# A Guide to Effective Instruction in Writing

## Kindergarten to Grade 3

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2005

# A Guide to Effective Instruction in Writing

## Kindergarten to Grade 3

Ontario

# Contents

# Preface

A *Guide to Effective Instruction in Writing, Kindergarten to Grade 3, 2005* is designed to provide classroom teachers of Kindergarten to Grade 3 with practical approaches and resources for delivering an effective writing program. The document is intended to supplement *A Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading, Kindergarten to Grade 3, 2003*, published by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Research indicates that, because reading and writing are interdependent, students' learning in one area supports their learning in the other. This guide complements and builds on material in the reading instruction guide, to help teachers plan programs that will enhance students' overall literacy development.

## Organization and Features of This Guide

This guide has seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of effective writing instruction. Subsequent chapters address the five key instructional approaches of an effective writing program: modelled writing, shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, and independent writing A final chapter discusses assessment and evaluation. A glossary of terms used in this guide is provided at the end of the document.

Supplemental appendices accompany several of the chapters. The appendices contain various kinds of information and tools intended for use with the teaching approaches and strategies outlined in the text. Thumbnail images of these appendices are provided in this guide; the full-sized versions can be downloaded from the *eWorkshop* website, at http://www.eworkshop.on.ca/resources/literacy.

# I. Overview of Effective Instruction in Writing

**Chapter Contents**

# Overview of Effective Instruction in Writing

## Introduction

Readers and writers are involved in similar activities. Readers create meaning for groups of words based on their knowledge and experiences. Writers take ideas, thoughts, and emotions and transfer them onto paper (or a computer screen) using their knowledge of language conventions and the writing process to create meaningful text. These activities are embedded in all aspects of the curriculum.

Since both reading and writing focus on meaning, development in one reinforces progress in the other: students learn to read and write better when the two processes are linked. As in teaching reading, writing teachers use a balance of modelling, direct instruction, guided instruction, and facilitation of students' independent learning and practice.

Critical literacy plays an important part in both reading and writing. It encourages students to become actively engaged with the text as they make connections to their prior knowledge, other texts, and the world around them. It also encourages them to move beyond the text as they ask questions about the author's purpose and make inferences, evaluations, and judgements.

Writing is a powerful instrument for students to use to express their thoughts, feelings, and judgements about what they have read, seen, or experienced. As students continue to develop an understanding of the writing process; the elements of writing; text forms, genres, and formats; and technology, they are able to express themselves more confidently and effectively.

Teachers use their professional judgement and careful observation in order to provide explicit instruction that will support students as they become effective writers.

Because of the interconnectedness of reading and writing, this guide builds on material already presented in *A Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading,*

> *"The interconnectedness of reading and writing is profound and inescapable … Fragmenting these complex literacy processes interferes with the greatest goal of literacy education – the construction of meaning from and through text. Using reading and writing together in harmonious concert enables learners to draw on these complementary processes at the same time as they work to construct meaning."*
>
> (Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. vi)

*Kindergarten to Grade 3* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003; hereafter referred to as the *Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading* or, simply, the reading instruction guide). For example, Chapter 3, "Oral Language and Reading", explains oral language development and its relationship to reading and writing, while Chapter 10, "The Role of Writing in Reading Instruction", addresses the interrelatedness of reading and writing and provides specific examples of ways in which writing supports reading and reading supports writing. It is hoped that teachers will refer to these and other chapters in the reading instruction guide as they familiarize themselves with this writing guide.

There are five key instructional approaches to writing – modelled writing, shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, and independent writing – each of which forms the subject of a later chapter. Each approach provides opportunities for oral language instruction and practice, and each chapter contains one or more sample lessons that can be used for planning purposes or as a source of new ideas.

First, however, this overview examines the understandings teachers must have to successfully deliver an effective writing program. Teachers need to understand the goals of writing instruction, the stages of development writers pass through, the strategies used by proficient or "good" writers, and the knowledge and skills students require to become effective writers. These understandings will guide teachers in establishing goals, planning programs, delivering instruction, and assessing student progress in ways that address the needs of all students.

## The Goals of Writing Instruction

Writing instruction has four main goals for student achievement:

1. To write clearly and creatively to convey a message
2. To communicate ideas, thoughts, feelings, and experiences
3. To understand that writing is a reflective and interactive process
4. To understand the different purposes, audiences, and forms for writing

To enable students to achieve these goals, teachers need to provide effective instruction in:

- oral language skills;
- activating prior knowledge and experience;
- understanding audience, purpose, and form for writing;
- understanding the writing process;
- understanding the elements of writing;
- applying higher-order thinking skills.

To enable students to achieve these goals, every writing program should include:

- a balance of direct instruction, guided instruction, and independent learning and student practice;
- large-group, small-group, and individual instruction; discussion; and collaboration;
- a variety of assessment and evaluation techniques, used to inform program planning and instruction;
- an uninterrupted literacy block every day;
- the integration of phonics and word study into reading, writing, and oral language activities;
- the introduction of a variety of text forms, genres, formats, and electronic media;
- authentic and motivating literacy experiences and learning activities;
- activities and an environment that promote higher-order thinking skills;
- guidance, coaching, and feedback for students;
- interventions for students who are at risk of not developing literacy skills;
- a supportive classroom culture and effective classroom organization and management;
- parental and community involvement.

## The Stages of Writing Development

All children come to school with a variety of print and oral language experiences, and teachers recognize and make accommodations for the differences among students when planning an effective writing program. A carefully planned program provides a meaningful context within which students can develop the skills and strategies needed to communicate ideas and information in writing. Program planning should begin by considering the three initial stages of writing development: emergent, early, and developing fluency. There are many examples of writing continua available in professional resources for teachers. The developmental continuum shown below, in the "Developmental Stages" graph, is one example.

Students do not develop their writing skills evenly from stage to stage. There is considerable overlap from one stage to the next. It is common for developing writers to exhibit behaviours from more than one stage of development.

The three charts[1] provided on the following pages outline the main indicators of students' understanding of writing, and their interest and ability in writing, at each stage of development. Accompanying each indicator is a suggested teaching approach that will best support student progress in that particular aspect of writing.

**Developmental Stages**

| | Emergent | Early | Developing Fluency |
|---|---|---|---|
| K | | | |
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
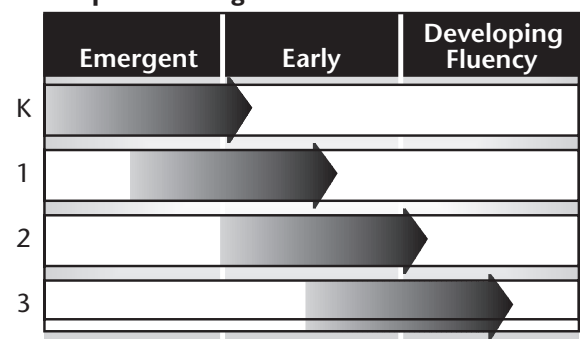
1. Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2000, Appendix, pp. 69–70.

## The Emergent Writer

Emergent writers learn that their oral language can be recorded in print. They develop an understanding that writing is used to communicate a message. They imitate adult writing by using pictures, symbols, and some conventional letters.

### The Emergent Stage

| The student: | The teacher: |
| --- | --- |
| • understands that writing records a personal message;<br><br>• understands that writing is a form of communication and conveys a meaningful message;<br><br>• progresses to writing a simple message using a combination of pictures, symbols, and letters; | • uses modelled, shared, and interactive writing to record students' ideas on a classroom chart during discussions, sharing time, and the morning message (e.g., sending notes to the principal, making shopping lists for the house centre, recording recipes);<br><br>• models a variety of ways of message making (e.g., environmental print, classroom labels, morning message, shared writing, sentence strips) to help students understand that meaning can be conveyed in a variety of forms; |
| • begins to use the conventions of oral language (often with a tendency to overapply newly learned conventions), while progressing from simple descriptions to retelling events and explaining ideas; | • models correct oral language structures, and rephrases grammatically incorrect responses from students (e.g., Student says, "I goed to the store." Teacher responds, "You went to the store."); |
| • demonstrates interest in playing at "writing" and willingness to do so; | • provides an inviting environment and a variety of tools and media for student writing; |
| • develops the understanding that illustration and writing are different, and progresses from scribble writing to letter approximations to conventional letters and spaces, with few or no attempts at punctuation; | • demonstrates through read-alouds the difference between illustrations and print, and reinforces these concepts through modelled and interactive writing, using an alphabet picture chart and magnetic letters; |
| • progresses from demonstrating beginning awareness of directionality to using left to right, top to bottom (i.e., concepts of print); | • uses a "think-aloud" strategy, during modelled reading of a big book, to demonstrate that the text is read from left to right and from top to bottom; |
| • progresses from using symbols representing print to spelling words with one or more letters, with a focus on letters representing the sounds of consonants (e.g., his/her own name, and high-frequency words such as "mom", "I", and "to"). | • engages in phonemic awareness activities and models how sound awareness translates to print. |

## The Early Writer

Early writers are developing a greater understanding of the concepts of print. They begin to understand some purposes for writing and to use some basic writing forms. They express their ideas in simple sentences, often using invented spelling.

### The Early Stage

| The student: | The teacher: |
|---|---|
| • understands that writing is a way to preserve thoughts and information; | • encourages students to share their journal writing, create books for the classroom library, write notes and cards, and so on; |
| • demonstrates awareness that oral language needs to be grammatically accurate, and is able to self-correct, using specific vocabulary to suit different purposes (e.g., for description, comparison, and higher-order thinking); | • provides classroom experiences that enrich oral language; |
| • demonstrates enjoyment of and continued interest in writing; | • provides opportunities for students to communicate in personally meaningful ways; |
| • represents words with conventional letters and spaces in simple sentences, and attempts to use some punctuation in written language; | • demonstrates, during modelled writing, how language works (e.g., letters, words, spaces, sentences), using the think-aloud process;<br><br>• in an interactive writing lesson, gives students the opportunity to participate in the writing; |
| • progresses from demonstrating awareness of basic print concepts to first steps in planning, revising, and editing; | • models and shares the writing process, using graphic organizers (e.g., story web, story plan) to plan a story and write a first draft;<br><br>• in subsequent modelled and shared writing lessons, gives students the opportunity to revise and edit the first draft; |
| • understands some purposes for and forms of writing, and uses basic sentence structures to communicate ideas; | • through shared and guided writing, introduces the elements of writing and coaches students on how to select the appropriate form to suit a specific purpose for writing; |
| • chooses letters to represent all dominant sounds in a word, often using invented spelling as well as conventional spelling of some high-frequency words. | • through modelled, shared, and guided writing, demonstrates and engages students in the use of strategies and resources that support the learning of spelling (e.g., sound/symbol relationships, word walls, theme word displays, personal dictionaries). |

### Developing Fluency

During this stage of writing development, children write for a variety of purposes, using forms appropriate for their audience. They follow the steps of the writing process, use a variety of spelling strategies, and group sentences into paragraphs.

## The Stage of Developing Fluency

| The student: | The teacher: |
|---|---|
| • understands that writing is an essential part of one's life in order to communicate and satisfy personal and academic needs; | • demonstrates, through think-alouds and modelling, that writers write for a purpose, consider the audience, and choose the appropriate form; |
| • recognizes that oral language needs to be adapted for specific purposes, and communicates messages for a variety of activities and events; | • during think-alouds, models alternative oral language structures and a variety of vocabulary; |
| • continues to enjoy writing, and understands that writing can be used for a variety of purposes; | • provides materials and opportunities (e.g., time to read quality books and talk to peers about writing ideas) to support student self-expression (e.g., point of view, reflection, personal experience); |
| • writes a variety of sentences and paragraphs, using appropriate punctuation; | • works with small groups in guided writing to support student acquisition of writing strategies;<br><br>• provides opportunities for students to reinforce, practise, and apply writing strategies during independent writing; |
| • uses a range of strategies for planning, revising, editing, and publishing written text; | • through guided and independent writing, supports students as they develop and implement strategies aligned with the writing process (e.g., graphic organizers, editing checklists, peer revision); |
| • uses appropriate vocabulary and a range of text forms to suit purpose and audience;<br><br>• writes a variety of simple and complex sentences grouped into paragraphs; | • may facilitate fluent writing through writing workshops and/or individual student conferences with an emphasis on the writing process and the elements of writing; |
| • uses letters to represent all sounds, and begins to use a variety of spelling strategies (e.g., visual and sound patterns, context, spelling resources such as dictionaries). | • provides daily opportunities for students to apply spelling strategies in a meaningful context. |

## Student Attitudes Towards Writing

As students develop as writers, they gain not only greater proficiency in writing but also greater understanding of what effective writers do. Teachers may choose to generate a list of "What Good Writers Do", "What Good Editors Do", or "What Good Spellers Do" with their class. A student-generated list can be used as a way for teachers to discover their students' attitudes towards writing, and towards themselves as writers. It can also highlight any gaps in students' awareness of the qualities of an effective writer, editor, or speller. The teacher can address these gaps through minilessons or other instructional strategies.

These lists are not prescriptive or exhaustive. They are used as a means to focus on writing and to "remind" students that they do not necessarily have to be a proficient speller to be an effective writer, and vice versa. It is possible that some qualities will fit under more than one heading.

These lists should be considered within the broader context of student development. It is assumed that a Kindergarten student will not be performing nor be expected to perform at the same level as a student in Grade 3; therefore, not all of the points below will apply to all students.

### Samples of Student-Generated Lists

| What Do Good Writers Do? | What Do Good Editors Do? | What Do Good Spellers Do? |
|---|---|---|
| • Like to write<br>• Write about things they know about or are interested in<br>• Draw and "talk out" their story (rehearsal)<br>• Decide whom they are writing for and what their writing will look like<br>• Share their writing with a partner, a conference group, or the teacher<br>• Read their first draft and ask, "Does it look right? Does it sound right? Does it make sense?" | • Use capital letters<br>• Check their punctuation<br>• Check their spelling<br>• Use complete sentences<br>• Write legibly<br>• Use interesting words<br>• Let somebody else read their story | • Read a lot<br>• Write a lot<br>• Look for patterns<br>• Know many high-frequency words<br>• Know if a word looks right<br>• Listen for sounds they hear<br>• Know where to look to find a hard word (e.g., word wall, dictionaries)<br>• Take a risk |

# Becoming an Effective Writer

*"Writing is a complex process that involves a range of skills and tasks. Although writing is often used to clarify and express personal thoughts and feelings, it is used primarily to communicate with others. Students need to become disciplined thinkers in order to communicate their ideas clearly and effectively. They need to learn to select and organize their ideas, keeping in mind the purpose for which they are writing and the audience they are addressing. They also need to learn to use standard written forms and other conventions of language."*

(Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1997, p. 11)

The *writing process* is the means by which students learn how to approach and carry out a writing task. The *elements of writing* provide teachers and students with the concepts and terminology necessary to understand and talk about the process and products of writing. An understanding of the *forms of writing*, which include *genres* and *formats*, and practice in identifying the purpose and audience for their writing enable students to select the most appropriate form to communicate their ideas and feelings.

> Students' developing understanding of the writing process provides them with the tools they need to express themselves effectively and to reach their target audience. Through direct instruction, teachers provide students with an understanding of how different aspects of a piece of writing – including planning, writing a draft, revising, editing, and publishing – all relate to one another.
>
> Effective writers make connections to prior knowledge, other texts, and the world around them as they craft their writing.
>
> As they write, students ask themselves:
> - "Did I say everything that I wanted to say?"
> - "Does my plan for writing reflect my thinking and ideas?"
> - "Did I listen to my teacher or peer in order to make effective revisions?"

The writing process, the elements of writing, and the forms of writing underpin the five key instructional approaches presented in this guide. These aspects of writing are interconnected, but they may be taught in isolation for a particular purpose – for example, in a minilesson devised to address a specific need – and then quickly integrated back into the literacy block.

## The Writing Process

The writing process teaches students how to develop their ideas and record them in written form. The process involves the following distinct steps:

- Planning

- Writing a draft

- Revising

- Editing

- Publishing

Each stage of the writing process is important and needs to be explicitly taught. The writing process can be taught in sequence, but it is also important to help students understand that writers go back and forth between the steps as they write. Some writing is never taken to completion.

All students, regardless of their stage of development as writers, are introduced to the writing process through modelled and shared instruction. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 participate in different aspects of a balanced writing program, depending on their stage of development. Each student will engage in the writing process at his or her own level – for example, a Kindergarten student might label a group picture during shared writing.

Teacher and peer conferences play an important role in the writing process and are discussed below in the sections on revising and editing.

Teachers need to model all aspects of the writing process many times so that students become familiar with each stage. This will enable students to participate in the writing process with understanding and confidence.

> **Talk is an integral part of the writing process. Students are given the opportunity to talk to each other in order to expand their ideas and/or make improvements in their writing.**

### Planning

The first step of the writing process, sometimes referred to as "rehearsal", results in a plan to guide students as they write. Students generate ideas based on prior knowledge or personal experience. They may be prompted to visualize or draw their story and then tell a friend. After brainstorming with other students, they evaluate their ideas, narrow their focus, and select a topic. Some students may be provided with a generic graphic organizer. As students create a plan, they need to consider why they are writing (the purpose), and who will read what they write (the audience). At this point, students may determine the form their writing will take.

**Writing a Draft**

Following the development of their plan, students write a first draft. The intent of this draft is to get ideas down on paper. *The focus, at this point, is on the message, not the mechanics of writing.* Once the draft is complete, students need to read what they have written and decide if it says what they want it to say and if they like what they have written. It is crucial that they understand that not all writing will be developed beyond this point. (Teachers will tell students how many pieces of writing are expected to reach publication over the course of the year.) If they consider that the draft has potential, they will move on to the next step in the writing process. However, if the draft is not satisfactory (e.g., does not address the purpose for writing), they may choose to go back to the planning stage and begin again. It is essential that students be taught how to evaluate their own writing at this stage in the process.

