeboarding)
 - David MacCaulay's *The New Way Things Work*
 - Joanne Settel's books (*Exploding Ants: Amazing Facts About How Animals Adapt*, *Why Do Cats' Eyes Glow in the Dark?*) and those coauthored with Nancy Baggett (*How Do Ants Know When You're Having a Picnic?*, *Why Does My Nose Run?*)
 - Bill Slavin's *Transformed: How Everyday Things Are Made*

DAY 2

Mini-lesson: Doing Research for Explanatory Writing

- Explain that writers of explanatory pieces usually need to do research before they write, so that they can be sure that what they are saying is accurate and complete and expressed in a way that can be understood by the reader.
- Describe the kinds of information that a writer might have to research (e.g., the date of an invention, the full name of the inventor, where the event happened, the process of developing or refining the discovery, similar inventions that did not become well-known and why).
- Select two or three texts and discuss the kind of research the writers might have had to do before starting to draft their explanations.
- Have students work with a partner to explore the texts, reading and discussing them and making notes on audience, purpose, stance, and characteristics.
- Reconvene the class and work with the students to create a "Characteristics of Explanatory Writing" anchor chart.
- Ask students to start thinking about topics for a piece of explanatory writing of their own. Emphasize that the writer must be (or must become) very familiar with the subject. Suggest that students start thinking about explaining cause and effect in simple things around them. They might ponder the following questions: *How does this little game work? What does a plant need in order to grow? Why did the blocks fall down? How is a particular holiday celebrated? How does a clock tell you the time?*

- If students need help finding a topic, they could choose from the following list:

Why dinosaurs vanished from the earth	How a pencil works
How pulleys work	How stalactites are formed
Why it snows	Why it rains
Why volcanoes erupt	Why we need ladybugs
How a sundial works	What makes a tidal wave
Why some animals become extinct	Why we don't see a full moon every night
How a bird uses its beak	Why Mars is called the red planet
How to do long division	How a bicycle works
Why a boat floats	How planes fly
How text messaging works	How maple syrup is made
How pollution affects the environment	Why magnets work
How baseball is played	How to tell which way is North
How a hummingbird feeds	How the digestive system works
How a light bulb works	The life cycle of a specific plant or animal

DAY 3

Mini-Lesson: Drafting a Piece of Explanatory Writing

- Choose a topic (e.g., How does a spider catch its prey?) and model how to write an explanation, demonstrating the characteristics of the text form and thinking aloud during the writing. Ask: *What is this writing intended to do? Who is my intended audience? What does this type of writing focus on? What should be left out? What should I do as an introduction, as an ending? How is explanatory writing structured? Will graphics help me communicate my message?*
- Briefly discuss explanatory writing templates and make them available to students if needed.

Sample Template #1

I want to explain why...

There are several reasons for this. The main reason is...

Another reason is...

In addition, ...

So now you can see why...

Sample Template #2

There are many explanations why...
One explanation is that...
The evidence for this is...
An alternative explanation is...
This explanation is based on...
Of the two explanations, I think the most likely is...

- Make sure that every student has chosen a topic to write about.
- Have students begin to research their topic and make notes in their writer's notebook during independent writing time.

DAY 4**Mini-lesson: Revising the Draft**

- Using the "Characteristics of Explanatory Writing" anchor chart as a guide, work with students to revise and improve the modelled writing from Day 3.
- Have students continue to research their topics during independent writing time. Those students who are ready to do so may start writing their explanatory pieces.

DAY 5**Mini-lesson: Crafting the Writing**

- Using the modelled piece of writing, craft the text to conform to the text form and to make it interesting for the reader. Using a think-aloud, ask the following questions as you work:
 - What do we want to communicate in this explanation?*
 - Have we said what we meant to say?*
 - Does the introduction give the reader a glimpse of the meaning and spark interest?*
 - Does the writing flow? Is it structured so that it is easy for the reader to follow?*
 - Have transitions been used, and used correctly?*
 - Does the order make sense?*
 - Does the ending pull the explanation together?*
 - Does the writing show explanatory writing characteristics? Which ones?*
 - Is there anything we should add to make this explanatory text more effective?*
- Ask students to keep these questions in mind (post an anchor chart) as they draft and craft their own pieces of explanatory writing during independent writing time. Remind them to develop only one main idea in each paragraph.

DAY 6**Mini-lesson: Editing the Writing**

- Remind students that readers must be able to easily read what has been written.
- Using class editing checklists, explain the importance of close editing – the word-by-word check of a text for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors and the careful review of the format for anything that might mislead or confuse the reader – and model how to do it, concentrating on one writing convention or aspect at a time.
- Have students share their work with a partner, get feedback, revise, then edit, in preparation for publishing.

APPENDIX 4.5A – STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR EXPLANATORY WRITING

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. In my piece of explanatory writing, I :

- directed my writing to a particular audience.
- provided a context and adopted a point of view to capture the interest of my readers.
- created a visual sequence with my text and graphics.
- made sure that my writing and illustrations make the explanation clear.
- made sure that my explanation is easy to follow and makes sense.
- grouped and organized ideas into paragraphs.
- included only relevant information.
- used time words to show sequence.
- provided an ending to the piece of writing.
- used conventions (correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and legible handwriting) to help the reader access the information.

