



With **300**  
strategies

JENNIFER SERRAVALLO

*The*  
**Writing Strategies**  
*Book*

YOUR **EVERYTHING GUIDE** TO  
DEVELOPING SKILLED WRITERS

**Study Guide**

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## An Introduction to the Study Guide

Thank you for choosing to study *The Writing Strategies Book* with your colleagues! I encourage you to bring a spirit of open-mindedness, risk taking, and adventure to your collaborative practice. In this guide, I offer ways to structure your time as you explore the ideas in the book together.

Some ideas in this study guide are ones intended for out-of-classroom settings, such as in a PLC, a grade-level team, or faculty meetings. Other ideas are ones that are best tried in a classroom with students. You may decide to try these by venturing into a classroom with a group of colleagues, or by videotaping your practice and viewing it later with peers.

The format of this study guide will feel familiar. I borrowed the same structure that I used in both *The Reading Strategies Book* and *The Writing Strategies Book*, and the study guide I wrote for *The Reading Strategies Book*. You'll find that each collaboration idea has its own page, and there are familiar elements on each page including:

- a Title
- a Procedure: a clear, step-by-step process for the activity
- a Level: a marginal denotation as a “beginner,” “intermediate,” or “advanced” activity. Some are marked acceptable for “any” and there are notes within the page to help you understand how to adapt for teachers of differing experience levels.
- Book to Book: cross-references to my other books, for those of you who have them, to help you understand how my books fit together



- **Setting:** a suggestion for whether this works best at a teacher meeting (such as a PLC or faculty meeting) or while working in classrooms with children (such as a lab site)
- **Coaching Tips:** a more in-depth discussion of how to do the activity with colleagues as well as some sidebar tips I'd likely give you if I was with you as you practice.

Below, you'll find an overview table of all fifteen suggestions at a glance.

I hope this serves as an easy-to-follow guide that offers ideas for conversations, activities, and practices that will strengthen your strategic writing instruction, raise the quality and engagement levels of your student writers, and strengthen collaboration with your colleagues.

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Book to Book</b>	<b>Setting</b>
1	How Do I Know What to Teach?	Any	Either of the <i>Playbooks</i>	Meeting room
2	Revise Your Curriculum to Be More Specific	Any	Either of the <i>Playbooks</i>	Meeting room
3	Imagine the Course	Any	Either of the <i>Playbooks</i>	Meeting room
4	Visualize It	Any	<i>The Writing Strategies Book</i>	Meeting room
5	From Page to Practice	Any	<i>Conferring with Readers and Teaching Reading in Small Groups</i>	Classroom
6	Create a Toolkit	Any	<i>The Writing Strategies Book</i>	Meeting room
7	Mark Up a Mentor Text	Any	<i>Teaching Reading in Small Groups</i>	Meeting room
8	Create a Unit from Scratch	Beginner or Intermediate	Either of the <i>Playbooks</i>	Meeting room
9	Planning Prompts	Beginner or Intermediate	<i>The Writing Strategies Book</i>	Meeting Room
10	Author New Strategies	Intermediate	<i>The Writing Strategies Book</i>	Meeting room
11	Balancing Whole-Class and Individual Goals	Intermediate	Either of the <i>Playbooks</i>	Meeting room
12	One Strategy, Many Twists	Intermediate or Advanced	<i>Conferring with Readers and Teaching Reading in Small Groups</i>	Classroom
13	What Does "Got It" Look Like?	Intermediate or Advanced	Either of the <i>Playbooks</i>	Meeting room
14	Studying Support	Advanced	<i>Conferring with Readers and Teaching Reading in Small Groups</i>	Classroom
15	Teach, Review, Respond	Advanced	Either of the <i>Playbooks</i>	Meeting room



## 7. Mark Up a Mentor Text

**Procedure:** For quick reference, the procedure summarizes the steps involved in the professional learning activity.

Choose this when . . .

LEVELS  
any

BOOK TO BOOK  
See a variety of sample mentor texts mentioned under the heading "Using a Mentor" throughout *The Writing Strategies Book*.

SETTING  
meeting room

**Margins:** The margins will guide you to find activities for novice to more advanced levels of experience with strategies, references from other books you may have by Jennifer Serravallo, and the optional setting (meeting or classroom) for this activity.

**Procedure** Find a mentor text that you plan to study with your class. One strategy at a time, mark up the text with possible places to highlight as examples. You may want to include notes about the strategy on the sticky note you use.

**Coaching Tips** I learned from Carl Anderson many years ago that it's helpful to confer with a "text under your arm" (2000) so that when you need to give a quick example or demonstrate a strategy, the text is right there at your fingertips. This will save time since you won't need to run back to your desk or easel ledge to retrieve the book you wanted to use.

To make this text easy to use, I recommend reading it aloud as an interactive read-aloud so the children are versed in the text in the midst of a conference or small group you are conferring with. You can also reference a small part, saving time in your teaching.

**Coaching Tips:** These are notes, coach to coach, that include helpful tips and more elaborated advice on how to engage in the professional learning activity. At times, there is also advice for making the activity simpler or more sophisticated depending on the group of teachers who are practicing.

**Gulp! Yum...**

It may look like this snake has bitten off more than it can chew, but snakes can swallow meals bigger than their own heads with ease.

