

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



A set of free professional development materials designed with busy educators in mind. The toolkit builds on the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse practice guide, [*Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers*](#), to promote collaborative learning and planning among teachers. The Toolkit is a one-stop shop for those interested in improving students' writing quality and offers guided activities and practices that teachers can implement throughout the school year.

TOOLKIT

What will teachers and school leaders learn from using the Toolkit?

Teachers will learn strategies to help them carry out **evidence-based recommendations** from the practice guide:

- **Provide daily time for students to write.** Regular, frequent writing practice is critical for developing students into effective writers. The Toolkit provides ideas for fitting ample writing time into each day.
- **Teach students the writing process.** Students need guided practice through each phase of the writing process. The Toolkit explains how to teach students each step in the process to create complete and well-thought-out writing.
- **Create an engaged community of writers.** Students are more engaged in writing if they are part of a community that supports and interacts with writing. The Toolkit explains how to build this community.

School leaders will learn how to support teachers in using the Toolkit and evidence-based writing practices and how they can ensure sustainability and institutionalize writing practices over time.



What does the Toolkit include?

The **Toolkit** includes materials, resources, and activities for educators to use over the course of eight one-hour professional learning community (PLC) sessions.

- **The Facilitator's Guide** contains all of the information needed to lead a group of teachers in the PLC sessions. The Toolkit also includes slides for a facilitator to use during the PLC sessions.
- **The Teacher's Guide** contains activities to be completed during and between PLC sessions. The teacher's guide also includes self-reflection and goal-setting tools.
- **Videos and lesson plans** on the Toolkit website supplement the Teacher's Guide.
- **The School Leader's Guide** contains guidance, tip sheets, and other tools for supporting teachers to complete the Toolkit and improve their writing instruction.

How long will the Toolkit take to complete?

Completing all PLC sessions will take eight hours over eight sessions, with one or two weeks between sessions. The Toolkit also includes activities to complete between PLC sessions to help teachers practice the strategies discussed in the sessions, as well as self-reflection tools and goal-setting tools. In total, the independent activities will take about five hours to complete.

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.

Do teachers have to complete all of the Toolkit sessions?

The Toolkit PLC sessions are designed to build off one another. Completing all eight sessions will help teachers learn how to implement all evidence-based practices shared in the Toolkit. However, teachers have limited time and may need to complete fewer sessions. The Facilitator's Guide includes ideas about how to decide which sessions to prioritize if time is limited.

Which teachers should participate in the PLC sessions?

The Teacher's Guide is designed for educators teaching writing in grades 2 through 4, although some of the content can apply to teachers of grades kindergarten through 6. The School Leader's Guide also includes information on how to integrate writing into the classrooms of non-literacy teachers who may not participate in the PLC sessions.

Who should facilitate the PLC sessions?

The PLC session facilitator may be an assistant principal, instructional coach, or lead teacher. This person should be flexible, familiar with the participants, and committed to writing instruction. The School Leader's Guide includes more information on selecting a facilitator.

Can teachers complete the Toolkit on their own, outside of a PLC?

The Toolkit was designed for teachers to complete in discussion-based PLC sessions to allow them to compare current instructional practices with new learning and brainstorm implementation strategies. However, some teachers who want to improve their writing instruction may not have access to a PLC. For these teachers, the Toolkit contains information on how an individual teacher could complete parts of the Toolkit on their own.

Where do the evidence-based practices come from?

Across a variety of subject areas, grades, and topics, the What Works Clearinghouse analyzes research on educational interventions to determine whether the research meets its high standard of evidence. Research that meets these standards gets compiled into practice guides to help educators use evidence-based teaching strategies. Learn more about the What Works Clearinghouse at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>.

Who created the Toolkit?

The Toolkit is a product of the **U.S. Department of Education's Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Mid-Atlantic**, one of ten RELs that aim to assist educators and policymakers in their work to improve outcomes for students by helping them generate and use research, evidence, and evidence-based practices. The Toolkit was created by REL Mid-Atlantic and developed with input from teachers and school leaders in the District of Columbia and a team of writing instruction experts. Learn more about REL Mid-Atlantic at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/region/midatlantic>.

Are the Toolkit materials really free?

Yes! The U.S. Department of Education sponsored the development of the Toolkit, and it is free for anyone to access. All materials are available at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/writing-grades-2-4>.