2. While producing this piece of explanatory writing, I learned to do the following things:

3. I need to work on:

Sample Lesson 4.6 – Persuasive Writing

DESCRIPTION

The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

Writing and speaking persuasively are necessary life skills for influencing others, advocating change, and presenting a reasoned argument about an issue or cause. Persuasion is the basis of argumentative discourse, presenting thinking and stance in formal writing situations. Students use persuasive writing to try to persuade others to do or believe what they consider important. They try to win the reader over, appealing to the reader's reason, character, or emotions. To do so, they must first form their own opinion about a topic, then analyse and evaluate their ideas, considering the validity of each point they want to make. They must anticipate the arguments the opposition might advance. Students must have a clear sense of their audience before they start to write.

Characteristics

Persuasive writing usually consists of:

- a title or opening statement that tells the reader what is being argued;
- ideas that are well sequenced and logical;
- main ideas organized into paragraphs;
- techniques, such as rhetorical questions, to make the argument more personal to the reader;
- supportive facts and persuasive words and phrases, illustrations, and labels;
- ideas stated in a unique or surprising way;
- an ending recommendation or conclusion that ties the ideas together.

A Critical Look at Persuasive Text

All junior students, even the youngest, have encountered persuasive texts designed to influence their beliefs and actions. Persuasive techniques are used to sell products or to convince an audience of something. Naming these techniques and deconstructing ads and posters allows students to work with real-life examples of persuasive writing. It is vital that students understand the techniques used and the effects they have on consumers. Discussions on these matters can be lively and can have a definite influence on student writing. Possible discussion prompts are:

What is the intended message? Who is the target audience?

What is the purpose of the message?

What are the authors trying to present?

What authority has this writer to say this? What do other authorities have to say?

Do you support this message? Why or why not?

How did the creator of this poster or ad get your attention?

Whose voice is present? Whose voice is missing?

What might the creators of this piece have to gain from its creation?

How should a reader respond to this text? How do you feel about it?

What did you think of the ad or poster initially and has your thinking changed after this discussion? Why?

What does this discussion have to do with our writing?

INSTRUCTION**DAY 1****Mini-lesson: Introduce Persuasive Writing**

- Select some good examples of persuasive writing. Many exist in children's literature, e.g., Baylor, Byrd. (1982). *The Best Town in the World*. New York: Aladdin.
 - Brown, M. (1997). *The Important Book*. New York: Harper Collins.
 - Cowcher, H. (1990). *Antarctica*. New York: Farrar.
 - Scieszka, Jon. (1989). *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!* New York: Viking.
 - Stead, Tony and Ballester, Judy. (2002) *Should There Be Zoos?: A Persuasive Text*. New York: Mondo.
 - Van Allsburg, Chris (1991). *The Wretched Stone*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
 - Yolen, J. (1982). *Encounter*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace.
- Other examples can be found in newspaper editorials (sample topics: *Should some countries be able to hunt whales for food? Should students be given homework on Fridays?*), advertisements (sample topics: *Are those running shoes the best because a basketball star is recommending them? Should ads for toys be directed to children? Does "junk mail" serve a purpose?*), social studies, science, and health textbooks (sample topics: *the rights of Native people, individual rights, environmental rights*).
- Make overheads of the text of a book you have shared with the class as a read-aloud.
 - Read the text aloud, inviting students to note things that make this kind of writing different.
 - Use the overheads to locate and mark characteristics the students have noted. Discuss.
 - Use this information to develop a "Characteristics of Persuasive Writing" anchor chart. Post it in the classroom.
 - Give students time to develop a short list of issues about which they have strong feelings. Ask them to include at least one argument in support of each issue, their purpose for writing about it, and their intended audience. Have students share these topics/issues to create a class list. File the student lists in writing folders.

DAY 2**Mini-lesson: Drafting a Piece of Persuasive Writing**

- Articulate the purpose and audience for today's writing.
- Choose an issue of interest or concern to you and your students.
- Compose a piece of persuasive writing in front of your students.
- Do a think-aloud about determining the point of view you will be taking.
- Write the title as you think out loud that your intent is to give the reader a view of the topic.
- Write a statement of your position to show that this is where and how a writer presents the topic to the reader. Model the language used when developing a piece of persuasive writing (e.g., use *in my opinion, firstly, however, in fact, another, but, similarly, finally*), doing your thinking and decision-making out loud. Model deciding what background information you may need to include.

- Demonstrate how to write logical arguments to support and strengthen your point of view. Use a minimum of three arguments. Develop each argument in a new paragraph, thinking aloud as you go. Show that you need strong arguments to convince someone and that you may have to do some research to be sure of your facts.
- Demonstrate how to write a conclusion, restating the point of view. Reread the draft.
- Discuss with the class how you used persuasive language to make and support claims.
- Before students begin work on their own piece of persuasive writing, have them explain their arguments to a partner.

Note: If students still need to work on the concepts, continue to discuss characteristics the next day. Proceed to the next mini-lesson once students are ready to move on to the development of opposing perspectives.

DAY 3

Mini-lesson: Revising the Draft to Refine the Arguments

- Use the organizer below to explicitly model how to examine both sides of an issue and how to write from both perspectives. Model how using this “both sides” strategy can help a writer gather and organize information in a focused way.

Position statement:

Arguments and evidence for:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Arguments and evidence against:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Conclusions:

- Challenge students, during independent writing time, to revisit their text from a different perspective, considering the other side of the arguments they developed the day before and thinking about what they learned today in the mini-lesson. Ask them to use the organizer to quickly plan how to further develop their piece, and to use the information to extend their arguments. Direct them to rewrite the piece using a paragraph structure.
- At the end of the writing time, ask: *How did looking at your issue from both sides make a difference in your persuasive piece?* Please share your thoughts.