A stretchy strip called a **ligament** holds together the top and bottom of the jaw. The snake can hinge its mouth open to create plenty of room for its prey. The snake will usually swallow its meal headfirst. The snake's curved teeth keep the squirming prey from wriggling out of its mouth.

A big meal like this one will take many days to **digest**. Most snakes eat only once a week. Pythons can go for more than a year without another meal.

**6.16** Clever headings  
Ask self, does my title simply label or does it grab my reader's attention?

**6.23** Partner facts - Ask yourself "How?"  
explain not only what but how

**6.22** Support your facts  
1. Find words that are important, content-specific  
2. Add more info to define.

This short text, like many you'll find, is rich with opportunities to teach strategies. Having spots marked ahead of time allows you to save time when conferring with students.



# 1. How Do I Know What to Teach?

Choose this when . . .

LEVELS

any

BOOK TO BOOK

See either book in *The Literacy Teacher's Playbook* series for a more in-depth discussion of formative assessments.

SETTING

meeting room

**Procedure** Read across the opening 2–3 pages of each of the ten goal chapters. Choose a student to study. Find writing samples that will help you understand that student across each of the different categories. With colleagues, discuss the student's strengths and what an appropriate goal might be (using the hierarchy on page 3 of *The Writing Strategies Book*). Then, dip into the chapter that correlates to that goal to select appropriate strategies that are tied to the student's goal and grade level.

**Coaching Tips** All the beautiful strategy instruction in the world will do little if it's not grounded in what a child can already do, and what a possible next step for that child might be. Those who have read my *Literacy Teacher's Playbooks* know that I value the stuff inside a child's desk; informal assessments and everyday student work help me to prioritize instruction. Student notebook writing, drafts, and information we can glean from kidwatching during independent writing count as data!

The initial pages of each goal chapter in *The Writing Strategies Book* (see sections titled "How do I know if this goal is right for my student?") offer a very brief introduction to each goal, and how to know if it's right for your student.

If you're just getting started and want to try this activity without collecting materials from students in your class, or if you're a coach who is doing some professional learning with teachers outside of the normal school year without access to student work, I'd recommend downloading the work samples from my *Literacy Teacher's Playbooks*. Two first-grade samples can be found at [www.heinemann.com/products/E05300.aspx](http://www.heinemann.com/products/E05300.aspx). Two fourth-grade samples can be found at [www.heinemann.com/products/E04353.aspx](http://www.heinemann.com/products/E04353.aspx).



## Determining Where to Start: A Hierarchy of Possible Writing Goals



Each goal on the hierarchy corresponds to one chapter filled with strategies. Once you identify which goal is the best fit, turn to the corresponding chapter to find ideas for lessons.



## 2. Revise Your Curriculum to Be More Specific

Choose this when . . .

LEVELS  
any

BOOK TO BOOK  
For more information on how to assess and evaluate what your students are already doing, which will help guide your planning, see either book in *The Literacy Teacher's Playbook* series, Chapters 1 and 2.

SETTING  
meeting room

**Procedure** Focus on one unit. Review the expected outcomes, goals, objectives, and/or enduring understandings. Consider which of the ten goals in *The Writing Strategies Book* apply to your unit. Using the overview tables within each unit, find lesson ideas that match the stage of the writing process and grade level of your writers. Compare your current lessons to the lessons in the book. Revise any that need to be more explicit by borrowing language from strategies.

**Coaching Tips** For many of the districts I work with, curriculum guides are usually explicit about unit topic, or writing assignments, or standards. But sometimes teaching children *how* to write the piece, not just *what to write* is left to the teacher to figure out.

This activity will allow a grade-level team of teachers to plan for nitty-gritty, day-to-day teaching. You may choose to use the strategies as they are written or revise into language that's more comfortable for you. What's most important to keep in mind is that you're equipping children with a *strategy* in every single lesson.

One extension possibility is to brainstorm some of your own "lesson language" to fit with your class read-aloud (feel free to use what's in *The Writing Strategies Book* as a model, but you'll probably want to make it your own). Another extension possibility is to work together to create anchor charts that will work for you and your students within each unit.

	Pre-Assessment Stray
ML1	Getting our minds ready to study characters
ML2	Reading a character – Characters Have Traits that Define Their Personalities
ML3	Readers use precise language to describe characters
ML 4	Reading about character using the ladder
ML 5 *	How characters keep near and why they are important or meaningful
ML6	Further conversations to grow their thinking about characters
ML 7	Traits of their Secondary Characters
ML 8	Reading about Secondary Characters
ML 9 *	How people around the character affect the character
ML 10	Secondary Characters Affect the Main Character
ML11	Relationships between the main characters
ML12	Characters by examining whether they are similar or different
ML13 (have post-its re)	their thinking about a character
ML14 (have post-its re)	traits to develop theories about characters
ML15	How a character acts out of character
ML16	How and why characters change
ML 17	Readers Revise their thinking about character change
ML18	Readers revisit their theories about characters near the end of the book
ML19	Readers learn life lessons from the characters in their books
ML 20	Readers notice the theme of the book
ML21*	Readers look across books to compare characters playing parallel roles to uncover common threads we may not have noticed before
ML22	Readers reflect on their thinking and notice how it has grown and changed as they are able to think more deeply about characters
Post Assessment/Pre Assessment for Close Reading.	Stray Post-Assessment/Pre-Assessment Question for Close Reading

11.1 - Retire overworked words

Notice when you use an overworked word. Stop + say, "what do I really mean here?"