**Revising**

*"A process writing classroom tends to be characterized by a number of elements such as: having students establish purposes for their writing; establishing author groups; peer conferencing; student-teacher conferencing; finding 'real' audiences for students' writing; teachers writing with students; recognizing students' personal writing processes; recognizing social and cultural influences on student writing."*

(Peterson, 2003, p. 1)

The focus of this step is to improve the quality of the message. Students are taught to examine their writing critically and use a variety of strategies to revise their writing effectively. A good way to begin is to ask themselves, "Does this make sense?" They need to determine if their ideas are clear and if their organization is appropriate for the form chosen. Students will also consider the style of their writing, including sentence structure, paragraphing, and vocabulary, and ensure that they have made the best word choices for their topic and audience. Word choice is a key concept related to developing the writer's voice. If students decide that significant changes are necessary, they may choose to go back and produce a complete second draft.

Teacher and/or peer conferencing is an effective approach to revision. After a revision conference, the student writer will decide if he or she will implement any of the suggestions made.

It is important for teachers to remember that students may reach plateaus in their writing. Rather than progressing on to the next stage of development, they may need more experience and time in order to expand their repertoire of ideas and their sense of writing style and form. With children in Kindergarten to Grade 3, there may need to be a strong emphasis on oral language (e.g., frequent opportunities to talk to peers or listen to the teacher read a variety of books) in order to help them internalize different perspectives and ideas and incorporate them into their writing.

## Editing

By this stage, students are satisfied with their message. They feel they have addressed the purpose, used the appropriate text form, and considered their audience. Therefore, they now need to focus on the mechanical aspects of their writing – they need to be taught to proofread their own writing and the writing of others. During proofreading, students will check the correctness of their spelling, grammatical structures, and punctuation. Class-developed editing checklists are a most effective tool since they reflect students' capabilities. Ultimately, students will need to develop a variety of strategies, through a balanced writing program, before they are independently able to edit their work and the work of others.

## Publishing

Students now make their writing presentable to the intended audience. They consider the visual layout of the text (e.g., margins, headings, graphics, and photographs) and its legibility. Once their writing has been published, it should be shared with their audience.

As the following chart shows, writing is recursive in nature. The writer moves back and forth between the steps of the writing process in order to create and refine ideas. It is important to remember that not all writing reaches the publishing stage.

### The Writing Process

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Planning/Rehearsal** — I have shared with a peer and I am happy with my plan. | **NO** → | Return to planning/rehearsal |
| ↓ **YES** | | |
| **Drafting** — Do I want to continue writing this piece? | **NO** → | Return to planning/rehearsal or put in writing folder |
| ↓ **YES** | | |
| **Revising** — Is this piece the best that it can be? | **NO** → | Make further revisions, return to an earlier stage, or put in writing folder |
| ↓ **YES** | | |
| **Editing** — Do I want to publish this piece? | **NO** → | Return to an earlier stage or put in writing folder |
| ↓ **YES** | | |
| **Publishing** | | |

> *"Writing competence develops along with skills in other areas of language, especially reading. As students read a variety of written texts, they increase and gain command over their vocabulary, and learn to vary their sentence structure, organizational approach, and voice."*
>
> (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1997, p. 11)

## The Elements of Writing

As students develop as writers, they gain a greater understanding of the elements that give each piece of writing its focus and character. The elements of writing[2] are as follows:

- Ideas/Content
- Organization
- Voice
- Word Choice
- Sentence Fluency
- Conventions
- Presentation

These elements are reflected in the expectations and the achievement chart of the ministry's language curriculum document for Grades 1–8.

Understanding the role of the various elements of writing enables students to express their thoughts and feelings in their own unique way. Different elements may be introduced when teachers deem students to be ready to understand and use them. The elements should not be taught in isolation but should be introduced in the context of the daily language activities of the class. On some occasions, the teacher may focus on a specific element of writing during a minilesson or shared writing lesson, but the new learning should be integrated into students' daily learning. As students grow developmentally, they will write more complex, lengthy pieces that will provide further opportunities to teach the elements of writing.

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Students' developing understanding of the elements of writing provides them with the tools they need to express themselves effectively and to reach their target audience. Through direct instruction, teachers provide students with an understanding of how different aspects of a piece of writing – including ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation – all relate to one another.

Effective writers make connections to prior knowledge, other texts, and the world around them as they craft their writing.

As they write, students ask themselves:

- "Can the reader tell how I feel about this topic?"
- "Did I say everything that was important?"
- "Why did I decide to write this?"

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2. The discussion of the elements of writing in this and the following section is based on the writing model described by Ruth Culham in *6 + 1 Traits of Writing* (New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 2003), pages 11 and 12.
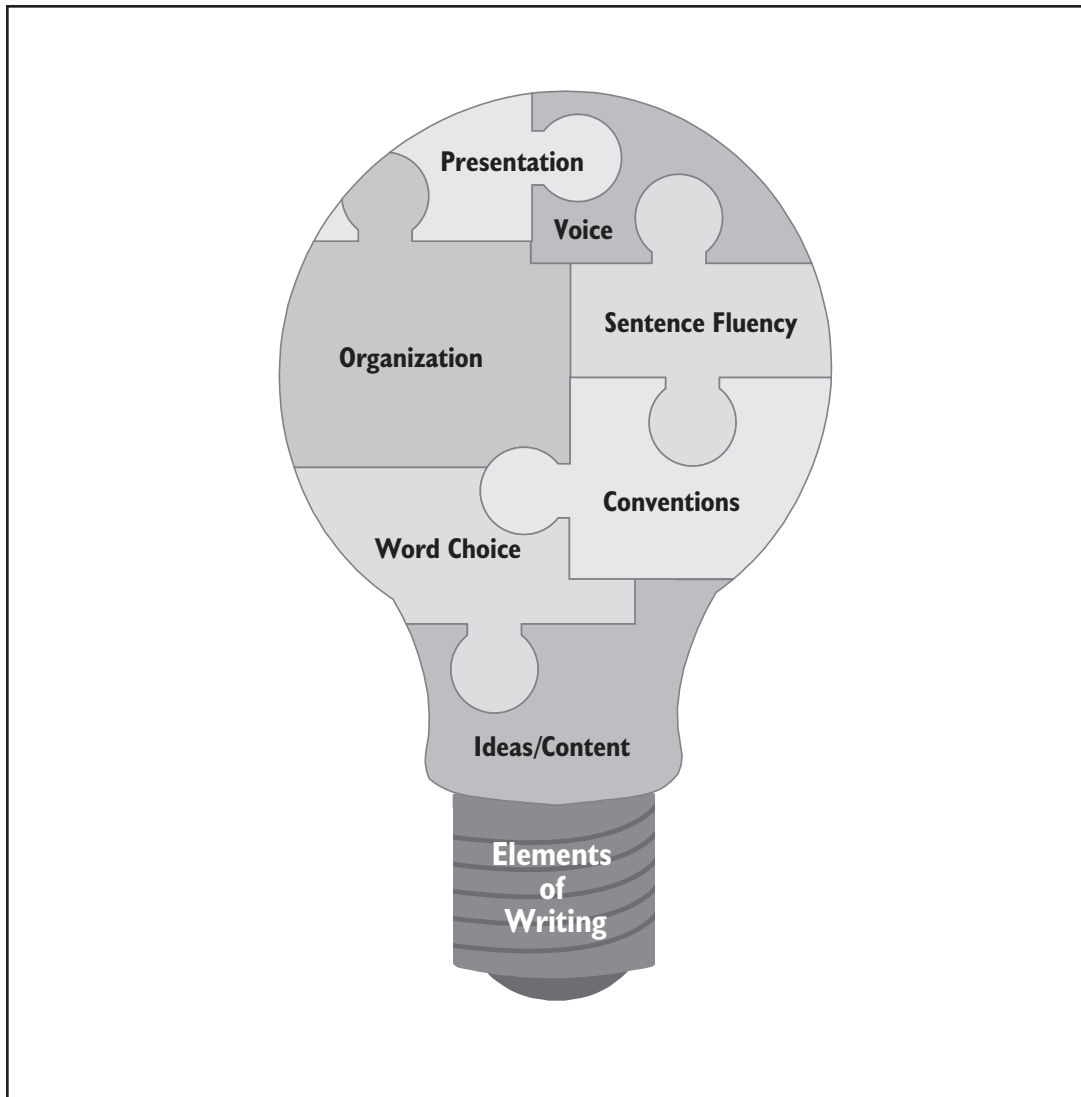
## Ideas/Content

Ideas and content reflect both the chosen topic and the purpose for writing. They need to be clearly expressed, focused, and supported with sufficient detail. Ideas and content are addressed during the planning stage of the writing process.

*Example: After visiting the fire hall, the teacher brainstorms with the students what they learned (ideas and content) and, together, they list the ways they can show their appreciation to the firefighters (purpose).*

## Organization

Organization provides the structure for the writing and reflects its audience and purpose. It is characterized by an effective beginning and end, a logical sequence

of ideas, and clear connections to the topic. Organization is explicitly addressed as writers create a plan. It is used to guide the writing of a first draft. The quality of the organization is evaluated during the revision step of the writing process.

*Example: The students have been asked to write a news report for their class newspaper. The teacher models how to use a 5 Ws – Who, What, When, Where, Why – organizer[3] to help students plan their first draft.*

It is recommended that teachers use the same graphic organizers for reading and writing so students can see the similarities between the two processes – between deconstructing a story as a reader and constructing a story as a writer.

### Voice

Voice gives style and personality to writing. It reflects the feelings and perspective of the author and can be found in illustrations as well as in the written word. Emergent writers who may be able to put very little in writing can still project a voice through their pictures.

The topic, audience, and purpose need to be considered when developing voice. Voice enables the reader to connect with the author. Voice will be considered as students write their drafts and will be refined when students revise their writing.

*Example: The teacher reads a grade-appropriate passage that has a strong voice. Students are asked to identify the author's feelings about the topic and to explain what the author did to enable readers to "hear" his or her voice. Students may notice the author's vocabulary, imagery, use of humour, use of illustrations, choice of font size for exclamatory sentences, and so on.*

### Word Choice

Word choice is about selecting the best word(s) to suit the writer's topic, audience, and purpose. It makes the writing descriptive, detailed, and precise. Effective word choices enable readers to visualize and understand the content more clearly. Word choice is a consideration during the drafting stage of the writing process and will be refined during revision.

*Example: The teacher provides a classroom experience, such as making applesauce, as a way to enrich students' vocabulary. A list of words and phrases that were shared during the experience could be written on a chart for students to use in their independent writing.*

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3. See the reading instruction guide, Appendix 10-1e, page 10.16.

**Sentence Fluency**

Using a variety of sentence structures and sentence lengths gives rhythm and flow to a piece of writing and makes it easy and pleasurable to read. Writing that conveys this impression of ease is said to be "fluent" (the term *sentence fluency* is commonly used). Fluency is addressed when students write their first draft, and is further developed as students revise and edit their writing.

*Example: During a shared writing lesson, the teacher and students edit and revise a passage that has many short, simple sentences that all start with the same pattern. The students are asked to revise and edit the passage and to identify the strategies they used (e.g., combine sentences, use connecting words, vary sentence length, change sentence order).*

**Conventions**

Conventions refer to the mechanics of writing and include spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. The accurate application of conventions makes writing easier for others to read. Students focus on conventions as they proofread their writing during the editing step of the writing process. With teacher guidance, students can generate an editing checklist that reflects their current understanding of conventions. The checklist may be used during peer editing or student self-editing. In addition, the checklist can easily be transformed into a rubric, outlining expectations that would be understood by all students. An editing checklist can be a powerful tool for teacher-student conferences, and can be used as an assessment tool by student and teacher.

Ongoing assessment provides teachers with the information they need to teach grammar, punctuation, and spelling. It tells them what students know and the areas in which they need to improve, relative to the knowledge and skills described in the curriculum expectations.

Spelling is an integral part of literacy development and should be taught in the context of both reading and writing instruction. There are occasions when teachers may decide to teach a specific spelling skill in isolation, during a minilesson or a shared writing lesson. However, this should always be done in the context of reading and writing so the new learning can be easily integrated into students' daily writing.

> **To ensure growth and independence in spelling, teachers must provide students with:**
> ➜ **many and varied print experiences;**
> ➜ **instruction according to the developmental needs of students;**
> ➜ **demonstrations of effective spelling strategies;**
> ➜ **opportunities for consolidation and practice.**

## Some Strategies for Teaching and Learning Spelling

| Spelling Strategy | Description | Teaching/Learning Strategies |
|---|---|---|
| High-frequency words | Students spell common words that they would be expected to read and write automatically (i.e., sight words). Many of these words are phonetically irregular (e.g., "of", "is", "are", "from", "the"). | Teach students to spell common words using strategies such as word wall activities, games (e.g., Concentration), and frequent opportunities to read, so that students see the words spelled correctly many times in context. |
| Letter-sound connections | Students say words slowly and spell words as they sound (i.e., phonics). | Use modelling and shared and guided instruction to teach students to say words slowly and record the sounds they hear. |
| Analogy | Students use what they already know about words in order to spell and read new words. | Teach students to spell new words by listing word families, substituting onset (e.g., change the first letter in "cat" to make it say "hat"), substituting rime (e.g., change the ending of "hop" to make it say "hot"), and making new words from known words (e.g., take the onset from "hat" and the rime from "mouse" to spell the word "house"). |
| Spelling resources | Students use a variety of references to assist with accurate spelling. | Teach students to use references such as a word wall, personal dictionary, picture dictionary, theme words, and subject-specific vocabulary. |

Effective spellers use all four spelling strategies and are willing to take risks when spelling new words.

**Presentation**

Presentation deals with the visual layout of the text. It may be influenced by the form the writing takes (e.g., a list, a story, a recipe). Consideration is given to legibility, titles, margins, graphics, illustrations, and other aspects related to how the writing looks on the page. Presentation is dealt with during the publishing step of the writing process.

*Example: The teacher may introduce students to software (such as "Kidpix") to add media and enhance the appearance of their writing products.*

**Teaching Prompts**

The elements of writing need to be explicitly taught. Although each element can be taught in isolation, collectively they need to be applied by students in the context of meaningful writing activities. Some suggested teaching prompts, which may be used during conferences and minilessons, are presented in the chart below. These and other prompts created by teachers to meet particular class needs will help students to apply the elements of writing independently.

### Ideas/Content

- What have you decided to write about? (topic)
- Why did you decide to write this? (purpose)
- Whom is your story for? (audience)
- Can you explain your ideas to a friend?
- Did you say everything that was important?

### Organization

- Did you make a plan and follow it?
- Do you have a beginning and an end?
- Do your ideas go together?
- Are your ideas in the right order?

### Voice

- How do you want people to feel when they read this?
- Can the reader tell how you feel about this topic?
- Does this writing sound as if it's you talking?
- Will someone be interested in reading this?

### Word Choice

- Have you used interesting words?
- Have you used any words too many times?
- Can the reader "picture" what you wrote?
- Have you chosen the best words?

### Sentence Fluency

- Have you used different kinds of sentences?
- Have you used some long and some short sentences?
- Do your sentences begin in different ways?
- When you read your sentences aloud, do they sound easy and natural?

### Conventions

- Did you read what you wrote? (proofreading)
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?
- Did you write in complete sentences?
- Have you followed the rules for paragraph writing?

### Presentation

- Is your writing neat and tidy?
- Does your writing look nice on the page?
- Does your work have a title?
- Have you used pictures/charts/diagrams well?

Please refer to the thumbnails of Appendix 1.1 at the end of this chapter and the full-sized version on the *eWorkshop* website at http://www.eworkshop.on.ca/resources/literacy for a list of texts that may be used to teach the elements of writing.

### Text Forms, Genres, and Formats

**Purpose + Audience = Form**

Students need to understand the different text forms and genres, and how these work, so that they can make decisions about the kind of writing they are going to do. They should, for example, be clear about the fundamental differences between factual and fictional texts, and recognize that there are various ways of writing them. These considerations may be addressed during the planning stage of the writing process.

> Students' developing understanding of text forms, genres, and formats provides them with the tools they need to express themselves effectively and to reach their target audience. Through direct instruction, teachers provide students with an understanding of how different aspects of a piece of writing – including the theme or topic, the audience, the purpose of writing, and the form – all relate to one another.
>
> Effective writers make connections to prior knowledge, other texts, and the world around them as they craft their writing.
>
> As they write, students ask themselves:
> - "What am I really trying to say?"
> - "Who is my intended audience?"
> - "How can I express my ideas?"
> - "Have I made myself clear?"

Within each form of writing, there are a variety of genres. Genres are a way of categorizing texts that have a similar style, structure, or theme. The traditional boundaries of genre are broadening and blurring as authors and illustrators expand and experiment with the categories. Many literary works combine two or more genres to create a multi-genre text.

Genres can lend themselves to a variety of formats. It is important to expose students to a wide range of genres and formats so that they can learn how to reach their audience effectively. Practice in using a variety of genres and formats can help students make critical links between their reading and writing (e.g., improve their ability to recognize text forms and identify their purpose and function during subsequent reading experiences). A sampling of formats should therefore appear in the classroom library and around the room and should be frequently highlighted for the students.

Below is a selection of text forms, genres, and formats that may be used in a writing classroom.

## Text Forms

- Narrative
- Recount
- Procedure
- Persuasive piece
- Report
- Explanation

## Genres

- Adventure
- Autobiography
- Biography
- Drama
- Fable
- Fairy tale
- Fantasy
- Folk tale
- Ghost story
- Historical fiction
- Humour
- Information piece
- Legend
- Memoir
- Mystery
- Poetry
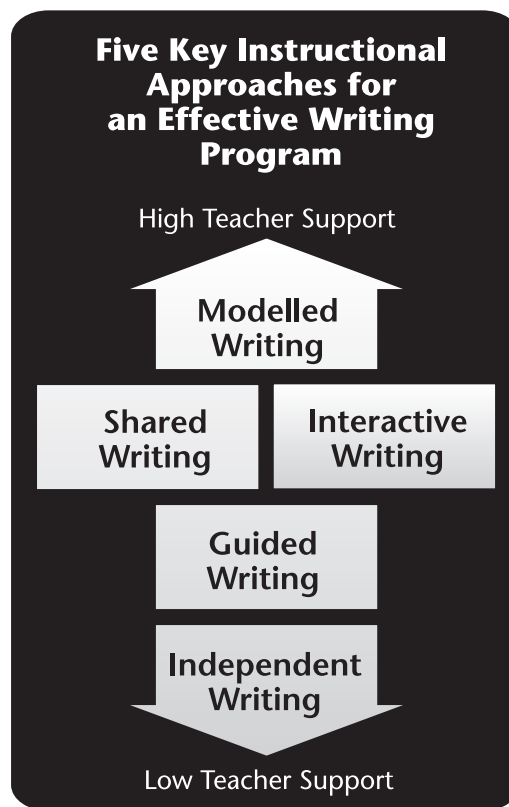- Science fiction

## Formats

- List
- Letter
- Magazine
- Newspaper
- Logo
- Storyboard
- Journal
- Comic strip
- Recipe
- Picture book
- Sign
- Play
- Diary
- Joke
- Story
- Graphic organizer
- Graph
- Acrostic poem
- Free verse
- Rap song or poem

## Five Key Instructional Approaches

The five key instructional approaches in an effective writing program are modelled writing, shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, and independent writing. Each is the subject of a chapter later in this guide. These approaches enable the teacher to scaffold student learning by modelling writing strategies, modelling the thinking process through think-alouds, sharing writing experiences with students, coaching and guiding students in their application of strategies, and providing students with opportunities to write independently.

