

Toolkit to Support Evidence-Based Writing Instruction in Grades 2 Through 4

School Leader's Guide

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How to Use the School Leader's Guide

The resources in this guide are designed for school leaders who want to learn more about improving student writing in their schools. The resources are intended to be used alongside implementation of *A Toolkit to Support Evidence-Based Writing Instruction in Grades 2 Through 4*, which teachers can use in professional learning communities (for more information about Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions and resources, see <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/writing-grades-2-4>). Thank you for dedicating the resources and time to implement the Toolkit and support writing instruction in your school!

How and when should I use these resources?

Recognizing that you are busy and have many responsibilities within your school, these resources are intended to be reviewed and used on your own schedule. You should review them before the school year begins, and then to return to them again throughout the year as needed. You can review them all at once to get a full picture of the ways a school leader can support changes in writing instruction. Alternatively, you could spread them out over several weeks or months, but it will be most valuable to engage with the resources before launching your school's PLC. The resources each include one to three pages of text, and some have additional pages with templates or examples. Some resources may be more relevant to your school's current needs than others, and you may want to focus your time on those.

Some of your teachers are about to embark on an innovative, in-depth professional development on writing instruction. As they put in the time and effort to learn new instructional strategies, as a school leader you can support the improvement of students' writing outcomes by institutionalizing supports throughout your school. The following documents will help you establish or update a writing vision and goals, support a professional learning community focused on writing instruction, monitor implementation of writing practices covered in the Toolkit, and inform continuous improvement. Writing is a fundamental skill, and students should develop a strong writing foundation early in their educational journey. With your support and guidance, your school can become a place where students acquire the necessary writing skills for communication, learning, and self-expression.

The Importance of Writing



Writing is a fundamental skill required to participate in professional, social, community, and civic activities.



Developing strong writing skills at an early age provides students with important learning and communication tools.



Evidence shows that improving writing skills helps build students' reading levels, mathematical and scientific analytical abilities, and social-emotional development.

Developing a Schoolwide Culture of Writing

A schoolwide culture of writing helps develop common language and understanding about what good writing looks like, which ensures all teachers are teaching writing in a consistent manner and that students are receiving the same message about the importance of writing and what is expected of them. You and your teachers will find it easier to sustain a continued focus on writing once your school develops its own culture of writing, one that reflects your school culture and community.

Establishing a culture of writing across the school requires time, buy-in, and shared goals. Below are some tips to expand the culture of writing throughout your school.

1. Recognize that ALL teachers are writing teachers.

Although you may decide that your school's writing professional learning community is for literacy teachers or teachers of a certain grade span, you can instill the idea among the school community that all teachers are responsible for developing strong writers. Students should begin to practice writing skills in kindergarten or earlier, and writing can (and should!) be integrated in every subject, from writing hypotheses in science to writing captions in art.

Tip sheets on integrating writing into other grades and subjects can be distributed and used with [non-literacy teachers](#) and [early elementary teachers](#).

Other ways to garner buy-in from all teachers include:

- Engage all teachers in developing a schoolwide vision and goals (see below).
- Dedicate professional development time beyond this toolkit to discussing the importance of writing.
- Use one-on-one meetings to discuss ways teachers are integrating writing in their classroom.
- Check for and provide feedback on how teachers integrate writing during observations.
- Highlight and celebrate teachers who are using writing successfully in their classrooms.

2. Create and disseminate a shared vision and goals for writing.

Vision

Creating an overarching vision for writing in your school will provide a lens to frame any writing initiatives moving forward. The vision should center on the relationship you want students to have with writing and should be reflective of the perspectives and experiences of your students. The schoolwide vision should also be able to trickle down to individual grades and classrooms. Consider encouraging teachers to put their own stamp on the vision to make it work for the students in their classroom. [This tool](#) can help you carry out your writing vision.

Examples of Schoolwide Writing Visions

Our school will be a place where students feel empowered to express their ideas in writing across a variety of content areas.

Our school will be a place where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts in writing.

Our school displays and celebrates student writing through ongoing exhibits and events.

Goals

Writing goals should be grounded in data, meaning that the school's progress toward achieving the goals is measurable, and should take into account where students currently are. Goals can target processes (what students do) and outcomes (the results of the actions). This could mean establishing goals related to assessment scores, to the number of opportunities for students to write throughout the day, or to scores on a survey of how students feel about their writing skills. Allow teachers to give their input when developing goals: Set aside collaboration time with teachers for a discussion on writing goals and to develop a shared understanding of where the school is heading. You can hold this discussion before implementing the Toolkit to establish a shared understanding earlier in the school year or immediately after the Toolkit sessions are complete to apply learnings from the Toolkit to the goals. Emphasize to teachers the collaborative nature of the goals so as not to encourage competition among teachers or students. We only succeed when we all succeed.

Examples of Schoolwide Writing Goals

All students will be writing on grade level with appropriate scaffolds by the end of the school year.

By the second month of school, students will write for at least one hour each day across all subjects.

At the end of each grading period, all students can point to personal improvements in their writing skills.

Once you introduce these goals to teachers and receive their feedback and approval, you can disseminate them throughout the school community. For example, you can post the vision for writing in the school entrance and send home the school's writing goals in a parent newsletter.

3. Celebrate student writing.

Buy-in doesn't begin and end with teachers; as with all education work, students need to be centered, empowered, and celebrated. Luckily, student writing lends itself well to being showcased. For example, you can:

- Decorate the hallways with student writing (and allow students to choose which of their writing is highlighted).
- Encourage teachers to decorate bulletin boards with subject-area student work that involved an element of writing.
- Compile students' writing into portfolios that are sent home.
- Highlight students who are "Writers of the Week."
- Host an Author's Circle and invite families to listen to students read their writing.
- Celebrate student writing. For example, host a writing celebration where students share writing samples.

In addition to celebrating student writing, teachers can also share their own writing and be involved in the writing community. Some teachers may not be confident writers, but this could be an opportunity for teachers to improve their own writing skills and share their own growth over the year.

