

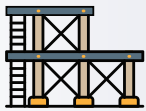
Evidence-Based Writing Practices to Support English Learner Students

New Mexico prioritizes equitable educational opportunities and achievement for English learner students. Through the Southwest English Learner Literacy (SWELL) partnership, Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest is working with the New Mexico Public Education Department as well as regional education cooperatives and school districts across the state. The goal is to help educators deliver high-quality literacy instruction that supports the development of stronger literacy and writing skills among English learner students.



Write to Succeed

REL Southwest is working with New Mexico educators to develop, implement, refine, and test Write to Succeed, a **professional learning program** that aims to improve English proficiency among English learner students and literacy skills for all students. Drawing on the Write to Succeed approach, this infographic outlines **two approaches** that support effective writing instruction.



Scaffolded writing instruction



Culturally and linguistically responsive instruction

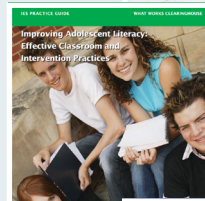
Stages of scaffolded writing instruction



Scaffolding is a process by which educators develop a student's capacity to learn a new concept.¹ The Write to Succeed program uses the teaching and learning cycle (TLC) to help educators scaffold students' thinking, reading, discussions, and writing.² This **scaffolded writing approach** helps students make sense of instructional content and develop oral and written language proficiency.

The Write to Succeed program encourages educators to apply the scaffolded writing approach to instructional units that have a writing focus and take place over the course of a few classes. The following stages of scaffolded writing instruction are grounded in evidence and draw from the following What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) practice guides:

- [Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers](#)
- [Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices](#)
- [Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School](#)
- [Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades](#)



Stage 1: Building the field³

During this stage, educators help students develop vocabulary and background knowledge on the unit topic.

1. Students intensively focus on a set of key vocabulary words across multiple days.
2. The teacher explicitly integrates oral and written English language instruction into content learning.
3. The teacher guides a discussion on text meaning.

Stage 2: Exploring the language of text type⁴

During the second stage, educators guide students through an analysis of the language used in the text that will be the focus of a final writing activity. This activity provides structured opportunities to develop written language skills and further integrates reading and writing skill development.

1. Students analyze the language in the text that will be prioritized in a unit-culminating writing activity.
2. The teacher focuses on language and concepts specific to writing in academic disciplines.

Stages 3 and 4: Jointly constructing texts and independently constructing texts³

The final stages focus on constructing texts, first together as a class, and then independently. When jointly constructing a text, students will engage in discussions and decisions related to the appropriate structure, content, and language of that text. After students construct their own text individually, they will receive feedback from their peers.

1. The teacher creates a structured opportunity for students to write as a class.
2. Students write independently after receiving support to plan the writing assignment.
3. Students apply academic forms of the language and learn to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.

Culturally and linguistically responsive instruction (CLRI)⁵

REL Southwest is enhancing the professional learning on scaffolded writing instruction by grounding it in culturally and linguistically responsive instruction (CLRI). CLRI shows promise for improving literacy skills among linguistically diverse students and in the broader student population. By engaging in a student-centered approach, teachers affirm their students' cultural and linguistic assets while teaching them crucial academic skills and content.

Centering instruction on students' experiences with CLRI

As teachers implement each stage of scaffolded writing instruction, they validate and affirm students' cultural experiences and linguistic skills by offering relevant and rigorous learning opportunities.

To create lesson plans centered on students' cultural and linguistic assets:

1. Provide opportunities for students to express their unique cultural identities.
2. Draw from cultural and historical references that align with students' identities.
3. Make learning more relevant by using cultural references.
4. Validate students' home culture and language by showing how it is relevant to students' academic success.

Related resources

Want to learn more about supporting your students' writing skills? Browse these resources from REL Southwest and the REL network:

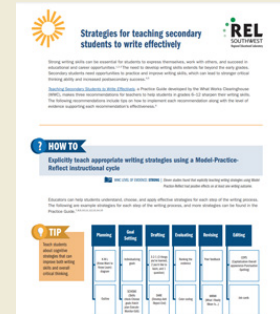
- A REL Southwest blog post [introduces the SWELL partnership](#) and explains how you can join the study.
- The [Promising Practices to Support English Learner Students in New Mexico](#) resource helps districts implement practices to serve New Mexico's English learner population more effectively. The companion [user guide](#) provides a step-by-step process for selecting, implementing, testing, and refining a change in practice in real time.
- Watch our video to learn more about our [previous partnership with New Mexico](#).



A REL Southeast infographic outlines [four recommendations](#) from the WWC practice guide *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices* and demonstrates how they may be integrated into grades 4–12 content-area classroom instruction.



An infographic co-developed by REL Northwest and REL Southwest describes several approaches that families and caregivers can use to support their middle or high schooler's [writing skills](#).



Drawing on the WWC practice guide [Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively](#), a REL Southwest infographic shares [evidence-based recommendations](#) to help students in grades 6–12 sharpen their writing skills as well as tips on how to implement the recommendations.

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