When teaching modelled, shared, interactive, guided, and independent writing lessons, the teacher embeds a variety of planned opportunities for students to develop their oral language and effective writing skills. Students often require a high level of teacher support when being introduced to new strategies and skills. As the teacher models the strategies and skills, and as students work to put them into practice, students move towards independence. This shift of responsibility from teacher to student requires consistent monitoring and assessment to ensure student success.

**Five Key Instructional Approaches for an Effective Writing Program**

High Teacher Support

Modelled Writing

Shared Writing

Interactive Writing

Guided Writing

Independent Writing

Low Teacher Support

## Setting High Expectations for *All* Students

To address the strengths and needs of all students and to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to become successful writers, teachers may need to adjust the pace and intensity of their instructional practice and the level of challenge in the materials used. Interventions, when needed, must be early and based on research. They require a focus on the same foundational skills and effective instructional practices that teachers normally use, but with adaptations.

At the beginning of the year, teachers should determine, through assessment and observation, which students are experiencing difficulties with writing, and in which specific areas. These assessments and observations will help teachers make appropriate decisions in planning and programming for these students.

### Teaching Writing to English As a Second Language/English Literacy Development (ESL/ELD) Students

An ESL/ELD student's developmental stage in writing can be determined by consulting *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: English As a Second Language and English Literacy Development – A Resource Guide* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001). Teachers must take into account the following factors that will have an impact on the student's growth in writing:

- the student's literacy level in his or her first language
- commonalities between English script, phonetics, conventions, and grammar rules and those of the student's first language

Appropriate adjustments to instructional approaches, to the level of challenge in the materials used, and in the use of assessment tools must be made in order to address the particular needs of ESL/ELD students. Adjustments could include using word webs to help students build vocabulary and express themselves more clearly when writing, providing bilingual dictionaries, arranging for peer tutoring, supplying graphic organizers that can be used to scaffold the learning of writing forms, and providing extra time to allow ESL/ELD students to be successful.

## The Role of Technology in Writing Instruction

The telecommunications capabilities of computer technology can play a key role in a writing program. At a very young age, many students have already become familiar with such capabilities as word processing, e-mail, teleconferencing, and the Internet. Use of these tools in the classroom introduces students to a global community of learners through a variety of highly motivational activities. For example, students can:

- record their ideas on the computer;
- communicate with peers (and others) at a distance;
- participate in collaborative projects that offer authentic experiences in reading and writing;
- send and receive authentic, personally relevant, real-time messages.

Through these and other uses of telecommunications, students can acquire knowledge and practise skills that contribute significantly to their development as writers. One way of integrating telecommunications technology into the writing program is to have students send e-mail messages to peers or others. Experiences such as this provide stimulus for students to make sure the message is understandable, has the right tone or voice, and contains proper spelling and grammar.

Word-processing programs allow students to create pieces of writing that can be revised and formatted and quickly checked for spelling and grammar mistakes using the on-screen dictionary and thesaurus. These are skills that will serve students well in the future.

The Ontario Ministry of Education has developed a resource CD-ROM entitled "Smart Ideas". This resource contains a variety of graphic organizers that can be used in the classroom as tools for reading and writing instruction.

For further discussion of information technology in education, features of electronic texts, recommended software, and how to evaluate new software, please refer to "The Role of Technology in Reading Instruction", Chapter 11 of the reading instruction guide.

## Planning and Classroom Organization

Strategies for planning and organizing an effective reading and writing program in a supportive classroom environment may be found in the reading instruction guide, Chapter 13, "Planning and Classroom Organization".

Routine and environment play an important role in students' acquisition of reading and writing skills. Routines establish specific expectations for the students' behaviour when they engage in a particular activity. For information on how to establish a routine and create a positive classroom atmosphere, including classroom floor plans and sample timetables, see pages 13.22–13.39 of the reading instruction guide.

Wall displays, charts, and displayed student work contribute to a print-rich environment (see pages 13.11 and 13.12 of the reading instruction guide). Learning areas are critical to an effective reading and writing program (see the reading instruction guide, page 13.9). The writing learning area could include the following materials and resources:

- magnetic letters and boards
- chalkboard and chalk
- alphabet books and familiar picture books (for referencing spelling: e.g., Student: "I know the word I want is in the book we just read as a class. I'm going to copy it for my story.")
- alphabet charts
- dictionaries and thesauri
- posted high-frequency and theme words
- a variety of types of paper (e.g., scratch pads, stationery, index cards, envelopes, construction paper, labels, telephone message pad, lined and blank paper)
- a variety of writing materials (e.g., pencils, markers, pencil crayons, date stamp, fix-it tape, stapler, paper clips, scissors, glue stick)
- a writing folder for each student

All items should be easily accessible and always found in the same place in a writing classroom.

## A Framework for Effective Early Writing Instruction

### The Goals of Writing Instruction

Children who become proficient, life-long writers:

- write clearly and creatively to convey a message;
- communicate ideas, thoughts, feelings, and experiences;
- understand that writing is a reflective and interactive process;
- understand different purposes, audiences, and forms for writing.

### Assessment, Evaluation, Reporting, Target Setting, Planning for Improvement

- Classroom level
- School level
- Board level
- Provincial level

### The Knowledge and Skills Students Need for Proficiency in Writing

- Oral language skills
- Ability to activate prior knowledge and experience
- Understanding of audience, purpose, and form for writing
- Understanding of the writing process
- Understanding of the elements of writing
- Ability to apply higher-order thinking skills

### Five Key Instructional Approaches

- Modelled writing
- Shared writing
- Interactive writing
- Guided writing
- Independent writing

### Teaching Practices That Support Early Writing Achievement

- A balance of direct instruction, guided instruction, independent learning, and student practice
- Large-group, small-group, and individual instruction; discussion; and collaboration
- A variety of assessment and evaluation techniques that inform program planning and instruction
- The integration of phonics and word study into reading, writing, and oral language activities
- An uninterrupted literacy block each day
- Parental and community involvement

- The introduction of a variety of text forms, genres, formats, and electronic media
- Authentic and motivating literacy experiences and learning activities
- Interventions for students who are at risk of not developing literacy skills
- A supportive classroom culture and an environment that promotes higher-order thinking skills
- Guidance, coaching, and feedback for students
- Effective classroom organization and management

# Thumbnails of Appendix

**Appendix 1-1: Some Suggested Picture Books for Teaching the Elements of Writing**

### Ideas/Content

| Title | Author |
|---|---|
| The Stinky Cheeseman and Other Stupid Tales | Jon Scieszka |
| Sunken Treasure | Gail Gibbons |
| Hooray for Diffendoofer Day | Dr. Seuss and Jack Prelutsky |
| Apple Picking Time | Michele Benoit Slawson |
| Stella Louellas Run away Book | Lisa Campbell Ernst |
| The Very Hungry Caterpillar | Eric Carle |
| Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge | Mem Fox |

### Organization

| Title | Author |
|---|---|
| A House Is a House for Me | Mary Ann Hoberman |
| Where the Wild Things Are | Maurice Sendak |
| Owl Moon | Jane Yolen |
| Today Is Monday | Eric Carle |
| The Tortilla Factory | Gary Paulsen |
| Two Bad Ants | Chris Van Allsburg |
| What Do Authors Do? | Eileen Christelow |

### Voice

| Title | Author |
|---|---|
| Magic School Bus Goes Batty | Joanna Cole |
| The Frog Alphabet Book | Jerry Pallota and Ralph Masiello |
| True Story of the Three Little Pigs | Jon Scieszka |
| I'll Love You Forever | Robert Munsch |
| Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type | Doreen Cronin |
| The Kissing Hand | Audrey Penn |
| Emperor's Egg | Martin Jenkins |

Appendix 1-1: Some Suggested Picture Books for Teaching the Elements of Writing *(page 1)*

**Appendix 1-1: Some Suggested Picture Books for Teaching the Elements of Writing** *(continued)*

### Word Choice

| Title | Author |
|---|---|
| The Most Wonderful Egg in the World | Helme Heine |
| Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain | Verna Aardema |
| The Remarkable Farkle McBride | John Lithgow |
| Grannyman | Judith Byron Schachner |
| Where the Sidewalk Ends | Shel Silverstein |
| Dinorella: A Prehistoric Fairytale | Pamela Duncan Edwards |
| Sing, Sophie! | Dayle Ann Dodds |

### Sentence Fluency

| Title | Author |
|---|---|
| Amanda's Dinosaur | Mary Ann Hoberman |
| A Day in the Life of Murphy | Alice Provensen |
| Isla | Arthur Dorrors |
| Mrs. Wishy-Washy's Farm | Joy Cowley |
| Nappy Hair | Carolivia Herron |
| Wombat Divine | Mem Fox |
| Sebastian: A Book About Bach | Jeanette Winter |

### Conventions

Most books can be used to teach conventions; however, the titles listed below are excellent examples.

| Title | Author |
|---|---|
| Yo! Yes? | Chris Raschka |
| Miss Spider's Tea Party | Antoinette White |
| Look Once, Look Twice | Janet Perry Marshall |
| Children of the Earth Remember | Schim Schimmel |
| A Cache of Jewels and Other Collective Nouns | Ruth Heller |
| Punctuation Takes a Vacation | Robin Pulver |
| Up, Up and Away: A Book of Adverbs | Ruth Heller |

Adapted from: Halton Catholic District School Board, *Literacy matters: What good writers do,* 2003.

Appendix 1-1: Some Suggested Picture Books for Teaching the Elements of Writing *(page 2)*

# References

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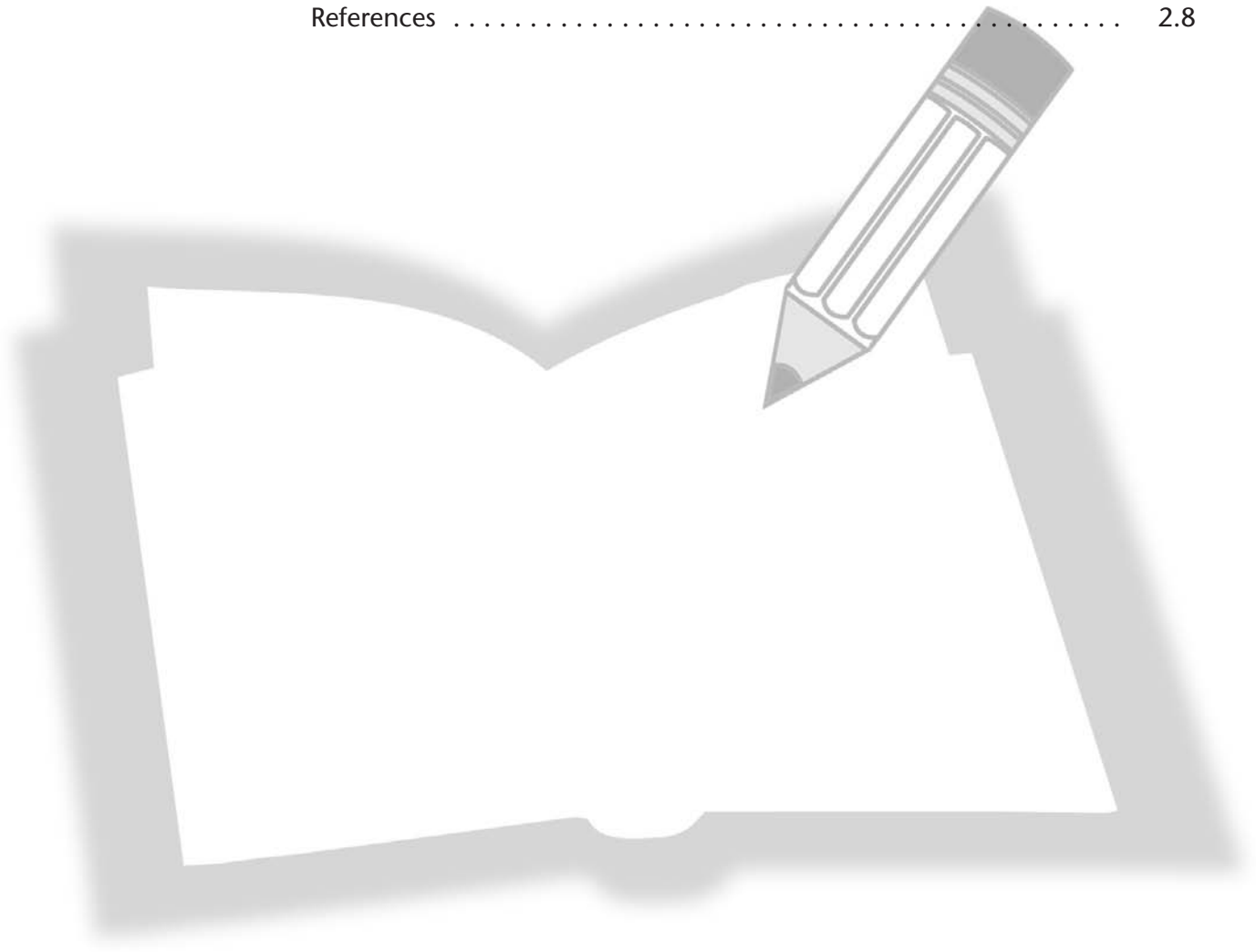York Catholic District School Board. (1993). *A balanced language arts program*. Toronto: Author.

# 2. Modelled Writing

# Modelled Writing

In modelled writing, the teacher demonstrates a specific aspect of writing to the whole class: for example, a new writing skill, text form, genre, or format. The text produced during the lesson is usually based on a situation or experience with which students are familiar so that they can relate to the content of the writing. The teacher is the scribe and provides full support by thinking aloud and modelling what a proficient writer does, thus demonstrating the process of putting thoughts and feelings into written form. By observing this process, students learn that even proficient writers make mistakes, and that all work can be revised or edited. Finished products should be displayed at eye level to allow students to read and reread the text.

## The Frequency of Modelled Writing

Modelled writing should occur daily as an integral part of the literacy block in Kindergarten to Grade 3. (See the sample timetables in the *Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading*, Appendices 13-4 to 13-9, pages 13.32–13.39.)

## The Role and Responsibilities of the Teacher in Modelled Writing

The role and responsibilities of the teacher in modelled writing are set out in the chart below. They apply regardless of the specific teaching point of the lesson.

### Role and Responsibilities of the Teacher in Modelled Writing

**The teacher:**

- plans the modelled writing lesson based on student need;
- communicates the purpose of the writing and the intended audience;
- uses students' prior knowledge as a springboard for writing;
- uses the think-aloud strategy while writing the text;
- uses correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation;
- demonstrates the use of resources in the classroom (e.g., word wall, theme words, calendar, dictionaries, thesauri);
- models neat printing.

**THE THINK-ALOUD STRATEGY INVOLVES THE TEACHER IN:**
- ➔ thoughtful planning;
- ➔ talking aloud to the students about what he or she is thinking;
- ➔ making connections to help students link their new learning with their prior knowledge.

See the *Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading*, pages 4.6–4.7, for more about the think-aloud strategy.

# Teaching Points

In addition to the sample lesson at the end of this chapter, the following table may assist teachers in preparing modelled writing lessons. When deciding which teaching point to focus on, teachers must take their students' needs and stage of writing development into consideration.

| Some Possible Teaching Points for Modelled Writing | |
|---|---|
| • Topic selection | • Genre (e.g., folk tale, mystery) |
| • Getting started/brainstorming | • Formats (e.g., letter, graphic organizer) |
| • Story mapping/webbing | • Conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, grammar) |
| • Creating an effective beginning or end | • Relating writing to prior knowledge |
| • Organization | • Using technology to support writing |
| • Voice | • Printing or writing neatly |
| • Word choice | • Writing for an audience |
| • Word usage | • Summarizing |
| • Editing and revising | • Organizing and extending thinking |
| • "Continuing from where we left off" (reviewing writing plans and rereading what was written the day before) | • Using other forms of media to enhance writing (e.g., magazines, newspapers, cartoons, environmental print) |
| • Text forms (e.g., recount, poem) | |

# Sample Modelled Writing Lesson: Kindergarten

**CONTEXT:** This lesson will introduce students to the idea that there is a purpose for writing. The specific form of writing should be modelled over a period of several days in order to build experience so that students can eventually write independently.

**PURPOSE:** This modelled writing lesson provides students with an opportunity to watch a proficient writer write a list, and hear a proficient writer's thought processes through a think-aloud.

## TIME FRAME
- 10 minutes maximum per day
- 3–4 days to allow for modelling of more examples as a follow-up

## MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
- chart paper
- markers
- easy access to a word wall, or to words posted in the classroom

## ADAPTATIONS AND EXTENSIONS
- Writing a list is an experience that many students can relate to, and students may therefore be encouraged to draw on their personal experiences to help them follow and internalize the lesson.

## ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

*Students will:*

**Oral Communication**

- listen and respond to others in a variety of contexts;

**Writing**

- write simple messages using a combination of pictures, symbols, letters, phonetic spelling, and familiar words.

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

*The teacher observes and notes students' ability to:*

- listen to and follow the text that is being modelled;
- verbalize an understanding of the use and/or value of the text.

## REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

**Students:**

- Do I know when it is useful to write a list?
- Do I see other lists in my class, at school, or at home?

**Teacher:**

- What skills and strategies did students learn? Will the students be able to apply these skills to their own work?
- How will I do things differently during my next modelled writing lesson?