DAY 4**Mini-lesson: Revising the Draft to Make the Arguments Stronger**

- Tell students that writing done for a familiar audience (e.g., classmates) is quite different from writing done for an unfamiliar audience (e.g., the mayor, the prime minister). Writing that is done for an unfamiliar audience is revised and edited to the fullest extent possible.
- Reread the piece of persuasive writing modelled on Day 1. Remind students that rereading a piece out loud and listening carefully while doing so can help a writer improve the writing. Ask: *Does it sound like persuasive writing? What makes it sound like persuasive writing? What does it need in order to sound like persuasive writing?*
- Model the revision process using a coloured marker, crossing out, inserting, rereading, reconsidering, asking questions, moving in and out of the process, all the time making changes that will result in a more powerful piece of writing.
- Ask students to use the same techniques to review their own drafts. Challenge them to find the most significant arguments and elaborate on them.
- Ask: *Do the arguments in your persuasive writing piece convince the reader of the writer's point of view?* Suggest that students seek feedback to help them improve their writing.

DAY 5**Mini-lesson: Editing to Improve the Writing**

- Reread the text revised on Day 4.
- Systematically demonstrate how to edit a small part of the text, using a different coloured marker. Refer to editing checklists posted in the classroom. Teach one or two points specifically related to editing persuasive writing (e.g., highlight how punctuation is used with transitional words. If necessary, add points to the editing checklist).
- Send students off to edit their own text and encourage them to apply the specific points they learned in the mini-lesson.

Note: At this point, some students will be ready to publish, others will still be revising or editing. Encourage those who have published their piece to choose a new topic to explore in persuasive writing.

APPENDIX 4.6A – STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR PERSUASIVE WRITING

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. In my piece of persuasive writing, I :

- demonstrated an understanding of the purpose of persuasive writing.
- began with an opening statement that tells the reader what is being argued.
- used a new paragraph to state and elaborate each of the points.
- used relevant and convincing information in my arguments, presented from my own experiences or research.
- planned the arguments logically and sequentially.
- planned my arguments in an organized and thoughtful manner.
- considered other points of view and attempted to refute the main opposing argument.
- maintained a consistent point of view throughout the piece.
- used a final paragraph that reiterates the main points with a concluding evaluation or recommendation.
- used writing conventions (e.g., correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and legible handwriting) to make the writing clear and well-presented.

2. While producing this piece of persuasive writing, I learned to do the following things:

3. I need to work on:

Sample Lesson 4.7 – Poetry Writing

DESCRIPTION

The Purpose of Poetry Writing

Poetry uses carefully chosen, heightened language to express ideas, feelings, and emotions in ways that prose cannot. Poems can be funny, surprising, poignant, moving, magical, and memorable. Poetry should be part of the literacy lives of students long before they are expected to write their own poems. The rhythms and cadences of poetry become familiar to students who hear poetry read aloud daily. In this focused study, students are immersed in the world of poetry. They are helped to know poetry, appreciate poetry, and write poetry for themselves and others. The study can also help them realize that, as Georgia Heard expresses so eloquently in the introduction to one of her texts, “poetry, like bread, is for everyone” (Heard, 1998).

Characteristics

Poetry usually contains:

- imagery (words that makes pictures in the mind)
- metaphors and similes (words and phrases that make creative comparisons)
- heightened language: words chosen with great care and intended to evoke colours, images, and sounds, and that touch the reader emotionally
- line breaks and regular (or irregular) stanzas, intended to give emphasis to certain words or ideas or to create certain rhythms
- beginnings and endings that intrigue, surprise, or make the reader think or remember
- repetition and pattern, to create special effects with words
- rhyme at the ends of lines or within lines.

“Before we can expect our students to explore poems we need to make sure we select with care the poems we share with them. The poems should allow the students the opportunity to make personal connections, although the poems need not exactly mirror their own lives or experiences. That would eliminate too many wonderful poems. It does mean, however, that there must be some point of contact in the poem for the student. A student may not have experienced the death of a sibling, for example, but he or she, more than likely, has had to deal with the loss of someone close. A dear friend moves away. A beloved pet gets hit by a car. A favorite neighbor dies unexpectedly. That sense of loss could be a point of contact.”

(Janeczko, 2003, p. 13)

INSTRUCTION**DAY 1****Mini-lesson: Working With the Features of Poetry**

- Explain to students that exploring what poets do with language is a meaningful and interesting activity.
- Read a selected poem to the class. (See Appendix 4.7A for ideas on choosing resources, and Appendix 4.7B for tips on how to prepare for a poetry read-aloud.)
- Ask the students to list the features they noticed in the poem.
- Divide the class into groups of three or four students and distribute the “Poetry Characteristics” list (Appendix 4.7C) to the groups.
- Ask each group to choose an item from the list and explore how it has been used in the poem, noting their findings. This activity helps students to examine and come to understand the tools that poets use.
- Present a selection of poems of various types, on various topics, and ask students to each choose three poems to read on their own.
- Ask students to start a list of poetic words and phrases in their writer’s notebook.

DAY 2**Mini-lesson: Helping Students Find a Topic for Poetry Writing**

- Discuss how poets find ideas. Using one poet’s poems, explore the topics and begin a list of what that poet writes about. Explain that poems often draw on out-of-the-ordinary happenings in everyday life.
- Ask the students to think about what really matters to them personally. Explain that they will be listing these ideas in their writer’s notebook, and that their list will be very special, not only because it will capture who they really are as individuals but also because it will help them find possible topics to write about during poetry study. To encourage deep thought, use question prompts, allowing sufficient thinking time between questions for students to find answers. Ask:

Are there people, places, and things that you care a lot about? Write them down.

