RESOURCE GUIDE

Collaborative Conversations About Evidence-Based Writing Instruction

A Guide for Leaders and Professional Learning Teams

COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM | Learning Reimagined™

About Collaborative Classroom

Collaborative Classroom is a mission-driven, nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that all students become readers, writers, and thinkers who learn from, care for, and respect one another.

OUR APPROACH

Collaborative Classroom's evidence-based programs help children develop as proficient readers and writers, appreciate the ideas and opinions of others, learn to agree and disagree respectfully, think critically about big ideas, and become responsible citizens of the world

How we teach matters as much as what we teach. Our commitment to continuous, embedded professional learning empowers educators to grow their teaching practices, build the school community, and create the conditions for authentic, student-centered learning.

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INTRODUCTION

It's common knowledge that writing is essential for our students' long-term success in school and beyond. We also know that reading and writing are reciprocal processes, each benefiting and enriching the other.

Yet in many K–5 classrooms, high-quality writing instruction is rarely accorded the same level of importance as reading, let alone given sufficient time or attention in our literacy blocks.

The truth is that we cannot claim to provide strong literacy instruction to our students without the inclusion of comprehensive, evidence-based writing instruction.

Whether you are a passionate teacher of writing or relatively new to best practices in writing instruction, this guide is designed to support you and spark collegial conversations about high-quality, evidence-based writing instruction in your school community.

The guide includes interviews with noted experts in the field, white papers, articles, and on-demand webinars.

- In the first section, read wide-ranging interviews with Joan Sedita, author of *The Writing Rope*, and Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, a longtime leader at the National Writing Project.
- In Section 2, explore short, browsable articles about writing instruction, full of engaging examples and practical, research-informed classroom practice. Questions at the end of each article help you deepen your thinking and reflect on your own practice.
- In Section 3, take a deep dive into the research with the white paper "Writing for Life: The Evidence Base for Powerful Writing Instruction."
- In Section 4, get convenient access to on-demand Collaborative Classroom webinars featuring Joan Sedita and Steve Graham.

Supporting educator professional learning is key to Collaborative Classroom's mission as a nonprofit organization. We invite you to visit our website and continue your literacy learning with us.

www.collaborativeclassroom.org

Section 1

Interviews

Joan Sedita on Evidence-Based Writing Instruction, the Writing Rope, and Reading-Writing Reciprocity

By Linda Rourke

Joan Sedita is a nationally recognized professional development author and K–12 reading and writing instruction expert. She is also the founder and CEO of Keys to Literacy, a professional development organization.

Joan has worked on numerous state-level initiatives and authored multiple professional development books, online courses, and training modules, and is the creator of the Writing Rope.

Collaborative Classroom: Joan, thank you for speaking with us. What inspired you to develop the Writing Rope™ model? How did you envision it supporting teachers in their day-to-day practice?

Joan Sedita: I have felt for years that there was a need for a framework to help educators identify the components of writing to inform instructional and curriculum decisions.

As this quote from the start of *The Writing Rope* book notes:

"Much has been written about the multiplicity of skills involved in reading, beginning with the 'five components' necessary for skilled, fluent reading that became popular after the 2000 report of the National Reading Panel (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension). On the other hand, when attention is paid to writing instruction, teachers are not sure what to include. Many educators who are knowledgeable about effective reading instruction are not able to identify the components of skilled writing or essential elements of a curriculum for teaching writing."

For years I used a wagon wheel metaphor to help teachers recognize that, like spokes in a wheel, there are many skills and strategies that must be combined for proficient writing. If any spoke is missing, it affects the integrity of the wheel.

However, with the renewed interest in Hollis Scarborough's Reading Rope in recent years, I decided that a similar metaphor for identifying writing components would resonate better than the wagon wheel, so in 2018 I developed the first Writing Rope graphic.

I envision teachers using the Writing Rope framework to assess if the writing instruction they are providing is complete.

I envision teachers using the Writing Rope framework to assess if the writing instruction they are providing is complete—that is, are they teaching skills, strategies, and techniques that are associated with all strands in the rope?

Administrators can use the Writing Rope framework to develop a writing curriculum and make decisions about potential writing instruction programs they might purchase.

Collaborative Classroom: One part of the Writing Rope that intrigues me is your inclusion of the writing process as part of the critical thinking strand. How does awareness of the writing process foster critical thinking?

Joan Sedita: All stages of the writing process (thinking, planning, writing, revising) require significant critical thinking.

For the reasons given below, this critical thinking strand of the rope seemed like the logical place to put the writing process.

At the thinking stage, when they are writing based on text or content they are learning, students must apply critical thinking to comprehend the sources and then extract the essential information they want to incorporate in their writing. If they are creating a writing piece that is not based on sources, such as a creative story or personal narrative, they still need critical thinking skills to brainstorm the ideas. This includes generating notes.

At the planning stage, critical thinking is needed to think through how students want to organize and structure their writing pieces. This includes using graphic organizers.

The writing stage requires the application and integration of many skills, strategies, and techniques from multiple strands in the Writing Rope. Critical thinking is needed to determine which type of text structure (informational, opinion, or narrative) and which pattern of organization (description/explanation, sequence, cause and effect, compare and contrast, or problem and solution) will best communicate the students' ideas. Critical thinking is needed to apply linguistic and language knowledge to write sentences and determine how to organize ideas into paragraphs.

Finally, at the revision stage, critical thinking is used to determine if students have adequately conveyed the message and meaning they want readers to take away from their writing. Important decisions are made about whether a student needs to go back to the thinking and planning stages to gather more information or adjust the organization of the writing piece. Decisions for adding better, more precise vocabulary and improved sentences also require critical thinking.

Collaborative Classroom: In your opinion, why is it crucial to prioritize writing instruction for K–5 students? How does writing instruction in the elementary grades contribute to students' cognitive and critical thinking abilities?

Joan Sedita: After the National Reading Panel report was published in 2000 and the Reading First part of the No Child Left Behind legislation focused educators' attention on reading instruction, writing instruction was neglected to a certain degree. In some cases, time for teaching writing was replaced with more time for reading instruction.

That began to change with the introduction of ten writing standards in the Common Core ELA standards (and similar state versions of these standards) and several reading standards that required students to write about what they are reading.

Also, as many states have added writing tasks on high-stakes state assessments that require students to answer prompts based on sources, it is becoming clear that many students are far below proficient in writing ability for their grade level.

There is also extensive research showing that writing improves reading (see the *Writing to Read* report by Graham and Hebert, 2010), and writing about text enhances learning of content (see *Writing Next* by Graham & Perin, 2007).

Young children in the primary grades need explicit instruction for transcription and foundational writing skills (spelling, handwriting, sentence writing) as well as an introduction to skills and strategies for the other strands of the Writing Rope, including text structure, critical thinking, and writing craft.

In grades 4 and 5, students need opportunities to integrate the skills they are learning and apply the skills from the critical thinking strand to write about what they are learning in all subjects.

It is critical that schools recognize that writing must be added to the focus they have placed on reading instruction.

However, it is important to note that if students leave elementary school with grade-level writing ability, this is no guarantee that their writing skills will continue to grow to meet the challenges that increase as they move through middle and high school grades. This is why writing instruction must continue through the secondary grades.

It is critical that schools recognize that writing must be added to the focus they have placed on reading instruction.

Collaborative Classroom: Given the volume and weight of many competing priorities in the classroom, especially in the past few years, many elementary-grade teachers say they've felt unable to devote time to teaching writing. What advice might you have for K–5 teachers who want to add or reincorporate writing instruction into the literacy block?

Joan Sedita: The Institute of Education Sciences' practice guide *Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers* recommends a minimum of one hour a day devoted to writing for students, beginning in first grade. The report notes that the hour should include at least 30 minutes dedicated to teaching a variety of writing strategies, techniques, and skills. The remaining 30 minutes should be spent on writing practice where students apply the skills they learned from the writing-skills instruction. *How do teachers find this time?*

Part of the answer is that more writing instruction needs to be integrated into the literacy block, and more writing tasks, with guided practice and feedback, need to be integrated into content teaching.

What is often considered the *reading instruction block* needs to be described as the *literacy instruction block* where writing and reading are integrated whenever possible. Reading and writing are both built on the same foundation of oral language. They are like two buckets drawing water from a common well.

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Spelling and handwriting transcription skills in primary grades are best taught during a phonics lesson as students learn letters and the sound-symbol correspondences for graphemes. Activities that combine decoding and encoding (spelling words) should be integrated in phonics lessons.

A number of writing skills can be taught and practiced together with comprehension instruction. For example, identifying main ideas and summarizing have been identified as effective strategies for supporting reading comprehension, but main idea instruction is also part of teaching students to write quality paragraphs, and summarizing has been shown to improve student writing. Another example would be teaching students to take notes, which supports both comprehension and gathering information when writing from sources.

Explicit instruction for skills and strategies for sentence writing and writing craft also need to be taught within the literacy block. However, the guided practice and

opportunities for students to collaborate to apply these skills to writing tasks is best done during the whole school day across all subjects.

Writing about text and what students are learning accomplishes two important objectives: they grow their writing skills and they learn their content more deeply. Reminders to apply all stages of the writing process, to write high-quality sentences, and to use graphic organizers to take notes and plan before writing should be given when writing about math, science, social studies, and other subjects.

Finally, students learn skills for using text structure in their own writing by analyzing and emulating text they are reading. When they do this across subjects, they learn structures that are unique to certain subjects.

Collaborative Classroom: What are some of the best ways for teachers to build their knowledge of both the content and pedagogy of teaching writing?

Joan Sedita: There are two Institute of Education Science research reports that provide recommendations for evidence-based writing instruction and include details and examples of what this looks like in the classroom:

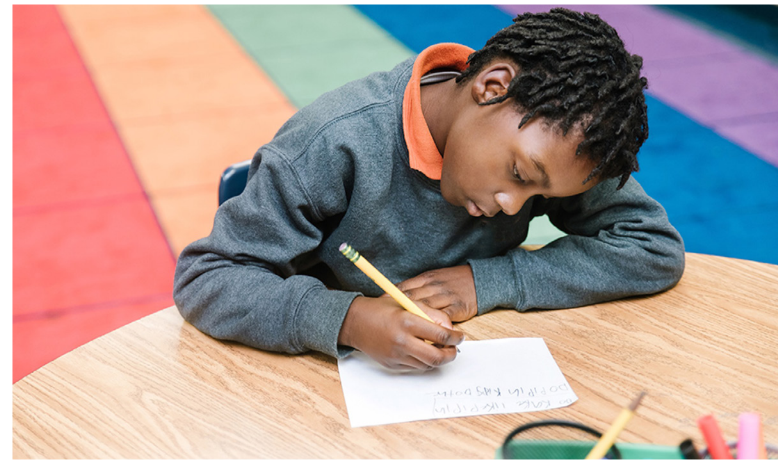
1. Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers
2. Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively

They are both excellent resources about the what and how of writing instruction.

The Keys to Literacy Free Literacy Resources Pages has an extensive collection of videos, archived webinars, articles, and templates/printables that can be accessed for free.

Much of the content and instructional suggestions in *The Writing Rope* book draw from two professional development training courses, online courses, and companion books that I authored which are available through Keys to Literacy. *Keys to Early Writing* is designed for K–2 educators, and *Keys to Content Writing* is designed for grades 3–12.

Collaborative Classroom: What practical strategies or techniques can teachers employ to create a supportive and engaging writing environment for K–5 students?



Joan Sedita: One of the four recommendations in the Institute of Education Sciences' research guide is: *Create an engaged community of writers*. This includes several components:

1. Teachers participating as members of the community by writing and sharing their writing.
2. Giving students writing choices.
3. Encouraging students to collaborate at all stages of the writing process.
4. Providing students with opportunities to give and receive feedback throughout the writing process.
5. Publishing students' writing and extending the community beyond the classroom. The Institute of Education Sciences offers a 4-minute video about a community of writers that can be accessed by searching for this title: Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers – Part 2.

Teachers can also do the following to create a supportive and engaging writing environment: show students that they enjoy writing and teaching writing, and create a classroom environment where students are encouraged to try hard, to accept that as they learn skills they will make mistakes—and that mistakes are OK—and to be kind to their peers when giving feedback about how to improve writing pieces.

Classroom routines that encourage students to follow all stages of the writing process and writing tasks that are appropriate to students' interests and abilities are also important.

Finally, many students are afraid to write, so providing scaffolded, explicit instruction for writing skills, strategies, and techniques with sufficient guided practice ensures that they have what's needed to successfully write and share their pieces with peers.

Collaborative Classroom: In your view, how does writing instruction in the elementary years contribute to students' social and emotional development?

Joan Sedita: Writing plays an important role in social development. Because writing is used to communicate, it is by nature a social activity. When students are taught skills and strategies for all the strands in the Writing Rope, they have the tools needed to effectively communicate what they think and want to share with others.

Reading and writing are essential for success in school. Given how much time students spend in school—over 12 to 13 years—there are significant impacts on their emotional development if they struggle to learn and experience failure in the classroom.

Educators must ensure that students are given sufficient, evidence-based writing instruction so they develop the skills needed to access content and learn in all subjects. Teachers of all content areas play a crucial role in developing reading and writing skills that in many ways are pillars that support social and emotional learning in school.