- Were the skills and strategies examined in this lesson appropriate for the students in my class?
- Do my students know how, when, and where they can write a list?

*Note:* The teacher's responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for these students.

## PROCEDURE

### Before Writing

*The teacher:*

- sets the purpose of the lesson.

   *"Our book buddies are coming to our classroom tomorrow, and I think it would be nice to have some snacks for everyone. I need to make a shopping list of the things I'll need to buy."*

### During Writing

*The teacher:*

- invites students to recall how their parents or caregivers remind themselves about what they need to buy at the supermarket, grocery store, pharmacy, and so on;
- elicits students' ideas on the need for lists as reminders and checklists, and where lists could be kept (e.g., on the refrigerator);
- uses a think-aloud strategy to explain the need for a shopping list and how to go about making one;
- demonstrates how a list is written (i.e., one item on each line):

   Things to Buy
       carrots
       dip
       crackers
       cheese
       juice
       napkins
       cups
       plates

### After Writing

*The teacher:*

- places the list on the wall in the house centre so that students can read and revisit the list;
- places pencils and notepaper in the house centre to provide opportunities for students to create their own grocery or shopping lists.

## References

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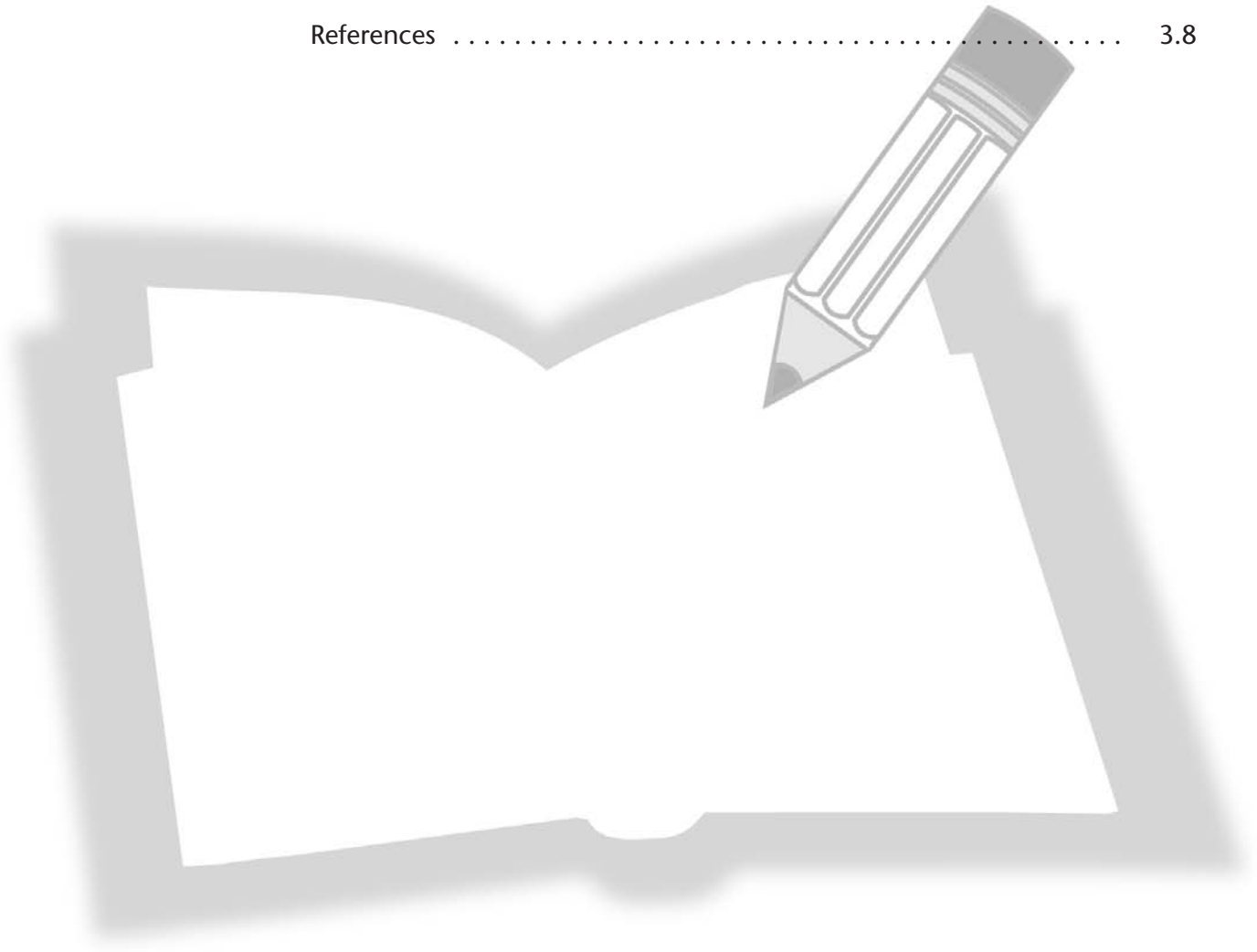Toronto District School Board. (2000). *Teaching children to read and write*. Toronto: Author.

# 3. Shared Writing

**Chapter Contents**

# Shared Writing

Shared writing allows students and teachers to work together on a piece of writing. The teacher is the scribe, and the students and the teacher collaborate to create the text. The writing that is produced should be easily available to students so they may read it over and over and use it as a model for their own writing. Shared writing can be taught in large- or small-group settings. It is a powerful teaching tool in all areas of the curriculum – for example, it can be used to teach students how to write a science experiment, a math journal entry, or a play for dramatic arts.

## The Frequency of Shared Writing

Shared writing lessons occur during the literacy block or at other appropriate times of the day. (See sample timetables in the *Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading*, Appendices 13-4 to 13-9, pages 13.32–13.39.)

Ideally, shared writing takes place every day. At a minimum, it should be done two to three times per week for 10–15 minutes.

### Shared Writing Lesson

Teacher selects the purpose and form for writing.

↓

Teacher plans how to involve the students in the writing.

↓

Teacher introduces the writing activity to the students.

↓

Students and teacher share ideas and compose; teacher scribes and composes.

↓

Teacher and students read shared product together.

# Roles and Responsibilities in Shared Writing

The roles and responsibilities of both teacher and students in shared writing are set out in the chart below. They apply regardless of the specific teaching point of the lesson.

## Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher and Students in Shared Writing

**The teacher:**

- selects, or selects with students, authentic opportunities (i.e., involving real-life situations or activities of which students have some prior knowledge or experience) for students to engage in writing;

- promotes development of writing skills both in the process of writing and in the use of the elements of effective writing;

- asks questions that help students apply new skills in writing and use higher-order thinking skills;

- teaches effective writing strategies and skills for various genres;

- fosters development of problem-solving skills as they apply to writing;

- shows how writing can be applied in other subject areas;

- makes ongoing observations and assessments of students' progress;

- plans future shared writing lessons that will address students' needs as identified by assessment data.

**Students:**

- learn by listening and watching carefully;

- develop writing skills and strategies within an authentic writing context;

- record their thinking through writing;

- develop an understanding of what writing is, and the confidence to write;

- join in the writing, when they are ready to do so, by sharing ideas that the teacher then scribes;

- practise writing in a safe, supportive environment, allowing themselves to take risks and make mistakes;

- experience writing through a variety of genres (e.g., stories, poems, daily messages, songs, procedures).

## Similarities and Differences in Shared and Interactive Writing

There are a number of important similarities and differences between shared writing and interactive writing, as outlined in the following chart.

### Similarities and Differences in Shared and Interactive Writing Lessons

| Similarities | Differences | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Shared Writing** | **Interactive Writing** |
| In both shared and interactive writing, the teacher:<br><br>• gives prompts and cues to students to guide their responses as they use a newly introduced writing concept or skill;<br><br>• teaches a writing skill either to the whole class or to a small group;<br><br>• uses a think-aloud strategy to demonstrate processes used during writing;<br><br>• creates a written product together with the students. | • The teacher is the scribe.<br><br>• The teacher demonstrates how writing works. | • There are opportunities to scribe for both students and teacher: they share the pen.<br><br>• The teacher engages students in the construction of a message. |

## Teaching Points

In addition to the sample lesson at the end of this section, the following table may assist teachers in preparing shared writing lessons. When deciding which teaching point to focus on, teachers must take their students' needs and stage of writing development into consideration.

### Some Possible Teaching Points for Shared Writing

| | |
|---|---|
| • Letter-sound relationships<br>• Spelling<br>• Print directionality<br>• Upper- and lower-case letters<br>• Sentence structures<br>• Paragraph structures<br>• Stages of the writing process (i.e., planning, writing a draft, revising, editing, publishing) | • Overall structure: the fact that written texts have a beginning, middle, and end<br>• Text form (e.g., narrative, explanation, procedure)<br>• Genre (e.g., fairy tale, fable, science fiction)<br>• Format (e.g., letter, recipe, play)<br>• Elements of writing (i.e., ideas, organization, word choice, voice, sentence fluency, conventions, presentation)<br>• How to write cross-curricular responses |

# Sample Shared Writing Lesson: Grade 2

**CONTEXT:** Grade 2 students are gathered together to learn how to write a reflection in their learning log for a design and technology challenge (in this case, building a toy). The students are familiar with the vocabulary for this particular unit of study. They have had experience of working on various design activities independently and in small groups, and of discussing with other students the successes and challenges in their work.

**PURPOSE:** Students will learn to record what they have learned and achieved in building a toy.

## TIME FRAME
- 10–15 minutes, over 2 or 3 days

## MATERIALS
- chart paper and markers

## ADAPTATIONS AND EXTENSIONS
- The teacher's prompts/questions are open-ended to allow for a range of responses from students with a variety of ability levels. Students may be provided with additional time to think and consolidate their ideas before writing them down.
- A graphic organizer may be offered to students who require assistance organizing their thoughts.
- The think-pair-share activity allows for a "rehearsal" for writing.

## ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS
*Students will:*

**Language: Writing**
- communicate ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes;
- begin to write more elaborate sentences by using adjectives and adverbs;

**Language: Oral and Visual Communication**
- retell stories and recount personal experiences, presenting events in a coherent sequence;
- apply the rules of participating in a conversation and working with others;

**Science and Technology: Structures and Mechanisms – Movement**
- communicate the procedures and results of investigations and explorations for specific purposes, using drawings, demonstrations, and oral and written descriptions.

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES
*The teacher observes and notes:*

- students' ability to organize their thoughts;
- students' ability to reflect upon their learning;
- students' ability to express themselves clearly.

**REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER**

**Students:**

- Did I express my thoughts clearly?
- What have I learned about writing that will help me when I'm writing on my own?

**Teacher:**

- What next steps should be planned, and what changes do I need to make in my lesson plan for future shared writing activities focusing on learning logs?
- What aspects of a reflective writing piece need to be addressed in the next shared writing lesson?
- Which students may need further instruction and practice through a guided writing lesson?

*Note:* The teacher's responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for these students.

**PROCEDURE**

**Before Writing**

*The teacher:*

- ensures that the student models (toys) are accessible for reference during the shared lesson;
- sets the purpose and tone for the shared writing lesson: "Now that you have finished building your toys, let's reflect on what we learned as we were making the toys. Think about how you started, what went wrong, how you solved problems, how you felt when it was finished. We're going to write an entry in our learning log about what we learned from our experience building toys."

**During Writing**

*The teacher:*

- does a think-pair-share activity: "Discuss with a partner: What are the challenges and successes of creating your toy?";
- uses the following prompts, if necessary:

  *"What do you like about your toy? What makes you feel proud of your toy? What changes did you make to improve your toy? What do you still want to change? What are different ways you or a friend can play with your toy?"*

- records a shared reflection on chart paper, using student oral responses and revising as necessary.

**After Writing**

*The teacher:*

- posts the shared reflection in clear view to allow students to revisit/reread it;
- provides additional opportunities in shared writing lessons on learning logs to build the students' skills in this area.
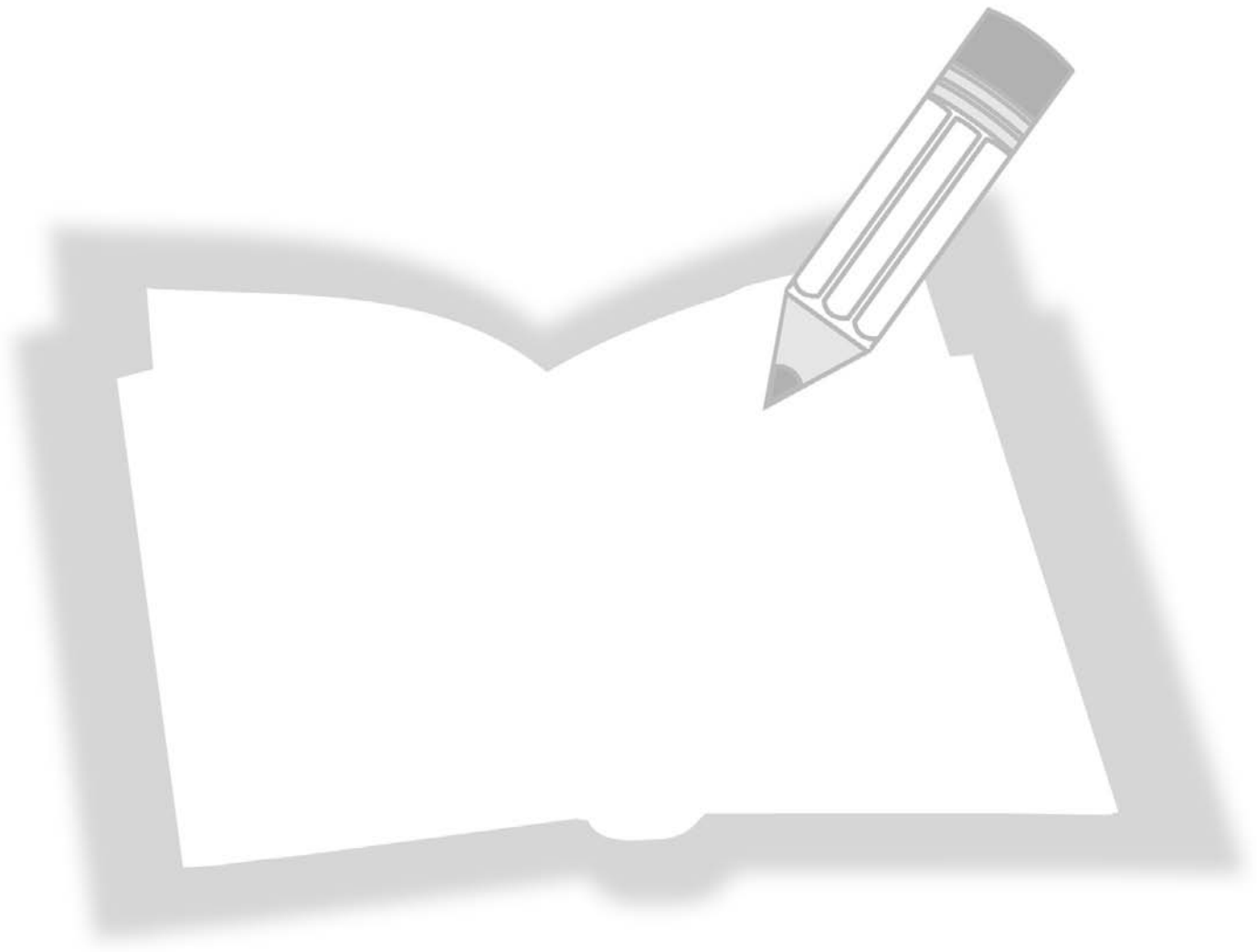
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# 4. Interactive Writing

**Chapter Contents**

# Interactive Writing

Interactive writing is an instructional approach in which the students and teacher share the task of scribing the message. This approach is especially helpful to reluctant writers, as it guides and encourages them to become independent writers. Interactive writing can be taught to a large or small group. The finished product should be displayed so that students can revisit it, and perhaps use it as a model for their own independent writing.

> *"Interactive writing is an instructional context in which a teacher shares a pen – literally and figuratively – with a group of children as they collaboratively compose and construct a written message. We want to help children learn how written language works so that they can become independent writers."*
>
> (McCarrier, Pinnell, and Fountas, 2000, p. 4)

## The Frequency of Interactive Writing

The frequency of interactive writing lessons may range from once a day to two to three times a week, depending on students' needs. The teacher may decide to use interactive writing more often in Kindergarten and Grade 1 classes to motivate reluctant writers to write. By Grades 2 and 3, the teacher may rely more on shared writing lessons to develop the students' writing skills. (See sample timetables in the *Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading*, Appendices 13-4 to 13-9, pages 13.32–13.39.)

**Interactive Writing Lesson**

Teacher selects teaching point.

Teacher, with or without students, decides on a purpose for writing.

Teacher and students share the pen, to create a message.

Teacher and students read the entire message and revise/edit if necessary.

Message is made available for independent practice.

# Roles and Responsibilities in Interactive Writing

The roles and responsibilities of both teacher and students in interactive writing are set out in the chart below. They apply regardless of the specific teaching point of the lesson.

| Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher and Students in Interactive Writing | |
| --- | --- |
| **The Teacher:** | **Students:** |
| • decides on a focus for the lesson; | • can be included in deciding on a purpose for writing (e.g., writing an invitation for parents to come and see a play that the students have been working on; recounting a class trip; writing a reminder for students to return their library books); |
| • uses prompts and cues to encourage students to apply new skills and strategies; | • are invited to write a letter or word, depending on their developmental stage, on chart paper (e.g., a child who has not yet developed a knowledge of the alphabet can still participate by showing where a space goes between words); |
| • uses a think-aloud strategy to help students make connections between letters and sounds; | |
| • revises and edits the text (e.g., using fix-it tape) if a mistake is made or changes are planned; | • read the message, checking/revising what they have written and deciding what, if anything, needs to be written next; |
| • supports students as they read the completed text; | |
| • displays finished text at eye level so that students may revisit the text over and over again; | • revisit the text independently; |
| • may cut text into sentence or word strips and place these in an envelope, with the complete message written out as a model, then place the envelope in a language activity centre for independent study. | • assemble word or sentence strips to construct the complete message, and practise reading the text. |

# Teaching Points

In addition to the sample lesson at the end of this section, the following table may assist teachers in preparing interactive writing lessons. When deciding which teaching point to focus on, teachers must take their students' needs and stage of writing development into consideration.