Are there things you like to do?

Are there memories and things that have happened to you that are special to you?

What happy or sad memories do you have?

Are there things that you have always wondered about?

What things do you like to study or think about?

What are the important things about your life that you never want to forget?

DAY 3**Mini-lesson: Using Images to Draft a Poem**

- Start by saying: *I'm going to draft a poem and, to do this, I need to think of something in my life that I care deeply about. It could be a memory or something I have seen that has stayed with me, or a feeling that I remember, or simply a thought. As soon as I have an idea, I am going to close my eyes and try to picture it. I can use any of my senses to help formulate the picture in my mind – sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch.*
- Name the image that comes to mind. Think aloud as you answer these questions:
What do I see? What do I hear? What am I wondering about? What am I feeling? What does it remind me of? Why is it important?
- After the out-loud reflection, model the drafting of the poem.
- Ask students to work on a poem of their own during independent writing time.

DAY 4**Mini-lesson: Revising the Poem**

Note: This sample mini-lesson deals with using precise wording and deciding on line breaks. Other revision mini-lessons could explore using different openers, different endings, rhythm and rhyme, and so on.

- Explain that poetry helps us to look at things in the world and describe them in new ways.
Example:
 - an everyday observation: *The birds sang in the tree.*
 - a poetic observation: *Sparrow-song burst from the haven of the copper beech.*
- Revise the poem drafted on Day 3, making the words that describe the image more precise.
Ask: What key words will help me to describe my image? I need to find words that show movement, action, or feelings about my image.
- Examine the nouns and verbs already used. *Ask: Are they concrete and strong? Verbs are the engines of sentences. They need to be precise and full of energy. Which verbs and nouns would help to create a more vivid picture in the reader's or listener's mind?*
- Write the revised poem in sentence form and, reading the sentences aloud, listen to the rhythm of the poem. Make two more copies of the poem in this format. Experiment with different ways of breaking the poem into lines, using slash marks to show possible breaks. Read each poem aloud, paying attention to the different line breaks in each case. Talk about how line break choices can affect meaning. Model how to decide which line breaks work best with the poem.
- Post a "Poetry Revision" anchor chart in the classroom as a guide for students. (See Appendix 4.7D.)
- Ask students to continue working on drafting poems during independent writing time. Explain that they will be asked to choose their best draft to revise, edit, and prepare for publication.

APPENDIX 4.7A – RESOURCE SELECTION

When students are being asked to explore imagery, mood, and rhythm, avoid choosing rhyming or formulaic poems such as haiku or cinquain. Highly structured poetry can limit student responses. Furthermore, when students are composing their own poems, an imposed rhyming structure can result in products that sound contrived.

Immerse your students in the endlessly inventive and varied world of poetry. The poems should cover a range of feelings and many different topics and come from many cultures. Some poems should rhyme and others not, and some should be poignant and moving. Several should be easy to read and filled with language play. Others should be powerful and trigger talk and exploration. Some of the poetry may be so engaging that it transports the reader into another place and time.

A good way to draw students into poetry is by sharing your own favourite poems and inviting students to share theirs. Favourite poems could be copied onto cards and kept in the classroom library for rereading during independent reading time. If the poems are chosen to cover a range of subjects and emotions, all students will find a work that particularly speaks to or touches them. It is important to emphasize the notion of respect for all voices in the classroom. Students will often share deep personal feelings during poetry sessions and everyone needs to be respectful and sensitive at these moments.

Help students to see that poetry is already present in the language used in the classroom: it is always there when someone describes something beautiful or unique.

School or public libraries are good sources for collections or anthologies of poetry.

“How important it is to share poetry with children! Sharing the sound and sense of a poem can be one of the most delightful moments in your teaching day. Above all, share the poems that delight you. You will gradually gain a clearer sense of what types of poems you and the class enjoy most together.”

(Graves, 1992, p. 15)

Choosing a Mentor Poem

Look for:

- a poem that speaks to you in a special way or that has personal meaning. You should be able to find some part of yourself or your life in the poem. Ask yourself: *What was my first response to this poem? What personal connections did I make? How does this poem touch parts of my life? What line in the poem stood out for me? Which line captured the essence of the poem?*
- a poem that you can read fluently. Ask yourself: *What did I learn when I first read this poem? What did I learn by rereading it?*
- a poem that you can discuss meaningfully and intelligently with the class. Ask yourself: *What inspired me in this poem? What might inspire others?*
- a poem that demonstrates the qualities of good poetry. Ask yourself: *What makes this poem a good poem? What crafting elements stood out in this poem?*
- a poem that students can learn from. Ask yourself: *What do I think the poet wanted me to understand from this poem? What might inspire me when I write my own poetry?*