Revise your language to be more specific

7.4

What can characters teach us?

List out some positive traits of a character in your book. Think about when your character acts that way, and why. Think, "what can this character teach me about living?"

### 3. Imagine the Course

Choose this when . . .

LEVELS  
any

BOOK TO BOOK  
*The Literacy Teacher's Playbook* series offers advice for planning out a student's work with a goal over time and communicating goals with family and other teachers within the school.

SETTING  
meeting room

**Procedure** Think of one student and that student's one goal. Look through the entire chapter that connects to that student's goal. Choose a series of strategies that build from simple to more complex.

**Coaching Tips** It's unlikely that you're going to plan out a six-week course for each and every reader in your classroom, and I wouldn't recommend it! What's most authentic is that you teach a strategy, see how the student does, and then decide whether to move on to a new strategy or reteach the same one. However, as an exercise in understanding and navigating the book, you could work alone or with your colleagues to take a case-study writer—perhaps one you studied from the first exercise in this study guide—and find strategies in the book that align to both the student's goal, as well as the child's grade level. In addition to finding strategies in the book, you could even invent some of your own!

The table below shows how one writer's six-week journey with a goal of elaboration went. Notice that all the strategies connect to the goal and the grade level.

<b>Week 1</b>	Working on a fictional narrative. Learned and practiced strategies 6.33 ("How Does Your Character Talk?") and 6.14 ("Show, Don't Tell: Emotions").
<b>Week 2</b>	Working on a fictional narrative. Learned and practiced strategies for developing setting details, strategy 6.26 ("Exploring Options for Setting") and strategy 6.13 ("Show, Don't Tell: Places").
<b>Week 3</b>	Working on fictional narrative. First conference this week revisited the strategy for setting details. Later in the week, learned and practiced a strategy for developing character traits, strategy 6.20, "External Character Description."
<b>Week 4</b>	Finished up fictional narrative, revising for all strategies learned with support from the teacher. Began working on an informational essay. Learned and practiced strategy about adding partner facts, strategy 6.23.
<b>Week 5</b>	Continuing informational essay. Learned and practiced strategy for supporting facts with additional information, strategy 6.22.
<b>Week 6</b>	Continued informational essay. Worked on using narrative/anecdote as an elaboration technique, strategy 6.41.

From *The Writing Strategies Book*, page 17



## 4. Visualize It

Choose this when . . .

LEVELS  
any

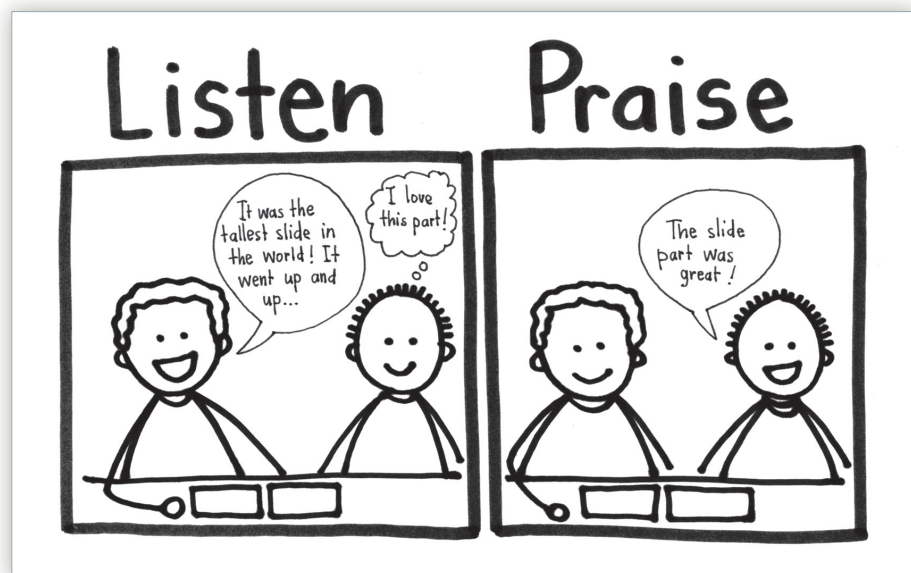
BOOK TO BOOK  
For more support with creating charts, please visit the introduction of *The Writing Strategies Book*, pages 23–25.

SETTING  
meeting room

**Procedure** Read through all of the information about one strategy (one entire page). Think of a student you want to teach this strategy to. Keeping in mind the age, stage of language acquisition, learning style, reading level, etc., of this student, create a visual that will work with this lesson and for the student.

**Coaching Tips** I included visuals for every lesson in the book for a few reasons. Inspired by the work of Marjorie Martinelli and Kristine Mraz (of chartchums [<https://chartchums.wordpress.com/>] and *Smarter Charts* fame [2012, 2014]) I wanted to challenge myself to imagine the language of the strategy and lessons as a visual for students. Martinelli and Mraz have convinced me that visuals help learning stick—so I did it for you, the teacher, in the hopes that seeing these visuals will help you commit these strategies to memory.