## Some Possible Teaching Points for Interactive Writing

| | |
|---|---|
| • Use of high-frequency words | • Letter-sound relationships |
| • Use of word analogy (e.g., onset and rime) | • Print directionality |
| • Words to "say slowly" | • Upper- and lower-case letters |
| • Use of spelling resources (e.g., word wall, calendar, dictionary, theme words) | • Sentence structures |

# Sample Interactive Writing Lesson: Grade 1

**CONTEXT:** The teacher will use a unit of study, a book, or a shared experience as a springboard for interactive writing. After experiencing an activity together and discussing it (e.g., a class trip, a read-aloud), the students can share ideas with confidence to create a meaningful text.

*It is important for the teacher to know what students understand and to customize the expectations accordingly, so all can participate meaningfully in the lesson.*

**PURPOSE:** A Grade 1 class is gathered together to reinforce the concept that what we say can be written and what we put in writing can be read by others and ourselves.

**TIME FRAME**
- 1 day
- 10–15 minutes

**MATERIALS AND RESOURCES**
- chart paper
- markers
- fix-it tape for correcting errors
- easy access to a word wall, labelled displays, first-name charts, alphabet charts, and other similar items

**ADAPTATIONS AND EXTENSIONS**
- The lesson reflects experiences that many students can relate to. It may therefore encourage students to draw on their personal and classroom experiences to help them follow and internalize the lesson.
- The teacher's understanding of each student's strengths will enable him or her to provide opportunities for all students to participate with success, especially those who are reluctant writers.

**ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS**

*Students will:*

**Writing**
- communicate ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes;
- write simple sentences using proper punctuation (i.e., periods);
- begin to revise written work, with the assistance of the teacher;
- write simple but complete sentences;
- use a period at the end of a statement;
- correctly spell words identified by the teacher (on charts/lists posted in the room and on individual word lists);

**Oral and Visual Communication**

- use familiar classroom vocabulary and oral language structures in conversations with their teacher and peers.

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

*The teacher observes and notes:*

- each student's understanding that writing requires attention to words, sentences, punctuation, and meaning;

- what a student does while writing in order to know whether to reteach a particular skill or strategy;

- any growth in a student's independent writing over time.

## REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

**Students:**

- Am I looking around the room to find words that I need?

- Can I read what has been written by my teacher and my class?

- What do I need more help with?

**Teacher:**

- Do the students know the routine for interactive writing, and am I managing it well?

- Are all students engaged in learning?

- Is the interactive writing truly interactive: am I involving the students enough and working together to create a collaborative piece?

- Am I meeting the needs of all students, and am I addressing a reasonable number of teaching points?

- Am I creating a variety of texts with my students?

*Note:* The teacher's responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for these students.

## PROCEDURE

**Before Writing**

Students have just returned from a trip to the farm. They have been discussing the trip, and are ready to write a simple sentence about it.

As a group, students and teacher have decided to record the following sentence on chart paper: *"Yesterday we went to the farm and we rode on a tractor."*

Students repeat the phrase as a rehearsal for writing.

**During Writing**

*Teacher [pointing to the chart paper]:* Where should we begin to write?

A student points at the place to start.

*Teacher:* Our first word is *Yesterday*. *Yesterday* is one of the words we use during calendar time. Joey, can you point to the word *Yesterday* on the calendar?

Joey points to the word, and the teacher asks him to record it on the chart paper, using the word from the calendar as his resource. Alternatively, the teacher can guide Joey's writing by reminding him of words he already knows, such as "yes" and "day".

*Teacher:* The next word is *we*.

*We* is a high-frequency word, and it is expected that students know this word. They should be able to write the word quickly, on their own.

*Teacher:* We must leave a space after *Yesterday* because we're starting a new word. Michael, will you come up and show us where a space should go before Wahid writes *we*?

*Teacher:* Let's read what we have so far: "Yesterday we …". The next word is *went*. Let's say it slowly and see what we hear. *W-e-n-t*. What do you hear?

The teacher continues to guide the students in the writing. The teacher may write down vowels and/or consonants that are not easily heard. As the message is recorded, the class should read what has been written and think about what needs to be changed and/or written next.

**After Writing**
- The class reads the text together.
- The teacher displays the text on the classroom wall and creates independent language activities based on the text.

# References

McCarrier, A., Pinnell, G.S., and Fountas, I.C. (2000). *Interactive writing: How language and literacy come together, K–2*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. (1997). *The Ontario curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language*. Toronto: Author.

Taberski, S. (2000). *On solid ground: Strategies for teaching reading, K–3*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

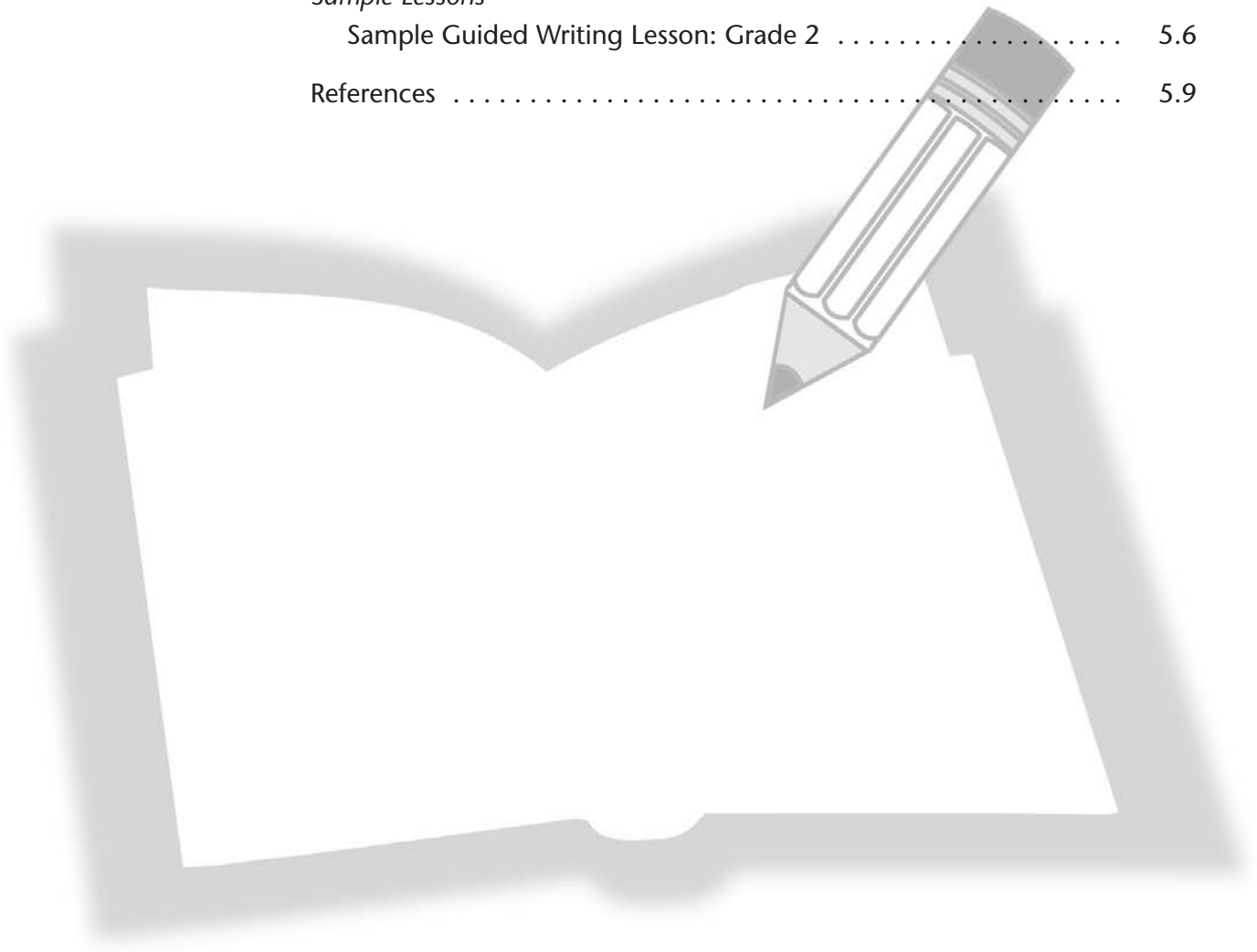Toronto District School Board. (2000). *Teaching children to read and write*. Toronto: Author.

# 5. Guided Writing

**Chapter Contents**

# Guided Writing

Guided writing is a strategy that gives students the opportunity to review a recently taught writing skill in a small-group setting and then to apply the skill through independent writing.

A guided writing lesson generally follows modelled, shared, and interactive writing lessons and comes about when a teacher determines that a group of students could benefit from further teacher support to develop a particular writing skill. The guided writing group comes together for the purpose of learning or practising this writing skill. Once the teacher feels that the group has a good understanding of the skill, the group is disbanded. In addition, students may use writing frames or templates to scaffold their writing knowledge and application of writing skills.

Guided writing lessons would also be appropriate in content area subjects such as science and technology – for example, to show students how to use precise, descriptive language when reporting on an experiment.

## The Frequency of Guided Writing

Guided writing lessons occur during the literacy block when the teacher determines that a group of students needs additional support to review or extend a writing skill. (See sample timetables in the *Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading*, Appendices 13-4 to 13-9, pages 13.32–13.39.) The number of guided writing lessons required will depend on the extent of the needs identified through teacher assessment – for example, a group may meet for two to three days consecutively, and then disband.

### Guided Writing Lesson

During the first part of the lesson, students are immersed in the focus skill through examination and discussion of models.

Students then work as a group to compose a text, applying the focus skill.

Teacher then guides students to write their own text independently, applying the focus skill.

Students share their writing, as a whole group, with a partner, or with the teacher.

## Roles and Responsibilities in Guided Writing

The roles and responsibilities of both teacher and students in guided writing are set out in the chart below. They apply regardless of the specific teaching point of the lesson.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher and Students in Guided Writing

**The teacher:**

- uses various assessment strategies to identify a group of students with similar needs, abilities, or interests;
- chooses appropriate resources for the lesson;
- provides the students with examples that demonstrate the focus skill of the lesson;
- leads the whole group in applying the skill cooperatively;
- monitors and scaffolds students as they apply the skill;
- makes ongoing observations and assessments of students' progress;
- maintains a balance between teacher support and student independence;
- asks appropriate questions, encourages dialogue, and helps students improve their understanding of the skill.

**Students:**

- develop a better understanding of a specific skill by participating in the whole-group activity;
- develop the confidence to use the skill independently;
- work on a specific skill in a safe, supportive environment.

## How Group Members Are Selected

Through diagnostic and formative assessment during observation and analysis of student writing, the teacher identifies a number of students who are at a similar instructional level for a particular skill. These students are grouped for a specific lesson to review or strengthen that skill. Guided writing groups are fluid and temporary, with membership depending on need or ability: for example, one group may need to review punctuation, while another group may need to work on using more descriptive language. Throughout the year, formative assessment will guide the teacher's decisions about the composition of groups and the concepts and skills to be addressed.

## Teaching Points

In addition to the sample lesson at the end of this section, the following table may assist teachers in preparing guided writing lessons. When deciding which teaching point to focus on, teachers must take their students' needs and stage of writing development into consideration.

### Some Possible Teaching Points for Guided Writing

| | |
|---|---|
| • Using more descriptive language<br>• Understanding the use of quotation marks<br>• Identifying characteristics of a genre<br>• Matching form and purpose<br>• Writing complete sentences | • Creating a clear beginning, middle, and end<br>• Writing a paragraph<br>• Elements of writing (e.g., voice, sentence fluency, word usage)<br>• Writing a research report |

## Activities for the Rest of the Class

Early in the year, the teacher establishes routines that allow the rest of the students to work independently while the teacher works with an individual or a small group. Independent work might include:

- follow-up writing activities from previous guided writing lessons;

- independent writing;

- spelling or word study follow-up activities;

- cross-curricular projects.

(See the reading instruction guide, pages 6.24 – 6.26, for further information on this topic.)

# Sample Guided Writing Lesson: Grade 2

**CONTEXT:** This lesson would follow and build upon modelled, shared, and interactive writing lessons related to plot development (i.e., creating a clear, distinct beginning, middle, and end).

Since the teacher is working with a small group of students, the other students will need to be reminded before the beginning of the lesson about how they can work independently while the teacher is busy.

**PURPOSE:** The teacher's purpose in this lesson is to reinforce how a writer effectively develops a plot when writing fiction – specifically, by using an effective beginning.

## TIME FRAME
- 15–20 minutes, over 2–3 days

## MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
- two or three familiar writing models (e.g., folk tale, fairy tale)
- paper

## ADAPTATIONS AND EXTENSIONS
Some students may need to:
- visit a previously created class "Ideas" chart to help with their story topic (see the sample graphic organizers in the reading instruction guide, Appendices 10-1d, 10-1e, 10-1g, and 10-1j, pages 10.15, 10.16, 10.18, and 10.21);
- outline the story orally before they write the beginning of a story;
- have the teacher act as a scribe to get them started.

## ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS
*Students will:*
- organize ideas in a logical sequence.

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES
- The teacher assesses achievement through observation of students during the group activity and through the writing that the students produce.

## REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER
**Students:**
- When I have finished writing a piece, do I read it over to see if my beginning is effective?
- Do I use suggestions offered by others during sharing?
- What do I need to work on next time?

**Teacher:**
- Which students need further instruction? How will I change my instruction to meet their needs?
- What went well in the lesson? What would I change for the next time I teach a similar lesson?

*Note:* The teacher's responses to these questions should be recorded with other assessment data for these students.

**PROCEDURE**

**Before Writing**

*The teacher has:*

- identified that "helping the group explore effective story beginnings" is the focus of the lesson;

- decided group composition;

- planned the lesson;

- collected examples of effective story beginnings (e.g., from familiar short stories, familiar folk tales, or student samples from the class or from *The Ontario Curriculum – Exemplars, Grades 1–8: Writing, 1999*, such as example 2 for Grade 2, level 3 [page 35]).

The teacher reminds the students that they have been looking at how other writers develop plot by using effective beginnings to their stories through read-alouds and modelled and shared writing.

An effective introduction should:

- make something interesting happen to grab the reader's interest (what);

- describe the setting for the story (where and when);

- introduce the main characters (who);

- suggest what the main characters are like.

(For a useful tool to help students record their ideas, see the "Who, What, Where, When, and Why (or How) Chart" in the reading instruction guide, Appendix 10-1e, page 10.16.)

*The teacher:*

- reads the first few paragraphs of a story that has a particularly effective beginning;

- discusses with the students why the beginning was effective. The teacher makes jot notes on the board as the students contribute ideas. These might include: makes something interesting happen to grab the reader's interest, sets the scene for the story, introduces the main characters, tells what the main characters are like. (*Note:* a chart of features of effective beginnings of stories may have been created during the modelled and shared writing lessons on this topic. If so, the notes the teacher makes can be minimal, and the chart can be used for reference.);

- reads another one or two beginnings of stories until several features of effective beginnings of stories have been recorded;

- asks the students to think of a story topic. The teacher invites one student to share a topic with the group. The teacher and students discuss what might be a good beginning for a story with that topic and has the students dictate a few sentences while the teacher records. The students refer to the chart of effective features of story beginnings to see if this beginning meets the criteria.

### During Writing

*The teacher:*

- tells the students that they are to think about the topic they chose previously and think about how a story with that topic might begin;

- invites students to begin writing a beginning or revising one of their previously written stories, while the teacher supports individual students in the group;

- invites students to share their ideas with a partner.

### After Writing

- The teacher brings the group together to share their story beginnings and discuss the effectiveness of each.

- If time permits, the students could complete their stories, or their story beginnings could be placed in their writing folders to be used later during a writing workshop (see Sample Independent Writing Lesson: Writing Workshop, in Chapter 6).

# References

Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. (1997). *The Ontario curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language*. Toronto: Author.

Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. (1999). *The Ontario curriculum – exemplars, Grades 1–8: Writing*. Toronto: Author.

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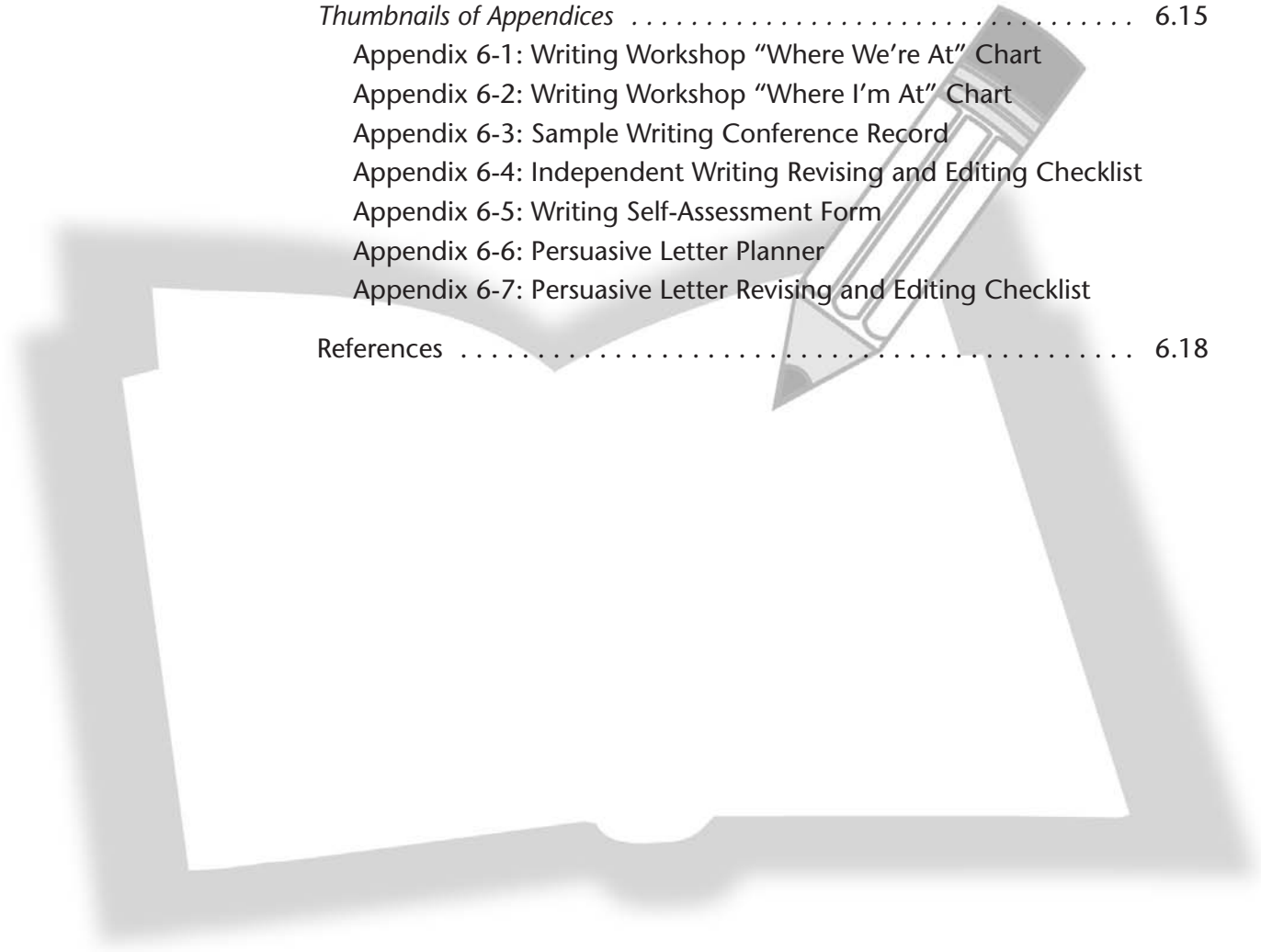
# 6. Independent Writing

# Independent Writing

Independent writing gives students opportunities to do their own writing using both self-selected and assigned topics and forms. As they write independently, students take risks, probe meaning, develop fluency, think creatively and critically, solve problems, express personal ideas, and enjoy writing.