Suggested Poetry Anthologies and Collections

- Adoff, Arnold. 1995. *Street Music: City Poems*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Adoff, Arnold. 1981. *OUTside / INside Poems*. New York: Harcourt Children's Books.
- Carlson, Lori Marie (ed.). 1998. *Sol a Sol*. Illustrated by Emily Lisker. New York: Henry Holt.
- Chandra, Deborah. 1993. *Rich Lizard and Other Poems*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Cullinan, Bernice (ed.). 1996. *A Jar of Tiny Stars: Poems by NCTE Award-Winning Poets*. Photographs by Marc Nadel. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.
- Fletcher, Ralph J. 1999. *Relatively Speaking: Poems About Family*. Illustrated by Walter Lyon Krudop. New York: Scholastic.
- Fletcher, Ralph. 1997. *Ordinary Things: Poems from a Walk in Early Spring*. Illustrated by Walter Lyon Krudop. New York: Atheneum.
- Fletcher, Ralph. 2005. *A Writing Kind of Day: Poems for Young Poets*. Illustrated by April Ward. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.
- Graves, Donald. 1996. *Baseball, Snakes and Summer Squash: Poems About Growing Up*. Illustrated by Paul Birling. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.
- Greenfield, Eloise. 1978. *Honey, I Love*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Heard, Georgia. 1997. *Creatures of the Earth and Sky: Poems*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.
- Hopkins, Lee Bennett (ed.). 1996. *Opening Days: Sports Poems*. Illustrated by Scott Medlock. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Hopkins, Lee Bennett. 2005. *Days to Celebrate: A Full Year of Poetry, People, Holidays, History, Fascinating Facts, and More*. Illustrated by Stephen Alcorn. New York: Greenwillow.
- Huck, Charlotte (ed.). 1993. *Secret Places*. Illustrated by Lindsay Barrett George. New York: Greenwillow.
- Janeczko, Paul B. (ed.). 2001. *Dirty Laundry Pile: Poems in Different Voices*. Illustrated by Melissa Sweet. New York: HarperCollins.
- Kennedy, X. J. and Dorothy M. 1999. *Knock at a Star: A Child's Introduction to Poetry*. Illustrated by Karen Lee Baker. New York: Little, Brown.
- Little, Jean. 1986. *Hey World, Here I Am*. Illustrated by Barbara Di Lella. Toronto: Kids Can Press.
- Mora, Pat. 1999. *Confetti: Poems for Children*. Illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez. New York: Lee & Low Books.
- Newman, Fran. Selected by, 1980. *Round Slice of the Moon and Other Poems for Canadian Kids*. Richmond Hill, ON: Scholastic-TAB.
- Nye, Naomi Shihab (ed.) 1992. *This Same Sky: A Collection of Poems from around the World*. New York: Four Winds Press.
- Rosen, Michael J. (ed.). 1996. *Food Fight: Poets Join the Fight Against Hunger With Poems about Their Favourite Foods*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Smith Jr., Charles R. 1999. *Rimshots: Basketball Pix, Rolls, and Rhythms*. New York: Dutton Children's.
- Soto, Gary. 1995. *Canto Familiar*. Illustrated by Annika Nelson. Orlando FL: Harcourt.
- Worth, Valerie. 1994. *All the Small Poems and Fourteen More*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Worth, Valerie and Babbit, Natalie. 2002. *Peacock and Other Poems*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

APPENDIX 4.7B – PREPARING FOR A POETRY READ-ALoud

- Read the poem silently several times, until you have a smooth flow to your reading.
- Check the meaning of any words you are not sure of.
- Read the poem aloud, trying to capture the meaning and mood of what you think the author was trying to communicate.
- Pay close attention to line breaks and punctuation. Use pauses at appropriate places for effect.
- Use the range of your voice (e.g., emphasize key words, use a softer voice, speaking happily, angrily, more loudly).
- Read the poem aloud to someone else, asking for suggestions. If no one is available, record your own reading and listen to the tape. Note how you use your voice. Ask yourself:
Which words am I accentuating? Where am I pausing? Is my tone of voice appropriate?
- Read the poem aloud again and again until it sounds right to you.

APPENDIX 4.7C – POETRY CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic	Description
Line breaks and stanzas	<p>Line breaks are used by the poet to clarify or reinforce a poem's message, increase the emotional impact of the words, or emphasize the rhythm or rhyme. A poem's lines may be long or short. Some poems have lines of a single word each. Lines can even be broken to create a visual image of the poem on the page.</p> <p>Stanzas are a poem's paragraphs. A new stanza might start a new thought or focus on a detail. In some poems, every stanza follows the same rhythm and rhyming pattern. In others, the stanzas are irregular in length and follow no set pattern. They start and stop where the poet felt they should.</p>
Inventive use of words	<p>Poems generally say a great deal in a few carefully chosen words. If a poet wants to make the reader smile, laugh, cry, think deeply, or stop short in wonder, the words that make up the poem, and the way those words are employed, must be fresh and memorable. A poem of even the simplest words can be powerful if the words are used effectively and imaginatively. Sometimes, the inventiveness of a poet's choice and use of words becomes even clearer when the poem is read aloud.</p>
Imagery	<p>Poems conjure up strong images. This is their aim. Their words, and the way the poet has used them, cause us to form pictures in our minds and often help us to see things in an entirely new way.</p>
Use of metaphor and simile	<p>Metaphors and similes are types of comparisons. In poetry, they are used to add interest and vividness to descriptions of feelings, images, and actions. They can help the reader visualize something never seen before or can make the ordinary suddenly seem special.</p>
Use of repetition, pattern, rhythm, and rhyme	<p>Words, lines, or whole phrases of a poem may be repeated. A poem may have no discernable rhythm or may have a rhythm as obvious and as powerful as the words themselves. In some poems, words at the ends of lines always rhyme and follow a set pattern; in others, the words may rhyme only occasionally or not at all. Rhyme may also be found inside lines, either regularly or intermittently. In some poems, no words rhyme. Repetition, pattern, rhythm, and rhyme are a poet's tools, to be used if they fit the subject and the mood and if they enhance the effect the poet wants to create.</p>
Memorable beginnings and endings	<p>The opening words of poems are deliberately chosen to entice the reader to read on. The endings are deliberately fashioned to deliver a surprise, a revelation, a shock, a smile, a moment of raw emotion, a figurative stab to the heart, an answer, or a rush of delight. The poet crafts a memorable beginning in order to "hook" the reader, and composes an ending that he or she hopes will make the reader stop and think, read the poem again, read it to others, perhaps commit it (or parts of it) to memory, and regard it as a special find.</p>