Implementing Your Writing Vision

Think about and reflect on the following questions as you begin implementing your schoolwide writing vision.¹ This reflection process will help you evaluate where you are in the process of implementing the vision. The table in this document provides a set of steps for strong implementation of a schoolwide writing vision. As you consider whether and how you will meet each of these steps, you can use the reflection questions to sharpen your approach.

Steps toward implementation	Reflection
Recognize the purpose of the writing vision	Who needs to know? Why is it important? Who needs to be involved in developing this vision?
Root cause	What is currently standing in your way? Why haven't you achieved this vision to date?
What it would take	What would the school need to commit to, secure, or build to be successful in this work? (e.g., resources needed, policies or practices to establish, skills or knowledge to acquire)
Establish clear expectations for change	What could our school realistically accomplish in 6 months, 1 year, 3 years? How will we get there?
Connect the goals to instruction	How will the new focus affect teaching in the classroom?
Align instructional strategies to the writing goals	How will instructional strategies change to accommodate the vision for writing? Will the curriculum change? If so, how might it change?
Align formative assessments to the writing goals	What information do we need to measure writing skills and growth? How can we adjust testing and data collection to measure writing skills and growth?
Establish a focused professional development plan	When will we implement the Writing Toolkit throughout the year? Who will participate?

¹ Adapted from *Common Core State Standards Implementation Planning Guide*, Scholastic Inc., 2011 and *Mapping to the Evidence*, EdResearch for Recovery, Results for America, The Annenberg Institute at Brown University, 2023.

Establishing Conditions for a Writing Professional Learning Community

Integrating the Toolkit into your existing professional development culture must be an intentional, planned act.

Now that you have decided to implement the Toolkit for Evidence-Based Writing Instruction in your school, you must ensure teachers have enough dedicated time to move through the professional learning community (PLC) modules and that PLC participants are set up for success.

1. Prioritize writing professional development among other subjects.

One of the biggest challenges within a school is balancing competing priorities. Writing is not the only subject students need to learn, and it can be difficult to determine where writing professional development fits in alongside reading, math, and social-emotional learning.

Instead of thinking of writing professional development as being done *instead of* reading, math, or other subjects, think of it as a *complement to* other professional learning. Students need writing skills to communicate their thoughts and ideas in every subject. Improving writing skills has been shown to improve student reading levels.² Writing has a place in every classroom, in every subject!

To put this vision of prioritizing writing professional development into action, ensure you have enough time in your existing professional development schedule for the Writing Toolkit sessions. The Toolkit is composed of an orientation and seven one-hour professional development sessions divided across three modules. It was designed to be entirely adaptable to your unique professional development landscape. You can split each session into multiple sessions if that is easier. If you have more than an hour for professional development sessions, the Toolkit includes additional discussion questions and activities to deepen learning. You can hold the sessions with one or two weeks in between or spread out the three modules throughout the semester or school year.

To plan how to fit the writing professional development into your existing schedule, [see this list](#) of PLC sessions, action steps, and a sample professional development calendar.

2. Establish groups within the PLC to facilitate discussion and achieve goals.

Each PLC session offers numerous opportunities for participants to work together in small groups. How you choose to organize these small groups may affect the learning outcomes. You may wish to pre-select small groups to best align with your schoolwide writing goals. The following table shows some potential benefits of different types of groupings for you to consider.

² Graham, S., & Herbert, M. (2010). *Writing to read: Evidence for how writing can improve reading*. Carnegie Corporation. <https://www.carnegie.org/publications/writing-to-read-evidence-for-how-writing-can-improve-reading/>

Grouping	Benefits
Grade-level teams	Groups can discuss how the content connects to their specific grade
One member per grade level	Will help strengthen vertical alignment; groups can discuss how the content builds on itself across grades
Subject matter teams	Groups can discuss how writing fits into their specific subject
Mix of subject specialists	Groups can discuss how writing works throughout the day in many content areas

3. Draw on existing knowledge.

Another consideration to keep in mind, both in forming small groups and in conducting the PLCs, is to ensure you are using the knowledge that already exists in the room. Teachers at your school bring a wide array of backgrounds, years of experience, and subject matter expertise. For example, special education teachers will hold expertise in writing instruction for students with diverse needs. Think about how participants’ backgrounds and experiences can contribute to the discussions. Encourage sharing and listening to different perspectives and ensure that everyone feels valued and heard.

Some content may be familiar to experienced teachers, such as gradual release and student collaboration. In instances where these concepts are discussed, encourage your facilitator to invite experienced teachers to share their own insights in addition to what is covered in the Toolkit. Conversely, some material might be new to everyone or might present familiar content in a new way. In these cases, the insight that comes from the fresh perspective of a new teacher may be useful to call upon. Consider pairing more experienced teachers with newer teachers as they move through the sessions.

The Toolkit begins with an initial self-reflection in which teachers identify their strengths and weaknesses. You may wish to use teachers’ responses to assess existing knowledge and pair teachers together. For example, you could pair together teachers with different strengths and weaknesses or teachers who have shared goals and areas of development.

Professional Learning Community Scheduler

Below is a list of the PLC sessions and independent work included in the Toolkit. Each session is designed to be one hour long. You can use this scheduler to map out when each session fits into your professional development schedule. A sample schedule with dates filled in based on a sample 2024–25 calendar is also provided. In the sample, you will see sessions occur once per week, allowing time in between sessions for teachers to implement their learning in their classroom. The initial self-reflection occurs during the orientation session. Self-reflections for modules 1 and 2 happen roughly two weeks after the end of the module, followed by a meeting with a coach. However, you can plan out a different schedule with pacing that works for your school and existing professional development. Be mindful of holidays and observances that may not already be included in your school calendar.

