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To **Create** a *World* in which
Children *Love* to *Learn!*

Strategies

FOR IMPLEMENTING

Writer's Workshop

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Foreword by Cathy Collier

Table of *Contents*

The Three-Legged Stool Model of Writer's Workshop

Strategic teaching is based on planning how to accomplish desired outcomes and then taking action. As a strategic writing teacher, you need great plans of action to achieve your goals. Your most important goal is clear: teach your students how to write.

In this resource, we gathered the best strategies we have seen in our collective 100-plus years of teaching students how to write. These are the strategies that help meet today's standards and that work for us, for our researcher colleagues, and for our hundreds of best-practice-writing teacher friends. The strategies are evidence-based and are compiled in an accessible, easy-to-use format. You can implement them individually, but used together, they make up the successful operating procedures in classrooms where students are becoming writers.

Strategies for Implementing Writer's Workshop is built upon a three-legged stool model for Writer's Workshop. Strategies are included for each of the legs of the stool that Writer's Workshop must stand on: Time to Teach, Time to Write and Confer, and Time to Share. This powerful organizational framework gives you the strategies you need to be successful.
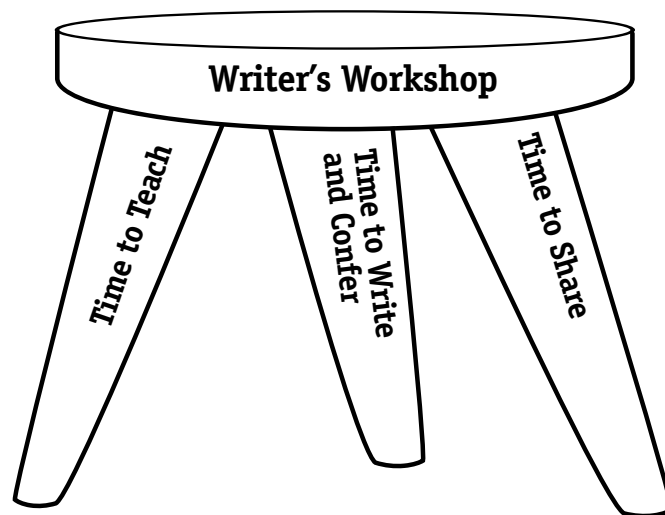
Time to Teach

Chapters 1 through 3 address the leg of "time to teach." When the strategies for effective classroom management and practices from these three chapters are put in place, instructional time can be maximized.

Chapter 1, Strategies for Building a Community of Writers, describes the essential characteristics of the Writer's Workshop community and gives strategies and classroom snapshots for designing and organizing space; establishing routines; managing writing tools and resources; developing learning walls, anchor charts, and writing centers; bringing real-world writing into the classroom; talking writing to writer; and using mentor texts in order to build a foundation for successful writing instruction.

In **Chapter 2**, Motivating Student Writers, strategies for engaging and motivating students during instruction are provided. We show you how to read and write like an author, use the language of motivation, motivate student writers with author celebrations, and build classroom morale.

Chapter 3, Whole-Group Instruction, shows *how* to teach through engaging mini-lessons, routines, structure, partner talk, and movement that launches effective time to teach.

Time to Write and Confer

Chapters 4 and 5 address the leg of "time to write and confer." The strategies in these chapters support effective writing practices and help students develop writing prowess and stamina.

Chapter 4, Independent and Small-Group Instruction, focuses on the effective writing conference by organizing and planning for small-group and individual conferences, creating a conference schedule, providing a conference structure, communicating conference expectations, and preparing a conferring toolkit.

In **Chapter 5**, Strategies for Writing Across the Content Areas, the key aspects of building writing skills and stamina are addressed. Strategies are provided to help students read and write increasingly complex text, to link writing to what they are interested in, and to give them ownership and autonomy by selecting their own writing topics.

Time to Share

Although strategies for time to share are provided throughout the book, the real strength that makes this leg stand on its own is in **Chapter 6**, Strategies for Publishing Student Writing. The final step of publishing and sharing for a meaningful and authentic audience is what provides a purpose for writing and increases student motivation. This chapter explains why to publish, provides principles for publishing, and explores a variety of publishing options. This chapter also provides many fantastic ideas for writing celebrations that we have found to be effective in our work.

Finally, **Chapter 7**, Strategies for Assessment, provides an overview of both formative and summative assessments and shares strategies for setting assessment goals and achieving assessment outcomes. This chapter also includes strategies for gathering evidence of student learning from multiple sources and involving students in self-assessment and setting learning goals. It is the culminating piece that brings Writer's Workshop all together.

Our Goal

The goal of this book is to help you strategically develop student writers through the Writer's Workshop model. After reading this book, you should feel confident in doing the following:

- Building a community of writers
- Motivating student writers
- Maximizing good instruction
- Having students writing every day and in every class
- Having students share writing publicly
- Monitoring writing outcomes through assessment

Don't forget that being strategic is a mindset. It starts with you. The best strategy for becoming the best teacher of writing you can be is your desire to be one. We hope this book will get you started. If you are already a stellar writing teacher, we hope it will help you continue on that path. Don't just be a good writing teacher—be strategic. Be amazing!