APPENDIX 4.7D – SAMPLE POETRY REVISION ANCHOR CHART**REVISING A POEM**

- Reread the poem to see if it makes sense overall.
- Read the poem to someone else to see if it makes sense to that person.
Ask if that person has any suggestions.
- Reread the poem, examining the language used.
Is the language surprising, rich, and vivid?
Did you use strong nouns and verbs to make the images clear?
Did you use simile and metaphor to make the images come alive?
Did you cut out any unnecessary words?
- Reread the title and opening.
Will the poem's title capture the reader's interest?
Does the poem have a good beginning?
- Reread the poem and try putting line breaks in different places.
Which line breaks make the meaning clear?
Which line breaks interfere with the meaning?
Which line breaks make the poem more powerful?
- Reread the ending.
Does the poem end in a strong and effective way?

APPENDIX 4.7E – STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR POETRY WRITING

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. During this study of poetry, what have I learned as a reader of poetry?

2. What have I learned about writing poetry?

3. My best poem was titled:

It was my best poem because:

Sample Lesson 4.8 – Procedural Writing

DESCRIPTION

The Purpose of Procedural Writing

The main purpose of procedural writing is to lead the reader through a series of steps that show exactly how to do something, with the expectation that the reader should be able to do that something by following the procedures as written. Procedural writing comes in many forms: directions for playing a game, instructions for planting a herb garden, a recipe for baking bread, a guide for how to prevent sunburn, or even a “recipe” for finding happiness in life.

Characteristics

Procedural writing usually contains:

- a clearly stated aim;
- lists of materials needed, or other requirements;
- a series of steps to be followed in sequence;
- information presented in a detailed and precise way;
- headings or subheadings, diagrams, photographs, or numbering to clarify instructions and make the steps easier to follow;
- words that express temporal transitions (e.g., *first, then, when, next*);
- text in the present tense (e.g., *you cut, you spread*);
- at the end, a summation of the procedure, in a way that completes the writing.

Procedural writing characteristics can differ depending on the purpose of the piece. For instance:

Recipes require:

- the name of the recipe
- the list of ingredients
- steps in the method
- the number of people the recipe will serve
- the time needed to prepare and cook

Game instructions require:

- information on the objective of the game
- the number of players
- the equipment needed
- the rules and how to score the game

Math directions require:

- a statement of the goal or aim
- the materials needed
- the directions
- how to check if the result is correct

Science experiments require:

- the aim or hypothesis
- the equipment needed
- the methodology to be used
- how to record observations and the conclusion

Riding a two-wheeler instructions require:

- an introduction
- the equipment needed
- safety concerns
- the steps in the process

INSTRUCTION**DAY 1****Mini-lesson: Introduction to Procedural Writing**

- Begin by distributing samples of procedural writing. These samples could be recipes, game instructions, “how-to” booklets, or articles from craft magazines. Children’s literature offers many good examples of procedural text for students to read; for example:

The Usborne Book of Hair Braiding, by Fiona Watt and Lisa Miles

The Usborne Book of Face Painting, by Chris Caudron et al.

Making Faces: A Complete Guide to Face Painting, by Stan Ellis-Thomas

Making Music: 6 Instruments You Can Create, by Eddie Herschel Oates.

- Have students work in pairs to examine, discuss, and record features of the texts that, from their perspective, are unique to the kind of writing being explored. Ask: *What do you notice? What is different about the way this information is recorded?* Once students have had an opportunity to examine, think critically, and record their observations, invite student pairs to share their responses with the large group.
- Ask students to think about topics for their own pieces of procedural writing during independent writing time. If they have difficulty finding a topic, they might consider choosing a topic from the list below.

How to:

make popcorn

make maple syrup

make a cake

bake cookies

baby sit

make a paper airplane

play hopscotch

do long division

make a hamburger

solve a math problem

conduct an experiment

welcome a new student

get dressed for school

prevent a sunburn

play hockey

plant a herb garden

make macaroni and cheese

make a friend

plan a party

make a paper crane

write a book review

write a letter

be a good citizen

write a science report

research a topic on the Internet

share a pizza fairly among
five people

- Ask students to state the purpose and intended audience for this writing. File their lists of topics in writing folders.

DAY 2**Mini-lesson: Identifying Characteristics of Procedural Writing**

- Using the information students recorded the previous day, work with them to develop an anchor chart on characteristics of procedural writing (list characteristics on an overhead).
- Work together to sift and sort through the information in order to establish the criteria for effective procedural writing.

DAY 3**Mini-lesson: Learning How to Write a Procedure**

- Articulate the purpose and audience for today's writing. Introduce the "how-to" topic you will be writing about. Choose a topic that is familiar to both you and the students (e.g., how to make a sandwich, how to play a simple game, how to make an easy craft). You will use this topic to draft a piece of procedural writing, demonstrating the key characteristics and organizational features of "how-to" writing. (Before the lesson, jot down the key points you want to include.)
- Begin with a discussion of experiences students have had when they were constructing something. Ask: *What made this a good experience? What made this a bad experience?* Start to develop the important concept of the need to write clear, understandable instructions that the reader can follow.
- As you write and draw your instructions, share your thoughts and decisions through a think-aloud. Demonstrate how instructions are written in a series of clear, sequenced steps, using "connectors" such as *first, then, next, finally*. Perhaps accompany the text with an illustration. Demonstrate rereading, talk about the changes you decide to make, and explain why you are making them.
- Refine the anchor chart created on Day 2.
- Ask students to review the list of topics they compiled on Day 2 and choose one that is meaningful to them. Ask them to work in their writer's notebook as they research and draft a procedural text. Provide writing templates for students who need them.