Toolkit Orientation



Orientation Session: Introduction to the Toolkit



Initial Self-Reflection and Goals for Learning



Independent Work—Introduction to Module 1 Video

Module 1: Creating Classroom Conditions for Writing



Session 1.1: Facilitate Writing Every Day



Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Adding Writing Time to the Day; Prepare Writing Prompts



Session 1.2: Build a Writing Community



Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Building in Student Choice; Introduction to Module 2 Video



Module 1 Self-Reflection



1:1 Coach Meeting—Set Goals for Continuous Improvement on Module 1 Practices

Module 2: Teaching Students to Use the Writing Process



Session 2.1: Introduction to Teaching the Writing Process



Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Teaching Components of the Writing Process



Session 2.2: Teach Planning and Drafting



Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Planning/Drafting Lesson Plan with Gradual Release



Session 2.3: Teach Sharing, Evaluating, Revising, and Editing



Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Sharing/Evaluating/Revising/Editing Lesson Plan with Gradual Release



Session 2.4: Build Student Independence



Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Building Student Independence



Module 2 Self-Reflection



1:1 Coach Meeting—Set goals for Continuous Improvement on Module 2 Practices

Module 3: Sustaining Evidence-Based Writing Practices Throughout the School Year



Session 3.1: Sustain the Practice







Independent Work— Continue Sustaining Practices and Complete Unfinished Activities from Session 3.1









1:1 Coach Meeting—Discuss Progress on Vision and Goals

Sample Schedule











Toolkit Orientation

<i>August 26</i>		Orientation Session: Introduction to the Toolkit
<i>August 26</i>		Initial Self-Reflection and Goals for Learning
<i>Week of August 26</i>		Independent Work—Introduction to Module 1 Video
<i>September 3</i>		First Day of School

Module 1: Creating Classroom Conditions for Writing

<i>September 6</i>		Session 1.1: Facilitate Writing Every Day
<i>Week of September 9</i>		Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Adding Writing Time to the Day; Prepare Writing Prompts
<i>September 13</i>		Session 1.2: Build a Writing Community
<i>Week of September 16</i>		Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Building in Student Choice; Introduction to Module 2 Video
<i>Due by September 27</i>		Module 1 Self-Reflection
<i>Week of September 30</i>		1:1 Coach Meeting—Set Goals for Continuous Improvement on Module 1 Practices

Module 2: Teaching Students to Use the Writing Process

<i>October 4</i>		Session 2.1: Introduction to Teaching the Writing Process
<i>Week of October 7</i>		Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Teaching Components of the Writing Process
<i>October 11</i>		Session 2.2: Teach Planning and Drafting
<i>Weeks of October 14 and October 21</i>		Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Planning/Drafting Lesson Plan with Gradual Release
<i>October 25</i>		Session 2.3: Teach Sharing, Evaluating, Revising, and Editing
<i>Weeks of October 28 and November 4</i>		Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Sharing/Evaluating/Revising/Editing Lesson Plan with Gradual Release
<i>November 8</i>		Session 2.4: Build Student Independence
<i>Week of November 11</i>		Independent Work—Prepare to Share: Building Student Independence
<i>Due by November 22</i>		Module 2 Self-Reflection
<i>Week of November 25</i>		1:1 Coach Meeting—Set goals for Continuous Improvement on Module 2 Practices

Module 3: Sustaining Evidence-Based Writing Practices Throughout the School Year

December 6



Session 3.1: Sustain the Practice

Week of December 9



Independent Work— Continue Sustaining Practices and Complete Unfinished Activities from Session 3.1

*Monthly starting in
January*



1:1 Coach Meeting—Discuss Progress on Vision and Goals

Selecting a Facilitator

One of the most important roles in using the Toolkit is that of the facilitator. The facilitator leads the session, drives discussion, and guides the learning. As the school leader, you may choose to facilitate the PLC sessions, or you may have an assistant principal, instructional coach, or lead teacher serve in this role. Although the facilitator's guide provides easy instruction for any facilitator, there are certain characteristics you should consider when selecting a facilitator.

1. Ability to be flexible.

Each session is subdivided into sections with suggested timeframes. However, a given discussion or activity might last longer than anticipated, in which case the facilitator must decide in the moment how to adapt the pacing for the rest of the session. This requires both flexibility and strong communication skills. Additionally, if participants did not complete the assigned reading before the session, or if the facilitator notices confusion or misunderstanding, the facilitator may decide to take time during the session to revisit sections of the practice guide. A successful facilitator will anticipate and be aware of participants' needs and differences and be willing and able to make changes when necessary.

2. Familiarity with participants.

When leading sessions, the facilitator should call on participants strategically, based on their expertise, strengths, and areas for growth. The facilitator can refer to the Initial Self-Reflection that all participants complete at the beginning of the Toolkit, but additional familiarity of teachers' instructional practices is beneficial. When participants need help in a particular area, the facilitator can direct learning and discussions toward that goal. When participants have particular strengths and a willingness to share them, the facilitator can rely on those participants to lead discussions or activities in those areas, while also ensuring that all voices are heard.

3. Commitment to writing instruction.

The facilitator does *not* need to be an expert in writing instruction; however, they should be familiar with evidence-based practices, explicit modeling and gradual release instruction, and the school's vision for writing. Before leading the sessions, the facilitator should read the *Teaching Elementary School Students to be Effective Writers* practice guide and become familiar with the Toolkit's self-reflections and observation checklists to recognize the fundamentals of successful writing instruction. If the facilitator is also conducting observations to monitor implementation of writing practice, this familiarity will be even more important and may serve to better guide the direction and focus of PLC sessions.

Integrating Writing for Non-Literacy Teachers

Your school is filled with teachers who support students in different ways. Not every teacher will complete the modules of the Writing Toolkit. Nevertheless, to support your school's vision for writing, it's important that every teacher takes accountability for integrating writing into their work with students.

When you initially draft your school's vision for writing, it's important you do so with all teachers, not just those primarily involved with writing instruction. Getting all teachers' input will help ensure the vision fits with your entire school community and will help garner investment from teachers who might not think about writing throughout the school day.

Once all teachers are familiar with the school's vision for writing, you might use time during one-on-one or team meetings to brainstorm with non-literacy teachers and discuss ways in which they can begin integrating writing into their classroom. You should also inform them if you plan on observing their classrooms for evidence of writing opportunities.