Collaborative Classroom: Looking ahead, what trends do you foresee in the field of writing instruction for elementary students, and how do you think they will shape the future of education?

Joan Sedita: As I noted earlier, writing has been neglected for far too long. The growing recognition that writing is as essential to school success as reading and the growing interest in how to teach writing effectively among educators of all grades suggests that writing will soon finally receive the attention it deserves.

Over the last two years, I have seen a significant increase in interest in writing professional development in my work with school districts and state departments of education. I have also seen a growing focus on writing on the part of literacy organizations, including the content of workshops and keynote addresses at literacy conferences.

Hopefully, this interest will translate into high-quality professional development and more attention to writing instruction at the pre-service level in teacher preparation programs. If teachers develop the knowledge of how to teach writing, they will be able to effectively teach their students how to write. ■

INTERVIEW

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl of the National Writing Project on Writing Instruction

By Kelly Stuart & Marisa Ramirez Stukey

In this interview, we had the pleasure of speaking with Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, the current Chair of the Advisory Board for the National Writing Project and the organization's Executive Director from 2014–2023. Elyse has also served as a member of the Collaborative Classroom Board of Trustees since 2017.

The National Writing Project (NWP) is one of Collaborative Classroom's most distinguished partners. NWP played a vital role in the initial development of our comprehensive K–5 writing curriculum, *Being a Writer*, and continues to be an important collaborator and thought partner to this day.

In this interview, Elyse speaks about the mission of the National Writing Project, the organization's ongoing partnership with Collaborative Classroom, best practices in writing instruction, and why the teaching of writing should be on an equal footing with reading instruction.

Collaborative Classroom: We're excited to speak with you today. Let's start by talking about the National Writing Project. Tell us about the organization's mission, how you work, and how educators can get involved.

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: At the National Writing Project, we envision a future where every person is an accomplished writer and engaged learner. We are teachers, university faculty, researchers, writers and journalists, librarians, and community educators who are working to advance writing.

Specifically, we advance writing by growing and sustaining nationally networked local communities of expertise in the teaching of writing. In all, we have 175 Writing Project sites housed on college campuses throughout the United States, and these sites prepare 2,000 new teacher-leaders each year.

We also work with current classroom teachers, putting their knowledge to work to improve the teaching of writing, providing professional learning opportunities, and hosting online communities of practice.

Many teachers can find a local NWP site and, for those not living close to one, we have a lot of online support through social media and online events. The best way to hear about our events is through our Write Now email newsletter. People can sign up for the newsletter at nwp.org.

Collaborative Classroom: When educators engage with the NWP, what will they discover? What might surprise them?

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: What teachers will find online or at local NWP sites is a community of educators who are passionate about writing and the teaching of writing. And they come from all levels and subject areas.

The Writing Project community is big and diverse, so people can always find others with their particular interests, whether that's teaching writing in science or using writing in the community for civic action.

We have a very broad view of writing because there are always new forms and new contexts in which to write. Think of all the new forms of writing that have come into being during just the last few decades due to technology and the internet: blogs, emails, podcasts, and so on. There's always something new in writing.

Something that might surprise those who are newcomers to our work is that we strongly believe in the importance of becoming a writer yourself. Our NWP programs tend to focus on teaching writing, of course, but a lot of what we do at our local sites is to write ourselves.

We think that when we are writers ourselves and we're wrestling with what it means to be a writer, that experience brings a level of nuance and understanding to our teaching of writing.

We strongly believe in the importance of becoming a writer yourself . . . We think that when we are writers ourselves and we're wrestling with what it means to be a writer, that experience brings a level of nuance and understanding to our teaching of writing.

One of the things I love about our partnership with Collaborative Classroom and about its Being a Writer curriculum is the emphasis that *Being a Writer* places on the *teacher as writer* and the act of teachers writing alongside their students.

So, we would invite all teachers using the *Being a Writer* program to seek out a local NWP site or join our national online community to become part of a community of writers themselves.

Collaborative Classroom: When considering K–5 writing instruction in general, what do you believe is most important? What guides your thinking?

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: When considering instruction, I think there are a few things that are very important to understand first about writing. Number one is that writing is something we make. Although we have maker movements in areas such as STEM, often people forget that *writing is an act of making something*. Therefore, everything we know about "making" applies.

It's a chance to be creative, to be independent, to carry through something that is ours, to make a contribution to the community. Looking through this lens of writing as making, when we are teaching and coaching young writers, we have a perfect opportunity to guide them in becoming reflective, self-managing, and independent learners.

Often people forget that writing is an act of making something. Therefore, everything we know about 'making' applies. It's a chance to be creative, to be independent, to carry through something that is ours, to make a contribution to the community.

The realization that writing is making also helps us clarify what exactly the work is in writing instruction. Like all making, *writing is a process*. We need to dispel the idea that what we write comes out perfectly the first time. Instead, we must embrace the process. It begins as we imagine what we want to write. Then we write

a little, we revise it, we write a bit more, and we make it better, just like we do with all the things we make. Writing is making, and human beings love making!

Next, I would hope that all elementary students get a chance to see how writing is a tool for thinking and learning, something that will be useful across their whole lives. We use it in a million ways: to plan, to keep track of things, to organize content, to reflect on our lives. A lot of this is writing that we do for ourselves, for our own purposes. It's low stakes or no stakes. It's done informally in a notebook or journal.

It's important for students to understand that writing is something we can use for ourselves, including managing our emotional lives. We're asking students to be a little more planful and self-managing, and writing is a tool for doing that. I'd encourage teachers to really emphasize and welcome all these uses of writing.

Collaborative Classroom: What do you think is essential for writers in grades K–2?

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: Our youngest students are learning how language works, including language that is spoken and language that is in print and graphics. Writing is another window into understanding language. We learn by drawing and then explaining our drawing to others and then working to link the sound-spelling patterns to our explanations. Drawing and writing go hand in hand for our very youngest learners who are learning to move between spoken language and representations of language.

In addition, teacher modeling of the writing process is key for our youngest writers. The teacher shows students how to write, revise, and edit pieces. Drawings can also be revised! Since we are teaching our students that writing is communication, we need to try out our writing on others, listen to our audience, and revise when we get feedback. We want K–2 students to see that process of making and understand it as normal.

Mainly, our youngest students need to understand and practice that we all "read writing" and we "write what people will read." We want them to understand that everything we read was created by a person just like them. Keeping the writer at the center of instruction helps students to see themselves as writers as well.

Collaborative Classroom: And what would you say is important for upper-elementary students?

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: For our older elementary writers, we can build from the strong foundation of writing from K–2. Content, genre, and mentor texts are essential for this age group. Older writers begin to expand their knowledge of the world, and therefore their writing expands as well. These students need to write across the disciplines, explore their own learning through writing, as well as explore their interests.

In addition, through the use of mentor texts, students can try out different techniques using published authors as their model. Another writer can give us insight into the different ways we can write, and if students come to understand that they can always look to other writing as a source of ideas for their own writing, they will have learned a very useful life skill.

Lastly, I would say that writing for an authentic audience and understanding who that audience is are both essential for grades 3–5. These upper-elementary students can reach a larger and more distant audience than students in earlier grades.

So much of learning to write comes from learning how your writing comes across to an audience, what they understand or get confused by, what made an impression on them, or where they got lost. Reading our own writing

from the perspective of an audience is a vital but very challenging skill that is learned most effectively when we actually get to write for an authentic audience.

When students publish their work for a real audience, this is a great place to introduce the idea of editing for "correctness." Grammar and conventions are essential aspects of the writing process, yet the research literature is clear that instruction in those areas happens best in context—right when the students have a need to ensure proper spelling and punctuation and care about getting it right.

Collaborative Classroom: These skills seem so important, and yet writing often gets less attention than reading in the approach to English Language Arts instruction. In fact, a lot of writing instruction is heavily focused on writing in response to reading. How does this impact writing? What are the benefits for students in moving beyond writing in response to a prompt?

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: One of the most significant impacts of instruction that's centered on "writing in response to reading" is that this approach narrows writing to short-answer or constructed responses in the reading program.

It may seem as if the students are doing a lot of writing, but the writing they are doing is mostly just a comprehension check based on response to a passage they have been given. If this is the majority of writing that students are doing, then there are a wide range of writing experiences they are not having: generating their own ideas for writing, writing more substantive genres, doing their own research and writing about that.

A big part of learning to write is learning what to do when you face the blank page—when you are generating your own topic and question, rather than just responding to a question that was given to you. Every child has questions and a desire to learn.

Children also bring enormous funds of knowledge. If our children aren't writing about something they choose, a topic in which they have the ability to be an authority, they aren't learning the full aspects of what it means to write. It is an error and a huge missed opportunity if students end up thinking, 'Only after I read, I write.'

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Collaborative Classroom: Written communication—especially in today's digital world—is everywhere. Why might teachers think differently about placing equal importance on writing?

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: Well, you're right that writing happens everywhere. Writing as a skill is a huge gatekeeper and advancer for people. In the workplace and in higher education, writing skills are essential to success.

But it's not just about writing in the future world of college and work. Kids are already publishing and writing in multiple forms on the internet. As we look at social media or online games, kids are constantly making things and publishing. The challenge is that there is often no link for most kids between what they are learning in school and what they are publishing right now in the world.

If we as educators can make this link, this is a powerful opportunity to support students in understanding the responsibility of being an author. Knowledge, authority, and ethics are parts of being an author. It's a way of showing students that they matter and their thoughts matter.

Writing as a skill is a huge gatekeeper and advancer for people. In the workplace and in higher education, writing skills are essential to success.

Collaborative Classroom: How might teachers balance the need for teaching students to respond to a prompt and perform well on tests with the need to offer students choice, ownership, and voice in their creative endeavors?

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: We know that when kids have a strong writing program in which they do lots of writing and develop fluency, they do better on assessments.

When students don't have opportunities for regular writing, but instead just do writing that is focused on preparing for the test, they may not do well, and in fact, a sole focus on writing for high-stakes situations can produce writing anxiety. Students who develop fluency and stamina, as well as confidence in their writing, typically excel in writing and on assessments. Confident writers will do better than anxiety-filled writers.

I know that teachers often feel a pressure to teach students the formula that will "ace the test." For many years, I have worked with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in writing and with several state committees, and NWP has its own writing assessment tools. In all of these cases, assessors work hard to not look for formulaic writing, but to look for writing that has an engaging voice and interesting content. When scorers see this kind of writing, it really stands out.

We know that when kids have a strong writing program in which they do lots of writing and develop fluency, they do better on assessments.

I would say to teachers that if they encourage a lot of writing, help students develop fluency and ease in generating content, and help them develop independence and confidence as writers, their students should do well in most writing assessments.

Collaborative Classroom: Given the fact that most texts that students experience at school are less representative than they should be, how do we encourage and support students' own voices and teach them high-level writing skills? How can writing support individual children's identities?

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: Writing is an extraordinary thing. It's transcendent. I want students to understand that writing has the amazing capacity to let us all contribute to a conversation that started before we were born and that will continue after we're gone. Our writing will continue beyond us. Your location, your voice, your place, your community need to be a part of that conversation.

Therefore, we want a wonderfully representative set of texts and imagery for our students. And, when we see a book that shows difference, we use it as a mentor text—as a way that we can learn about someone or something different from ourselves. We should also encourage students to write books themselves, bind them, and publish them so that they can see themselves in the books on the shelf.

I want students to understand that writing has the amazing capacity to let us all contribute to a conversation that started before we were born and that will continue after we're gone.

Collaborative Classroom: Our ongoing partnership with the National Writing Project has been such a rich experience. Could you say a little about how that partnership began?

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: The National Writing Project began working with Collaborative Classroom back in 2005 when the organization was still called Developmental Studies Center, very early in the development of the Being a Writer program. This was a period of tremendous growth in both research about writing and the practice of teaching writing, so it was exciting to be part of imagining and conceptualizing a comprehensive curriculum that really focused on writing.

For context, it's important to remember that, at that time, there was a considerable investment in the development of reading curricula, and sometimes writing instruction was added as an afterthought. In contrast, *Being a Writer* puts writing and the writer at the center of the curriculum in a way that complements the full range of language arts experiences. It was great to be a part of that project early on.

Later, of course, local NWP sites may have worked with teachers and schools adopting the *Being a Writer* curriculum, and the partnership grew. Now, as a member of the Collaborative Classroom Board of Trustees, I have an opportunity to see how this partnership can continue into the future.

Being a Writer *puts writing and the writer at the center of the curriculum in a way that complements the full range of language arts experiences.*

Collaborative Classroom: As you've said, the National Writing Project was involved in the early development of *Being a Writer* and has continued to be supportive of the work we do in that curriculum. What specifically about our approach resonates with your beliefs about teaching writing?

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl: The program name itself says a lot about the intent. From the very beginning, *Being a Writer* treats the student as a writer. That is vitally important.

The message that you are already a writer sends a message to students: you are a writer, you are going to get even better at your writing, and you are going to learn about a lot of different kinds of writing. The program is telling students that their voice is important. *Being a Writer* is also a curriculum that values and addresses the craft of writing and the fact that there is a deep connection between what we want to do as readers, writers, speakers, and listeners.