Sample #1: Drafting a "How-To" Text

List of materials/equipment needed to achieve the goal:

The series of steps or the method (each step might be supported with an illustration):

First ...

Next...

Then...

Usually...

Finally...

Evaluation or how the procedure might be tested:

Sample #2: Writing “How-To” Texts

Engage the reader by creating a context or a point of view.

Provide a guide to show what you are intending to do.

Create a visual hierarchy of text and graphics.

Anticipate problems the reader might encounter while following the instructions.

Write an ending.

DAY 4**Mini-lesson: Testing Procedural Writing for Clarity and Accuracy**

- Begin by asking a few students to come to the front of the class and follow the procedures you drafted on Day 2.
- When they have finished, ask the class to reflect on the process and discuss the results. Ask: *Were the students able to follow the instructions? Why or why not? Were the instructions meaningful? How could they be improved?*
- Make revisions to the instructions if need be.
- Invite the students to begin their independent writing time by reviewing their own drafts, keeping in mind what they just learned in the mini-lesson. Stress the need to check their draft for clarity of sequenced steps.
- Explain that getting reader feedback is vital. Feedback can help the writer complete the materials list and ensure that the instructions are in the right order and that the steps are easy to follow. Students should ask: *Are my directions clear? Are my steps well sequenced?*
- Ask students to have a partner read their completed draft and try to follow the procedures. For instance, a student who is writing about how to play a game could have other students try to play the game by following the written instructions.

DAY 5**Mini-lesson: Revising the Draft**

- Refer to the revision checklist posted in the classroom.
- Focus on types of revision that will strengthen students' pieces of procedural writing.
- Begin by rereading the piece that was modelled on Day 3, thereby demonstrating that writers always begin the revision process by rereading their writing.
- Work with the students to focus on the clarity of the sequenced steps. As possible changes are discussed, model the revision process (using a coloured marker), crossing out, inserting, rereading, reconsidering, writing in the margin, rereading once again, asking questions (*Have I anticipated problems, misunderstandings, mistakes that might be made?*), all the while emphasizing how the piece is constantly being made more useful to the reader.
- Send students off to review their own drafts and make revisions, applying what they learned in the mini-lesson. They can then go on to do an edit of their text to check grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

APPENDIX 4.8A – STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR PROCEDURAL WRITING

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. In my piece of procedural writing, I:

- directed the writing at a particular audience.
- created a context or adopted a point of view to engage the reader.
- created a visual hierarchy with the text and graphics.
- explained the procedure logically and clearly in my writing and illustrations.
- made the directions easy to follow and ensured that they made sense.
- grouped ideas and organized them into paragraphs.
- included all relevant information.
- used time words to show the sequence of steps.
- ended the piece appropriately.
- used writing conventions (e.g., correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation, and legible handwriting) to give the reader easy access to the information.

2. While producing this piece of procedural writing, I learned to do the following things:

3. I need to work on:

Sample Lesson 4.9 – A Focused Study: Report Writing

SAMPLE LESSON 4.9

DESCRIPTION

The Purpose of Report Writing

A report is a text form designed to provide information on a topic. In report writing, the writer strives to include appropriate facts and details and to exclude extraneous information. The material is organized into a structure that suits the purpose, audience, and context of the report, and develops a main focus that conveys a perspective.

Characteristics

There are different types of reports and each type is organized differently, depending on the purpose and audience. A report tends to be based on researched facts.

Reports usually contain:

- a table of contents (especially in longer reports);
- an opening statement to explain the topic of the report;
- information grouped by sub-topic;
- descriptive, factual language based on information gathered from research or experience;
- text written in the present tense;
- text that exhibits all the qualities we expect in any good writing;
- quotations and ideas from research sources to support statements and opinions;
- supporting visuals (e.g., diagrams, photos);
- a summing-up statement to end the report;
- an index;
- a glossary.

INSTRUCTION

DAY 1

Mini-lesson: Introducing Report Writing

- Collect several published reports of the type the students will be writing. Magazines such as *Kids Discover*, *National Geographic Kids*, and *Time for Kids* are excellent sources of reports.
- Decide on the focus of the lessons. If this is the first report writing the students will be doing, you may wish to limit the number of topics in order to make it easier to gather materials.
- Read several reports aloud so the students can hear what report writing sounds like. Read mentor texts that you can use throughout the focused study to demonstrate structure, craft, and cohesion in report writing.
- After the read-aloud, discuss the effectiveness of the texts.
- Make report samples available so that students can read them on their own and begin to feel comfortable with this text form.

DAY 2**Mini-lesson: Choosing a Report Topic**

- Model browsing through several books and looking at possibilities for report writing. Talk about looking for ideas in the classroom library or in the writer's notebook.
- Model the process of choosing and narrowing a topic. Begin with three possibilities and narrow them down to one by considering how much information is available on the topic, how much the writer already knows about each topic, and how much the writer will need to know in order to produce the report.
- Ask students to list some possible topics for their reports, suggesting that they consider curriculum subject areas, hobbies, or topics of particular interest to them.
- Have them choose three topics they think will work best.