You may find that some of the visuals in the book will work great, as is, with your own kids. Fabulous! Feel free to copy. However, you may find that there are some visuals that are intended for a different learner than the one in front of you. In this case, I hope you feel comfortable enough to make your own! For example, take a quick look at Lesson 2.3 (page 64). The visual would be appropriate in a first-, second-, or even third-grade



From *The Writing Strategies Book*, Lesson 2.3: "Listen. Praise."

class. But what if you teach middle school? You'll need to recreate the chart with some examples that are more relevant to your class. Take a look at Lesson 6.13 (page 224). It would be fine in many upper elementary or middle school classrooms as is, but what if you have an English language learner, a younger student, or a child at a lower reading level, for whom that much print would be overwhelming? Can you reimagine the chart as a more picture- or icon-heavy version?

**USE your SENSES**

As we walked into the stadium, I could **feel** the excitement of the crowd. The **lights** were on, and it **highlighted** the **bright green grass**. In the stadium section to our left, the **fans** were chanting in unison, "We love ya, we love ya, we love ya, and where you go we'll follow, we'll follow, we'll follow." Nobody seemed to mind that **there was** a chill in the air. We knew we'd be kept warm by the energy and enthusiasm of our fellow spectators.

**See**

**Feel**

**Hear**

**Feel**

From *The Writing Strategies Book*, Lesson 6.13: "Show, Don't Tell: Using Senses to Describe Places"



## 5. From Page to Practice

Choose this when . . .

LEVELS  
any

BOOK TO BOOK  
Many of the teaching moves and structures described in *Conferring with Readers and Teaching Reading in Small Groups* will work for writing as well!

SETTING  
classroom (or with video in a meeting)

**Procedure** Choose a strategy that will benefit one student (conference) or a group of students (strategy lesson). Read through the strategy, prompts, lesson language, and chart so you feel comfortable with what you plan to teach. Teach in front of your colleagues and receive feedback.

**Coaching Tips** When I was a first-year teacher, fresh out of college, I tried very hard to lead a writing workshop as described in *The Art of Teaching Writing* (Calkins 1994). I had the marble notebooks. I gave students choice in what to write. But try as I might, I couldn't get it to work. That is, until I saw for the first time what I had previously only read about. I can still remember the moment when a Teachers College Reading and Writing Project staff developer modeled an entire writing workshop for me. It transformed my practice immediately and immensely. From that moment forward, my colleagues and I would teach in front of each other, give each other feedback, and provide one another with countless examples of what strategies-come-to-life looks like.

As you read the strategies, lesson language, and prompts in the book, I hope you can start to visualize how you'll teach it to your own students. I recommend that you then do for your colleagues what my staff developer and colleagues did for me.



Watch the video of me teaching Lesson 9.19 for an image of how a strategy from the book came to life with one reader (see <http://hein.pub/WSBGuide>).

## 6. Create a Toolkit

Choose this when . . .

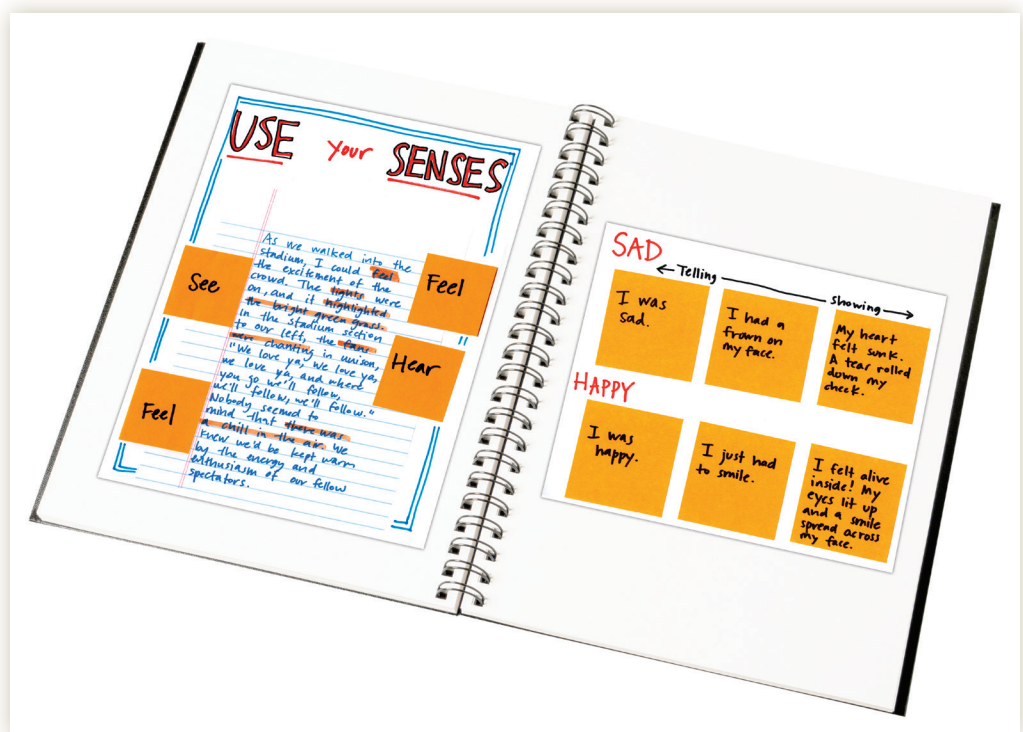
LEVELS  
any

BOOK TO BOOK  
To learn more about creating tools to support student independence, please revisit the introduction of *The Writing Strategies Book*, pages 23–25.