Also, one of the many places where [emeritus Collaborative Classroom board member] Zaretta Hammond and I agree is that frequently we see writing instruction that is over-scaffolded. Many teachers end up doing the majority of writing and thinking for their students, and unfortunately students are just doing a small part, remaining dependent learners.

Being a Writer takes a very different approach: students are given a lot of choice and independence, and teachers release responsibility throughout the program, yet have ways to support students with revising, editing, and correcting within the context of the students' writing, where it makes sense.

This approach to evidence-based writing instruction enables students to build their skills and continually know they are writing for real audiences—and most importantly, they know that their individual voices and thoughts have value. Each student is, in effect, being a writer from the very start. ■

Section 2

Articles

Our Approach to Evidence-Based Writing Instruction

By Sarah Rosenthal & Lisa Borah-Geller

In this article, veteran educators and Collaborative Classroom curriculum developers Sarah Rosenthal and Lisa Borah-Geller unpack our evidence-aligned approach to teaching writing in grades K–5.

DEVELOPING YOUNG WRITERS

We all light up when we see small children express themselves spontaneously, through a drawing, a song, a somersault, a giggle, or a heartfelt sigh. And we all admire the great writers whose texts impart powerful insights, make the bestseller lists, or morph into movies that move us.

What happens in between?

School.

Not every student will become a renowned author, of course—though some most certainly will. But all of our students can and should come to see themselves as writers and grow in their ability to write clearly, creatively, and purposefully.

So how do we nurture that original, expressive spark we celebrate in the very young, while steadily feeding and guiding the flame? How do we develop writers who are able to confidently and effectively communicate through written language, so that they can succeed in school and beyond?

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

According to the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, a successful writing program must:

- Provide time to write daily
- Teach the writing process and have students apply it for a variety of purposes
- Help students develop fluency with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, and typing and word-processing
- Create an engaged community of writers[1]

The work of numerous experts in the field of writing instruction underscores the importance of the guidelines recommended by IES. Research has demonstrated that "increasing the amount of time students spend writing enhanced the quality of their text" and that "highly effective teachers asked students to write often and for a variety of purposes."[2]

> *All of our students can and should come to see themselves as writers and grow in their ability to write clearly, creatively, and purposefully.*

Research also indicates that students need authentic opportunities (such as those provided by the writing-process approach) to use grammar, usage, and mechanics skills to improve their writing.[3] Studies have made clear that spelling and handwriting need to be taught explicitly and become automatic and fluent so students can focus on conveying meaning through writing.[4]

Studies have also indicated that students who experience a sense of community at school perform better academically, along with a host of other benefits.[5]

Research also supports a number of additional practices that operate in harmony with the IES guidelines. These include providing access to strong mentor texts, modeling and guiding students through the writing process, and providing feedback to students on their writing from both teachers and peers.[6, 7, 8, 9] Teacher feedback not only benefits students, but serves as a type of formative assessment that helps teachers adjust classroom instruction to target student needs.[10]

Writing about reading has been shown to be particularly beneficial, and students who write in response to texts usually improve their reading and writing skills and their content knowledge.[11] In addition, the role of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching is crucial in helping create an inclusive learning environment that fosters academic engagement and growth for all students.[12]

ROOTED IN THE EVIDENCE; TRUE TO OUR MISSION

The approach to writing instruction in *Being a Writer*, our comprehensive K–5 writing curriculum, is rooted in these evidence-based practices. We also stay true to Collaborative Classroom's commitment to educating the whole child by blending social development and academic instruction.

Our approach supports teachers with making their classrooms more culturally and linguistically responsive. Students draw on their own experiences, knowledge, and linguistic backgrounds, exercise meaningful choice of writing topics, and write for authentic purposes.

All instruction takes place within the classroom writing community, in which every student is a valued and supported member. Students regularly publish their finished work and share it with their community.

Our approach also supports instructional equity in the teaching of writing by providing a year-long program of grade-specific, fully articulated lessons, providing teachers with robust, consistent, carefully paced K–5 instruction that is grounded in Collaborative Classroom's more than four decades of research and practice.

These daily lessons incorporate highly engaging mentor texts selected to exemplify genre characteristics, specific writing strategies and organizational structures, and author's craft. The texts are also chosen for their capacity to both mirror students' diverse backgrounds and provide windows into the worlds of others.[13, 14, 15]

The accompanying assessment and conferring tools have been assiduously designed to track students' development, provide data needed to respond in real time to their evolving needs, and help teachers arrive at grades.

HELPING STUDENTS WRITE AND TEACHERS TEACH

Writing well is not easy. No worthy task is, whether you're climbing a mountain, playing the drums, or writing code. The teaching of writing requires a careful balancing of freedom and discipline, so that students become equally willing to take creative risks and attend to the nuances of writerly craft.

Collaborative Classroom's approach to teaching writing weaves together the many threads of evidence-based writing instruction in a seamless and effective way. This allows students to develop their innate capacity for powerful self-expression within a safe, caring environment, and allows teachers to focus on their calling: the teaching of students. ■

TIME TO REFLECT

1. What has brought you to this guide?
2. **Connect to Practice:** Based on what the IES recommends for a successful writing program, what do you feel is currently strongest in your classroom? Weakest?

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Reading and Writing: Reciprocal Opportunities to Become Both Brilliant and Infinite

By Nicole Campbell

"Juliet, I gave you your first set of purple composition notebooks when you turned thirteen. Do you remember what I wrote on your card?"

Reading will make you brilliant.
Writing will make you infinite.

"Juliet, you must write. You will write. ... This world is yours to reinvent. Do you understand?"

The above excerpt, from Juliet Takes a Breath by Gabby Rivera, demonstrates the interconnected power of literacy's twin components, writing and reading. Juliet is encouraged to read and in turn, use writing to become infinite and reinvent the world.

RECIPROCAL PROCESSES

Reading and writing have long been established as companion learning processes, most commonly referred to as reciprocal (Graham and Herbert, 2011). What does that mean?

"Reciprocal" indicates a symbiotic relationship. This symbiosis in reading and writing is apparent when we realize:

- Reading and writing are born from two naturally occurring language processes: speaking and listening.
- Reading and writing are interconnected. They mutually exchange energy to serve one another.

When it comes to language processes, reciprocity refers to the origin of reading and writing abilities. The human brain is equipped to house and develop centers for speaking and listening. This is not the case for reading

and writing. The brain, with the benefit of plasticity, dips into the existing communication centers to begin forging new neural paths for the skills of reading and writing.

The interconnection of reading and writing instruction has several well-established benefits. When both disciplines are equally engaged, space is created for a mutual energy exchange that yields profits in two disciplines instead of one (Graham and Herbert, 2011).

When we learn to **decode**, we look at written symbols, translate them to their respective sounds, then blend the sounds together and read a word. We repeat the process with a series of words that make a sentence. This is often referred to as ***lifting words off a page*** (Norton and Wolf, 2012).

When we learn to **encode**, we hold words we want to say in our mind, break each of those words into their respective sounds and symbols mentally and then physically construct or write those symbols onto a page. The process is repeated with a series of words that form a sentence or a complete thought. The idea begins in our mind, is disassembled into parts, and reassembled through writing on the page (Norton and Wolf, 2012).

For many learners, the physical task of deconstructing and reconstructing word parts to encode facilitates skill acquisition. As we strengthen encoding skills, an automaticity with word recognition develops that benefits reading fluency, and an increased reading fluency frees cognitive space for greater reading comprehension (Norton and Wolf, 2012).

Learning to read and engage in the work of other writers provides a conceptual understanding of the genres of writing and their design. When students understand the genre on a deeper, conceptual level, taking on the role of writer themselves and composing from scratch becomes less daunting (Graham and Perin, 2007).

Despite the definitive relationship and mutual benefit of these partners, classroom practice has been glaringly slanted towards reading. Why is that?

A glimpse into U.S. educational history gives us some answers.

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Despite the definitive relationship and mutual benefit of these partners, classroom practice has been glaringly slanted towards reading.

REVIEW OF LITERACY INITIATIVES IN U.S. HISTORY

In 1965, the passage of the Elementary Education and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) brought about three effects:

- First, this law increased the influence of the Federal Government in K–12 education.
- Second, ESEA established Title 1, a program that allocated federal resource dollars to schools in an attempt to level the learning playing field for economically disadvantaged children.
- Most importantly, in 1965, ESEA introduced annual, mandatory standardized testing in all public schools.

In the decades since standardized testing became a part of life in American education, the country has seen dramatic increases in state spending for testing.

Stress levels for both children and adults in schools and districts have risen dramatically with the emphasis of test performance. High stakes = high stress.

Standardized tests have largely been focused on reading, math, and science; consequently, arts and humanities disciplines have been devalued and scarce.

In 1997, the U.S. Congress asked the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to partner with the Department of Education to establish a National Reading Panel to comb the existing research for evidence-based answers to this pivotal question:

What are the most effective, evidence-based methods for teaching children to read?

In 2000, the commission published their findings in The National Reading Panel Report (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The crux of this report became known as "The Big Five."

The panel's "recipe" for best practice in the teaching of reading had five elements:

1. Phonemic Awareness
2. Phonics
3. Fluency
4. Vocabulary
5. Comprehension

The Big Five as a recipe for on-grade-level reading success became the focus of classroom teachers, administrators, and test writers everywhere. Nightly news reports spoke about the percentage of third graders in individual states reading on or below grade level.

Research-based reading instruction became the buzzword of the decade.

In 2001, George Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act added some new factors to the national conversation about reading. With NCLB, school funding was tied to performance on standardized testing in reading. In governmental circles, the received wisdom of the day was that the "recipe for success" in reading was now clear, and the next course was to have students demonstrate this success on standardized tests.

U.S. political leaders believed these test scores would discredit the notion that American students were falling behind academically to their peers around the world.

In hindsight, it's evident that this NCLB push for the most effective, evidence-based reading instruction was flawed.

Our nation, in fact, left one subject behind. It was writing.

Reading and writing are partners. They are interconnected.

CONSEQUENCES OF LEAVING WRITING BEHIND

The absence of teaching writing as a craft or process has a myriad of consequences that include life skills, communication, sense making and understanding. Without writing as an equal presence in the literacy classroom, students can suffer from a poignant missed opportunity in both writing and reading.

The obvious consequence is that writing is an important life skill. Along with speaking, writing is a dominant communication option for most humans.

Another point to consider is the importance of writing as a cognitive tool. Writing can be used (in its many forms) to mentally hold on to information too heavy for short term memory's grasp. In school students are taught to write about something they have read to help deepen their understanding. Many of us use the tool of writing to jot notes in the margins of something we read or when we are making sense of a new text.

Writing is an essential skill for working adults across a wide swath of professions and trades. In the years since our public schools have adopted the "that's not on the test" mantra, universities and employers have frequently bemoaned the underdeveloped writing skills of their newest students and employees.

Despite the importance of writing as a skill and the consequences of not developing it, our classroom pedagogy is heavily weighted towards the development of on-grade reading level skills (Graham, 2019).

The art of writing as a process and a craft has become a shadow component of literacy instruction. In some classrooms, this shadowy existence looks like:

"We get to writing whenever we have time."

Unfortunately, when standardized reading tests are attached to funding dollars and teacher evaluations, time for writing never comes.

When learners aren't engaged in being writers themselves, their ability to synthesize and evaluate other authors' texts is compromised.

Current K–12 classrooms that do regularly include writing instruction often only include the practice of writing in response to reading. Students are instructed to write in response to higher level, evaluative questions about texts. This type of activity is beneficial, as students are required to reread and think deeply, thus strengthening comprehension skills (Brindle, et al., 2016; Graham, 2019).

Research indicates that more often, classrooms omit writing skill instruction. This is despite the established knowledge that reading and writing are interconnected and mutually exchange energy to serve one another. When learners aren't engaged in being writers themselves, their ability to synthesize and evaluate other authors' texts is compromised.

Without a balance of both reading and writing, students are at risk of not accessing all of their literacy potential. An imbalance of exposure to encoding with a singular focus on decoding may negatively impact growth in both for budding readers and writers.

THE FUTURE MUST INCLUDE INTERCONNECTED LITERACY PRACTICE

Research has clearly shown us what learners need. Classroom literacy practice is in need of reorganization. Space and practice must be provided for writing to influence reading as much as the converse. The following are specific examples of how this looks in the classroom:

1. Focus should be placed on teaching explicitly foundational writing skills to mastery. Attention must be paid to the teaching of foundational writing skills with the same fervor as foundational reading skills (Graham, 2019; Graham and Herbert, 2011).
2. Significant evidence exists that writing instruction leads to reading improvement and reading instruction leads to writing improvement. Explicit writing instruction integrated with reading instruction is critical at all grades. Students' early prewriting attempts carry signals about later decoding, spelling, and reading comprehension performance. Learners who are reading decodable texts with controlled vocabularies should be scaffolded to write similarly (Graham and Herbert, 2011; Graham and Perin, 2007).
3. Students at all grade levels need opportunities to write at length often and within a community of fellow writers. Similarly, the modeling of writing by a teacher as fellow writer is an established, rewarding process (Gilbert and Graham, 2010; Graham and Herbert, 2011).

4. Students need access to models and exemplars of established writers and genres. Exposure to and instruction around high-quality mentor texts engages students in developing a conceptual understanding. With deep understanding of the framework of a genre, the student is empowered and armed to take on the role of writer (Graham and Perin, 2007).