Your teachers will have the best ideas for specific ways to integrate writing into their unique classrooms, but here are other ideas to help begin the brainstorming process:

Specials Teachers

Specials teachers, such as art, music, and physical education teachers, might not see the connections between their subjects and writing, but there are many ways to integrate writing into these types of classes. Consider the following examples to provide to these teachers:

1. **Writing prompts.** Provide students with a writing prompt that relates to the class topic. For example, after a music lesson on rhythm, students can write a short poem or song with their own rhythmic pattern.
2. **Reflections.** Have students write a reflection on what they learned or how they felt during class. This can help them make connections between what they learned in class and their own experiences.
3. **Artistic writing.** Ask students to write a short story, descriptive paragraph, or poem inspired by a work of art, a piece of music, or a movement activity. This can help students learn how to use their imaginations and expand their creative writing skills.

STEM and Social Studies Teachers

If your school has departmentalized classrooms, you may have teachers focused exclusively on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) or social studies subjects. Writing can also play an important role in these classrooms. Consider the following examples to provide to these teachers:

1. **Lab reports.** Have students write lab reports, detailing their experiment, results, and conclusions. This is an excellent way to teach students about the scientific method and how to communicate their findings.

2. **Creative writing in science.** Encourage students to write creatively about science topics such as a futuristic space mission, time travel, or the adventures of a microscopic organism.
3. **Technical writing.** Help students develop technical writing skills by having them write a set of instructions for building a simple machine, troubleshooting a software application, or solving a math problem.
4. **Letter writing.** Have students write letters to historical figures or political leaders, expressing their opinions on certain issues or asking questions about their decisions. This activity can help students understand the importance of written communication in history and society.
5. **Current events writing.** Have students write news articles or opinion pieces about current events related to social studies topics, such as immigration, climate change, or government policies. This will help students develop their critical thinking and persuasive writing skills.

Assistant Teachers, Paraprofessionals, and Other Resource Teachers

Assistant teachers, paraprofessionals, and other resource teachers can be a valuable resource for integrating writing with the students they support. Consider the following examples to provide to these teachers:

1. **Scaffolding writing.** Help students who are struggling with writing by providing extra support such as graphic organizers (e.g., outlines or storyboards) or sentence frames that students can use to structure their own sentences.
2. **Journaling.** Encourage students to keep a journal in which they can record their thoughts, experiences, and feelings. This can help students develop their writing skills and provides an opportunity for self-reflection.
3. **Collaborative writing.** Assign small groups to work on a writing project together, such as creating a story or report. This can help students develop teamwork skills and provides an opportunity to practice their writing skills.
4. **Differentiation.** Tailor writing activities and assignments to meet the individual needs and abilities of each student. This could involve providing different prompts, allowing for different modes of expression (e.g., oral, written, visual), or modifying the expectations for the final product.

Integrating Writing for K–1 Teachers

The Writing Toolkit is designed for use in grades 2–4 due to those grades’ focus on the foundational skills of writing and strategy instruction; however, the practices outlined in the [Teaching Elementary Students to be Effective Writers](#) practice guide are applicable for grades K–6. You may wish to include K–1 teachers in your writing PLCs with the expectation that some of their discussions and scaffolds might be different from those in higher grades. Alternatively, you might limit the Toolkit PLCs to teachers of grades 2–4 and find other ways to support K–1 teachers. Either way, it’s important to acknowledge that the foundations of writing begin in kindergarten or earlier, and K–1 teachers play an important role in getting students familiar with the writing process.

Writing Strategies for K–1 Students

Although not every writing strategy is appropriate for younger writers, the strategies from the practice guide (Recommendation 2a, Toolkit Module 2) can be used in a kindergarten or grade 1 classroom.

Component of the writing process	Writing strategy	How students can use the strategy	Recommended grade range from practice guide
Planning	POW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pick ideas• Organize notes• Write and say more	1–6
	Ordering Ideas/Outlining	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brainstorm/generate ideas for their paper• Review their ideas and place a number by what will go first, second, third, and so on	1–2
Drafting	Imitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select a sentence, paragraph, or text excerpt and imitate the author’s form	1–6
Sharing	Author’s Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sit in a special chair in front of peers and read their writing	K–6

You may notice that later components of the writing process—evaluating and revising/editing—do not have associated strategies that map to these early grades. However, the strategies listed in the practice guide can be adapted for younger students, and it might be a good exercise to have K–1 teachers work together to discuss how to scaffold some additional strategies.

Integrating Writing Throughout the Day in K–1 Classrooms

The practice guide recommends daily writing practice for all students, including those in K–1 (Recommendation 1, Toolkit Module 1). Kindergarten students should spend at least 30 minutes a day writing, whereas grade 1 students should spend a full hour. As with other grades, this time spent writing could occur in multiple subjects throughout the school day. Writing practice in grades K–1 accomplishes the same goals as writing in later grades: it can help students communicate thoughts and ideas, allow them to engage deeper with a text, and encourage them to draw connections to other learning experiences.

In the following hypothetical classroom scenario, Ms. Stark builds in writing opportunities throughout her kindergarten students' day without a dedicated writing block. Integrating writing throughout most activities helps her hit the suggested target for daily writing and helps her create an engaged community of writers (Recommendation 4, Toolkit Module 1).

Ms. Stark's Kindergarten Class

7:30 a.m. – Morning meeting; social-emotional learning

As students come into the classroom, they use a mood meter to indicate how they are feeling that morning. At their desks, **students draw a picture showing their emotion that morning and use the sentence starter “I feel...” to name their emotion.** More advanced students are encouraged to add on “...because...” to the sentence.

8:00 a.m. – Phonics

Students focus on isolating beginning sounds. Ms. Stark reads a word. Students repeat just the beginning sound out loud and **then write down on their whiteboards the letter that makes that sound.**

8:30 a.m. – Guided reading; literacy stations

Students rotate through multiple stations during this block. **Ms. Stark has one rotation set up as a dedicated writing station.** Activities at this station vary for different groups of students. One group is working on letter formation, a second group is using sentence starters and vocabulary choices to finish simple sentences, a third group works on using sight words in simple sentences, and a fourth group develops sentences to caption a picture.

10:30 a.m. – Recess; lunch

Ms. Stark brings chalk outside to recess. Many students decide to draw pictures on the blacktop. Without prompting from Ms. Stark, **some students use the chalk to write their names.** Ms. Stark notices and praises both the pictures and the writing.

