

Setting the Stage: A Writing Workshop Classroom

In order for our students to learn to be strong, successful readers and writers, they need to become a community that uses and values reading and writing. They need to make sense of their reading and writing experiences and make connections between their literacy learning and their lives. Writing Fundamentals helps you do that by grounding its teaching in quality books. You can reinforce these ideas by establishing community values about literacy.

How do we establish community values about literacy? The first step is to be clear about what we want our students to believe about literacy and learning. The next step is to teach, talk, act, and create an environment that supports these beliefs.

Beliefs and Environmental Supports

We Are All Writers

Have at least one bulletin board on which to hang your students' writing and information about the writing work your class is doing. Bulletin boards are an excellent way to publish and celebrate the work your community of writers has been creating. Hanging students' work on the bulletin board is a way for students to feel proud of their accomplishments as well as learn from each other.

We Have Writing Conversations and Share Our Work Often

Have places where writing partners can meet, share their writing, or seek help from one another. Ask students to meet with one another often to share and discuss their writing. Confer regularly with students about their writing.

We Cherish Books

The way you display, care for, and talk about books shows students that books and words matter. Consider ways to make your library and book displays attractive and enticing.

Reading Is Essential to Writing—Writers Learn from Other Writers

A large meeting area where the whole class can gather is essential. It is in this place where your community of writers will sit closely together and really get to know and learn from one another and all the wonderful books in your library. It is in the meeting area that you will teach your mini-lessons and where students will gather at the end of the Writing Workshop to share.

We Can All Be Successful Independent Writers

Writers need tools to help them achieve success as independent writers. These tools should be placed in a prominent location in your classroom. If they are stored away and out of sight, they are often misplaced. A bookshelf or a special case placed on each table offer good locations for these important tools.

Tools, Resources, and Structures

Writing Fundamentals provides all the exemplar texts, reproducible, and assessment materials you will need. As you read the lessons, you will notice occasional references to additional student and teacher materials and structures.

Chart Paper and Markers:

Using chart paper enables you to create permanent records of teaching and learning. Charts can be referred to and used throughout various studies.

Overhead Projector:

Many of the appendices in the Writing Fundamentals Units of Study are ideal for use as transparencies. If you have access to an overhead projector, reproduce the appendices on transparencies and display them during the lessons.

Writing Folders:

For grades K–1, students will keep their work in folders. Pocket folders with three-hole clasps provide an excellent space for writing resources such as alphabet charts and word lists.

Writers' Notebooks:

The most suitable container for writing in grades 2–3 and 4–5 is a Writer's Notebook. Marbleized notebooks work well because of their durability.

Writing Partnerships:

Some lessons refer to writing partners. Some teachers assign writing partners prior to a unit of study and have them sit together during mini-lessons. Others have students partner with the student sitting next to them. There are benefits to both arrangements, and you should choose the arrangement that works best for your class.



The Typical Cycle of a Unit of Study, Genre, or Author Study

Writing Fundamentals provides a roadmap for effective writing instruction that supports students through stages of the writing process. A unit of study consists of a series of lessons that take students through inquiry, development and planning, to publication. A typical unit of study will last between four to five weeks.

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- **Immersion:**
Introduce students to texts and authors who will become models and mentors for their writing.
- **Generating Ideas:**
Support students in adopting habits and practices of successful writers.
- **Selecting an idea:**
Encourage students to find subjects that matter and are relevant to their purpose and intention.
- **Collecting:**
Provide students with strategies for developing and researching their ideas.
(K-1 writers are not yet at this stage of the writing process.)
- **Drafting:**
Help students envision, plan, and organize finished text.
- **Revision:**
Guide students to effectively craft their writing to fit genre, purpose, and meet the needs of their intended audience.
- **Editing:**
Provide "skill" (spelling and punctuation) instruction directly related to student texts.
- **Publication:**
Celebrate and authenticate students' writing by preparing writing for an audience of readers.
- **Teacher and Student Evaluation:**
Identify the needs of your students by using rubric and student questionnaire for authentic assessment.

