

# Evidence-Based Recommendations for Remote Writing Instruction in the Secondary Grades

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE™

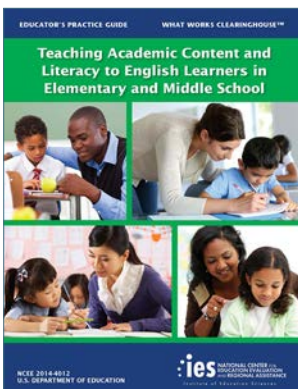
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The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) maintains a library of practice guides (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuides>) for educators and school officials to use to address challenges in their classrooms and schools. These guides synthesize WWC research reviews, the experience of educators, and expert advice into recommendations that can be implemented in the classroom. **Many of these recommendations can be implemented for free or at a low cost in remote learning settings by making only small adaptations.**

The examples below come from two practice guides about interventions for middle and secondary school instruction in writing. The recommendations included here have strong evidence, meaning that there is consistent evidence that the recommended practices improve student outcomes for a diverse population of students. **Each original practice guide contains more details as well as additional recommendations.**



## Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners

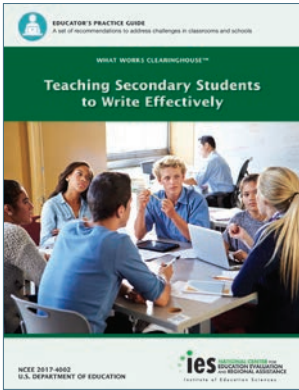
Explore the guide at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/19>.

Provide regular, structured opportunities to develop written language skills. **Use small groups or pairs to provide opportunities for students to work and talk together on varied aspects of writing.** When students get an opportunity to listen and speak through critical conversations about text and content in collaborative settings, their writing skills and language development are likely to benefit. Student collaboration and dialogue can focus on many aspects of written language development—from working on spelling and sentence structure, to quick-writes targeting vocabulary acquisition, to long-term research projects—depending on the instructional emphasis.

**Use digital breakout groups, included in most remote learning software applications, to allow students to collaboratively brainstorm, prepare for writing by completing a graphic organizer, or provide feedback on each other's work.** For example, after students have drafted a written piece, group students into pairs to read each other's work. Group students with varying levels of English proficiency so that students with stronger English skills can provide a language model for less proficient students. While providing feedback, students can also describe what they understand from reading a peer's writing. If possible, virtually drop into each breakout group to monitor student progress.

At the start of the activity, guide students in how to provide feedback to their peers by sharing sentence starters such as, "I like your opening sentence/paragraph because \_\_\_\_\_," "In this paragraph you have clearly explained that \_\_\_\_\_," and "An idea I have to make it stronger is \_\_\_\_\_."





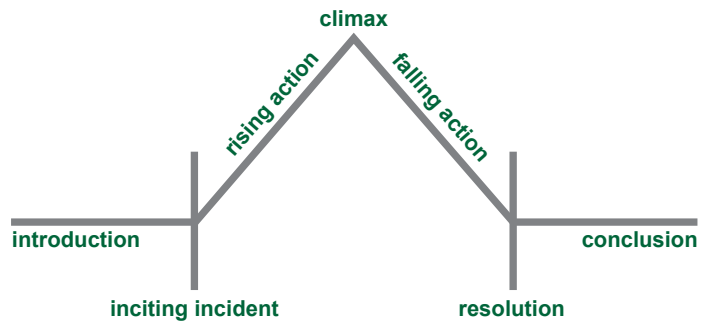
## Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively

Explore the guide at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/22>.

**Help students internalize the features of effective writing by explicitly teaching appropriate writing strategies using the Model-Practice-Reflect process, shown below.** The practice guide contains numerous writing strategies depending on the genre of the text that students will write.



**Use a remote learning lesson to model a new writing strategy for students.** The plot diagram (or Freytag pyramid) is one writing strategy you can show to students. Begin by modeling the diagram and explaining each section ("I do"). Together with the class, help students practice using the Freytag pyramid by filling out the diagram based on a novel that the class has read together ("we do"). Label each section of the diagram using a digital whiteboard, if available. Or create a slideshow where each slide labels another section. Now, students should be prepared to fill out the diagram on their own when developing the plot to their own narrative story. After the lesson, students should individually complete each section of a Freytag pyramid before writing ("you do"). In a subsequent session with the class, ask students to reflect on using the strategy.



**Looking for more writing strategies?** Consult the practice guide or find more through professional learning communities, like the National Writing Project ([www.nwp.org](http://www.nwp.org)) and National Council of Teachers of English ([www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)), or publications like Writing Next (<https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/teal/publications/writing-next/>).