During independent writing, the amount of structure that defines the level of independence ranges from the very structured writing workshop, through content-directed learning logs (see "Sample Shared Writing Lesson" in Chapter 3) or other assigned writing tasks, to the less structured writing sprees (see "Assessment Strategies and Tools" in Chapter 7).

Independent writing could occur as a follow-up to a series of writing lessons – involving modelled, shared, and guided writing – with a focus on a particular concept or skill. It could also occur during a period of time when students have free choice of the topic and form for their writing.

Each piece of a student's independent writing would not necessarily go through all of the stages of the writing process, unless the student or teacher chooses to have it do so. However, students should regularly take pieces of writing through the whole writing process to help them develop skills associated with each stage and to give the teacher assessment information about both the process and the product of students' writing.

Two sample independent writing lessons – the writing workshop and a persuasive writing assignment – have been provided in order to emphasize that there are numerous ways of approaching independent writing.

**Independent writing is used to give students the opportunity to:**
➜ understand and appreciate the importance of writing;
➜ apply their knowledge and skills to write independently;
➜ make independent choices about their writing – for example, about the topic or the publication format;
➜ become confident about expressing their personal voice and ideas in writing;
➜ develop skills related to each stage of the writing process.

## The Frequency of Independent Writing

The teacher plans a literacy block that reflects a balance of instructional strategies for writing: modelled, shared, interactive, guided, and independent. (See sample timetables in the reading instruction guide, Appendices 13-4 to 13-9, pages 13.32–13.39.)

At the beginning of the year, during the literacy block, the teacher plans lessons to establish the procedures for independent writing. Establishing procedures early in the year will reap benefits during the rest of the year as the students learn to work independently, thus freeing the teacher for small-group lessons and one-on-one conferences.

In addition to forming a part of the literacy block, independent writing can occur during other times of the day. For example, independent writing could be used in:

- a writing component that completes a content area project;

- a reflection following a lesson or event;

- a learning log where a student reflects on the past week's activities;

- a free-time activity when the student makes a greeting card for a family member.

The amount of time spent on independent writing varies depending on the goal of the student or teacher and on student ability and experience.

# Roles and Responsibilities in Independent Writing

The roles and responsibilities of both teacher and students in independent writing are set out in the chart below. They apply regardless of the specific teaching point of the lesson.

## Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher and Students in Independent Writing

**The Teacher:**

- creates an environment that supports independent writing;
- provides the students with the structure appropriate for the goal of the independent writing period (e.g., writing workshop procedures);
- presents minilessons, focused on writing content, process, or product, as needed;
- monitors student progress and decision making during the writing process;
- monitors and scaffolds students' learning as they write independently;
- assists the student as a guide and a facilitator, making sure the requisite skills (e.g., research, Internet use, time management) are in place for success;
- schedules regular teacher-student conferences for formative assessment purposes to extend the student's writing ability and allow the student to share self-assessment information;
- uses various assessment strategies during independent writing to identify student achievement and consider which students may need a future minilesson or a shared or guided writing lesson on a particular skill;
- conducts guided writing sessions;
- maintains a student-centred approach with minimal teacher intervention;
- helps students explore possibilities by asking appropriate questions, encouraging dialogue about the writing, and urging students to achieve their best effort.

**Students:**

- work independently;
- understand and follow the classroom routines during independent writing;
- engage in the writing process and track their progress using the classroom tracking system;
- use classroom materials and resources;
- engage in peer conferencing when necessary;
- are prepared for student-teacher conferences;
- make a careful note of their own learning and record it on a self-assessment checklist;
- maintain a writing folder.

## Independent Writing and the Writing Process

From the point at which an idea and purpose for writing come to mind to the final publishing of a piece of writing, most writers take their writing through the following process:

- Planning or Rehearsal, including creating an outline

- Writing a Draft

- Revising

- Editing

- Publishing

While not every piece of writing that a student completes would be taken through each step of the writing process, students should be given opportunities to experience the complete writing process several times a term. Emergent writers may craft a sentence that is complete and is not revisited. As they gain experience, they are introduced to the stages of the writing process. Over the years, students will have gained more writing experience, so that by the end of Grade 3 they can independently take a piece of writing through all the stages of the writing process. Teacher and student may decide together if a piece of writing should be taken through to the publishing stage.

# Sample Independent Writing Lesson: Writing Workshop, Grade 3

The writing workshop sample lesson does not include the "before writing", "during writing", and "after writing" components of the sample lessons for the other instructional approaches to writing. It is a description of a structured organizational strategy that will keep the students focused on their writing content and process. At the same time, this strategy allows the teacher to teach minilessons as needed, to circulate in the classroom for observational assessment purposes, and to engage in conferences with individual students for in-depth formative assessment. Once the students have had considerable experience with the writing workshop, the structure may be relaxed or refined to meet the needs of the class.

The writing workshop would be most effectively used in Grade 2 or 3. However, the structure of the workshop can be introduced in Kindergarten and Grade 1 through modelled and shared experiences.

Some advance preparation will be required to facilitate smooth, worthwhile conferences during the writing workshop. The day before any conference, the teacher and the students will decide who will be ready for a conference the next day, and those students will each choose a piece of writing from their folders to discuss with the teacher.

The Writing Self-Assessment Form (Appendix 6-5) will help the students choose and assess their pieces of writing and begin to formulate goals for their next attempt at writing. Folders are handed in so that the teacher can read the selections and make notes on the first part of the Writing Conference Record (for a sample, see Appendix 6-3). Assessment can take place during this reading as well as during the conference. Before the conference, the teacher should be familiar with the piece of writing being discussed so that the student needs to read only a section of the piece to the teacher during the conference (e.g., a part that the student thought was particularly effective). The teacher can complete the rest of the Writing Conference Record during the conference as the piece of writing is discussed, and then share assessment information with the student.

*Usually, the conference will concentrate on only one aspect of the student's writing, such as a specific element of writing (see "Elements of Writing" in Chapter 1), sentence structure, or the choice of format for the piece.*

**CONTEXT:** The writing workshop is used to implement process writing in the classroom, while at the same time allowing students to choose topics and forms. It can be used to introduce a class to teacher expectations about the writing process and about conferencing and sharing. The minilesson component allows for whole-class instruction on concepts that need to be reinforced or reviewed.

**PURPOSE:** The writing workshop provides opportunities for students to have repeated experiences with:

- shared and guided writing;
- working independently without disturbing others;
- working for periods of time without direct teacher supervision;
- independently gathering resources needed for writing (e.g., pencils, paper);
- the writing process: planning, writing a draft, revising, editing, publishing;

- preparing for a writing conference (e.g., pre-selecting a piece of writing to be discussed during the conference and making notes about one or two specific topics to discuss).

## TIME FRAME

- 40–50 minutes
- The time allocated to the writing workshop will depend on the developmental stage of the students: for example, Grade 1 students may need a shorter period of time and more teacher support at the beginning of the school year, while Grade 3 students should be able to work effectively with the structure described in this sample lesson.

## MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- writing folders
- "Where We're At" Chart (Appendix 6-1) for use in a whole-class setting
- "Where I'm At" Chart (Appendix 6-2) for individual student use
- Sample Writing Conference Record (Appendix 6-3)
- Independent Writing Revising and Editing Checklist (Appendix 6-4)
- Writing Self-Assessment Form (Appendix 6-5)
- wall charts for reference (e.g., steps in the writing process, rules for working independently)
- writing materials (e.g., pencils, markers)
- spelling reference chart, word wall, dictionaries, thesauri
- date stamp

To download the full-sized versions of the above appendices, go to the *eWorkshop* website at http://www.eworkshop.on.ca/resources/literacy

## ADAPTATIONS AND EXTENSIONS

- Students will be working at individual achievement levels, so few adaptations are required. However, some students may require the support of a scribe, a tape recorder, or specialized computer software to help record their thoughts. Other students may need organizational help at various steps of the writing process.

## ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

*Students will:*

- communicate ideas and information for specific purposes and to specific audiences;
- write materials that show a growing ability to express their points of view and to reflect on their own experiences;
- organize information into short paragraphs that contain a main idea and related details;
- begin to use compound sentences and use sentences of varying length;
- produce pieces of writing using a variety of forms;
- revise and edit their work, using feedback from the teacher and their peers;
- proofread and correct their final drafts.

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

*The teacher will use:*

- "Where We're At" Chart (which enables the teacher to take a quick, "at-a-glance" look at where each student is in the writing process, and to identify any students who may require assistance to move to the next step);

- "Where I'm At" Chart (which enables the teacher to keep track of where each student is in the writing process);

- Writing Conference Record (for recording assessment before and during the conference; the record helps the teacher make decisions on very specific teaching points to be addressed in the near future);

- Writing Self-Assessment Form (which can help the teacher keep track of what students know and what needs to be taught);

- achievement chart from the curriculum document for language, Grades 1–8.

## REFLECTIONS AND SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

**Students:**

- Have I reviewed my "Where I'm At" Chart and the Writing Self-Assessment Form to determine what I've done well and what I need to do next?

- Have I reviewed the "Where We're At" Chart to find out who would be an appropriate partner for a peer conference?

- Did I reflect on suggestions offered by others during sharing and teacher and peer conferences?

**Teacher:**

- What went well during the writing workshop? What needs to be improved?

- What minilessons will be necessary?

- Is there a group that would benefit from a small-group guided writing lesson?

- Does the Writing Conference Record form need to be adapted to suit my personal assessment style?

- Am I using all the assessment tools effectively in order to balance my focus of instruction?

## PROCEDURE

- Minilesson: 5–10 minutes
- "Where We're At": 3 minutes
- Writing/Conferencing: 30 minutes
- Sharing: 10 minutes

**Minilesson**

In the first 5–10 minutes of the writing workshop, the teacher delivers a whole-class minilesson. The minilesson is focused on directly teaching a specific skill in order to help students become effective writers.

This lesson could:

- reinforce a convention (e.g., end-of-sentence punctuation);
- address workshop management concerns;
- explore an element of writing.

**"Where We're At"**

The students open their writing folders and use the "Where I'm At" Chart to determine what they are going to work on during writing time. The teacher uses the "Where We're At" Chart to record what each student intends to work on during the workshop. As the teacher is recording each student's plan, the names of students who are at the revising or editing stages could be written on the chalkboard so they will know who might be available for a peer conference during writing time. (At this time, the teacher might pair students for peer conferencing if it would be beneficial for a student to work with another particular student.)

**Writing/Conferencing**

The teacher makes sure that all students have started writing before calling the first student to conference. Between conferences, the teacher circulates around the classroom, for observational assessment and to work with any students who may need teacher assistance.

The writing conference should focus on a single point to be discussed between student and teacher, such as examination of content, editing conventions, or word choice. Before and during the teacher-student writing conference, the teacher completes an in-depth, formative assessment of the student's growth in writing, and provides information about how the student's writing could be improved – for example, by discussing writing strengths and needs with the student or suggesting organizational strategies or sources of information. The Writing Conference Record can be used for this purpose.

To allow the teacher to conduct three or four writing conferences and circulate to coach students as they write, the conferences must be very organized, with both the teacher and the student doing some pre-conference preparation. Each conference should take no longer than 3 or 4 minutes.

Students who are at the revising or editing stage can take the opportunity to share their writing with a peer. Together they can discuss strengths, areas for improvement, and next steps. Students may decide whether or not to take their peer's advice.

**Sharing**

In the last 10 minutes of the workshop, students share their writing with a partner or the whole class – either to get feedback on an idea/draft, to share a small selection of writing that demonstrates an understanding of a new writing skill, or to present a completed, published piece of writing.

# Sample Independent Writing Lesson: Persuasive Writing, Grade 3

A great deal of writing that primary students do in the classroom is narrative writing, either personal narrative or story writing. Persuasive writing may therefore be a new form of writing or may not be a natural or first choice for many students.

The following lesson is an example of an assigned independent writing task designed to introduce students directly to writing techniques of a less familiar but important type. The Persuasive Letter Planner (Appendix 6-6) focuses on helping students understand the power of the written word to influence people's actions. The lesson structure could as well be applied to any other text form.

**CONTEXT:** This Grade 3 independent writing lesson would occur after students have had experience with analysing persuasive writing that has been written by others and have had the opportunity to write persuasively through shared and guided writing lessons.

The students will have examined samples of persuasive writing, such as:

- advertisements from newspapers and magazines
- election pamphlets or letters
- local newspaper editorials
- letters to the editor of a local newspaper
- book or movie reviews
- advertisement flyers and letters

The students will have explored viewpoints on a variety of topics. For example:

- whether their parents should let them stay up later at night
- whether putting advertising logos on clothing can influence children
- whether TV advertisements should be presented to very young children and why
- whether and how playground bullying affects others
- how easy it is to pack a healthy lunch that tastes good
- whether children should read (*name of book*) and why
- whether children should watch (*name of TV show or movie*) and why

The students will have become familiar with characteristics of persuasive writing. For example, persuasive writing:

- targets a specific audience;
- takes a position for or against an issue;
- contains persuasive language (i.e., tries to convince the reader to believe or do something);
- can be enhanced with oral language/media (speeches, jingles, TV or radio commercials) or visuals (logos, posters);
- uses connecting words to show sequence (e.g., first, second, third).

The students will have had many experiences with composing pieces of persuasive writing, using the following structure:

- introduction – presentation of topic and viewpoint in a strong statement

- reasons that support the viewpoint – at least three points

- conclusion – summary of the viewpoint and the evidence and, possibly, a call for action

**PURPOSE:** This lesson provides students with an opportunity to write to the school principal about a current issue concerning their school.

While visual and oral language can be used as powerful influences in persuasion, this lesson will focus only on written language.

### TIME FRAME
30–40 minutes per day for 4 or 5 days (this time can be part of the writing workshop)

### MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
- writing folders

- "Where We're At" Chart (Appendix 6-1) for use in a whole-class setting

- "Where I'm At" Chart (Appendix 6-2) for individual student use

- Sample Writing Conference Record (Appendix 6-3)

- Writing Self-Assessment Form (Appendix 6-5)

- Persuasive Letter Planner (Appendix 6-6)

- Persuasive Letter Revising and Editing Checklist (Appendix 6-7)

To download the full-sized versions of the above appendices, go to the *eWorkshop* website at http://www.eworkshop.on.ca/resources/literacy.

### ADAPTATIONS AND EXTENSIONS
- Students will be working at individual achievement levels, so few adaptations are required. However, some students may require the support of a scribe at times. Other students may need organizational help at various steps of the writing process.

### ONTARIO CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS
*Students will:*

- communicate ideas and information for specific purposes and to specific audiences;

- write materials that show a growing ability to express their points of view and to reflect on their own experiences;

- organize information into short paragraphs that contain a main idea and related details;

- begin to use compound sentences and use sentences of varying length;

- produce pieces of writing using a variety of forms;

- revise and edit their work, using feedback from the teacher and their peers;

- proofread and correct their final drafts.

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

If the students have received feedback (through formative assessment) on their persuasive writing during shared and guided lessons, this persuasive letter could be assessed summatively. If they have not had previous experience with the letter format, this assignment would not be included in the summative assessment.

*The teacher will use:*

- "Where We're At" Chart (which enables the teacher to take a quick, "at-a-glance" look at where each student is in the writing process, and to identify any students who may require assistance to move to the next step);
- "Where I'm At" Chart (which enables the teacher to keep track of where each student is in the writing process);
- Writing Conference Record (for recording assessment before and during the conference; the record helps the teacher make decisions on very specific teaching points to be addressed in the near future);
- Writing Self-Assessment Form (which can help the teacher keep track of what students know and what needs to be taught);
- achievement chart from the curriculum document for language, Grades 1–8;
- a rubric specific to the task.

## REFLECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHER

**Students:**

- Have I reviewed the Persuasive Letter Revising and Editing Checklist and the rubric to determine what I've done well and what I need to do next?
- Did I reflect on suggestions offered by others during sharing and teacher and peer conferences?

**The Teacher:**

- What went well during the writing process? What needs to be improved?
- What minilessons will be necessary?
- Is there a group that would benefit from a small-group guided writing lesson?
- What skills/concepts need to be taught in future writing units?

## PROCEDURE

**Before Writing**

The teacher sets the context of the writing task by asking why so many students are saying there is not enough to do during recess time. Students discuss how they spend their recess time and consider what could be done to make recess time more fun for everyone on the playground.