—Richard, Jan, and Vickie

Components of Effective Whole-Group Writing Instruction

Writer's Workshop includes three foundational components: instructing, writing/conferring, and sharing. Each component plays a valuable role in the teaching process and creates a predictable nature to writing instruction. Although the focus of instruction, topics, and genres of writing may change, students are empowered by knowing they will receive explicit modeling, opportunities for discussions, time to practice writing skills, and time for sharing every day. Students who are comfortable in a predictable environment can be more focused on learning and more productive.

With the ever-increasing academic diversity in today's classroom, whole-group, small-group, and individual writing instruction provides students with learning opportunities tailored to meet their individual needs. Each of the Writer's Workshop components lends itself to one or more of these groupings.

Figure 3.1 Components of Writer's Workshop

Component	Grouping Practice(s)	Instruction/Action	Suggested Time*
Instructing	Whole Group	Explicit Instructing Modeling Demonstrating Discussing	5–15 Minutes
Writing and Conferring	Small Group Partners Individual	Explicit Instructing Demonstrating Conferring Writing/Illustrating	15–30 Minutes
Sharing	Whole Group Small Group Partners	Reflecting Supporting Critiquing Celebrating	5–15 Minutes

*These times should reflect time of year, grade level, developmental of writing levels of students, and mini-lesson.

Whole-group instruction is perhaps the most traditional form of teaching. When used properly, it can be both efficient and effective during Writer's Workshop to share the same skills and subject matter with the entire class. Whole-group instruction includes the following benefits:

- All students are exposed to the same curriculum.

- Students gain a sense of belonging and feel part of the classroom community.

- Students do not have to worry about being labeled based on readiness level.

- Students benefit from learning from each other and hearing others' opinions and understandings.

In this chapter, you will find five strategies for effective whole-group instruction that serve as the umbrella over small-group instruction and individual or group conferring as well:

- Design SMART whole-group instruction (including sample lessons for grades K–8)

- Write and talk like a writer

- Engage students in whole-group instruction through talking

- Engage students in whole-group instruction through movement (including sample lessons for grades K–8)

- Be a writer!

Strategy 1: Design SMART Whole-Group Instruction

The relationship between whole-group instruction and the "Instructing" component of Writer's Workshop lies in the writing mini-lesson. Although "mini" in length, the content is carefully selected to capture and inform students at the time, but also "contain opportunities for deeper and longer thought over time" (Angelillo 2008, 40). Typically a short, explicit lesson (5–15 min.) that focuses on a specific writing skill or author's craft, the mini-lesson serves like super glue that holds writing instruction together. Without this explicit teaching, the writing time looks more like journaling—free writing with little direction from the teacher through the writing process. It is through whole-group mini-lessons that teachers raise a concern, explore an issue, model a technique, reinforce a writing strategy, and provide opportunities for "writerly conversations" with their students (Calkins 1994, 193).

Make the most of whole-group instruction by teaching SMART: **S**park curiosity and interest, **M**odel writing skills and strategies, **A**ctively engage students, w**R**ite to become better writers, and **T**alk writer to writer.

- **Spark the curiosity and interest of students by making connections and by clearly stating what students will learn.** Connections are related to ongoing student work and may be presented through a piece of literature, a newspaper article, a manipulative, a sample of student writing, or a previously taught mini-lesson/series of lessons. Be explicit when stating the mini-lesson focus. Tell students what they will learn, not just what they will do. For example, instead of saying, "Today we will find interesting language in books by author Jane Yolen "try saying, "Today, I will teach you how author Jane Yolen uses alliteration to add imagery to her writing."

- **Model writing skills and strategies to provide students with a repertoire of tools they can draw upon to improve their writing.** Most often modeling is presented in the form of a demonstration where the teacher thinks aloud during a step-by-step process. Modeling is not just talking about how something is done and/or showing students a sample of a finished product. It is teacher talk about the mental process that occurs during the writing that specifically identifies the important details, the skills, or strategies that students need. Here is an example for thinking aloud during the revision process. "As we read this story about my school day together, I'm thinking I have left out a few details about what happened. I know one way to add details to my story is to ask questions. First, I will read this sentence (*teacher reads sentence aloud*), then I can ask *when*—When did I go to the library? It was after lunch, so I can add an insertion mark, a caret, and add the words, 'after lunch.' Next, I will ask the question, *where?*, etc. This may seem rudimentary. However, all writers, regardless of age, need to hear a writer's thought process and develop an understanding of how and why certain choices are made. Besides demonstration, modeling may take the form of an inquiry lesson or guided practice.