SETTING  
meeting room

**Procedure** Think about the strategies you anticipate will be most used in your classroom. Create a toolkit of mini-charts, student tools, mentor texts, sample writing exemplars that you create, or other materials to use during your teaching, and/or to leave with students after a lesson.

**Coaching Tips** There are many benefits to trying out this idea. One is that in creating tools that you plan to leave with students, you'll make the strategy stick in your own head more effectively. Another is that because you've done careful thinking about how you'll support students' independence, you're more likely to have their independence in mind as you're teaching. Third, by having tools at the ready, your lessons will be swifter than if you were to make the tools on the spot. This means you can work with more readers in the same time period!



These are some samples from my own toolkit that I carry with me as I work with teachers and students in schools all over the country. I'm sure to have my writing notebook with a wide range of sample pieces to use in quick demonstrations, samples of tools that I can leave with students, and even a few copies of my favorite mentor texts.



# 7. Mark Up a Mentor Text

Choose this when . . .

LEVELS  
any

BOOK TO BOOK  
See a variety of sample mentor texts mentioned under the heading “Using a Mentor” throughout *The Writing Strategies Book*.

SETTING  
meeting room

**Procedure** Find a mentor text that you plan to study with your class. One strategy at a time, mark up the text with possible places to highlight as examples. You may want to include notes about the strategy on the sticky note you use.

**Coaching Tips** I learned from Carl Anderson many years ago that it’s helpful to confer with a “text under your arm” (2000) so that when you need to give a quick example or demonstrate a strategy, the text is right there at your fingertips. This will save time since you won’t need to run back to your desk or easel ledge to retrieve the book you wanted to use.

To make this text easy to use, I recommend reading the text aloud to the class during an interactive read-aloud so the children are very familiar with it. That way, when you’re in the midst of a conference or small group you’ll be able to quickly turn to a page to reference a small part, saving time in your teaching.

**Gulp! Yum...**

It may look like this snake has bitten off more than its head, but snakes can swallow meals bigger than their own heads with ease.

A stretchy strip called a **ligament** holds together the top and bottom of the jaw. The snake can hinge its mouth open to create plenty of room for its prey. The snake will usually swallow its meal headfirst. The snake’s curved teeth keep the squirming prey from wriggling out of its mouth.

A big meal like this one will take many days to **digest**. Most snakes eat only once a week. Pythons can go for more than a year without another meal.

30

7.16 Clever headings  
Ask self, does my title do it?  
Or does it draw my reader + intrigue?

6.23 Partner facts -  
Ask yourself "how?"  
explain not only what but how

6.22 Support your facts  
1. Find words that are important, content-specific  
2. Add more info to define.

This short text, like many you’ll find, is rich with opportunities to teach strategies. Having spots marked ahead of time allows you to save time when conferring with students.

## 8. Create a Unit from Scratch

Choose this when . . .

### LEVELS

beginner or intermediate

### BOOK TO BOOK

For more information on how to assess and evaluate what your students are already doing, which will help guide your planning, see either of the *Literacy Teacher's Playbooks*, Chapters 1 and 2.

### SETTING

meeting room

**Procedure** Decide on a set of goals for the unit and the genre of writing your students will be working on (if the unit is genre based). Create a calendar with the step of the writing process your students will be engaged in on that date. Search through *The Writing Strategies Book* to find lessons that fit with the genre, step of the process, and grade level of your students.

**Coaching Tips** It's tempting to want to teach everything to your students right away. I understand the urgency! However, having a smaller set of goals gives your unit focus, which will help your students learn more deeply. This will help the learning to better "stick" and carry over to future units, and when the student is working on a writing piece independently outside of a unit. So as you plan out your unit, try to have only a few main focuses.

If creating a unit of study is new for you, I'd recommend making the unit genre-based (i.e., fiction, all-about books, poetry). This will allow you to find a mentor text to have a vision of what you're working toward and can help you to better sort through the 300 strategies in the book to find ones that work best for your purpose.

Week 1	Generating and collecting	Generating and collecting	Generating and collecting	Generating and collecting	Choosing
Week 2	Developing	Developing	Rehearsing and drafting	Drafting	Revising
Week 3	Revising	Choosing	Developing	Developing	Rehearsing and drafting
Week 4	Revising	Editing	Editing	Publishing	Celebrating!

At first, plan out the process across the days of a calendar.