DAY 3**Mini-lesson: Narrowing a Topic**

- Explain to students that if they have chosen a general topic, such as “Butterflies” or “Machines”, they will need to narrow their topic to make it manageable.
- Model how to narrow a topic. You might demonstrate this by brainstorming and listing what you know and what you would need to know about the selected topic. Use a T-chart:

Things I Know	Things I Need to Find Out

- Think aloud to show that, if what you know is very little compared with what you need to know, then the topic is too general and you need to zero in on just one aspect. Look at the “Things I Know” column and see if there is some part of the topic about which you already know some things and that will require far less research. Explain that this part should become the report topic.
- Ask the students to review their chosen topic to see if it is too general. Have them work at narrowing down their topic to something manageable.
- Once everyone's topic has been narrowed down, ask students to decide on a purpose and an audience for their report.
- During independent writing time, have students brainstorm a list of questions on their topic for which they want to find answers. Ask them to review their list, combining some questions and deleting others, until they have four or five questions of particular importance to their topic. Questions may be added and others deleted as research progresses.

DAY 4**Mini-lesson: Doing Research for a Report**

- Model taking information from different sources and writing it on sticky notes to be collected in a folder or on a page in the writer's notebook. (Model and remind students that sources must always be identified. Note the title, author, and number of the page on which the information was found.)
- Explain that writers get their information from many sources: books, magazines, the Internet, their own observations.
- Have students research answers to their questions during independent writing time and record their findings on sticky notes.

DAY 5**Mini-lesson: Refining the Research and Sharpening the Focus**

- Model how to reread the sticky notes with the following questions in mind:
 - Which parts of the information relate to my original questions?*
 - What other information do I need?*
 - How does the information I found during my research fit with what I already knew about this topic? Do I need to check something further?*
 - What don't I understand about this topic?*
- Show how to examine the information and cluster the sticky notes into categories, discarding any information that isn't relevant to the report, even if it is interesting.
- Demonstrate how, by rereading and examining clustered research notes, the writer will often find areas where more information and research are needed.
- Explain that writers also need to be able to sort information into categories so as to separate essential information from less important information. They must do this to maintain a clear focus in their report writing.
- Have students reread and cluster their own notes during independent writing time, and conduct more research if they need to do so.
- Ask them to think about the focus of their report and then sort their information under different headings (e.g., "Part of main focus", "Not part of main focus"). Help them to see that this sifting of information is what information writers do all the time: they cluster big ideas and discard lesser or irrelevant ones.

DAY 6**Mini-lesson: Organizing Information and Drafting a Report**

- Demonstrate how to arrange facts into a logically sequenced and cohesive whole. Use key transition words to connect ideas (e.g., *at first, then, now, after, later, finally*).
- Model writing a rough draft, using the collected information and thinking aloud as you work. Show how each research question or category becomes a paragraph or a section in the report. Emphasize the importance of sequencing the information in a logical way.

- Demonstrate possible ways to end the report. For instance, a report could end with:
 - From my research I am able to conclude that...
 - I realize that...
 - This makes me think...
 - This is important because...
- Show examples of the various visual aids that writers add to their reports to help clarify the written material (e.g., labelled diagrams, graphs, photos, maps, drawings, timelines). Discuss which visuals best serve specific purposes.
- Have students work from their sticky notes to draft their own reports during independent writing time.

DAY 7

Mini-lesson: Revising the Draft

- Emphasize that writers always reread what they have written to make sure the content says what they want it to say.
- Use the draft report to explore the following revision questions:
 - What exactly do I want to communicate about this topic?*
 - Did I say what I meant to say?*
 - Is my writing clear to others?*
 - Have I provided evidence from sources to support my opinions?*
- Explain that writers must write so that readers can easily read and comprehend the text. If something is fuzzy, ambiguous, or hard to understand, the text needs to be revised. Tell students that writers often use mentor texts to guide them. Demonstrate using a mentor report to help with revision.
- Ask students to review their drafts and revise them as necessary, using the revision questions as a guide.

DAY 8

Mini-lesson: Citing Other Sources and Getting Feedback

- Model how to add information or quotes to the report during the revision process. Explain that using quotes from reputable sources can give authority to a report.
- Stress that all writers benefit from having their work reviewed by an objective reader.
- Have students share their work with a partner, talk about findings, and revise their drafts in light of the feedback received.

DAY 9**Mini-lesson: Editing the Revision**

- Explain that the text must be free of errors so that it is easy for a reader to read. Using class editing checklists and the report written in class, model editing the material. Talk about the importance of editing. Model how to read for one type of error at a time (e.g., read for spelling errors, circling any word that is questionable and checking its spelling in a dictionary).
- Read the draft aloud to be sure that what you have written “sounds right”. Read aloud again, this time paying careful attention to grammar or punctuation.
- Have students read their own reports for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, referring to editing anchor charts for guidance.

DAY 10**Mini-lesson: Publishing a Report**

- Talk about possible ways to publish the students’ report writing. Consider a bulletin board display, a class newsletter, or sharing with another class.
- Once students have published their reports, help them to reflect on the work they have done and what they have learned. Explain that report-writing will be something they will do often in the future.

APPENDIX 4.9A – STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR REPORT WRITING

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The strengths in my report are:

2. If I could do further work on this report, I would:

3. While writing this report, I learned to do the following things:

4. The strategies I found helpful before, during, and after the writing were:

5. I need to work on:

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