12:00 p.m. – Text study

During this block, Ms. Stark reads a book to students on the carpet. Today, they are working on identifying the setting of a story. After discussion of the book, students return to their desk for their exit ticket, where the teacher **asks them to draw and label the setting at the end of today's story.** Students use invented spelling to label the setting.

1:00 p.m. – Art

Ms. Stark’s class has art today, where students are working on creating self-portraits. Next to their portraits, **students write three things that make them unique.** The art teacher will use these portraits to decorate the hallway and show how our differences make us special.

2:00 p.m. – Math

Back in Ms. Stark’s room, students work on addition with word problems. “There were three ducks swimming on the pond.” **Students draw and label the three ducks on their whiteboard using simple shapes.** “Four frogs hopped into the water to join them.” Students draw and label the four frogs. Then, they solve how many animals were in the pond altogether.

3:00 p.m. – Closing circle; dismissal

As students are called for dismissal, Ms. Stark asks them to come up to the board and **draw or write one word to describe their day.**

Integrating Writing for 5–6 Teachers

The Writing Toolkit is designed for use in grades 2–4 due to those grades’ focus on the foundational skills of writing and strategy instruction; however, the practices outlined in the [Teaching Elementary Students to be Effective Writers](#) practice guide are applicable for grades K–6. Almost all of the writing strategies outlined in the Practice Guide and in the Toolkit are applicable for students in grades 5 and 6, so teachers of those grades could easily participate in the PLC. Alternatively, you might limit the Toolkit PLCs to teachers of grades 2–4 and find other ways to support 5–6 teachers.

Writing Strategies for 5–6 Students

Nearly all of the strategies outlined in the Practice Guide (Recommendation 2a, Toolkit Module 2) can be used in a grade 5 or 6 classroom. Teachers in these upper elementary grades may encourage more flexibility among components of the writing process, allow students more independence when implementing the strategies, or further expand upon the strategies.

Component of the writing process	Writing strategy	How students can use the strategy	Recommended grade range from practice guide
Planning	POW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick ideas • Organize notes • Write and say more 	1–6
Drafting	Imitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a sentence, paragraph, or text excerpt and imitate the author’s form 	1–6
	Sentence Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try out sentences orally before writing them on paper. • Try multiple sentences and choose the best one. • Use transition words to develop different sentence structures. • Practice writing good topic sentences. 	3–6

Component of the writing process	Writing strategy	How students can use the strategy	Recommended grade range from practice guide
Sharing	Peer Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In pairs, listen and read along as the author reads aloud. • Share feedback with their writing partner, starting with what they liked. 	2–6
	Author’s Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit in a special chair in front of peers and read their writing 	K–6
Evaluating	Self-evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reread and ask these questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are the ideas clear? – Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end? – Does the writing connect with the reader? – Are sentence types varied? 	2–6
	Self-monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assess and ask these questions, either out loud or internally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Did I meet the goals I developed for my writing? If not, what changes should I make to meet my goals? – Did I correctly use strategies that were appropriate for this task? If not, what should I change? • Record their answers to self-assessment questions on a chart or teacher-provided questionnaire in order to track their progress toward writing goals and strategy use. • Congratulate themselves, and inform their teacher, when they meet their goals. 	3–6

Component of the writing process	Writing strategy	How students can use the strategy	Recommended grade range from practice guide
Revising and editing	Peer revising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place a question mark (?) by anything they do not understand in their writing partner’s paper. • Place a carat (^) anywhere it would be useful to have the author include more information. 	2–6
	COPS (editing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the COPS editing questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Did I Capitalize the first word in sentences and proper names? – How is the Overall appearance of my paper? – Did I use commas and end-of-sentence Punctuation? – Did I Spell each word correctly? 	2–6

Monitoring Implementation of Writing Practices in the Classroom

As your teachers begin to learn about the evidence-based writing practices included in the Toolkit, it's important to plan for ongoing monitoring and assessment of how teachers are integrating these practices in the classroom. Gathering qualitative or quantitative data on the extent to which teachers implement these recommendations will help you tailor future professional development discussions, inform future coaching sessions, and map student data to teacher practices.

Included in this resource are three examples of observation checklists you can use or adapt for classroom observations of writing practices. Also included in this resource are examples of completed checklists.

How to select which checklist to use.

Although all the observation items are the same across the three checklists, the feedback format is different. You may choose to collect qualitative data, such as notes as you observe a classroom (Writing Checklist 1), or you may find it more beneficial to rate each item numerically (Writing Checklist 3). For early implementation of the Toolkit's practices, simply marking whether you observe the items might be sufficient (Writing Checklist 2). Examples of how you may wish to fill out the checklists are included as well.

How to use the checklist.

These checklists could be completed by you as a school leader, or by an assistant principal or instructional coach. They can be used during or after a classroom observation. The items for observation include both teacher instructional techniques along with the classroom environment and student behaviors. These observation items map directly to the recommendations covered in the Toolkit and align with the self-reflection items teachers complete as they work through the modules in the Toolkit. This alignment is intentional so that in coaching or feedback meetings with teachers, you can discuss how teachers' self-reflections align with your observations.

What to do when observing non-literacy classrooms.

Although these checklists are designed for classrooms where explicit writing instruction is taking place, observing how teachers in all classrooms implement writing might be beneficial to align with your school vision for writing and help instill the belief that all teachers are writing teachers. In the case of a non-literacy classroom such as science or art, a detailed observation checklist for writing is not necessary. Instead, you may wish to add "Opportunities for students to write" as an additional item to your observations of those classrooms.