Depending on the specific school situation, some possible responses might be:

- The playground could be divided into separate areas for Primary, Junior, and Intermediate students.
- Lines could be painted on the pavement to allow for more games to be played – for example, four-square, hopscotch.

- More or improved playground equipment could be added.

- A specific area could be designated for ball hockey.

- Someone could teach the students how to play various playground games.

The teacher tells the students that they are going to write a persuasive letter to try to convince the principal to help the students improve the quality of their playground activities at recess.

Using a reference chart, the teacher reviews the characteristics and structure of persuasive writing as well as letter format.

The teacher reviews the Persuasive Letter Planner with the students (see Appendix 6-6).

In a later lesson, the following assessment tools are reviewed:

- Persuasive Letter Revising and Editing Checklist (see Appendix 6-7)

- a rubric specific to the task

**During Writing**

- The students take their letter writing through each of the steps of the writing process.

- The students engage in teacher or peer conferences regularly, throughout the writing process.

**After Writing**

*Sharing*

In the last 10 minutes of each lesson, students share their writing with either a partner or the whole class. They could share either a completed, published piece of writing or an idea/draft on which they would like to receive feedback.

# Thumbnails of Appendices



Appendix 6-1: Writing Workshop "Where We're At" Chart



Appendix 6-2: Writing Workshop "Where I'm At" Chart



Appendix 6-3: Sample Writing Conference Record *(page 1)*



Appendix 6-3: Sample Writing Conference Record *(page 2)*

# Thumbnails of Appendices *(continued)*

**Appendix 6-4: Independent Writing Revising and Editing Checklist**

Use this checklist to revise and edit your story.

| Revising Checklist | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| The main idea of my story is clear. | | |
| I have included details about the events, characters, and setting. | | |
| I have made the plot interesting. | | |
| I have used a variety of sentences. | | |
| I have used a variety of words. | | |
| I have thought about how my story will seem to a reader. | | |
| I tried to express my feelings in the story. | | |
| My story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. | | |
| My events are in the right order. | | |
| **Editing Checklist** | **Yes** | **No** |
| I checked my grammar. | | |
| I checked my punctuation. | | |
| I checked my spelling. | | |

Appendix 6-4: Independent Writing Revising and Editing Checklist

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**Appendix 6-5: Writing Self-Assessment Form**

**Writing Self-Assessment**

Three pieces of writing that I did:

_____

_____

_____

My favourite was _____

because _____

_____.

When I have a choice, I usually write about _____

_____.

In future, I plan to write about _____

_____.

**What I think about my writing:**

My main idea is clear.     ☺  😐  ☹

I include lots of details.     ☺  😐  ☹

I use interesting words.     ☺  😐  ☹

Appendix 6-5: Writing Self-Assessment Form
*(page 1)*

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**Appendix 6-5: Writing Self-Assessment Form** *(continued)*

I try to express my feelings.     ☺  😐  ☹

My stories have a beginning, middle, and end.     ☺  😐  ☹

The order of things that happen makes sense.     ☺  😐  ☹

I proofread my writing for spelling, punctuation, and grammar.     ☺  😐  ☹

**How I plan to improve my writing:**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix 6-5: Writing Self-Assessment Form
*(page 2)*

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**Appendix 6-6: Persuasive Letter Planner**

**Persuasive Letter Planner**

**Planning:**
My Point of View:
I think _____

_____

My Reasons:
1. _____
_____
_____

2. _____
_____
_____

3. _____
_____
_____

I think I have shown that _____
_____
_____

**Revising and Editing:**
I received feedback from:
– my teacher about _____
_____

– other students about _____
_____

I used my Revising and Editing Checklist     ☐

Appendix 6-6: Persuasive Letter Planner

# Thumbnails of Appendices *(continued)*

**Appendix 6-7: Persuasive Letter Revising and Editing Checklist**

Use this checklist to revise and edit your persuasive letter.

| Revising Checklist | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| My point of view is clear. | | |
| I have included at least 3 reasons to support my point of view. | | |
| I have stated a point of view. | | |
| I have used persuasive language to defend my point of view. | | |
| I have thought about how my persuasion will seem to a reader. | | |
| I have used a variety of sentences. | | |
| My letter has a beginning, middle, and end. (I stated my point of view, gave my reasons, summarized my point of view, and called for action.) | | |
| I have used a letter format with date, salutation, and closing. | | |
| **Editing Checklist** | **Yes** | **No** |
| I checked my grammar for complete sentences. | | |
| I checked my punctuation for capitals, periods, and commas. | | |
| I checked my spelling. | | |

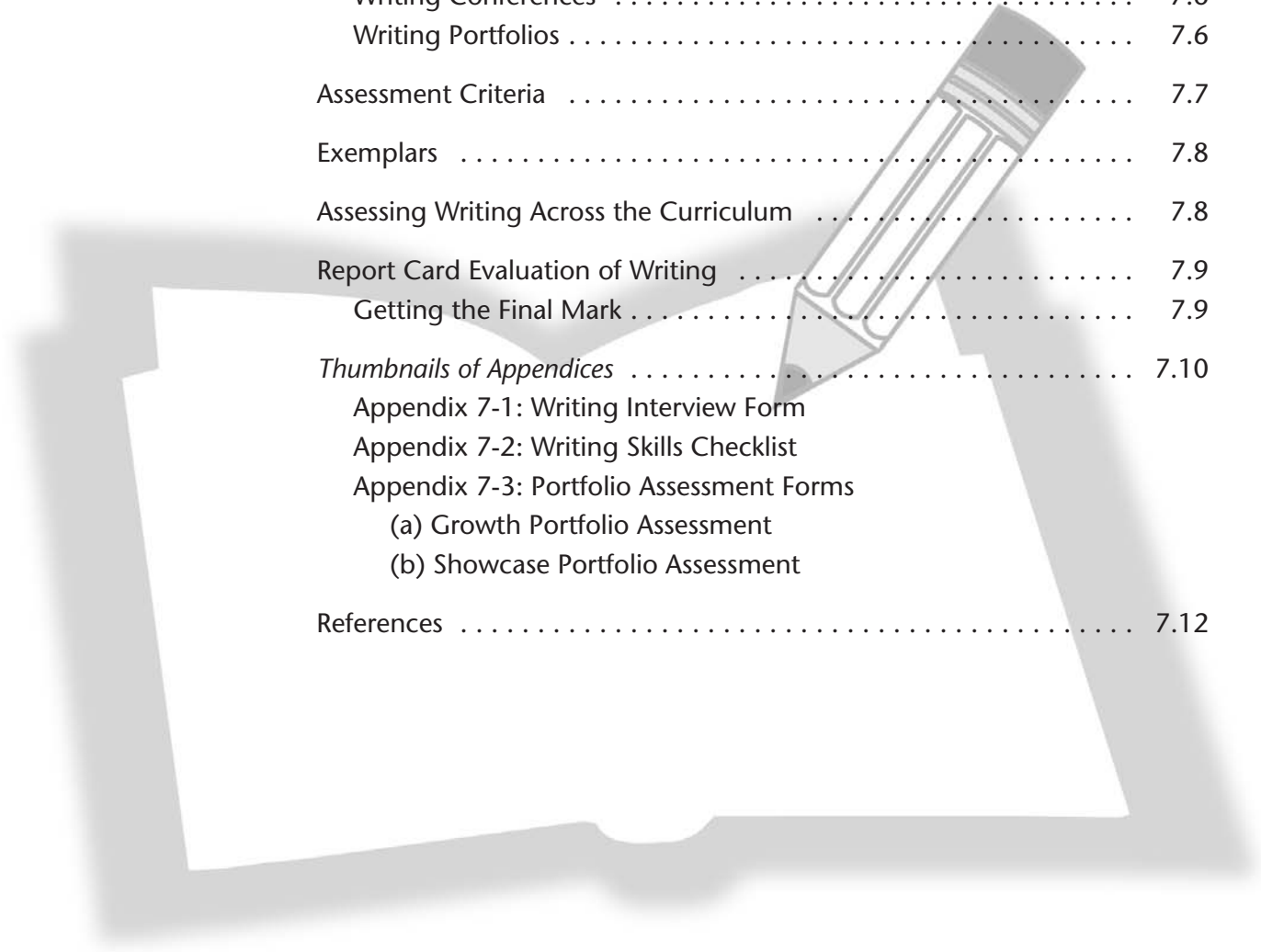Appendix 6-7: Persuasive Letter Revising and Editing Checklist

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Hill, S., and Davis, J. (2003). *The no-nonsense guide to teaching writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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# 7. Assessment and Evaluation

**Chapter Contents**

# Assessment and Evaluation

Teachers conduct assessment and evaluation to gain information about student learning and to help them improve and tailor their program for the individual student's needs.

There is a clear distinction between assessment and evaluation. The teacher assesses a student's progress throughout the term, using a variety of strategies and tools to develop an understanding of current student learning and then determine a plan for future teaching and learning. The teacher provides feedback to the students to help them better understand their achievement and how to improve their writing.

The teacher evaluates or makes a judgement about a student's progress at the end of a term or a unit of study, basing the evaluation on the student's best, most consistent work or performance. Students reflect on the evaluation and create goals for future learning. The teacher's evaluation is reported to students and parents.

| Assessment | Evaluation |
|---|---|
| • Throughout the term, the teacher gathers information and provides feedback to the students to help them better understand their achievement and how to improve their writing. | • At the end of a term, or unit of study, the teacher evaluates the collected data and makes judgements about each student's most consistent level of achievement. The teacher's evaluation is reported to students and parents. |
| • The teacher gathers information about each student, and creates fluid, temporary groupings based on need and on the instructional strategies that would best meet those needs. | • Evaluation information gives the teacher information about writing strategies and skills that need to be reviewed or reinforced. |
| • Students are given many opportunities to practise and demonstrate their writing skills as teachers continually provide support and feedback. | • Teachers collect both finished and unfinished pieces of writing that demonstrate the best and most consistent writing performance for evaluation. |
| • A variety of formal and informal strategies, including writing conferences, are used to collect information. | • The teacher's evaluation is based on summative assessments (e.g., writing conference information or assessment of writing products). |

Ongoing assessment and evaluation provide teachers with the information required to balance their instruction in order to address the needs of individual students. Ongoing assessment also allows for unscheduled teaching opportunities. These are brief interruptions during independent writing time to address a particular teaching point. Using assessment data to inform instruction, the teacher may determine that some students will continue to benefit from modelled experiences while others are ready to move on to shared and guided instruction. Instructional groupings will be formed using the results of assessment. Based on these results, the teacher will plan instruction for small, flexible, short-term groupings, based on need.

> **Unscheduled Teaching Opportunity**
> The teacher seizes a brief moment during independent writing to showcase a student who is using a specific skill or strategy in his or her writing. For example, the student uses an interesting descriptive word. The word is shared and recorded for other students to use if they wish. The class resumes its work.

*Diagnostic assessment is assessment that shows us where to begin the journey of instruction and learning. Formative assessment occurs during the learning process and tells us if we're on the right path. Summative assessment is assessment of learning that shows us how far we've come.*

## Categories of Assessment

Three broad categories of assessment are used in both reading and writing: diagnostic, formative, and summative. See the reading instruction guide, pages 12.4–12.5, for definitions and explanations of each category of assessment.

The table at the top of the next page provides a selection of assessment strategies and tools (listed by category) that may be used for assessment of writing.

### Assessment Strategies and Tools

The major assessment strategies and tools for writing are described below. See the reading instruction guide, pages 12.7–12.27, for further discussion of assessment strategies and tools for reading and writing.

To download the full-sized versions of the appendices in this chapter, go to the *eWorkshop* website at http://www.eworkshop.on.ca/resources/literacy.

#### Interest Inventory or Writing Interview

Students complete an interest inventory and/or a writing interview early in the school year in order to communicate ideas and attitudes towards writing. The teacher reviews the inventories to learn about the range of interests and attitudes within the class. Students may respond to the inventory or interview in writing, or they may have a private meeting with the teacher to express their thoughts orally. Students should be encouraged to give honest answers. This is a chance for a teacher to gain a better understanding of the students in the class so as to provide opportunities and resources that will meet the needs of every student. (See Appendix 7-1 for a sample form for use in a writing interview.)

## Assessment Strategies and Tools by Category of Assessment

| Diagnostic Assessment | Formative Assessment | Summative Assessment |
|---|---|---|
| Interest inventory/ Writing interview | Learning log/Response journal (ongoing entries) | Learning log (summary of learning) |
| Observation checklists (criteria-based) | Observation checklists (criteria-based) | Ontario writing exemplars |
| | Writing portfolio review | Writing portfolio review |
| | Writing conference | Writing conference |
| Anecdotal records | Anecdotal records | Rubrics |
| Writing spree | Writing spree | Rating scale |
| | "Where We're At"/ "Where I'm At" charts | |
| | Student self-evaluation | |

## Writing Spree

Kindergarten to Grade 2 students are asked to spend no longer than ten minutes writing all the words they know on a piece of paper. If a student is hesitant, the teacher can use prompts to help students remember any words, especially high-frequency words, that they may be able to write.

## Anecdotal Records, Observation Checklists, Rating Scales, and Rubrics

These are assessment tools that focus a teacher's assessment, provide a record of achievement for students, and help determine individual students' instructional needs. See the reading instruction guide, pages 12.20–12.26, for a description of each of these tools and how they are used to assess student work. A sample template for an anecdotal record can be found in Appendix 12-1 in the reading instruction guide. In the present document, samples of checklists for writing can be found in Appendices 6-4, 6-7, and 7-2.

## Learning Log or Response Log

A learning log provides a student with an opportunity to periodically record or reflect on what he or she has learned in a particular lesson or unit of work. A response log provides an opportunity for a student to periodically record his or her responses to a particular text that is being read independently or by the whole class. Students are encouraged to write their own thoughts, feelings, and questions about the story rather

than answer specific questions. Generally, teachers read the entries and record responses that concentrate on content, and they do not make corrections. These logs are a chance for students to record their ideas and feelings with the knowledge that they will be accepted. The teacher may use a separate notebook or record book to record observations for his or her own use.

Learning logs and response logs are effective assessment tools for both reading and writing. The information gained can help teachers create lessons within the balanced language program that specifically meet the needs of the students in the class.

Below is a list of some points that a writing teacher can look for in a learning or response log:

• Understanding of concepts

• Higher-order thinking

• Understanding of a specific form or genre

• Understanding of conventions of print

• Distinctive voice

• Communication of ideas

• Word choice

• Sentence fluency

## Writing Conferences

Writing conferences are scheduled, one-on-one meetings between teacher and student to assess student learning. They offer teachers opportunities to get to know their students as writers and to monitor their students' progress in writing. Teachers are able to identify students' strengths and the challenges they face, and to help them set specific goals in their writing. Observations are recorded in dated anecdotal-record format or on a template made specifically for writing conference records (for a Sample Writing Conference Record, see Appendix 6-3).

Writing conferences can take place during the writing workshop or during other writing activities.

## Writing Portfolios

Writing portfolios are collections of student work representing growth in writing performance. A writing portfolio may contain a student's best pieces, the student's assessment of his or her work, and one or more works in progress.

Writing portfolios are excellent tools for both student self-assessment and the teacher's assessment of students. Students can determine the criteria for judging good writing through brainstorming sessions with the teacher and their peers. Older students can take charge of their personal collection of work, while younger students may need more directed help on what work to include. As students collect and select their work, writing portfolios become an effective way to encourage students to reflect on what makes some pieces of writing better than others and to think about how they could improve future writing.

Writing portfolios can be visited once or twice per term and are useful for generating student goals for future writing projects. Portfolios can also be used to involve parents in their children's writing assessment and to report individual student progress.

Two types of writing portfolios are used in the Primary grades.

- A **growth portfolio** is used to demonstrate a student's writing development. It can start with a baseline piece of writing that a student completes independently at the beginning of the year. Over the year, pieces of writing that show growth in the student's writing achievement can be selected, either by the student or by the teacher. The portfolio includes student reflections that describe why pieces were chosen, how they reflect growth, and what are the next steps to be taken. A growth portfolio can be used for diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment. (See Appendix 7-3a: Growth Portfolio Assessment.)

- A **showcase portfolio** is used to keep samples of a student's best writing and student reflections. The teacher reviews the showcase portfolio, using appropriate criteria, to assess writing achievement. Students may have the opportunity to attach their own assessment to each piece, and to explain why the piece has been placed in the showcase portfolio. Assessment information from this portfolio is used for summative assessment. (See Appendix 7-3b: Showcase Portfolio Assessment.)

## Assessment Criteria

The language curriculum document for Grades 1–8 (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1997) has grade-level writing expectations that specify what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The achievement chart for language, based on these expectations, contains the criteria that are to be used to assess achievement of the expectations and describes four possible levels of achievement. Teachers assess, evaluate, and grade student achievement in language based on the achievement chart.

The achievement chart specifies the four categories of knowledge and skills that should be included in writing assessment. Assessment of student achievement in these four categories is balanced over the term as students participate in activities that span the four categories.

Since the achievement charts are generic rubrics for a subject, they can provide models for specific rubrics that could be created, either individually by the teacher or cooperatively by the teacher and students, to assess achievement of expectations for a major task. (See Appendix 12-7 in the reading instruction guide for an example of a rubric with specific, observable criteria.)

Although instruction and formative assessment could focus on one category of knowledge and skills at a time, it is important to include all four categories of knowledge and skills for summative assessment. This will result in a balanced, comprehensive assessment of student writing by ensuring that no one category receives undue emphasis.

## Exemplars

*The Ontario Curriculum – Exemplars, Grades 1–8: Writing, 1999* and the Education and Quality Assessment Office's (EQAO) *Scoring Guides and Anchors* are valuable resources for assessing writing. These exemplars are samples of end-of-year student work, completed in response to a particular task, that are carefully chosen to illustrate performance at each of the four levels of achievement.

Used along with rubrics, exemplars provide a guide for assessing students' work in relation to selected curriculum expectations, in order to promote consistency in assessment and evaluation. Exemplars can also be used to provide students with clear examples of work at each level of achievement to help them improve their learning. Teachers can use the ministry and EQAO exemplars as a guide when developing their own exemplars, based on specific tasks, to use with their students at various times during the year.