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Generating and collecting</b> 3.1 Important People	<b>Generating and collecting</b> 3.2 Moments with Strong Feelings	<b>Generating and collecting</b> 3.5 Mapping the Heart	<b>Generating and collecting</b> 3.10 Scrapbook Your Life (to Write About It Later)	<b>Choosing</b> 4.7 Ask Questions to Focus
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Developing</b> 5.8 Uh-Oh . . . UH-OH . . . Phew	<b>Developing</b> 5.29 Multiscene Storyboarding	<b>Rehearsing and drafting</b> 6.4 Act It Out . . . Then Get It Down	<b>Drafting</b> 6.9 “What <i>Else</i> Happened?”	<b>Revising</b> 6.13 Show, Don’t Tell: Places
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Revising</b> 6.33 How Does Your Character Talk?	<b>Choosing</b> 4.15 Focus on an Image	<b>Developing</b> 5.35 Coming Full Circle	<b>Developing</b> 5.36 Seesaw Structure	<b>Rehearsing and drafting</b> 5.39 Write the Bones, Then Go Back to Flesh It Out
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Revising</b> 6.43 Lie (To Tell the Truth)	<b>Editing</b> 8.18 Turn to Spell-Check	<b>Editing</b> 9.8 Guess What! Complete Sentences	<b>Publishing</b> 4.4 Write a Title	<b>Celebrating!</b> (see Appendix)

Find strategies that align to your unit goals and step of the writing process, and that also match the grade level of your students.



## 9. Planning Prompts

Choose this when . . .

### LEVELS

beginner or  
intermediate

### BOOK TO BOOK

For more support  
with understanding  
prompting, reread  
*The Writing Strategies  
Book*, pages 18–19.

### SETTING

meeting room

**Procedure** Choose a strategy from the book or one you’ve created yourself. Plan out a list of prompts, trying to push yourself to come up with at least one example of each type (compliment, directive, redirection, question, or sentence starter). Make sure all the prompts match the strategy! Then, mark each prompt according to how much support it gives writers.

**Coaching Tips** Teachers who consider themselves beginner prompters may just try to generate some—or any—prompts that connect to the strategy. Remember, the prompts will be used while students practice the strategy you’ve just highlighted, so it’s crucial that the prompts support the child with that specific strategy.

Those who consider themselves intermediate prompters may try to consider different prompt types, using the explanation on this page, or the discussion in *The Writing Strategies Book*, pages 18–19.

Those who are comfortable with the practice of coaching readers and are looking for a way to refine those skills may try to think about how different prompts offer differing levels of support for readers. By making a list of prompts you tend to use and marking each prompt with “more” or “less,” you can reflect on how much support you give writers and begin to become mindful of how you might give over some of that support to students to encourage independence.

Try to generate prompts that fall into all five categories explained in the graphic on page 19. The point here is not that you’d try to use every type of prompt every time you teach, but rather to help you become aware of how different prompt types support writers in different ways, what your tendencies are when you prompt, and what other options are available to you.

The feedback I offer students takes a few predictable forms:

- **compliment:** names something the student does well (e.g., “You checked the word wall to help you spell that sight word without sounding it out!”)
- **directive:** directs or commands the child to try something (e.g., “Reread the ending. Make sure it leaves your reader with something to think about.”)
- **redirection:** names what the child is currently doing, and redirects the child to do something slightly different (e.g., “You’re listing specific facts you know. Let’s try to first list the names of the chapters you might write, then we’ll get to the facts.”)
- **question** (e.g., “Can you write a definition to give more detail?”)
- **sentence starter:** offers the child language, which is especially helpful when coaching a child through oral storytelling, or when working with partners or writing clubs; the student will repeat the sentence starter and then verbally complete the sentence (e.g., “Once . . . And then . . . Later . . .”).



Prompt types are found in *The Writing Strategies Book*, page 19.

# 10. Author New Strategies

Choose this when . . .

LEVEL  
intermediate

BOOK TO BOOK  
Read across strategies in *The Writing Strategies Book* (the top paragraph or so on each of the strategy pages) to get a feel for the language, and then try to write your own.

SETTING  
meeting room

**Procedure** Try your hand at writing a piece in a genre your class is currently studying. Notice what you do as a writer to generate ideas, craft the piece, and work through the process. Articulate your own strategies that you can imagine teaching to students in your class.

**Coaching Tips** Three hundred strategies is a lot. It's a massive collection, and you'll find strategies that work in a wide variety of settings—but it's not everything.

It's important that as you become more comfortable with the language and phrasing of a strategy that you begin to innovate by making up some of your own. When you do this, you'll have the confidence to come up with something on the spot when you're working with a writer, if need be.

One way to start this is to begin by “spying on yourself.” Write something in the same genre you're planning to teach to your students. Then try to figure out what you do. First, just name it. For example, when writing a letter to your senator, you may say, “I keep a list of reasons and examples to back up my main points. Then, I organize them by grouping things that seem the same together, then I use that as a plan to start my draft.” It's important to phrase what you noticed as a series of actionable steps—a strategy. I recommend reading several strategies from *The Writing Strategies Book* to get the hang of the language.

Dear Senator Cory Booker,

I wanted to write to encourage you to keep our children and future in mind as you vote on upcoming legislation. I am especially concerned about reversals to some of what was recently put in place to protect our environment. This planet is all we have, and we need to take care of it even when it inconveniences businesses.

A growing number of scientists agree that climate change is real. Over 100 scientists have contributed to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). These scientists have made it clear that we need to reduce our emissions by at least 50% to 70% in global greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. We need to act now so that our climate is not too damaged. The government should be making every effort to reduce our emissions – now.