In the United States, learners are waiting for their schools to provide them with opportunities to be, like the heroine in *Juliet Takes a Breath*, both brilliant and infinite. ■

TIME TO REFLECT

1. **Connect to Practice:** Do you relate to the sentiment many educators express, "We get to writing whenever we have time"? What small changes could you implement based on the reciprocal nature of reading and writing to increase writing time in your classroom?
2. **Connect to Practice:** How often do you model writing to your students? In what ways could you incorporate this process more regularly?

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Teaching Writing Conventions for Effective Communication

By Jeremy Hyler

TEACHING CONVENTIONS IN AN EVOLVING WORLD

We live in an exciting time for teaching writing. The ways we write have dramatically expanded—from traditional essays and reports to blogging and texting. There are so many formats for expressing ourselves via the written word. For teachers of writing, this evolution presents a challenge. With so many informal writing contexts now available, the role of conventions is often overlooked. Educators frequently find that the writing their students produce for class assignments misses the mark when it comes to conventions.

So, what are conventions? Conventions in writing refer to the standard use of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and other elements of written communication. Something as simple as a missing capital letter or a period can change the meaning of a sentence.

Writing doesn't always require formality. However, there are times when writing conventions matter immensely. As educators it is our responsibility to teach conventions and ensure that students fully understand the context in which they are writing and the expectations of their specific audience.

WHY TEACHING CONVENTIONS STILL MATTERS

Conventions provide a framework for clear communication. When writers follow the standard usage rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling, their ideas and arguments are easier for readers to understand.

The skillful use of conventions conveys professionalism and credibility. When writers use proper grammar and spelling, they demonstrate that they take their task seriously. This can be especially important in professional settings where a writer's career could be impacted.

> *Conventions provide a framework for clear communication.*

The use of conventions impacts audience as well. Proper grammar and punctuation make a writer's work easier to read for striving readers or multilingual readers whose first language is not English. Following conventions makes writing more inclusive and ensures that it reaches the widest possible audience.

Conventions are also important for engaging the reader. When a writer attends to conventions, their writing flows smoothly from one idea to the next. The use of conventions makes writing a pleasure to read.

CONVENTIONS, FLEXIBILITY, AND CODE SWITCHING

As we consider how to teach our students about the use of writing conventions, we might ask ourselves: What does an astute writer look like in today's digital age?

Let's consider what Graham & Perin state in the Writing Next Report:

"Most contexts of life (school, the workplace, and the community) call for some level of writing skill, and each context makes overlapping, but not identical, demands. Proficient writers can adapt their writing flexibly to the context in which it takes place" (p. 9).

So, to put it plainly, proficient writers are mindful writers. Students must develop the discernment, flexibility, and the skills to shift their writing as they move between the various spaces in which they write.

If students can master the differences between formal and informal writing spaces, the readers of their writing will better comprehend what the writer is trying to convey.

Students are quite capable of code switching (Wheeler & Swords, 2004) when taught to do so and given the chance to practice. For instance, students should learn that an email to a teacher or their manager would constitute formal writing in which they should follow conventions and grammar rules.

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Proficient writers are mindful writers. Students must develop the discernment, flexibility, and the skills to shift their writing as they move between the various spaces in which they write.

On the other hand, if a student is sending a text message to their best friend, they can be freer and more casual. Learning to use the type of writing for the space they are in has real-world consequences: If we don't teach students that it is inappropriate to include text talk in an email to a potential employer, that can lead to them not getting the job.

INTEGRATE—DON'T ISOLATE—THE TEACHING OF CONVENTIONS

Differentiation between formal and informal writing is only part of the equation. The question still remains of how we teach conventions to students.

Writing professionals, such as Constance Weaver, Jeff Anderson, English teachers, and literacy researchers, have been arguing about the best way to teach our students conventions for over 100 years. But there are some points that most can agree on.

To have a demonstrable effect on students' abilities as writers, the instruction of conventions must be integrated.

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To have a demonstrable effect on students' abilities as writers, the instruction of conventions must be integrated.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) even passed a resolution that states:

> ***"…the use of isolated grammar and usage exercises not supported by theory and research is a deterrent to the improvement of students' speaking and writing and that, in order to improve both of these, class time at all levels must be devoted to opportunities for meaningful listening, speaking, reading and writing" (NCTE, 1985).***

Students learn best when they are taught within context. It is important for teachers to examine closely what students struggle with in terms of conventions, and turn those struggles into powerful lessons that students can benefit from.

DON'T PROHIBIT CERTAIN WAYS OF WRITING

Equally important, telling students they can't write a certain way can create apprehension, dissatisfaction, and even a dislike towards writing. As educators, we want our students to feel empowered to play with their writing and freely express their ideas—even as they learn to discern between the demands of different writing contexts.

After all, that freedom to express themselves, along with exposure to high-quality mentor texts, is key to how students find their voice as writers.

CONCLUSION

Skilled writers have a strong understanding of conventions, and they wield them with discernment based on the particular type of writing and audience.

This requires educators to be equally discerning in how we teach conventions. Specifically, we must teach conventions within the context of students' own writing, not in isolated exercises. We must also encourage students to consider how conventions work within the different formal and informal writing spaces they experience every day. ■

TIME TO REFLECT

1. Reflect on the question in the article: *What does an astute writer look like in today's digital age?*
2. **Connect to Practice:** Do you currently teach conventions within context? If so, what activities would you recommend to a colleague who currently teaches conventions in isolation? If not, list some methods you could implement in your instruction immediately to shift to teaching more in context.

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Five Ways to Build a Strong Writing Community

By Marine Freibrun

One of the most important things a teacher can do is to create a classroom environment and community that fosters writing. Students need to evolve as proficient writers while also enhancing their desire to write, and teachers can do that by creating a community of writers.

In my third-grade classroom, we built a solid community of writers through a practical and engaging approach. I modeled the writing process to my students, sharing my own ups and downs to make it clear that we were all in it together. Getting hands-on with writing alongside my students, I joined our class as a fellow writer.

Our classroom turned into a hub of creativity where I made sure to create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere for everyone to share their ideas. During our group learning sessions, energy filled our classroom as students freely shared thoughts, crafting a mix of creative stories.

Seeing the genuine pride in their eyes as they shared their written pieces, it hit me how crucial it was to create a space where each student felt heard and appreciated. In that warm and nurturing setting, creativity thrived, and writing became a shared journey for our community of emerging authors.

Creating a community of writers is one of the recommendations of the What Works Clearinghouse's Educator Practice Guide, Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers (Graham, et al., 2018). The authors of these practice guides combine their expertise along with research to create specific, evidence-based recommendations for educators.

So, how can you carry out this recommendation to create a community of writers in your classroom? This article explores five suggestions from the guide and my personal experience implementing each one in the classroom.

SHARE YOUR WRITING

One of the most powerful ways to teach writing is through explicit instruction and modeling, and through sharing your own writing as a teacher. By doing this, you are participating as a member of the writing community.

As you teach writing, use metacognition while thinking through the writing process, and show your students the perseverance required to create a strong piece of writing. You can also show the satisfaction that comes when finishing a piece of work.

Some more easy-to-implement strategies to share your writing include:

- Drafting a letter or narrative in front of students
- Collaborating with students on a writing project, like a class newsletter
- Offering your own examples for writing assignments that students are completing
- Demonstrating how you actively decide on a topic you're going to write about

My personal experience

Metacognition was always an effective tool to use during instruction with my students. During explicit instruction and modeling, I shared my thoughts aloud with my students. Depending on the writing activity, I would create my writing piece live—in front of and with my students.

Through this process I was not only demonstrating metacognition, but I was also creating success criteria for students to refer to as they started to complete their own writing pieces.

PROVIDE WRITING CHOICES

Students should have multiple opportunities to choose what they want to write. Giving students the freedom to choose a topic or to modify a teacher-selected topic is a powerful way to build community.

Giving students the freedom to choose a topic or to modify a teacher-selected topic is a powerful way to build community.

You can foster choice by having students keep notebooks they can use to record writing ideas, like memories or their experiences throughout the day. Give students daily access to their notebooks so they can easily add and build upon their ideas throughout the school year. In addition to keeping a writing notebook for ideas, encourage your students to write just for themselves in a journal format, or to write for their peers or an imaginary audience.

In addition to writing choices, provide students with instruction for writing to prompts. Prompts help students to write while also making sure their writing is aligned with your instructional purpose. Make sure the writing prompt clearly states expectations for content and writing skills.

Students should also be given room to express their thinking. Using prompts can help teachers to utilize specific content standards, assess student writing, and build engagement among students.

My personal experience

Giving students choice in writing can foster a love for writing, while also supporting students to practice mindfulness and enhance their creativity. To incorporate choice and mindfulness in our classroom, I instituted an end-of-the-day reflection writing session. Each student had their own spiral notebook that they used as a journal to reflect on their learning for the day.

I would sometimes give students a "free write" session where they were encouraged to write freely about their day, goals, or anything that was on their mind. Other times I would give students a specific end-of-the-day prompt to use to help guide their writing.

COLLABORATE AS WRITERS

Another way to build a community of writers is to encourage your students to collaborate throughout the writing process. Students can work together while brainstorming ideas for a topic, forming writing groups during the drafting process, and by editing and reviewing each other's writing.

Collaboration can also look like students creating a piece of writing together. Students can use chart paper to collaborate on and to display their collaborative work. Students can also work together to develop a school or class newsletter or to write stories they share with peers in other classes.

When you collaborate as writers, you're also honoring students' diverse perspectives.

When you collaborate as writers, you're also honoring students' diverse perspectives. As mentioned in the white paper, *Writing for Life: The Evidence Base for Powerful Writing Instruction*, (Ramirez Stukey, M. & Eidman-Aadahl, E., n.d.), recognizing and magnifying the voices of students in writing stands as a crucial element of effective writing instruction and serves as a means to nurture the distinctive abilities and talents of each student.

Writing, being a fundamental mode of communication, should offer students the chance to articulate their perspectives in a manner reflective of their life experiences and individual voices. When students collaborate, they can amplify each other's voices.

My personal experience

My favorite way to collaborate as writers was through creating a class story book. This was a great end-of-the-year activity that encouraged collaboration among students. We had a book theme, and students worked together on their individual stories—brainstorming, drafting, and giving each other feedback. The finished product was a memory of our school year together that my students could keep.

GIVE AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK

Throughout the writing process, students need opportunities to give and receive feedback. Through feedback, students will know whether their writing is able to convey its message. Students should be sharing their writing with you, and responding to your written and verbal feedback.

Students should also be responding to their peers' feedback and having conversations about what could improve their writing. Encourage your students to participate in the feedback process with one another. Use rubrics, teacher-student conferences, peer conferences, and writing exemplars to encourage feedback conversations. When students work together to provide each other feedback, it can enhance their understanding of their own writing.

Before sending students to give each other feedback, however, make sure your students have been explicitly taught strategies on how to provide and receive feedback. Through explicit instruction, model and provide sample language for students to use while they're giving and receiving verbal feedback. Give students sentence frames to guide their conversations.

Here are some examples:

- When you wrote ____ it helped me understand ____.
- I could picture ____ when I read ____.
- A standout line in your writing for me is ____ because ____.

My personal experience

My favorite way to help students give feedback was through the Jigsaw method. I used it in a variety of ways, but the most influential way to support students with collaboration was using the Jigsaw method as a form of feedback. Engaging in this activity, students learned from one another while also learning how to give and receive constructive and effective feedback. This was also a way to collaborate and learn through a shared experience. Giving students opportunities to receive individual feedback is also a vital part of the writing process. When this is modeled, students can use those strategies during a Jigsaw activity.

PUBLISH STUDENTS' WRITING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Build your community of writers by publishing students' writing. There are so many ways to publish their work:

- Displaying writing in the classroom on poster boards and anchor charts
- Posting on a blog
- Sharing through Google Docs
- Working with a student book publishing company
- Using web-based resources (FlipGrid, Canva, etc.)
- Creating construction paper books with binding

You can post your students' work outside of your classroom, too! Post their work for others to see by hanging completed writing pieces in the front office, in the hallways, or in multipurpose rooms and auditoriums. Take it one step further, and have your students complete a gallery walk that showcases everyone's work. Have students use sticky notes to leave each other positive praise on the work. Through this activity, students' writing will be celebrated and your community of writers is built and strengthened.

My personal experience

I showcased my students' work in our classroom in a variety of ways—anchor charts, bulletin board displays, class books, etc.—but one of my favorite ways was through an "Author's Tea." This was typically something I did at the end of the school year, but it could be done during any time of the school year. Students would choose their favorite writing piece from the year. I got fruit platters, juice, tea, and other yummy treats and decorated a classroom table with the food and flowers. I invited students' family members to join us for tea and set out all of my students' writing that they chose. I also set up an Author's Chair where students could sit and read their writing pieces if they wanted to read aloud. It was a wonderful way to showcase writing and include family.

By embracing these strategies, educators can effectively create a vibrant and supportive community of writers within their classrooms. This approach not only aligns with best practices in teaching but also empowers students to develop essential writing skills while finding joy and value in their writing endeavors. ■

TIME TO REFLECT

1. Think back on times in your life when you felt heard and appreciated, whether in school, work, or simply with friends and family. Do you think that feeling impacted your writing?
2. Have you had an experience where you felt unheard, unsupported, and perhaps unsafe? How did that impact your writing and/or other work? What could have been done at the time to help you feel more supported?
3. **Connect to Practice:** How is your current classroom community? In what ways might you bolster it to ensure students feel heard and appreciated?
4. **Connect to Practice:** How do you currently showcase student writing? What ideas would you like to try implementing in the future?