Writing Observation Checklist 1

Items for observation	Notes
Teacher instructional techniques	
Instruction was focused on a writing strategy with clear process steps for students to follow	
Instruction was aligned to a component of the writing process	
Teacher provided background knowledge of when, how, and why to use a given writing strategy	
Teacher included an explicit model of a writing strategy, including think-aloud	
Teacher included checks for understanding in guided practice	
Teacher included physical reminders of writing strategies (e.g., graphic organizer, anchor chart)	
Teacher monitored students individually, in pairs, or in small groups to ensure strategies were used effectively	
Teacher provided feedback on student writing either orally or in writing	
Teacher worked with individual students who struggled with a strategy	
Teacher increased complexity of strategy for individual students who mastered it	
Teacher provided students with opportunities for independent practice	
Instruction followed a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to students	
Classroom environment and student behaviors	
Teacher shared their own writing with students via think-aloud modeling	
Students participated in collaborative writing either with teacher or peers	

Items for observation	Notes
Writing prompts had an element of student choice or open-ended topics	
Students had opportunities to give and receive feedback with peers	
Teacher published student writing inside or outside the classroom	
Students were engaged in productive struggle	
Students were able to select appropriate writing strategies for the task	
Students were able to move back and forth through multiple components of the writing process	
Students knew and could articulate their individual writing goals	

Writing Observation Checklist 2

Items for observation	Observed?	
Teacher instructional techniques		
Instruction was focused on a writing strategy with clear process steps for students to follow	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Instruction was aligned to a component of the writing process	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided background knowledge of when, how, and why to use a given writing strategy	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included an explicit model of a writing strategy, including think-aloud	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included checks for understanding in guided practice	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included physical reminders of writing strategies (e.g., graphic organizer, anchor chart)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher monitored students individually, in pairs, or in small groups to ensure strategies were used effectively	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided feedback on student writing either orally or in writing	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher worked with individual students who struggled with a strategy	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher increased complexity of strategy for individual students who mastered it	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided students with opportunities for independent practice	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Instruction followed a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to students	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom environment and student behaviors		
Teacher shared their own writing with students via think-aloud modeling	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students participated in collaborative writing either with teacher or peers	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Writing prompts had an element of student choice or open-ended topics	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Items for observation	Observed?	
Students had opportunities to give and receive feedback with peers	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher published student writing inside or outside the classroom	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were engaged in productive struggle	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were able to select appropriate writing strategies for the task	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were able to move back and forth through multiple components of the writing process	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students knew and could articulate their individual writing goals	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Feedback

Writing Observation Checklist 3

Not Yet: Teacher did not demonstrate the skill or behavior. There are significant areas for improvement or development.

Approaching: Teacher partially demonstrated the skill or behavior, but it requires further development or refinement.

Proficient: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior effectively.

Exemplary: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior highly effectively, serving as a model others could follow.

Items for observation	Rating			
	1: Not Yet	2: Approaching	3: Proficient	4: Exemplary
Teacher instructional techniques				
Instruction was focused on a writing strategy with clear process steps for students to follow	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Instruction was aligned to a component of the writing process	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided background knowledge of when, how, and why to use a given writing strategy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included an explicit model of a writing strategy, including think-aloud	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included checks for understanding in guided practice	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included physical reminders of writing strategies (e.g., graphic organizer, anchor chart)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher monitored students individually, in pairs, or in small groups to ensure strategies were used effectively	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided feedback on student writing either orally or in writing	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher worked with individual students who struggled with a strategy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher increased complexity of strategy for individual students who mastered it	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

Not Yet: Teacher did not demonstrate the skill or behavior. There are significant areas for improvement or development.
Approaching: Teacher partially demonstrated the skill or behavior, but it requires further development or refinement.
Proficient: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior effectively.
Exemplary: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior highly effectively, serving as a model others could follow.

Items for observation	Rating			
	1: Not Yet	2: Approaching	3: Proficient	4: Exemplary
Teacher provided students with opportunities for independent practice	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Instruction followed a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to students	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom environment and student behaviors				
Teacher shared their own writing with students via think-aloud modeling	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students participated in collaborative writing either with teacher or peers	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Writing prompts had an element of student choice or open-ended topics	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students had opportunities to give and receive feedback with peers	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher published student writing inside or outside the classroom	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were engaged in productive struggle	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were able to select appropriate writing strategies for the task	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were able to move back and forth through multiple components of the writing process	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students knew and could articulate their individual writing goals	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

Strengths

Not Yet: Teacher did not demonstrate the skill or behavior. There are significant areas for improvement or development.
Approaching: Teacher partially demonstrated the skill or behavior, but it requires further development or refinement.
Proficient: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior effectively.
Exemplary: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior highly effectively, serving as a model others could follow.

	Rating			
	1: Not Yet	2: Approaching	3: Proficient	4: Exemplary
Items for observation				
Areas for growth				

Writing Observation Checklist 1 Example

Items for observation	Notes
Teacher instructional techniques	
Instruction was focused on a writing strategy with clear process steps for students to follow	<i>Teacher focused on sentence generation; however, she did not give students clear steps to implement independently</i>
Instruction was aligned to a component of the writing process	<i>Instruction was aligned to drafting component</i>
Teacher provided background knowledge of when, how, and why to use a given writing strategy	<i>Discussed when (drafting initial sentences) and why (to get thoughts down on paper); need stronger how</i>
Teacher included an explicit model of a writing strategy, including think-aloud	<i>Model was aligned to persuasive writing in general rather than a specific strategy; no think-aloud</i>
Teacher included checks for understanding in guided practice	<i>Needed more CFUs to check student understanding of strategy process</i>
Teacher included physical reminders of writing strategies (e.g., graphic organizer, anchor chart)	<i>Writing components anchor chart</i>
Teacher monitored students individually, in pairs, or in small groups to ensure strategies were used effectively	<i>Teacher circulated throughout guided and independent practice</i>
Teacher provided feedback on student writing either orally or in writing	<i>Teacher provided brief oral feedback to most students during circulation</i>
Teacher worked with individual students who struggled with a strategy	<i>Provided brief guidance to 3 struggling students</i>
Teacher increased complexity of strategy for individual students who mastered it	<i>Not seen</i>
Teacher provided students with opportunities for independent practice	<i>Students wrote independently for 10 minutes</i>
Instruction followed a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to students	<i>Guided and independent practice were present and strong; model needs work</i>
Classroom environment and student behaviors	
Teacher shared their own writing with students via think-aloud modeling	<i>Teacher actively wrote and read a response to the sample prompt and used a think-aloud when debating word choice</i>