## Assessing Writing Across the Curriculum

Writing is used across the curriculum and can therefore be assessed and evaluated for both language and other areas of study. For example, when Grade 3 students are studying pioneers, the teacher may teach a specific writing form, such as a recount, that students can use to demonstrate their understanding of the life of a pioneer. When the recounts have been written, the teacher assesses the writing skills, and also the students' understanding of concepts related to pioneers. Assessment can be recorded through the use of two different rubrics: one to assess the social studies content and one to assess the skills used to write a recount. Students need opportunities to practise recounts before the recount can be used for evaluation.

# Report Card Evaluation of Writing

Report card evaluations of writing are based on summative assessments of completed writing assignments, where students have had ample opportunities to practise and improve their work after formative feedback.

Teachers evaluate student performance according to the grade-level expectations. However, these expectations measure end-of-year achievement. At the end of the first and second terms of each grade, therefore, teachers must determine, through their own experience and consultation with colleagues, what achievement is reasonable at this time in relation to the grade-level expectations.

When teachers evaluate student work, they need a clear understanding of what the levels represent. For example, all four levels of achievement identify knowledge and skills within the grade level. Level 4 is defined as achievement beyond the provincial standard, not beyond the grade. Level 3 reflects a student's achievement at the provincial standard. Level 2 is student work that is approaching the provincial standard, and level 1 is much below the standard. Teachers who are unsure of the differences between the descriptors in the achievement charts should read and analyse the student samples in the ministry exemplars at each level for the appropriate grade.

Report card grades from one term to another are not cumulative, even though student learning is. In other words, students' level of performance in any one term reflects their achievement related to the knowledge and skills developed in that term, and not their overall achievement. For instance, a student may receive a level 4 overall in the first term in Grade 3 for writing narratives, concrete poetry, and cross-curricular journals, and a level 3 overall in the second term for paragraph writing, research, and letter writing. Thus, the report card does not show student growth from term to term; rather, it shows student performance in relation to specific achievement criteria in a particular term. Since the focus of knowledge and skills changes from term to term, the grades given for various assignments by term are independent of each other.

## Getting the Final Mark

Teachers can organize the record keeping of summative assessments according to the four categories of knowledge and skills. After determining the most consistent level of achievement for each category, the teacher arrives at the final mark by giving equal weight to each category mark.

Recording the students' marks by category allows the teacher to identify the patterns of strengths and needs of each student. If similar patterns are noticed with a number of students, these students might be grouped together for guided writing lessons. Noticing patterns in the class's marks for each category helps the teacher plan purposefully for the next term as well as offering accurate data for report card comments on the strengths and areas for growth of each child.

# Thumbnails of Appendices

**Appendix 7-1: Writing Interview Form** *(page 1)*

**Appendix 7-1: Writing Interview Form** *(page 2)*

**Appendix 7-2: Writing Skills Checklist**

**Appendix 7-3: Portfolio Assessment Forms**
*(a) Growth Portfolio Assessment*

# Thumbnails of Appendices *(continued)*

**Appendix 7-3: Portfolio Assessment Forms** *(continued)*

**(b) Showcase Portfolio Assessment**

Name: _____     Date: _____

I picked this piece to add to my portfolio because _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

This piece shows that I am learning to _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

**Teacher's Comments:**

This is a good choice for the portfolio because _____
_____
_____
_____.

**Parent's/Guardian's Comments:**

This is a good choice for the portfolio because _____
_____
_____
_____.

Appendix 7-3: Portfolio Assessment Forms

*(b) Showcase Portfolio Assessment*

# References

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# Glossary

*Note: Words and phrases printed in boldface italic in the following definitions are also defined in this glossary.*

**achievement level.** The level at which a student is achieving the Ontario curriculum expectations for his or her grade level.

**acrostic poem.** A poem in which the letters of a word are arranged vertically, with each beginning the first word of a line of the poem.

**adaptations.** Changes made to a teaching strategy or to a generally assigned task to ensure that all students are able to participate.

**adventure.** Fiction that focuses on the solving of a problem through a series of action events.

**alphabet charts.** Charts containing letters of the alphabet written in both upper and lower case, and a picture and word that are clearly associated with each letter. This type of chart helps students make links between letters and sounds.

**anecdotal record.** A written description, by the teacher, of observed student demonstrations of knowledge and skills. Anecdotal records should reflect only observed behaviours, not opinions or personal interpretations. They may be running accounts of what students say and do during a particular activity, or records of specific behaviours. Students should be observed in a variety of situations over time. Consistent record taking helps to reveal patterns of student development.

**assessment.** The ongoing, systematic gathering, recording, and analysis of information about a student's achievement, using a variety of strategies and tools. Its intent is to provide feedback to the teacher that can be used to improve programming. Assessment should be authentic – that is, based on classroom programs. Peer assessment, the giving and receiving of feedback among students, can also play an important role in the learning process. See also *diagnostic assessment*, *formative assessment*, and *summative assessment*.

**autobiography.** A factual retelling of the author's life or parts of his or her life from the author's own perspective.

**biography.** The factual retelling of a real person's life or parts of his or her life.

**checklist.** An assessment tool that lists specific skills, strategies, or behaviours associated with a particular task or assignment. Teachers may use a checklist for diagnostic or formative assessment, and students may use a checklist for self-assessment or as a way of tracking their use of specific skills.

**conventions.** Accepted practices or rules of language use. Conventions related to the mechanics of writing include rules for spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

**"developing fluency" stage of writing development.** The stage at which students begin to write for a variety of purposes using forms appropriate for their audience. They follow the steps of the writing process, use a variety of spelling strategies, and group sentences into paragraphs.

**diagnostic assessment.** Assessment that is undertaken to identify a student's prior learning so that appropriate instruction can be provided. It occurs at the beginning of a school year, term, or unit, or as needed. See also *formative assessment* and *summative assessment*.

**early stage of writing development.** The stage at which students begin to understand some purposes for writing and to use some basic writing forms. They express their ideas in simple sentences, often using *invented spelling*.

**editing.** A stage in the writing process in which students focus on the mechanical aspects of their writing. They check the accuracy of their spelling, grammatical structures, and use of punctuation.

**ELD.** See *English literacy development*; see also *English as a second language*.

**elements of writing.** The elements of writing are: ideas/content, organization, voice, word choice, presentation, sentence fluency, and conventions.

**emergent stage of writing development.** The stage at which students learn that their oral language can be recorded in print. They develop an understanding that writing is used to communicate a message. They imitate adult writing by using pictures, symbols, and some conventional letters.

**English as a second language (ESL).** A program of instruction for students who have little or no fluency in English, designed to help them build their English-language proficiency. See also *English literacy development*.

**English literacy development (ELD).** A program of instruction for students who speak a variant of English that differs from standard English, and who need help to improve their skills in reading, writing, and oral communication. See also *English as a second language*.

**environmental print.** Words, phrases, and pictures that students see around them in the classroom, at home, and in public places. Examples include billboards, traffic signs, store signs, and labels.

**ESL.** See *English as a second language*; see also *English literacy development*.

**evaluation.** A judgement made at a specific, planned time about the level of a student's achievement based on the data gathered from summative assessment in relation to the curriculum grade expectations.

**exemplars.** Samples of student work that are chosen to illustrate performance at each of the four *achievement levels*. In 1999, the Ministry of Education published *The Ontario Curriculum – Exemplars, Grades 1–8: Writing*, which contains task descriptions for end-of-year tasks, *rubrics*, and samples of student work at each level of achievement for each of the tasks. Exemplars help students understand the quality of work that is expected of them for a particular kind of task, and they provide teachers with examples that can help them assess their own students' work. Exemplars are intended to promote consistency in assessment.

**expectations.** The knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn and to demonstrate by the end of every grade or course, as outlined in the Ontario curriculum documents for the various subject areas.

**explanation.** A text that explains how things work or how they were made.

**explicit teaching.** Clear, direct, purposeful teaching of specific knowledge, skills, or strategies.

**extensions.** Changes made to a teaching strategy or to a generally assigned task to ensure that, as students grasp the new learning, they will continue to be challenged and have opportunities to extend their learning. See also *adaptations*.

**fable.** Traditional fiction that teaches a moral or lesson. The characters are usually animals, but they have human qualities. The interaction of these animals reveals general truths about human nature.

**fairy tale.** Traditional fiction about magical creatures, objects, or events.

**fantasy.** Fiction that contains an imaginative setting and characters unlike anything with which we are familiar, such as talking animals and/or beings with magical powers.

**first name charts.** List of students' names, grouped alphabetically by the first letter of their first name.

**flexible groupings.** Groupings of students who need to work on a particular strategy, skill, or text form (generally four to six students for *guided writing* groups). Teachers change the group composition when one (or more) of the students makes significant gains or demonstrates acquisition of the strategy or skill for which the group was formed, or to accommodate specific needs or interests.

**folk tale**. A work of traditional fiction based on an oral tale that has been passed down from generation to generation.

**format.** The way in which a genre is represented (e.g., list, joke, graphic organizer, sign, recipe, letter).

**formative assessment.** Assessment that tracks individual students' progress on an ongoing basis. It provides students with information about the strengths and weaknesses of their writing. When a student applies a new skill in writing, it is crucial for him or her to receive feedback as soon as possible on what was done successfully and what needs to be done to improve the student's achievement. Formative assessment also provides teachers with regular information about the effectiveness of their instructional strategies.

**framework.** For the purposes of this document, a step-by-step guide prepared by the teacher, with the students, to help them perform an activity, process, or procedure.

**free verse.** Poetry that does not rhyme or have a regular rhythm.

**genre.** Categorizations of texts by literary style and structure or theme (e.g., fiction, non-fiction; poetry, drama, prose; adventure, fairy tale, science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, mystery; informational text, biography, memoir). Some genres can combine fictional and non-fictional content.

**ghost story.** Fiction that refers to super-natural characters and/or phenomena.

**gradual release/transfer of responsi-bility.** During *explicit teaching* of new information, strategies, and skills, and while modelling strategies, skills, and behaviours, the teacher provides students with maximum support. As students begin to apply the new learning, the teacher provides guidance and offers feedback as necessary. As students internalize the learning, skills, strategies, and behaviours (e.g., during shared and then guided writing sessions), the teacher gradually provides less and less support and students assume more and more responsibility. Finally, the release or transfer of responsibility is complete, and the student is able to work independently.

**graphic organizer.** A visual framework that helps the learner organize ideas and make connections between them.

**guided writing.** A key instructional approach that consolidates previously taught writing skills through a small-group, teacher-directed lesson. The students review a recently taught writing skill and then apply the skill through independent writing.

**higher-order thinking skills.** Thinking that goes beyond the recall of basic facts and enables students to solve problems, understand and use concepts of some complexity, and achieve a deeper level of understanding of texts.

**historical fiction.** Realistic fiction that portrays life and events during a particular time in history. While plot details and/or characters are imaginary, reference may be made to real people and happenings of the period.

**humour.** Writing and/or illustration meant to entertain through the use of comedy, wit, fancy, and humorous anecdotes.

**ideas/content.** An element of writing. Ideas and content reflect the topic of the writing.

**independent writing.** A key instruc-tional approach that gives students opportunities to explore writing independently, using self-selected or assigned topics, genres, and forms.

**informational text.** Non-fiction that gives facts, figures, principles, and new information on a variety of topics from the material and social world.

**interactive writing.** A key instructional approach in which the teacher and students share the task of scribing a message. The teacher selects an appropriate teaching point. The teacher and students share the pen to create a message, and the finished text is then used for independent practice.

**interest inventory/writing interview.** A checklist, questionnaire, or oral interview that enables students to communicate their ideas about and attitudes towards writing.

**invented spelling.** A way of spelling words according to the way they sound to the student.

**learning log/response journal.** A student's written record of and reflection on his or her learning.

**legend.** Traditional fiction telling the story of a national or folk hero and based on fact but including imaginative material.

**literacy block.** A block of time scheduled daily by the classroom teacher for literacy instruction or activities.

**memoir.** A record of a person's life, often in connection with specific experiences or events.

**minilesson.** A brief, focused lesson in which the teacher teaches and models a specific strategy. Students are asked to work with the strategy independently if it is relevant to what they are doing.

**modelling.** The teacher demonstrates a task or strategy to students, so that they can learn how to do it by copying the model. When modelling includes thinking aloud, students become aware of the processes needed to perform a task or implement a strategy.

**mystery.** A type of realistic fiction that centres on a problem or question. A solution or answer is reached through the use of clues and/or participation in events.

**narrative.** A text that tells a story that is usually imaginary but may be based on fact.

**onset.** The consonant or consonants that occur before a vowel in a syllable (e.g., the *g* in *gain*, the *fr* in *fright*). (See also *rime*.)

**organization.** An element of writing that provides the structure for the writing. It is characterized by an effective beginning and end and a logical sequence of events or ideas.

**peer assessment.** Assessment, by one or more students, of another student's writing using a guideline, usually in the form of a checklist, rating scale, or rubric.

**peer conference.** A discussion between two students about their writing. Peer conferences offer students opportunities to give each other suggestions on how to make their writing better.

**persuasive text.** A text whose purpose is to persuade the reader to take a certain action and/or accept a particular point of view.

**planning.** A stage in the writing process, sometimes referred to as rehearsal. Students create a plan for their writing, keeping purpose and audience in mind.

**poetry.** Verse or rhythmic prose that uses imagery to create an emotional response or evoke sensory images. Poetry may occur in all types of literature, including fiction and non-fiction.

**presentation.** An element of writing that focuses on the visual layout of the text. Consideration is given to legibility, titles, margins, graphics, and illustrations.

**prior knowledge.** The knowledge that a student has acquired to date and that he or she brings to a text and draws on to understand the text.

**procedure.** A text that lists steps or actions necessary to do something.

**proofreading.** The careful reading of a final draft to eliminate typographical errors and correct errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Proofreading takes place during the *editing* stage of the *writing process*.

**provincial standard.** A level of student achievement established at each grade by the Ministry of Education for report card grades. The provincial standard is set at level 3 of the four levels of achievement. Students evaluated at level 3 are working at the expected level of achievement, which is considered to be the standard for each grade.

**publishing.** A stage in the writing process in which a student makes the writing presentable for the intended audience.

**rap.** Free, informal verse recited with a strong rhythmic beat.

**rating scale.** A simple tool for assessing the quality of a performance, product, attitude, and/or behaviour, on the basis of a set of criteria, along a point-scale ranging from low to high (e.g., from a low of 3 points to a high of 10).

**recount.** A retelling of an experience or event.

**report.** A text that conveys information about an event or situation using an organizational structure designed to communicate the main points as effectively as possible.

**response journal.** See *learning log/response journal*.

**revising.** A stage in the writing process in which students examine their writing critically and use a variety of strategies to improve the content and/or organization of their writing.

**rime.** The part of a syllable that contains the vowel and all that follows it (e.g., *-one* in *bone* and *tone*). A rime is smaller than a syllable but larger than a phoneme. (See also *onset*.)

**rubric.** A scoring scale in chart form, often developed in connection with a performance task, that provides a set of criteria related to expectations addressed in the task and describes student performance at each of the four levels of achievement. Rubrics are used to assess and evaluate students' work and to help students understand what is expected of them.

**scaffolding.** An instructional technique in which the teacher breaks a writing approach into small steps, models the steps, provides support as students learn the strategy, and then gradually shifts responsibility for applying the strategy independently to the students. Scaffolding allows students to build on their prior knowledge and modify their current understandings; where prior knowledge is lacking, modelled and shared experiences bridge the gap.

**science fiction.** Fantasy fiction that deals with the actual, imagined, or potential impact of science and technology on society and/or individuals, usually in the future.

**self-assessment.** A student's assessment of his or her own writing with the use of a guideline (provided by the teacher or student generated), usually in the form of a checklist, rating scale, or rubric. The purpose is to help students review their own work critically and work independently to improve their performance.

**sentence fluency.** An element of writing that is developed by using a variety of sentence structures and sentence lengths. This is done in order to achieve rhythm and flow and make the writing easy and pleasurable to read.

**shared writing.** A key instructional approach in which the teacher and students work together on a piece of writing. The teacher is the scribe, and the students respond to prompts and questions from the teacher in order to help create the text. The teacher selects an appropriate teaching point and introduces the writing activity to the students. The students share their ideas, and the teacher scribes and composes. The teacher and students read the finished text together.

**summative assessment.** Assessment that occurs at the end of a learning module or a specific time period, and that is based on work in which the student is expected to demonstrate the knowledge and skills accumulated during that period of time. Summative assessments provide teachers with additional information (additional to that obtained from a variety of assessments conducted earlier) to evaluate student achievement and program effectiveness.

**text forms.** Texts can take the form of narrative, recount, procedure, persuasive piece, report, and explanation. When students consider the purpose of and audience for their writing, they can more easily choose the form their writing will take.

**think-aloud.** A process in which the teacher models the recognition of language cues and the application of reading and writing strategies by expressing his or her thought processes out loud while writing a text for students.

**thumbnail.** A miniature representation of a page of text or picture.

**voice.** An element of writing that helps the text to reflect the feelings and perspective of the author and gives a distinctive quality to a work. It can be found in illustrations as well as in the written word.

**word choice.** An element of writing that makes the writing descriptive, detailed, and precise. The writer selects words that enable readers to visualize and understand the content more clearly.

**word wall.** A list of words, grouped alphabetically and prominently displayed in the classroom, that teachers use to help students become familiar with high-frequency words.

**writing a draft.** A stage in the writing process, usually following the planning stage. The intent at this stage is to get ideas down on paper and then consider the next step for that particular piece of writing.

**writing conference.** A teacher's planned discussion with individual students about their writing. Writing conferences offer teachers opportunities to get to know their students as writers, to monitor their students' writing progress, and to plan future instruction based on identified needs.

**writing portfolio.** A collection of student work representing the student's growth and achievement in writing performance. A writing portfolio may contain a student's best pieces, the student's evaluation of his or her work, and one or more works in progress.

**writing process.** The process involved in producing a polished piece of writing. The writing process comprises several stages, each of which focuses on specific tasks. The main stages of the writing process are: *planning*, *writing a draft*, *revising*, *editing*, and *publishing*.

**writing spree.** Students are asked to spend no longer than ten minutes writing all the words they know on a piece of paper.

**writing workshop.** A structured organizational strategy in which students can write independently, confer with other students or the teacher, and present their work to the class. The writing workshop takes place during the literacy block.

Ministry of Education

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