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In Praise of the Writing Process

By Jenn Evans

> "I'm not good at writing. I don't know where to start. I don't know how to make my writing better."

Every K–5 teacher of writing has heard these remarks. To our young students, authors seem to possess magical abilities, effortlessly producing writing of all sorts, from captivating stories to compelling essays. As educators, it's our responsibility to demystify the act of writing and share some empowering truths:

- *There is a clear process to writing.*
- *The writing process is accessible to all of us, and it helps us create pieces of writing that successfully inform, persuade, and delight our readers.*
- *The more deeply we engage in the writing process, the greater the rewards.*

THE POWER OF THE WRITING PROCESS

Writing in the Age of AI

The recent explosion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) language learning models has strengthened the notion, even among some adults, that the act of writing involves magic. You put in a prompt and (ta-da!) you get writing.

The reality is, even with access to helpful AI tools, great writing doesn't appear out of thin air. As writers we must have:

- Strong critical thinking skills
- Background knowledge about our chosen topic and the skills to research it further
- Knowledge of writing genres and author's craft
- The skills to structure and organize ideas effectively
- Understanding of grammar and conventions
- Methods for finding and fixing the parts of our writing that aren't working
- Confidence in our own voice as a writer
- Trusted readers who can give us feedback

In my early drafts of this article, I did benefit from using AI tools to help generate ideas and suggest ways to organize the content. While revising, I used AI to assist me in recognizing words I overuse.

These AI tools were useful. Nonetheless we must acknowledge the limitations of AI in helping writers—especially student writers—navigate the writing process, produce strong work, and see themselves as writers.

The Limitations of AI Writing Tools

The use of AI did *not* enable me to fast-forward my way through the writing process. Nor did it magically drop a complete and polished piece of writing into my lap.

In fact, I rejected quite a few of the AI-generated suggestions, instead trusting my knowledge of the topic and my discernment as a writer, as well as insightful feedback from colleagues.

I also said "no thanks" to AI suggestions that would have erased my own unique voice as a writer.

WHY THE WRITING PROCESS REMAINS VITAL

Perhaps most importantly, *I leaned into the writing process in order to refine my ideas*—something the AI tool couldn't do for me.

In other words, I used the act of writing itself (and rewriting and revising!) to help me interrogate my own thinking and deeply examine the ideas I wanted to share.

I used the act of writing itself (and rewriting and revising) to help me interrogate my own thinking and deeply examine the ideas I wanted to share.

In short, this piece was not created with a wave of an AI wand. I went through the entire writing process, repeating several steps two or even three times. This article is better for having gone through the process.

The Joy of the Writing Process

If my journey through the writing process sounds onerous, well, it wasn't.

As a former educator who knows the writing process well, I enjoyed every step along the way—including the messy parts and the moments of writer's block.

That knowledge of and joyful trust in the writing process is something that we should strive to develop in all of our young writers.

So, how do we achieve that?

WRITING INSTRUCTION SHOULD BE PROCESS-FOCUSED, NOT PRODUCT-FOCUSED

It can be tempting to focus on writing as a product—the final pieces that our students publish. But we know that successful writing instruction is actually process-focused (NCTE, 2022). As the saying goes, it's about the journey, not the destination.

That's why it is so important to explicitly teach the writing process, step by step, and center that process in our instruction.

UNPACKING THE WRITING PROCESS

Prewriting

The journey begins with prewriting. Writers brainstorm ideas, ask themselves questions, consider what they already know about their topic, do research, and organize their thoughts. They might sketch an outline or use a planning tool.

Writers are also examining their initial ideas in the context of the genre, their intended audience, and the purpose they want to fulfill via their writing. Younger writers may want to rush through this step and into drafting, but as educators, it's our job to show them the value of spending time in this stage.

During prewriting, students may also have the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups as they brainstorm and share ideas with peers. The value of nurturing a strong classroom writing community is obvious here, since this collaborative work will be most fruitful when all writers feel supported and valued.

Drafting

The first draft is akin to laying a foundation. It's rough, imperfect, disjointed, and probably doesn't resemble the final product, but it's a necessary step on the road to literary creation.

When teaching K–5 writers, it's important to emphasize that messiness is a completely normal part of drafting.

When teaching K–5 writers, it's important to emphasize that messiness is a completely normal part of drafting. Students should concentrate on writing as freely as possible and getting their ideas on paper. If writers focus too much on editing themselves as they draft, it can often slow them down.

Revising

Writers refine their work through revision. They polish sentences, improve word choice, and add color and interest to their writing. Other revisions go deeper as writers review and evaluate the ideas in their writing.

When supporting young writers, it can be helpful to have them reflect on questions such as: "Did I actually do what I envisioned in the prewriting stage? Are there places in my writing where I might want to rethink my original ideas or structures?"

Young writers may approach revision with a deficit mindset: "Here are all the things that are wrong with my draft and now I have to fix them." However, we can help them reframe it as one of the most exciting and rewarding parts of the writing process.

Revision is often the time when writers suddenly get new insights, discover more engaging ways to present ideas, and tease out a key point that clinches their argument.

Feedback from peers and the teacher also plays a vital part during revision. So much depends, though, on *how* feedback is given and received. Students need regular practice to learn how to ask for, give, and receive helpful feedback through peer and teacher conferring.

As in the prewriting stage, having a safe, supportive writing community is a prerequisite for students to consistently give and receive helpful feedback.

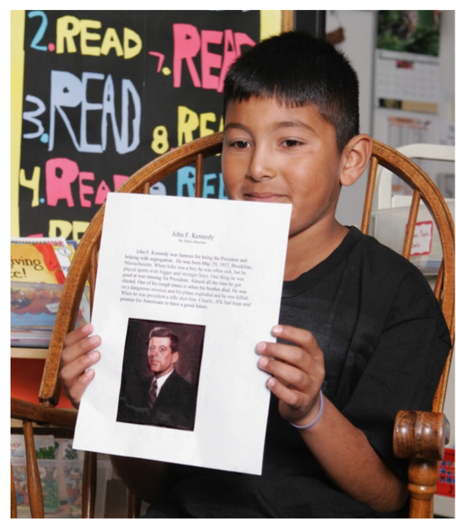
Editing and Proofreading

Editing and proofreading are necessary skills for every writer to develop. Ideally our instruction integrates spelling, grammar, and conventions directly into the writing process and emphasizes the interconnectedness of reading, spelling, and writing. Young writers also benefit from applying this instruction directly to their own writing.

At the same time, we as educators need to be mindful of our blind spots around what "good writing" is, especially during this stage of the process. Every writer brings their own distinct cultural richness and linguistic assets to their work.

Publishing

Publishing is the final stage, when finished writing is launched into the world. This is a joyful part of the process, as writers savor their accomplishments and recognize themselves as authors.



Publishing is also a valuable opportunity for learning. Young writers gain so much when they see their writing being *read and experienced by actual readers.*

Publishing is also a valuable opportunity for learning. Young writers gain so much when they see their writing being read and experienced by actual readers.

Writers can find out how well their writing accomplished its purpose. What moment of the story got the biggest laugh? What part of the argument won readers' hearts and minds?

And by interacting with readers—hearing their reactions and answering their questions—writers can reflect authentically on the writing process they went through.

K–5 writers often share their published work with the classroom community via an Author's Chair. You might also post student writing where it can be read and enjoyed by a wider audience.

In my own classroom, I encouraged my students to share their work in a variety of ways such as giving poetry readings and creating books. One student, without prompting, even recorded a movie of his short screenplay with friends over a weekend!

THE WRITING PROCESS IS NOT LINEAR

As we engage in the writing process with our students, we also want them to learn that the process is flexible and highly adaptable. According to Flower and Hayes, writing is a recursive process; it can (and should!) repeat and circle back around itself (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

In other words, skilled writers do not necessarily move through the writing process in a linear way. They feel empowered to revisit different parts of the process as needed.

Sometimes writers circle back to drafting to get a fresh start, sometimes reworking just a small piece—an opening or closing, perhaps—to make a stronger statement. Other times they are fine-tuning word choice or revising a tricky passage multiple times.

In other words, skilled writers do not necessarily move through the writing process in a linear way. They feel empowered to revisit different parts of the process as needed.

EXPLICITLY TEACHING THE WRITING PROCESS: PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Modeling the Writing Process in the Classroom

How can we explicitly teach the writing process in the classroom? One practical way to do so is through modeling the process ourselves. This has the added benefit of further strengthening the classroom writing community.

As my colleague Marine Freibrun explained in her article in this guide, "I modeled the writing process to my students, sharing my own ups and downs to make it clear that we were all in it together. Getting hands-on with writing alongside my students, I joined our class as a fellow writer."

Creative Teaching with Playdough: A Hands-On Approach

Taking an example from my own time as a middle school teacher, I always began the school year by using playdough to teach the writing process.

Using a script shared in the Ideas Plus Book 15 (NCTE, 1997) as my initial guidance, I walked 150 of my brand-new sixth graders through the process of creating a pencil holder using the playdough I'd provided to them. And they got to watch me as I created my own alongside them.

Through this act of tearing down and starting over, students learned that in prewriting, we have an infinite number of ideas to choose from, limited only by our imagination.

Every year there would be a collective gasp when I told them to mash up their first idea. "Why, Ms. Evans? This one works just fine!" students would say. Through this act of tearing down and starting over, students learned that in prewriting, we have an infinite number of ideas to choose from, limited only by our imagination.

Later steps showed the students how the writer, like a sculptor, goes through a creative and refining process to produce a final piece.

This hands-on activity served both as an opportunity for our classroom to get to know each other and start becoming a true writing community, as well as a very concrete reminder for them as to what the writing process looked like.

From Playdough to Pen and Paper: Transitioning Tools in Teaching

When we moved on from playdough to pen and paper, my students felt safe, embracing the inherent messiness of the writing process with newfound confidence.

They were no longer afraid to take risks, acknowledging imperfections as part of the journey, and eagerly diving into revisions to refine and enhance their drafts.

Continuous Modeling Throughout the School Year

For the remainder of the school year, I continued to model writing frequently, showing everything from my brainstorming a creative story to identifying important research for a persuasive article, from how I'd draft a message to my best friend to how I'd craft a letter to the district superintendent.

My students saw how the writing process played a role in drafting any piece, no matter the context.

CONCLUSION

Writing well doesn't require magic, AI tools, or rare talent. As educators, it's our job to demystify the act of writing for our young writers.

Let's empower students with the knowledge that at its heart, writing is a process … and if any magic exists, it lives within the process itself.

Every writer can access the writing process and, with time and practice, take full ownership of it and reap its rewards. ■

TIME TO REFLECT

1. **Connect to Practice:** How can you shift your current writing instruction to make it more process-focused than product-focused?
2. Have you tried using AI technology as a tool in your own life? Do you feel you may incorporate it as a tool within your teaching process and if so, how?

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The Liberatory Impact of Evidence-Based Writing Instruction

By Barbara Patterson Oden & Nicole Campbell

> "Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind."
>
> —Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

At a time when book banning and revisionist curriculum is at its most virulent, the literacy education of the next generation of students has become akin to an endangered species.

For more than two decades, nearly every diverse student population measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—racial, socio-economic, linguistic, and neurodiverse—has had a persistent literacy achievement disparity compared to their counterparts (NAEP, 2022).

Many states and localities have begun the shift toward science-of-reading-informed instruction. Improvements to writing instruction, however, have largely remained null.

Skilled literacy is more than just reading; it is the interdependent cognitive process for consuming information and creating new knowledge. This cannot develop in the absence of writing instruction.

THE URGENT NEED FOR EVIDENCE-BASED WRITING INSTRUCTION

And yet not unlike the stagnant NAEP scores, the amount of time allotted to writing instruction is at an all-time low. When it does occur, it has been relegated to responding to what students have read as a means to measure comprehension, or it is taught with exceeding rigidity for standardized testing purposes.

Might the dearth of writing instruction be a contributing factor to our nation's persistent reading achievement gaps?

With these current conditions, logic would dictate that students who are denied access to books and histories that accurately reflect and affirm their identities would spend their K–12 education being solely evaluated on their written comprehension of a dominant culture's identities and values. This wouldn't be an education; it would be a tragedy.

Nonetheless, this is reality for far too many students.

> "The truth always needs a resting place or it will lie down wherever it sees fit."

—Tarana Burke, *You Are Your Best Thing: Vulnerability, Shame Resilience, and the Black Experience*

While the fight against book bans and historically inaccurate curriculum tends to take place everywhere but inside the classroom, teaching evidence-based writing instruction can act as a counterbalance to these and other inequitable policies.

Writing has been the quintessential tool of resistance and revolution from the very founding of our country.

America's forefathers understood deeply the liberatory impact of freedom of speech and of a free press—so much so, that both were enshrined in the Constitution for themselves and prohibited by law for those they wished to remain silent and powerless.

This century's rise of blog culture is proof positive that writing's liberatory power has not wavered, and today's social media influencers can monetize the power of storytelling in posts that move hearts and minds.