Items for observation	Notes
Students participated in collaborative writing either with teacher or peers	<i>Teacher shared the pen with 2 students</i>
Writing prompts had an element of student choice or open-ended topics	<i>Students were able to pick an argument to defend</i>
Students had opportunities to give and receive feedback with peers	<i>Two turn-and-talks; however, no sentence stems were given to assist in students providing feedback</i>
Teacher published student writing inside or outside the classroom	<i>Bulletin board outside classroom was filled with writing from last unit</i>
Students were engaged in productive struggle	<i>Some scaffolds can begin to fall away to allow for more productive struggle</i>
Students were able to select appropriate writing strategies for the task	<i>Majority of students were able to appropriately select sentence generation for the drafting portion of their task; witnessed several students select appropriate editing strategies for different stages of the task</i>
Students were able to move back and forth through multiple components of the writing process	<i>Students moved across planning and drafting; some students additionally moved to revising and editing</i>
Students knew and could articulate their individual writing goals	<i>Saw approximately 10 students place physical goal card on desk; 4/5 students I asked could tell me their writing goal</i>

Writing Observation Checklist 2 Example

Items for observation	Observed?	
Teacher instructional techniques		
Instruction was focused on a writing strategy with clear process steps for students to follow	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Instruction was aligned to a component of the writing process	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided background knowledge of when, how, and why to use a given writing strategy	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included an explicit model of a writing strategy, including think-aloud	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included checks for understanding in guided practice	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included physical reminders of writing strategies (e.g., graphic organizer, anchor chart)	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher monitored students individually, in pairs, or in small groups to ensure strategies were used effectively	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided feedback on student writing either orally or in writing	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher worked with individual students who struggled with a strategy	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher increased complexity of strategy for individual students who mastered it	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided students with opportunities for independent practice	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Instruction followed a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to students	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Classroom environment and student behaviors		
Teacher shared their own writing with students via think-aloud modeling	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students participated in collaborative writing either with teacher or peers	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Writing prompts had an element of student choice or open-ended topics	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Items for observation	Observed?	
Students had opportunities to give and receive feedback with peers	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher published student writing inside or outside the classroom	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were engaged in productive struggle	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Students were able to select appropriate writing strategies for the task	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were able to move back and forth through multiple components of the writing process	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students knew and could articulate their individual writing goals	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Feedback

Classroom was a very supportive learning environment. Students were engaged with the work and with each other. Peer interaction was strong. Explicit model needs work. Need to focus on think-aloud for specific writing strategy steps.

Writing Observation Checklist 3 Example

Not Yet: Teacher did not demonstrate the skill or behavior. There are significant areas for improvement or development.

Approaching: Teacher partially demonstrated the skill or behavior, but it requires further development or refinement.

Proficient: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior effectively.

Exemplary: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior highly effectively, serving as a model others could follow.

Items for observation	Rating			
	1: Not Yet	2: Approaching	3: Proficient	4: Exemplary
Teacher instructional techniques				
Instruction was focused on a writing strategy with clear process steps for students to follow	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Instruction was aligned to a component of the writing process	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided background knowledge of when, how, and why to use a given writing strategy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included an explicit model of a writing strategy, including think-aloud	1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included checks for understanding in guided practice	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher included physical reminders of writing strategies (e.g., graphic organizer, anchor chart)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher monitored students individually, in pairs, or in small groups to ensure strategies were used effectively	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided feedback on student writing either orally or in writing	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher worked with individual students who struggled with a strategy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher increased complexity of strategy for individual students who mastered it	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher provided students with opportunities for independent practice	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

Not Yet: Teacher did not demonstrate the skill or behavior. There are significant areas for improvement or development.
Approaching: Teacher partially demonstrated the skill or behavior, but it requires further development or refinement.
Proficient: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior effectively.
Exemplary: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior highly effectively, serving as a model others could follow.

Items for observation	Rating			
	1: Not Yet	2: Approaching	3: Proficient	4: Exemplary
Instruction followed a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to students	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom environment and student behaviors				
Teacher shared their own writing with students via think-aloud modeling	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students participated in collaborative writing either with teacher or peers	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Writing prompts had an element of student choice or open-ended topics	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students had opportunities to give and receive feedback with peers	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher published student writing inside or outside the classroom	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were engaged in productive struggle	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were able to select appropriate writing strategies for the task	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students were able to move back and forth through multiple components of the writing process	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students knew and could articulate their individual writing goals	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

Strengths

Instruction was clearly aligned to drafting, and it was clear students were familiar with the components of the writing process. Classroom environment was set up in a way for students to engage with each other and practice independently. Monitoring and individual check-ins were successful.

Not Yet: Teacher did not demonstrate the skill or behavior. There are significant areas for improvement or development.
Approaching: Teacher partially demonstrated the skill or behavior, but it requires further development or refinement.
Proficient: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior effectively.
Exemplary: Teacher demonstrated the skill or behavior highly effectively, serving as a model others could follow.

Items for observation	Rating			
	1: Not Yet	2: Approaching	3: Proficient	4: Exemplary
Areas for growth				

Explicit model should be aligned to the writing strategy. Think-aloud was not present. With more checks for understanding, may have caught that students were unclear about the process to follow for the strategy. Too many unnecessary scaffolds during independent practice that could be taken away to allow for more productive struggle.

Using Data to Inform Continuous Improvement

Data are the foundation of informing continuous improvement in writing instruction in your school. Writing is a complex skill that requires ongoing practice, feedback, and assessment. You will need to support teachers in generating and collecting classroom- and student-level data and ensure that data are compiled and aggregated to the grade or school level. Here are some strategies to help you set expectations for teachers to collect and use writing data, including samples and evaluations of student writing, to determine progress toward your school’s writing vision and goals.