I understand that these are challenging issues that need our attention. However, our health, animal ecosystems, and even our children's future cannot wait. I urge you to use your voting power to support clean energy emissions and for the funding of initial investments in renewable energy.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Serravallo

**Annotations:**

- Explain reason(s) why upfront (points to the first paragraph)
- Clearly state the point of the letter. (points to the opening sentence)
- Statistics and proof to back up reasons. (points to the paragraph about scientists)
- Conclude being specific about what I want him to do. (points to the closing sentence)





Planning Your Week

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Mini-lesson	Story maintain	leads	Slow down Storytell	dialogue	setting description
Strategy Lesson (10)	Nick Mateo Isabelle	Kamala Mercer Vanessa	Kezia Joana Jasmine	Latesha Jackson	
Strategy Lesson (10)	Alex + Mark	Meiling Shanique Eliot	Francine Rachel Rajiv		TBD
Conference (5)	Caroline	Nick	Rajiv	Sunniva Vanessa	Theo _____TBD
Conference (5)	Isabelle			Joana	Caroline _____TBD
Partner/Club	/	Sunniva + Theo	/	Mercer + Mateo	Alex Kezia
Other					

A blank version of the Planning Your Week form is included in the Appendices.

Then, make sure you're clear on how your writing block will flow. If you use a writing workshop, I'd recommend splitting time up into "practicing the class goal" time and "practicing my own goal" time.

### One Possible Reading Block Structure

7- to 10-minute minilesson	10-minute independent writing	2-minute transition	20- to 30-minute independent writing	Partnership/ writing club conversation	5-minute teaching share
Teach a minilesson focused on unit/curriculum.	Students write independently as teacher confers and pulls small groups. Students attempt to practice strategies focused on unit goals.	Teacher reminds students to take out their goal card and begin focusing on their goal.	Students write independently as teacher confers and pulls small groups. Students practice strategies focused on an individual goal taught during conferences and small groups.	Two times per week, students meet to discuss their writing and/or support one another with goals.	Brief review of lesson, set up for next day, or share from an individual's practice.

## 12. One Strategy, Many Twists

Choose this when . . .

### LEVELS

intermediate or advanced

### BOOK TO BOOK

*Conferring with Readers and Teaching Reading in Small Groups*

### SETTING

classroom (or with video in a meeting)

**Procedure** Choose a strategy that is appropriate for a student in each teacher's classroom from your professional learning group. Have everyone record him- or herself teaching the strategy, or bring the students into a room and teach in front of one another. Compare the ways teachers adapted or modified the strategy to match the students in front of them.

**Coaching Tips** I write in the introduction of *The Writing Strategies Book* that I hope each teacher can become comfortable enough with the strategies to make them their own. As interesting as it is to read the strategy ideas on the page, it'll be even more exciting to compare different teachers' interpretations! As you turn what's in the book into actual practice in your classroom, you may find

- two teachers who read the same strategy interpret it in different ways.
- when you get in front of children, you may need to make some changes to what's written to respond to them as learners.
- the way it's written and the way you say it aren't the same. Rephrasing the language of the strategy so you "own it" is crucial.
- the example that's used in *The Writing Strategies Book* doesn't match the level of your student writers, so you'll need to create your own.
- the mentor text suggestion isn't in the same genre as what your students are writing, so you'll need to find another.

For this idea, you can choose to go into a classroom with one colleague or a group of them and take turns teaching strategies from the book. Alternatively, you could video record yourself teaching a conference or small-group lesson and spend time watching it with a colleague. It might even be interesting for you and your colleague(s) to each teach the same strategy in your own classrooms and then compare the interpretations and modifications when you discuss as a group!

Some questions to guide your discussions of the different lessons:

- What was similar and what was different?  
Try naming what you noticed, without any judgmental language.
- What decision process did you use to adapt this chosen strategy?
- What seemed most effective?
- What other students might also benefit from this strategy? How might it be adapted for them?
- What other text(s) might make for good examples or demonstrations?





## 13. What Does “Got It” Look Like?

Choose this when . . .

### LEVELS

intermediate or advanced

### BOOK TO BOOK

For more information on what to expect of students at different levels (and how to interpret artifacts of student learning) see either of the *Literacy Teacher’s Playbooks*.

### SETTING

meeting room only (or classroom plus meeting room)

**Procedure** Find one strategy that would work for at least one student in each teacher’s classroom in the study group. Go back to your respective classrooms and teach the strategy. Bring back something—a transcript, a sticky note, a recording, a notebook entry, a draft, or a photo—to show the student’s learning or response to the strategy. Discuss which of the students seemed to “get it.”

**Coaching Tips** In *The Writing Strategies Book*, you’ll find strategies and prompts to help nudge readers along as they practice. Looks simple, right? But here’s the thing—you need to know when to use which prompt, when to decide to stop prompting, and even when to move on to a new strategy. What will help you with this in-the-moment decision making is doing some norming of expectations with you and your colleagues.

You could practice this together as a group. Go into a classroom, teach a strategy to the whole class or a group of kids, bring their work back, and sort them into piles: “got it,” “kind of got it,” “didn’t get it.” Alternatively, you can each collect information from your own classes and bring the students’ work to a meeting to share and sort together. Beyond just sorting into piles, you’ll then want to discuss *why* you put the work in the category you did, and what it means to “get it.”

When you have a clear sense of what you’re looking for as the result of your strategy, you’ll be better able to guide readers in the midst of practicing, and support readers with next steps as needed.



# 14. Studying Support

Choose this when . . .