Undoubtedly, there is a way forward..

> "We write for the same reason that we walk, talk, climb mountains or swim the oceans—because we can. We have some impulse within us that makes us want to explain ourselves to other human beings."

—Maya Angelou, from an interview with Vikas Shah in *Thought Economics: Conversations with the Remarkable People Shaping Our Century*

MAKING THE SHIFT TO EVIDENCE-BASED WRITING INSTRUCTION

According to the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (Graham, et al., 2012), successful writing instruction must:

- Provide daily time for writing explicit instruction and student practice
- Teach the writing process and have students apply it for a variety of purposes and audiences
- Develop students' fluency with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing and word-processing
- Create an engaged community of writers that includes teacher as writer and student autonomy

While this report's research basis spans over the last 40 years and was published in 2012, our classrooms remain riddled with popular practices rather than best practices when it comes to teaching writing.

Classrooms that are already making the shift to the science of reading are primed for making a unilateral shift to evidence-based writing instruction. For classrooms plagued with socially unjust policies, evidence-based writing instruction would serve as both the balm and liberation teachers and students desperately need.

> "Writing is a liberating medium, allowing one to move others in a multitude of directions."

—Martika Shanel, from an interview with Tiffany Turner for *The Indie Children Authors Connection* blog

Liberation is defined as the opportunity to be one's authentic self, free from oppression and harm.

The unique construct of evidence-based writing instruction leverages equitable practices more so than any other discipline. Its liberatory power to disrupt reproductive practices that negatively impact students is singular and only closely matched by its reciprocal literacy partner, reading.

Teaching writing is the very opportunity to cultivate the gifts and talents of every student. It is the skilled implementation of the four components to successful writing instruction listed above that creates the conditions for what Dr. Gholdy Muhammad calls humanizing pedagogy. She asserts in her book *Unearthing Joy: A Guide to Culturally and Historically*

Responsive Teaching and Learning that a humanizing pedagogy "elevates genius, justice, joy, love and humanity for all students" (Muhammad, 2023, p. 21).

Evidence-based writing instruction has the capacity to invoke all of these things in our students as it creates the conditions and gives them permission to share with the world who and what they say they are.

Correlating the Research with Culturally Responsive Premises

In this section, we will explicitly correlate the evidence-based writing instruction body of research with supporting culturally responsive premises.

To further illustrate the liberatory impact of these writing instruction components, we provide model instructional examples evident in the third edition of Collaborative Classroom's Being a Writer program.

Provide Daily Time For Student Writing

> "Who cares if you have a writing program if the kids don't write?"

—Dr. Steve Graham, from "Research-Based Writing Instruction: Five Essential Features," a Collaborative Classroom webinar

Effective writing instruction demands that students have a balance of opportunities to both write freely to get their ideas on paper and employ the conventions of writing. *Being a Writer* institutes a predictable three-part lesson structure that includes daily writing time.

The daily practice of writing, whether process oriented or free writing, engages students in all three stages of what neuroscientists call information processing, and it leverages oral cultural learning traditions of storytelling, song, chants, poetry, and dialogic talk. Time for writing builds students' intellectual capacity through the engagement of processing input, making meaning of said input, and the immediate application of new knowledge through directed and relevant tasks (Hammond, 2014).

Completing this three-part cognitive loop within the boundaries of culturally connected learning is the essential power of evidence-based writing instruction. Ensuring it happens daily is the moral imperative for teachers and leaders who determine how instructional schedules are designed.

Teach the Writing Process

> "Writing is like any other sort of sport. In order for you to get better at it, you have to exercise the muscle."

—Jason Reynolds, from an interview with Gayle King on CBS This Morning

During the Getting Ready to Write portion of the *Being a Writer* curriculum, students are immersed in lessons that help them learn about the writing process as well as strategies that can help them develop their writing for different stages of the process. Students learn to flexibly navigate a process that is not always linear; different pieces require different steps in the process.

In Getting Ready to Write, instruction explicitly demonstrates writing as a recursive process across stages. The teacher gradually releases responsibility to the students with sufficient scaffolding in place, including cooperative learning strategies, partner work, and conferencing.

The ability to communicate through writing has long held a dual pursuit for marginalized communities. Writing is the elevation of both intellectual and moral enrichment. The ability to communicate effectively has long been a conduit for liberation (Muhammad, 2019).

From Phyllis Wheatley pronouncing an entire people's humanity in poetry to Frederick Douglass persuading a president into bending the arc of justice toward freedom for an entire nation, possessing the skills to write for a variety of audiences and purposes has the extraordinary power to create liberation in the most oppressive circumstances.

In our schools, it has the power to dismantle the predictability of success and failure across diverse student populations.

Write For a Variety of Purposes and Authentic Audiences

> "Much of learning to write comes from learning how one's writing is experienced by an audience of readers."

—Marisa Ramirez Stukey and Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, "Writing for Life: The Evidence Base for Powerful Writing Instruction," a Collaborative Classroom white paper

Being a Writer provides learners with mentor texts which include diverse trade books, author interviews, articles, poems, podcasts, and videos. This wealth of resources provides a rich repository of ideas for writers to learn from and draw upon when time is provided for them to write.

In addition, students learn the importance of knowing why they are writing and who they are writing for before they start the writing task. They discuss how they might write differently based on their intended audience. Together as a writing community, they discuss differences between formal and informal language and which audience each is best suited for.

The use of mentor texts is widely respected by researchers as one of the most impactful writing instructional practices. In addition to reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing, it has the potential to expand the constraints of traditional print media and allow students to see themselves in the work of contemporary authors who reflect their identities, cultures, and values (Muhammad, 2019).

Moreover, emulating mentor texts across other academic literacies provides students with the opportunity to consider how scientists, historians, and mathematicians think differently within their disciplines (Muhammad, 2019).

Develop Students' Fluency with Handwriting, Spelling, Sentence Construction, Typing and Word-Processing

> "Young children in the primary grades need explicit instruction for transcription and foundational writing skills (spelling, handwriting, sentence writing)."

—Joan Sedita, in "Evidence-based Writing Instruction, the Writing Rope, and Reading-Writing Reciprocity," an interview for the Collaborative Classroom blog

Writing fluency refers to the writer's ability to quickly and easily express themselves in a way that is also easy for their audience to comprehend. Handwriting, spelling, typing, and sentence construction are all entry-point writing skills students must draw upon to translate their thoughts and ideas into writing. Automaticity or fluency with these skills creates cognitive space for the composition to occur. When these basic skills are automatic, the student can compose their message.

Authentic writing experiences are crucial; these skills shouldn't be learned in isolation. Teachers can create sentence construction exercises from mentor texts, students' lives, school events, or students' own writing (Graham, et al., 2012).

The emulation of mentor writing supports the needs of all students, including those who are emerging readers and second language learners. Its ability to support discreet entry point skill development while seated in a text that provides cultural relevance heightens a student's cognition and ability to retain the skills into working memory (Hammond, 2014).

Create an Engaged Community of Writers

> "All learning is social and writing is no different."

—Marisa Ramirez Stukey and Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, "Writing for Life: The Evidence Base for Powerful Writing Instruction," a Collaborative Classroom white paper

Being a Writer includes intentional community building right from the start, which lays the groundwork for the rest of the year's writing endeavors.

Students learn to gather as a community. They are introduced to procedures and routines in ways that suit their developmental stage. These lessons build relationships between peer writers that nurture mutual respect and a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives within the community.

Over time, this community evolves into a place where students generate ideas together, build on one another's thinking, and learn to agree and disagree respectfully. Writing partnerships are randomly generated and students learn to work together across an entire unit.

In turn, students develop relationships with peers they may or may not know well through built-in lesson supports for helping them get to know one another and solve problems that may arise through the process. Reflection questions help them generate ways to make partner work go more smoothly.

Creating community for students through writing partnership practices enhances students' cultural awareness and identity. Students not only become more responsive and reflective with their peers and their own learner mindsets, they develop the criticality to think and write more deeply about social concepts like power, justice and equality that impact their daily lives (Muhammad, 2023).

Students' increased capacity with self- and peer reflection, dialogue, and collaboration throughout the writing process all contribute to their learner clarity, dispositions, and engagement. Furthermore such development leads students to a level of self-empowerment that transcends the writing block and contributes to their success across all aspects of their school and home lives (Bloomberg, et al., 2022).

Actively Include the Teacher in the Writing Community

> "Without community, there is no liberation."

—Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*

Being a Writer includes a Teacher as Writer feature, which provides a supportive way for teachers to participate as members of the writing community. Each week begins with a prompt for teachers to respond to in their own writing notebook. This dual role as member of the writing community as well as teacher promotes a sense of belonging and safety. In addition, the teacher's writing can provide material to draw upon and use in place of writing models included in the lessons.

Evidence-based writing instruction coupled with culturally responsive pedagogy asks students to be at their most vulnerable than any other content area. How can students openly share the fragility of their identity or academic struggles in writing with a teacher they feel no connection or kinship with?

They can't and they won't.

Teachers need to have a different kind of relationship with their students that is beyond kindness; they need rapport in order to build trusting relationships. Rapport happens when students see their humanity reflected back by their teacher. There is no better way to do this than teachers modeling their own writing experiences for and with their students. From rapport, an alliance as a bonafide learning partner, not leader, will emerge between teachers and students (Hammond, 2014).

This is the cornerstone of culturally responsive teaching that will solidify the liberatory impact of evidence-based writing instruction for students.

FOR THE CULTURE AND THE COMMAS: LOOKING INWARD, MOVING TOWARD LIBERATION

> "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be?"

—Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*

This way of thinking about writing instruction may be atypical, but it is our responsibility as educators to look inward first when moving toward change. This includes thinking about writing in atypical, liberatory ways.

Changing the impact of our instruction will require unlearning many antiquated albeit popular practices and reimagining what could be possible for each and every student. Of course, teaching students to be their most brilliant selves is not, and never could be, easy work.

We are called to do it nonetheless.

If we are truly determined to eliminate achievement disparities, liberating our students to find the genius in their voices and the joy in their learning has to be the ultimate goal.

Evidence-based writing instruction is the way forward. ■

TIME TO REFLECT

1. **Connect to Practice:** What is your classroom community currently like? What can you do to establish a stronger rapport with your students and build trusting relationships?
2. **Connect to Practice:** Are you, as an educator, able to be your authentic self, free from oppression and harm? Do you think all of your students feel the same way about themselves? What can you do with your current writing instruction to give all of your students that sense of liberation?

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Section 3

White Papers

Writing for Life: The Evidence Base for Powerful Writing Instruction

By Marisa Ramirez Stukey, PhD & Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, PhD

INTRODUCTION: “THE NEGLECTED ‘R’”

The 3 “R’s”—Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic—have long been considered the cornerstones of American education. Each of these content areas has been consistently linked to success in school and in life. However, one of the “R’s” receives significantly less attention than the others. Writing, while clearly identified as a critical skill, has long been sidelined. This fact has been in evidence as far back as 2003, when The National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges authored a report entitled “The Neglected ‘R’: The Need for a Writing Revolution.”

In response, many states attempted to address this lack of writing instruction by adding a writing portion to state tests in the early 2000s. Given the clout of high-stakes state testing, it was assumed that this new assessment would lead to an increase in dedicated, quality writing instruction.

However, more than 20 years since the publication of The National Commission on Writing report, there is a continued lack of attention given to writing instruction. Despite the increased focus on testing, writing is often alloted the least amount of time in classroom scheduling (Picou, 2020) and is frequently taught in a narrow, formulaic way that prioritizes students’ proficiency on standardized tests, rather than the development of robust, comprehensive written communication skills (Applebee & Langer, 2011).

Even as quality writing instruction has been neglected in school, business and industry leaders have long indicated that writing proficiency is a ‘threshold skill’ and a key consideration in both hiring and promotion decisions.

Even as quality writing instruction has been neglected in school, business and industry leaders have long indicated that writing proficiency is a “threshold skill” and a key consideration in both hiring and promotion decisions (National Commission on Writing, 2004). In a more recent survey, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2018) found that 82% of employers agree that strong written communication skills are essential for employees. Beyond the scope of college and career, written communication has become more important to our way of life. From emails and social media to text messages and blogs, people are writing in more formats and in greater volume every day.

Although allocating sufficient time in school schedules for quality writing instruction is essential and is associated with improved performance, research has demonstrated that time alone is not enough to ensure that students become proficient writers. Students also benefit from a strong community of writers who support their learning, the ability to connect reading instruction to their writing, opportunities to write for real purposes and real audiences, and the technical skills to write with fluency and confidence. This paper calls forth the research base of quality elementary writing instruction and considers the instructional implications for educators who are supporting our youngest writers.

THE RESEARCH BASE FOR QUALITY WRITING INSTRUCTION

Creating a Community of Writers

All learning is social, and writing is no different. Students need opportunities to collaborate with peers, talk about their writing, and get feedback to grow as writers. Multiple studies have shown the power of collaboration to improve student writing (Curry, 1997; MacArthur, Schwartz, & Graham, 1991; Pritchard & Marshall, 1994; Troia & Graham, 2002; Yarrow & Topping, 2001). In each of these studies, students were encouraged to

collaborate across the writing process—generating ideas together, working collectively on a text, and providing peer feedback and editing.