Writing Assessments

To collect writing data, teachers need to develop assessments that align with the writing curriculum and vision. Writing assessments can be formative or summative, and they should measure specific writing skills, such as organization, sentence fluency, and conventions. Here are some examples of writing assessments:

1. **On-demand writing prompt.** Students are given a prompt and a limited amount of time to complete their writing. This type of assessment can measure how well students can write under pressure and how well they can develop their ideas in a limited amount of time.
2. **Writing process prompt.** Students are given a writing task over an extended period of time—multiple class periods—in which students engage in components of planning, drafting, evaluating, revising, and editing.
3. **Writing portfolio.** Students keep a portfolio of their writing throughout the year, which teachers can use to track progress over time. This type of assessment can measure student writing growth.

Encouraging Collaboration and Professional Learning

To ensure that writing instruction continues to improve beyond the original training, school leaders should encourage ongoing collaboration and professional learning among teachers. One way to do this is to set aside 60–90 minutes of professional development time dedicated to writing for teachers to bring in exemplar student work and share with other teachers within and across grades. Teachers can use this time to analyze student writing data, discuss instructional strategies, and develop common expectations for writing. During this time, teachers can establish what mastery of a writing skill looks like across grade levels, observe trends in students’ strengths and areas for growth in writing, and reflect on changes made in their classrooms and the results they’ve seen in the data. For example, teachers can collaborate on using writing data for continuous improvement of their instruction by discussing common challenges students in a grade level are encountering and strategies to address them. This collaboration can expand if teachers assign a common writing prompt to compare student responses more directly.

Example Data Tool

Teachers can use existing writing rubrics developed by the state, district, or curriculum if they are available. If not, and if collecting writing data is a new endeavor at your school, an easy way to start is with a simple checklist. To begin, teachers could collect a small number of items of data, such as the number of opportunities students have for writing per week, or the number of students who produce writing pieces longer than a paragraph. Not only can teachers track their classroom growth on these metrics, but this type of data is then easy to aggregate across grade levels or schoolwide so you can see your school's progress toward your vision.

Eventually, you will want to collect more detailed writing data. Before having teachers develop rubrics, sticking to a checklist will keep things simple and more objective. Below is a checklist teachers could use to evaluate the components of a student's writing. They could then provide a count of how many students in their class had each of the relevant components, which again could be aggregated to the grade or school level. This checklist is just an example of what a simple data tool could look like; the specific components might change based on grade, curriculum, or writing focus.

Organization and Structure

- The writing has a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- The writing has a main idea or topic that is developed throughout the piece.
- The writing has paragraphs or sections that are organized logically.

Grammar and Mechanics

- The writing demonstrates proper use of punctuation, including periods, commas, and quotation marks.
- The writing demonstrates correct capitalization of proper nouns, the beginning of sentences, and titles.
- The writing has complete sentences that are free of grammatical errors.
- The writing demonstrates appropriate use of verb tense and subject-verb agreement.

Vocabulary and Word Choice

- The writing demonstrates appropriate use of grade-level vocabulary.
- The writing uses descriptive words to paint a picture in the reader's mind.
- The writing includes words that show connections between ideas.

Content and Development

- The writing includes specific and relevant details that support the main idea or topic.
- The writing shows evidence of planning and revision, with changes made to improve the quality of the writing.
- The writing demonstrates an understanding of the audience and purpose of the piece.

Developing a Rubric

Before having teachers develop extended rubrics, they can use their existing checklist on a 0–2 scale, where 0 means the element is absent, 1 means the element is present but underdeveloped, and 2 means the element is present and developed well. After your school has collected and analyzed writing data through checklists and these basic rubrics for a while, and your teachers can move into more detailed data collection and analysis, you can guide them through developing more in-depth writing rubrics. Although the specific components of the rubric may depend on grade level, curriculum, or genre of writing a classroom is focused on, you can use the following guidelines to help teachers develop strong and objective rubrics.

1. **Determine the writing expectations.** Begin by identifying the specific writing expectations for students at the end of the year. Consider the writing genres students learn throughout the year, such as narratives, expository texts, and persuasive essays, and determine what specific writing skills and strategies are required for each genre.
2. **Identify performance levels.** Decide how you will categorize students' writing based on their proficiency level. A common approach is to use a 4-point scale, with each level describing a different level of proficiency. For example, the levels might be “Exemplary,” “Proficient,” “Developing,” and “Emerging.”
3. **Determine rubric categories.** Identify the key categories on which you will evaluate students' writing. These may include categories such as “Organization,” “Development of Ideas,” “Grammar and Mechanics,” and “Use of Evidence.”
4. **Define each category.** For each category, define what is expected at each level of proficiency. Be specific and use clear language. For example, under “Organization,” you might define “Exemplary” as having a clear and logical structure with a well-defined introduction, body, and conclusion, while “Emerging” might indicate having no discernible structure or organization. You might identify or create writing samples that demonstrate each level of proficiency.
5. **Use clear and respectful language.** As you write your rubric, use clear and respectful language. Avoid using language that others could perceive as insensitive or offensive and be open to feedback from students and colleagues.
6. **Test your rubric.** Before using your rubric, test it with a few writing samples to ensure that it accurately reflects your expectations and is easy to use. The rubric should be reliable and valid. Reliable means that if multiple assessors use the rubric to score a single writing sample, they should produce the same results. Valid means that the score a student receives on the rubric should fairly and accurately reflect their performance on that domain. Make adjustments to the rubric as needed based on your experiences.

Using Data for Continuous Improvement

After teachers collect writing data, they can use the data to inform continuous improvement in writing instruction. Here are some strategies to help you use writing data effectively:

1. **Analyze data.** Teachers should analyze writing data across students to identify patterns and trends in student performance. For example, if many students struggle with organization, teachers can focus on

teaching and reinforcing organizational skills. Teachers can do this analysis independently or with a coach or peers to understand broader patterns across the school.

2. **Adjust instruction.** Based on the analysis of writing data, teachers should adjust their instruction to address specific writing needs. For example, if many students struggle with sentence fluency, teachers can provide more opportunities for students to practice sentence construction.
3. **Share exemplar work.** Teachers should share exemplar student work with other teachers either in the same grade (horizontal alignment) or in different grades (vertical alignment). This can help create a shared vision of what good writing looks like and how to achieve it.
4. **Repeat.** Improvement is continuous, so teachers should continue to collect new data and analyze the data to assess whether improvements are happening and determine how to continue tailoring instruction.

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