LEVEL  
advanced

BOOK TO BOOK  
*Conferring with Readers and Teaching Reading in Small Groups* offer advice about working with individuals and groups. Although the books are about reading instruction, the structures of teaching apply to writing as well.

SETTING  
classroom (or with video in a meeting)

**Procedure** Watch a colleague teach a strategy to an individual or a group (either on video or in a classroom). Listen for the coaching prompts and record them as best you can. Study the level of support offered by each of the prompts. Plan the next steps for the student with gradual release in mind.

**Coaching Tips** Remember that the reason for teaching strategies is to support children to be strong, confident, and independent writers. Ultimately, we want students to outgrow the strategies we teach them and do the work of the goal automatically.

This sort of independence will only be possible if students receive lessened support from their teacher over time, and are supported to take on more of the work themselves. For many children, this will mean that while you may offer very supportive prompts when the strategy is new, you want to be aware of how much support you're giving and eventually lessen it to the point where the student is doing the work without your help.

To get started with this activity, you may take a look at the coaching prompts that are included with any of the 300 strategies. In a meeting, you can name whether each prompt offers a high or low amount of support. You can also brainstorm some more prompts that would connect to the strategy, and name those as "high" or "low" as well.

Then, I think it's important to study our teaching. It's one thing to brainstorm a list of prompts, and yet another to be aware of how much support we are giving in the midst of teaching and student practice. I recommend going into a classroom and having colleagues watch and record your prompts on a notepad, or videotaping yourself teaching and watching your prompting back.

Strategy	Prompts That Offer a High Level of Support	Prompts That Offer Less Support; Require More Student Independence
Move a Page to a New Place (page 171)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I think something in your piece is out of order. What page might you move?"</li> <li>• "Your piece seems confusing. I think something needs to be moved to a new place."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "What might you move?"</li> <li>• "Think about whether the piece is in order."</li> </ul>
External Character Description (page 231)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Think about what you see—hair, skin, clothes—and write down specific details about the character."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Describe your character."</li> <li>• "List the traits."</li> <li>• "What makes your character stand out?"</li> </ul>

# 15. Teach, Review, Respond

Choose this when . . .

LEVEL  
advanced

BOOK TO BOOK  
For more information on what to expect of students at different levels (and how to interpret artifacts of student learning) see either of the *Literacy Teacher's Playbooks*.

SETTING  
meeting room

**Procedure** Bring a sample of student work (e.g., a draft, a notebook entry, a video of the student working with a writing partner). Review the student's learning as compared to the expectation. Discuss whether you'd repeat the same strategy with some modification, repeat as is, or move on to a new strategy.

**Coaching Tips** At the start of each goal chapter (Chapters 1–10), you'll learn about how I'd assess a reader to figure out which goal to focus on. Once you've chosen a goal, you'll then begin teaching—choosing a starting strategy that is both appropriate for the child's goal and grade level. Let's say you've finished your first conference. You taught a strategy; the child practiced; you said good-bye. Now what? As I see it, you have a few options:

- The student was so confused by the strategy, it almost seemed to make things worse! You'd likely decide to scale back and go with something a little simpler next time.
- You acknowledge the student approximated but still could use more time with the strategy. In this case, you'd reteach the strategy the next time you saw him.
- The student showed mastery of the strategy while you were with him. You'll leave him to keep working, check in in a few days, and decide whether to move on at that point.
- Seemingly before you had the words out of your mouth, the student showed an ability to use the strategy. In the next conference, you'll need to be ready with a new strategy, something a bit more complex but still within the goal.
- You've taught several strategies to the student, including this last one, and the student has been doing well with his goal. It's been several weeks. The student is ready to move on to a new goal.

- This decision making is part and parcel of being a responsive teacher, but boy is it hard! Lean on colleagues to help you by bringing work to discuss the results from strategy instruction. Decide together what to do next.







## Appendices

### Student Work Samples

Many of the activity and exercise suggestions in this study guide ask that you use student work as a grounds for making decisions of which strategy to teach and how much support to give the student during the practice of the strategy. In case you are working during the summer months, or for some other reason do not have access to student work, I suggest you use some of the student work samples that are included as a part of *The Literacy Teacher's Playbook* series. In that series, I explore the work of four students (two first graders and two fourth graders). When you follow these links, you'll find packets of student work that help you to understand the student as both a reader and a writer. Even if you do decide to use their work as a springboard for your initial conversations, my hope is that you will soon practice the activity again with your own students' work!

[www.heinemann.com/shared/companionResources/E05300/Marelle.pdf](http://www.heinemann.com/shared/companionResources/E05300/Marelle.pdf)

[www.heinemann.com/shared/companionResources/E05300/Emre.pdf](http://www.heinemann.com/shared/companionResources/E05300/Emre.pdf)

[www.heinemann.com/shared/companionResources/E04353/Joana.pdf](http://www.heinemann.com/shared/companionResources/E04353/Joana.pdf)

[www.heinemann.com/shared/companionResources/E04353/Alex.pdf](http://www.heinemann.com/shared/companionResources/E04353/Alex.pdf)

# Planning Your Week

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Strategy Lesson</b> (10 min)					
<b>Strategy Lesson</b> (10 min)					
<b>Conferences</b> (5 minutes each)					
<b>Guided Reading</b> (15–20 min)					
<b>Other</b> (____ min)					
<b>Notes</b>					







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