Young writers thrive in classroom environments where writing is modeled, supported, and celebrated. Students who see themselves as writers are motivated to write, and those who exist in a community that values writing have better opportunities to develop their writing craft and skill (Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, et al., 2012). A community of writers should include the teacher as a member of that community. Teachers who model the importance of writing to communicate, the perseverance necessary for revision, and "sharing the pen" with their students have a greater impact on the quality and composition of their students' writing (Curry, 1997; Troia & Graham, 2002). Teacher modeling of the writing process is key for young writers' development.

Allowing students choice and helping them make decisions about their writing are critical components in creating a community of writers. Student choice not only increases motivation and engagement but has also been "linked to increases in student effort, task performance, and subsequent learning" (Marzano Research, n.d.). Multiple studies show that choice in writing supports students in their development as writers (Curry, 1997; MacArthur, Schwartz, & Graham, 1991). Students need opportunities to choose their topics, show their knowledge, and add their voices to the bigger conversation.

Peer editing and conferring, as well as teacher feedback, are particularly key aspects of a community of writers. Multiple studies have attested to the power of peer feedback as a part of the writing process (Curry, 1997; MacArthur, Schwartz, & Graham, 1991; Troia & Graham, 2002; Yarrow & Topping, 2001). For example, in one study, upper-grade elementary students were paired and taught how to receive and give feedback to one another. Feedback included both praise and critical feedback to move the writer forward (MacArthur, Schwartz, & Graham, 1991). Students who received feedback produced writing of higher quality when revising with peer support than students who worked through a process approach.

As mentioned previously, ample time daily for writing instruction and writing is essential. While research does not give a specific amount of time that students should spend, a recent IES practice guide recommends that elementary students spend a minimum of 30 minutes daily writing and 30 minutes engaging in writing instruction (Graham, Bollinger, & Booth Olson, et al., 2018). Many classrooms fall well short of that allotment of time (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gilbert & Graham, 2010), although literacy instructional blocks of time have increased. The increased time in ELA blocks is often devoted to reading-focused instruction, without consideration for the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing.

Ensuring a Strong Reading-Writing Connection

Although reading and writing do not employ the exact same set of skills, they do draw on common sources of knowledge. Writers draw on their knowledge of features of language such as syntax, phonics, vocabulary, and features of text, such as genre conventions and organizational structures. The link between strong writers and strong readers is clear. As an example, students who have ample time to write show a 14 percentile-point jump on measures of reading comprehension (Graham, Harris, & Santangelo, 2015). In addition, students who are directed to write about what they read or learned show significant improvements in the comprehension of that material (Graham & Hebert, 2011). Writing in response to reading clearly supports a deeper understanding of the reading.

There have been recent calls for writing in response to reading as the main or only form of writing instruction. However, there are potential issues with that approach. Writing in response to reading can narrow writing to short answers or constructed responses. It may seem as though students are doing a lot of writing, but the writing they are doing is mostly a comprehension check. If writing in response to reading becomes the mainstay of the writing instruction, there is a wide variety of experiences that students are not getting: generating their own ideas for writing, writing in more substantive genres, doing research, or writing about their findings.

Writing and the teaching of writing not only deepen students' comprehension when reading but also their recognition and decoding of words in text (International Literacy Association, 2020). Decoding and encoding are reciprocal processes. As students engage in writing, they are using their knowledge of sound-spelling patterns to convey their thoughts. Research suggests that encoding instruction supports later development of spelling, writing, and reading skills (Weiser & Mathes, 2011). In addition, teaching students how to spell and practicing those spelling skills in writing not only support better spelling but enhance multiple reading skills (Graham & Santangelo, 2014).

Mentor texts are another link in the reading and writing connection. Through the use of mentor texts, students can try out different techniques using published authors as their models. Another writer can give us insights into the different ways we can write. Students will come to understand that they can always look to other writing as a source of ideas for their own writing. A meta-analysis indicated that mentor text use is one of the key elements of writing instruction (Graham & Perin, 2007). Studies also show that reading mentor texts and discussing the writing techniques used within the texts improved students' own use of structure, style, and writing conventions (Corden, 2007; Premont, Young, & Wilcox, et al., 2017).

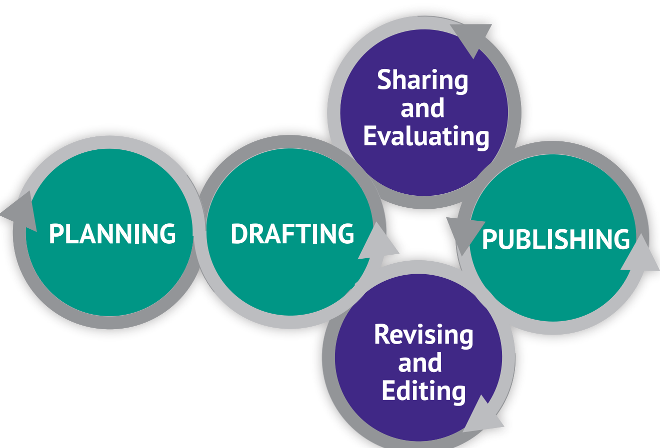
A popular saying is that "reading is breathing in and writing is breathing out." While the reciprocal relationship is indisputable, allowing dedicated time for both reading and writing is necessary for the relationship to flourish. It is often assumed that students become better writers by writing more. And while studies have shown that students who are provided with additional time to write weekly have greater gains in the quality of their writing (Graham, McKeown, & Kiuhara, et al., 2012), the act of writing in and of itself is not sufficient to enhance students' writing competence (Graham & Harris, 1997). Students need quality instruction on the wide varieties of reading and writing necessary for clear and compelling communication.

Employing the Writing Process for a Variety of Purposes and Audiences

A strong writing community is designed to support writers throughout the writing process. While sometimes presented as a list of steps, the writing process is recursive, moving back and forth along a process towards a published piece.

Explicit teaching of the processes of writing is important for helping developing writers learn how to approach the different writing tasks and challenges they will encounter.

Elements of the Writing Process



Multiple studies indicate the importance of teaching students various strategies they can employ as they engage in the writing process (Curry, 1997; Glaser & Brunstein, 2007; Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005; Guastello, 2001; Pritchard & Marshall, 1994; Tracy, Reid, & Graham, 2009). Strategies might include different approaches to planning, trying out sentences orally before writing them, working with peers to edit their writing, or learning to use sharing in the author's chair as a way to self-evaluate and self-monitor. Strategies can also include learning to use mentor texts within the writing process or learning to manage the social aspects of the community of writers, such as giving and receiving feedback. Students need many such experiences where they move among the phases of the writing process recursively as their text evolves (MacArthur, Schwartz, & Graham, 1991; Pritchard & Marshall, 1994).

In addition to developing flexibility in the processes of writing, students also need to develop the flexibility that allows them to address different purposes for writing. Writing is a tool for thinking and learning, a skill that will be useful throughout our lives. We use writing to plan, to keep track of things, to organize content, and to reflect on our experiences. While much of our writing is done for ourselves or for our own purposes, there is also a tremendous amount of writing we will do for others, and consequently students must understand that writing for various purposes requires different skills and techniques. Learning the features of various genres is an important part of the writing process. In particular, students need to understand how the features of each genre support the purpose of the writing itself and how genres have real-world applications (Glaser & Brunstein, 2007; Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005; Lane, Harris, & Graham, et al., 2008; Troia & Graham, 2002). For example, writing a letter to persuade the reader requires the use of different writing techniques from those required for writing a letter that describes or narrates.

Much of learning to write comes from learning how one's writing is experienced by an audience of readers—what they understand, what makes an impression on them, or where they get lost. Writing for an authentic audience is an essential part of the writing done at school. Aspects of understanding the audience include adjusting the tone, sharpening word choice, and considering the background knowledge of the reader. Extensive studies suggest that teaching students to consider their audience and authentically write for a real audience improves writing instruction (Berninger, Rutber, & Abbott, et al., 2006; Ferretti, Lewis, & Andrews-Weckerly, 2009; Sawyer, Graham, & Harris, 1992). Allowing students to write for a wide variety of audiences helps them understand that writing is a way to communicate and to convey information.

Conventions of Writing and Grammar

As writers who wish to convey meaning to our audience, we must ensure that our audience can easily read and understand what we have written. A publishable piece—one that follows the conventions of writing and grammar—provides the structure through which our audience comprehends our meaning.

Often, when educators think about writing instruction, what first comes to mind are grammar lessons, punctuation, and other mechanics of writing. While it is essential that young writers understand these technical aspects of writing, which are vital for clarity and for conveying nuance, it is easy for conventions to be overemphasized in writing instruction. Too frequently they are taught in a way that prevents students from developing as strong writers overall. As an example, kindergarten students who engaged in a curriculum that focused heavily on form and mechanics were hindered in their expression by the need for "correctness" (Wohlwend, 2008). Striking the right balance between allowing students to freely get their thoughts on paper versus employing the conventions of writing can be a challenge.

When we as writers follow the conventions of writing such as capitalization, punctuation, and correct spelling, we are in effect displaying "good manners" for readers. These good manners allow the reader to easily grasp the author's intentions: where to stop, where to pause, what is a proper place or name. In addition, when we are writing for real audiences and purposes, the "correctness" of our writing matters.

It has been clearly established that grammar instruction in context and for real purposes is much more likely to be retained than isolated grammar instruction (Graham, McKeown, & Kiuhara, et al., 2012; Graham & Perin, 2007; Hartwell, 1985; Hillocks, 1986). In particular, grammar instruction is most effective when it is part of the revision process (Robinson & Feng, 2016). Students can see immediate application and relevance. When we are writing for an audience, we care much more about getting it right.

Lastly, there is an aspect of fluency that is important to acknowledge in writing instruction. The "basic" writing skills of handwriting, spelling, and sentence construction are essential for students to translate their ideas into writing. Fluency in handwriting consists of teaching students to properly hold a pencil and to form their letters fluently and efficiently (Denton, Cope, & Moser, 2006; Graham, Harris, & Fink, 2000). Fluency of spelling supports students in learning how to spell words they commonly use and how to acquire the skills necessary to generate and check plausible spellings for words (Berninger, Vaughan, & Abbott, et al., 2002; Graham, Harris, & Fink-Chorzempa, 2002). The research

on handwriting and spelling instruction supports an increase in those particular areas but also suggests that fluency in these areas allows students to write better sentences and produce longer texts (Graham, Bollinger, & Booth Olson, et al., 2018). Fluency in sentence construction consists of supporting students in learning to write strong sentences, including considering how the meaning, syntax, and sentence punctuation interact to form strong sentences (Fogel & Ehri, 2000; Saddler & Graham, 2005). As students become more fluent in these aspects of writing, they have more cognitive energy to focus on developing and communicating their ideas.

Equity in Writing Instruction

Instructional equity is often defined as interrupting the reproductive practices that negatively impact students, reducing the predictability of who succeeds or fails, and cultivating the gifts and talents of every student (National Equity Project n.d.; Hammond, 2015). Writing instruction is inextricably linked to each of those elements. As evidenced by NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) scores, only 15% of low-income students and students of color score as proficient in writing as compared to 27% of students overall (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

To begin the work of addressing inequity and interrupting the reproductive practices that negatively impact students of color, writing instruction must intentionally support all students in developing as cognitively independent learners. Study after study shows that students of color, English learners, and disadvantaged students receive instruction that is more focused on basic skills, less challenging, and more repetitive than instruction received by other students (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Oakes, 2005). For example, Black and Latinx students are more likely to be graded on grammar and mechanics of writing and more likely to have most of their writing instruction focused on conventions (Picou, 2020). While grammar and conventions are essential aspects of writing, the narrow instructional focus for students of color is a reproductive practice that marginalizes the voice and impact of those students' writing.

Celebrating and amplifying student voice in writing is an essential aspect of quality writing instruction and is a way to cultivate the unique gifts and talents of each student.

Writing is a vital form of communication and students should have the opportunity to express their views in a way that is unique to their life experiences and their voices. Voice and choice are clear research-based components of quality writing instruction, yet often in practice educators limit voice and choice in writing for some students. One reason that Black and Latinx students may have grammar and conventions of writing emphasized is that teachers have an implicit bias toward the dialect differences that may be apparent in writing. In the essay "Why Keisha Can't Write," Dr. Keira Lee-Heart describes that "The subjective, intimate, contextual exercise of writing has been forced into a box many sizes too small, only to then be watered down and force-fed to students" (2018). When student voice, no matter how different from the mainstream, is not valued, their writing will suffer.

CREATING WRITERS FOR LIFE

In order to truly support students in becoming the writers they need to be for college, career, and life, intentional writing instruction focused on research-supported areas is imperative. Research suggests that schools prioritize time for writing instruction, allowing students ample opportunities to engage in research-based writing and develop a writing community that allows them to thrive. Audience and purpose must take a prominent place during instruction, while developmentally appropriate grammar and conventions aligning with research are also emphasized.

An instructional equity lens must be applied to writing instruction as well to ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage in all of the research-based aspects of writing instruction that lead to quality writing. Additionally, teachers need support with schedule

allocations that respect the need for dedicated writing time and accessible professional learning, assisting them in aligning their instruction with current research.