"Writing has to be learned in school very much the same way that it is practiced out of school. This means that the writer has a reason to write, an intended audience, and control of subject and form. It also means that composing is staged across various phases of rumination, investigation, consultation with others, drafting feedback, revision and perfecting."

Donald Graves 1999



Writing Fundamentals Units of Study

K-1	2-3	4-5
Launching Writing Workshop	Launching Writing Workshop	Launching Writing Workshop
Poetry	Nonfiction	Memoir
Personal Narrative	Poetry	Nonfiction
Author Study: Donald Crews	Author Study: Gail Gibbons	Poetry
Author Study: Mem Fox	Author Study: Patricia Polacco	Feature Article
Fiction	Folk Tales and Fables	Biography
Nonfiction	Letter Writing	Author Study: Cynthia Rylant
Touchstone (Mentor) Texts	Touchstone (Mentor) Texts	Picture Book Study
FUNctional Writing	Personal Narrative	Essay
Label and List Books	Autobiography	Touchstone (Mentor) Texts

How to Use Writing Fundamentals

Schoolwide, Inc.'s goal for developing the Writing Fundamentals Units of Study was to provide curriculum that would support teachers in using trade books as teaching tools. We envisioned creating lessons and supplemental materials that would be accessible, easy to use, directly linked to students' needs, and models for effective writing. In addition, we wanted to give teachers foundations that would improve practice, planning, and assessment.

The Writing Fundamentals materials include:

- *Exemplar Texts*
- *Immersion Guides*
- *Mini-Lessons*
- *Reproducible Materials*
- *Assessment and Self-Reflection Tools*



Exemplar Texts

“Teachers must ensure that children have access to reading materials that are relevant to the kind of writer they are interested in becoming.” Frank Smith 1988

Reading and writing development are inextricable. Providing opportunities to read and look closely at texts is an essential component of effective writing instruction. The best texts are those that resemble the kinds of writing that you hope your students will achieve, that your students will enjoy, and that show clear craft, structure, and process elements. The exemplar texts in the Writing Fundamentals Units of Study meet each of these criteria.

Immersion Guide

*“In order for students to grow in their ability to craft a particular genre, they need to be immersed in opportunities to read, write, discuss and look closely at the genre.”
What Research Says about Writing NCTE 2006*

The Immersion Guide provides all the information you need to launch and build community around your unit of study. Included in the Immersion Guide are: an introduction that explains how the unit of study is relevant to your students’ needs; book synopses that will help you discover the many teaching opportunities each book provides; classroom environment ideas that will help you create excitement and active class involvement in the study; comments about particular issues related to the structure of your Writing Workshop; the amount of time a study may take; and appendices that will help you make home-school connections.

The Immersion Guide also includes a five-day read-aloud plan that explores exemplar texts and provides you with discussion material for before, during, and after reading.

Reproducible Materials

The appendices in Writing Fundamentals have been created to support and supplement your instruction. In some cases, you will want to use the appendices to make home-school connections. Other times, you may want to create transparencies of the appendices to support your students’ writing. Many appendices can be reproduced and distributed to your students to use during independent writing time. Some appendices have been created for teacher use only and are meant to support you in creating charts and visual resources during the lessons.

Assessment and Self-Reflection Tools

*“Perspectives on authentic assessment provide a guiding definition of assessment as an educational tool that serves the purposes of learning as well as the purposes of evaluation.”
Howard Gardner 1991*

Writing Fundamentals provides you with materials to involve students in the process of assessing and evaluating their growth and development as writers. Within each unit, you will find a lesson and self-reflection questionnaire that will focus students’ attention on the work they have done and their growth during the unit. You will also find an assessment guide to help you evaluate their work based on the specific skills and strategies you have taught.