

# Creating a Successful Writing Workshop Classroom

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To help make your writing workshop classroom a success, consider how you can incorporate the following into your writing workshop.

## ■ **To write well, writers need to spend time writing.**

In order to become effective writers, students need to engage in the practice of writing every day. The writing workshop should be structured so that the majority of time is devoted to independent writing. The amount of time writing workshop takes will vary depending on the grade level and the time of year, but it is best to set aside approximately 45 minutes for writing workshop.

## ■ **Writers need feed back and support.**

To become successful and grow as writers, students need ongoing feedback and support. Mini-lessons that speak directly to the needs and intentions of student writers are an integral part of writing workshop classrooms. One-on-one and small-group conferences offer students the opportunities they need for essential feedback and individual support.

## ■ **Writers need mentors.**

Think of something you do really well. Chances are you have someone who has inspired you and helped direct your learning—a mentor. Mentors provide a vision for success. Students need mentors for inspiration and to raise the level of their writing craft. In addition to the authors of our favorite books, we need to take on the role of writing mentors for our students. We need to share our writing experiences and give our students a firsthand vision of successful writers.

## ■ **Writers read.**

The most common answer when writers are asked for writing tips is read, read, read. Reading improves students' writing on a variety of levels: It provides a model for what good writing sounds like; it fosters an appreciation for the craft, form, and function of writing; and it inspires new ways to use writing.

## ■ **Writers need structure and routines.**

Structure and routines create the optimal environment for students to achieve success in the writing workshop. Where will writing supplies be kept? What should a writing workshop look like? What should students do when they think they are done? What will happen during a conference? How will students get feedback? What tools will be used? How will students be assessed? These and many other management and routine questions need to be answered at the onset of writing workshop. Consistency is key to creating successful writing workshop.

## ■ **Writers need motivation.**

There are so many reasons to write: Writing helps students slow down and pay attention to their world; it helps students gain a deeper understanding of their lives and experiences; it is enjoyable and creative. The motivation for this kind of writing is intrinsic. If we are explicit about these reasons to write it will help our students value them. In addition to intrinsic motivation, it is important to create external motivators for writing. Publishing celebrations can be great external motivators as can creating an environment where student writing is valued, shared, and talked about often.