While the ability to write skillfully in college and career is an important goal for writing instruction, it is not the only important objective. Students are already writing and publishing in multiple forms online. The challenge is that there is often little to no linkage between what students are learning at school and what they are publishing in the world. This is a great opportunity for educators to support students in understanding the responsibilities of being an author. Knowledge, authority, and ethics are parts of being an author. We need to show our students that they matter, their ideas matter, and those ideas are worthy of publication. With quality writing instruction, all students are writers now and will be for life.

TIME TO REFLECT

1. **Connect to Practice:** Reflect on how writing instruction currently is in your classroom, school, or district. How might you improve instructional equity to ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage in all of the research-based aspects of writing instruction?

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Section 4

On-Demand Webinars

On-Demand Webinars

Scan the QR codes to access these complimentary on-demand professional learning webinars. Please note that you will be asked to complete a brief form before accessing the webinar recording.

RESEARCH-BASED WRITING INSTRUCTION: FIVE ESSENTIAL FEATURES
Presented by Professor Steve Graham

Professor Steve Graham is lead author of the *IES Practice Guide on Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers*. In this pre-recorded webinar, Dr. Graham discusses:

- Using evidence-based strategies to teach the writing process
- Supporting emerging writers
- Establishing an engaged community of writers
- Encouraging risk taking
- Bolstering collaboration
- Creating opportunities to give and receive constructive feedback
- Connecting writing, reading, and learning so they support each other—because we know that teaching students to write makes them better readers

THE WRITING ROPE
with Joan Sedita

In this recording, Joan Sedita concludes a five-part book study of her bestselling book, *The Writing Rope: A Framework for Explicit Writing Instruction in All Subjects*.

Joan presents an overview of each strand of the Writing Rope, discusses her experience teaching students and training teachers, and responds to thoughtful questions posed by book study participants.

This five-part, self-paced virtual book study was sponsored by Collaborative Classroom and hosted by The Reading League chapters in Indiana, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania.

Section 5

About the Authors

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Senior Program Manager, Collaborative Classroom

Lisa is a senior program manager at Collaborative Classroom and has over 20 years of curriculum development experience with the organization. She is currently part of the Program Development and Publishing team revising Collaborative Classroom's core programs.

In addition to her work at Collaborative Classroom, Lisa has seven years of experience as a Spanish bilingual elementary school classroom teacher, an English Language Development (ELD) teacher, and a Response to Intervention (RTI) teacher in San Francisco Bay Area public schools. She has also held positions as design thinking facilitator for the San Francisco Unified School District, student teacher supervisor for the Bay Area Teacher Training Institute, and curriculum consultant for the Renegade Girls Tinkering Club. Lisa has volunteered in the San Francisco public schools as a school site council vice-chair, an after-school enrichment manager, and an academic tutor. She is a teacher recipient of the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Educational Service Award.

Lisa holds a B.A. in Psychology and a Multiple Subject Clear Credential with a Bilingual Cross-Cultural Emphasis in Spanish (BCLAD) from the University of California, Los Angeles.

NICOLE CAMPBELL

Manager of Educational Partnerships, Collaborative Classroom

Nicole Campbell is the Ohio/Kentucky Manager of Educational Partnerships for Collaborative Classroom. She has over 20 years in education as a classroom teacher, reading specialist and ELA teacher. She has taught collegiate courses in Literacy, Phonics and Early Childhood; published work in Reading Teacher Magazine; and presented at national conferences. She holds a M.Ed in Literacy, an Ohio Reading Specialist License, and a B.A. in Elementary Education. She also has Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham certifications.

Nicole is passionate about equity in literacy access, children's exposure to rich literature, and social-emotional development.

ELYSE EIDMAN-AADAHL

Chair of the Advisory Board for the National Writing Project; Executive Director (2014–2023)

Collaborative Classroom board member Elyse Eidman-Aadahl is chair of the Advisory Board for the National Writing Project (NWP). Previously she served as the executive director of the National Writing Project, where she drew upon 25 years of experience designing and leading national programs, partnerships, and action-learning efforts for the NWP and other educational organizations.

A recipient of the Hollis Caswell Award for Curriculum Studies, Eidman-Aadahl holds a Ph.D. in curriculum theory from the University of Maryland, College Park. Her scholarship includes studies of literacy and learning in the context of our new digital, networked ecology. A main focus of Eidman-Aadahl's research is how educators from diverse backgrounds research and reason together about this social transformation—as well as literacy, equity, and agency—for themselves and their youth.

She is a broadly published author and presenter, well-known for co-authoring *Redesigning Civic Education for the Digital Age: Participatory Politics and the Pursuit of Democratic Engagement* (2016), *Because Digital Writing Matters* (Jossey-Bass, 2010) and *Writing for a Change: Boosting Literacy and Learning Through Social Action* (Jossey-Bass, 2006).

JENNIFER EVANS

Marketing Content Manager, Collaborative Classroom

Prior to her work with Collaborative Classroom, Jennifer Evans, M.Ed., served as a middle school teacher in Broward County, Florida. She continued with her interest in literacy education by working as an after-school tutor in Texas before working at a range of learning companies. She believes that students learn best when they feel comfortable and safe; it was this belief that led her to her work at Collaborative Classroom.

MARINE FREIBRUN

Manager of Educational Partnerships, Collaborative Classroom

Marine Freibrun, M.Ed., joined Collaborative Classroom in 2022 as manager of educational partnerships for Idaho and Utah.

Before joining Collaborative Classroom, Marine served as the English language arts and literacy assessment coordinator for the Idaho State Department of Education.

As the assessment coordinator, she supported teachers and district leaders in the implementation of the Idaho Literacy Achievement and Accountability Act, legislation designed to establish an extended time literacy intervention program to support students' literacy achievement. In doing so, Marine worked with teachers and district leadership to evaluate assessment data from the state's literacy assessment and define next steps for effective instructional practices.

Marine began her career as an elementary school teacher in Southern California, teaching grades 2, 3, and 5. Throughout her career, she also had the opportunity to support and serve teachers as an instructional coach, English Language Development (ELD) coach, and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) coach.

Marine received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from the University of California, Irvine and her master's degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from California State University, Northridge. She lives in the Boise area with her husband and two sons.

STEVE GRAHAM

Regents and the Warner Professor in the Division of Leadership and Innovation in Teachers College, Arizona State University

Steve Graham is a Regents and the Warner Professor in the Division of Leadership and Innovation in Teachers College. For 42 years he has studied how writing develops, how to teach it effectively, and how writing can be used to support reading and learning. In recent years, he has been involved in the development and testing of digital tools for supporting writing and reading through a series of grants from the Institute of Educational Sciences and the Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education. His research involves typically developing writers and students with special needs in both elementary and secondary schools, with much of occurring in classrooms in urban schools.

Graham is the former editor of *Exceptional Children, Contemporary Educational Psychology, Journal of Writing Research, Focus on Exceptional Children,* and *Journal of Educational Psychology*. He is the co-author of the *Handbook of Writing Research, Handbook of Learning Disabilities, APA Handbook of Educational Psychology, Writing Better, Powerful Writing Strategies for all Students* and *Making the Writing Process Work*. He is also the author of three influential Carnegie Corporation reports: *Writing Next, Writing to Read, and Informing Writing*.

Graham has served as an advisor to a variety of organization, including UNESCO, National Institute of Health, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Zuckerberg Initiative, National Writing Project, Institute of Educational Sciences, the College Board, and the What Works Clearinghouse. He was the chair of the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guides for both elementary as well as secondary writing. Steve was a member of the National Research Conference committee on adolescent and adult literacy. He was elected to the Reading Hall of Fame for 2018, and recognized as an outstanding reviewer for the journal Review of Educational Research, in 2024.

Graham is a fellow of the American Educational Research Association, Division 15 of the American Psychological Association, as well as a fellow of the International Academy for Research in Learning Disabilities.

JEREMY HYLER

Manager of Educational Partnerships, Collaborative Classroom

Before joining Collaborative Classroom in 2021 as a manager of educational partnerships, Jeremy Hyler was a teacher for almost 22 years. During his career as an educator, Jeremy taught mostly middle school (grades 6–8) and was a department head and part of school- and district-wide improvement teams for several years.

Besides being a classroom teacher, Jeremy has spent the last eleven years as a teacher consultant for the Chippewa River Writing Project at Central Michigan University. In addition, he is a media literacy innovator for KQED. He has presented at many state and national conferences as well as internationally.

Jeremy holds a master's degree in Middle Level Education from Walden University and a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Alma College.

A Routledge author, Jeremy has co-authored three books: *Create, Compose, Connect!: Reading, Writing, and Learning with Digital Tools; From Texting to Teaching: Grammar Instruction in a Digital Age;* and *Ask, Explore, Write!: An Inquiry-Driven Approach to Science and Literacy Learning*. Jeremy has contributed to other professional books and articles as well.

BARBARA PATTERSON ODEN

Manager of Educational Partnerships, Collaborative Classroom

With over two decades of experience, Barbara Patterson Oden has served as a classroom teacher, literacy and gifted resource teacher, instructional coach, district supervisor of professional learning, and adjunct collegiate faculty.

Before joining Collaborative Classroom, she served as an elementary assistant principal in a Title I school. She is also an educational consultant with Learning Forward and president of its Virginia Affiliate. Barbara believes the most revolutionary act of educational equity is teaching EVERY student to read. It is this belief and passion for creating more equity in education that drives her work as a manager of educational partnerships in Virginia.

Barbara is a graduate of the George Washington University with an M.A. in Education and Human Development and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington with a B.A. in Elementary Education. She resides in Chesapeake, Virginia.

SARAH ROSENTHAL

Program Manager, Collaborative Classroom

Sarah is a program manager at Collaborative Classroom, where she has been developing curricula since 2005. She is currently part of the Program Development and Publishing team revising Collaborative Classroom's core programs.

Prior to joining Collaborative Classroom, Sarah taught writing to children and adults. She designed and taught creative writing workshops for more than 3,500 K–12 students in 17 Bay Area schools, and designed and led an inquiry-based nonfiction writing program for grades 3–8 at St. Raymond's School in Menlo Park, CA. She also taught writing courses at several Bay Area universities, led private writing workshops for adults, and conducted one-on-one manuscript consultations. In addition, Sarah wrote language arts curricula for the Institute of Reading Development based in Berkeley, CA. She served as copy editor and poetry columnist at Citysearch.com, researcher and writer at Collegeboard.com, copy editor at trade book publisher Mercury House, and poetry editor at Ink magazine. She is also a poet and writer who has published four books and has seen her work published widely in journals and anthologies. Sarah holds a BA Magna Cum Laude in Literature & Society from Brown University, an MFA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University, and a coaching certification from New Ventures West.

LINDA ROURKE

Director of Program Marketing, Collaborative Classroom

Linda Rourke, Director of Program Marketing, bridges program development with marketing and field teams to provide educational partners with a clear picture of Collaborative Classroom program benefits for teachers and students. With a background as an English teacher, Linda offers leadership and support through presentations, workshops, and keynotes. She holds a B.A. in English and M.S. Ed in Literacy Education from Northern Illinois University.

JOAN SEDITA

Founder and CEO, Keys to Literacy

Joan Sedita is a nationally recognized professional development author and K–12 reading and writing instruction expert. She is also the founder and CEO of Keys to Literacy, a professional development organization.

Joan has worked on numerous state-level literacy initiatives and authored multiple professional development books, online courses, and training modules, and is the creator of The Writing Rope framework for writing instruction. A collection of free resources to support K-12 literacy instruction, including videos, archived webinars, and teaching materials, is available at the Keys to Literacy resource website.

KELLY STUART

President and CEO, Collaborative Classroom

Kelly Stuart serves as president and chief executive officer at Collaborative Classroom. In earlier roles at Collaborative Classroom, Dr. Stuart worked as chief operating officer, vice president of Dissemination and Implementation, and assistant director of Dissemination.

Previously, she served as the senior research associate at WestEd, where she led dissemination for the Doing What Works (DWW) website, which developed practical tools and videos to support educators in their understanding and use of proven research-based practices. Also while at WestEd, Dr. Stuart launched the U.S. Department of Education's School Turnaround Learning Community (STLC), an online community for states, districts, and schools involved in turnaround efforts. Prior to WestEd, she was the director of special programs at the Success for All Foundation.

Since beginning her career as an elementary school teacher, Dr. Stuart has worked with educators in schools and after-school sites in every state. She has a B.S. in liberal arts, a teaching credential, an M.A. in education administration, and an Ed.D. in education leadership.

MARISA RAMIREZ STUKEY

Senior Director for Research, Collaborative Classroom

Dr. Marisa Ramirez Stukey is the senior director of Research with Collaborative Classroom. She received her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in teacher education and professional learning and a master's degree in Reading Education, both from the University of Florida.

Marisa is a Nationally Board Certified teacher with over fifteen years' experience teaching in both elementary and higher education contexts, instructional coaching, and professional learning systems development. Her research interests focus on reading comprehension instruction and designing literacy professional learning. She has consulted with numerous school districts in developing change models and collaborative professional learning structures, particularly to shift literacy instruction. She lives in Gainesville, Florida.

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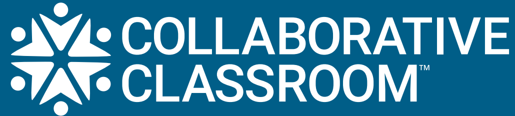

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