- **Actively engage students to not only hold their interest and keep them on task, but also to create opportunities to discuss, practice, process, and retain writing information.** Engaging students might be as simple as quick choral responses; partner responses like Turn and Talk or Think-Pair-Share; physical responses like Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down or response cards; or allowing students to try out a new technique in their writing immediately after a quick demonstration. Consider the ancient Chinese proverb, "Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand." Active engagement can lead students to deeper thinking, problem solving, and the confidence to complete a writing task. For example, read a simple sentence aloud and ask students to turn to a partner or group of four to come up with details that would make the sentence more complex and engaging.

- **wRite to become better writers.** There is no argument that to improve our skills as a runner, a cook, a driver, etc., we must devote time for consistent practice. We commit to that time because we give value to the new endeavor. The same holds true with developing writers. Providing a consistent time for writing practice strengthens students' writing "muscles" and stamina as they develop an awareness of the value writing has in their everyday lives. Each time we write for and with our students, we too are becoming better writers and teachers of writing. As we share the process of working through a writing draft—writing, rereading, ruminating, revising, editing—students develop an awareness of the struggle and commitment involved in the writing process. It is through you that they recognize the value of writing practice and how determination and perseverance produces progress as writers.

- **Talk writer to writer.** It is important to use the language of writing when thinking aloud, talking about, and working on written pieces alongside your students. It is the vocabulary—words like draft, revise, audience, ideas, voice, alliteration—that creates a classroom of students who begin to see themselves and their classmates as authors of important work. Building a community of writers is valuable in the continued writing development of students. Donald Graves states, "It is a learner's perception of who they are and what they can do that has the greatest effect on what they learn" (Allen 2009, 31). Teachers talk writer to writer in the mini-lesson:

  - **before modeling:** making connections, sparking ideas, and creating curiosity

  - **during modeling:** using the writing vocabulary during explicit instruction of writing concepts and engaging students in their own writer-to-writer conversations

  - **after modeling:** to restate the mini-lesson focus and encourage students to apply their new learning into their current writing or add it to their writing toolbox to use in the future.

In addition to teaching SMART, the framework of the mini-lesson is as important as the predictability and consistency of the instruction. Over time, we have developed a lesson framework that supports SMART instruction:

- Think About Writing

- Teach

- Engage

- Apply

- Write/Confer

- Spotlight Strategy

- Share

Think About Writing

"Writers, we have been working on..."

The mini-lesson begins with an introduction that connects the lesson topic to a previously taught mini-lesson, to authors as mentors, and/or to literacy instruction. This part of the lesson might include revisiting anchor charts, sharing snippets of mentor texts, using realia to pique student interest, or examining a piece of informational text to identify text structure. It reminds students that writing is not an isolated subject, but interrelates in their literacy world, as well as in the overall curriculum.

Teach

"Today writers, I will show you how to...". or "Today writers, we will work together to...."

The intention of the mini-lesson is clearly stated at the beginning of this portion of the lesson. It is here that the step-by-step focus skill or strategy we want our students to attempt in their writing is demonstrated. Teachers can use their own writing, show how an author developed the teaching point, or consider using a student's work for the demonstration. Demonstrations serve as an instrumental part of scaffolding student writers as they develop their understanding of the writing process.

Engage

Scaffolding for writers continues in this part of the lesson by providing a time for short, focused practice of the strategy they might apply in their work. Asking students to "Turn and Talk" or "Stand up, Partner Up," quickly allows opportunities for practice. Often this involves an "oral rehearsal" in which students form a partnership to discuss and practice the skill, while the teacher listens in, providing praise and supportive suggestions.

Apply

"Writers, always think about how important it is to...."

This is the final phase of the actual mini-lesson, before students move off to begin their important writing work. The intent here is to echo the mini-lesson concept across the lesson. The key instructional focus is, again, explicitly stated and writers are encouraged to practice the strategy/skill in their current writing or add it to their writing goals list to be used in future writing. When done well, students are motivated, enthusiastic, and focused on attempting new ideas in their writing.

Write/Confer

This should be the longest period of time during Writer's Workshop, but sadly often is shortened by lengthy mini-lessons. Writers become better writers by writing, practicing the strategies, skills, and craft of writing. Teachers are responsible for providing that valuable time, as well as scaffolding writers through guiding and conferring during this writing time. Writing conferences can take the form of one-to-one, small group, table conferences, etc. The specific format is less important than just taking the time to talk writer to writer in conversations that will help students become better writers. (Additional information on conferences may be found in Chapter 4.)

Spotlight Strategy

"Spotlighting" is a quick opportunity to give affirmation for correctly demonstrating a writing skill or specific tasks. During the writing and conferring phase, students are asked for their attention: "Writers, may I have your eyes and attention?" A quick comment is given that both recognizes and validates the selected writer's work, such as: "Writers, listen to the way Miguel used alliteration in this sentence to give detail and catch the reader's attention. Exceptional writing work!" Students recognize Miguel for his work and then move back into their writing practice, while the teacher continues with writing conferences. Once routines are established, this takes little effort, yet provides a positive example of good writing and encourages other students to risk trying new strategies and crafts in their own writing.

Share

Sharing is an essential element of Writer's Workshop that is also the most frequently omitted due to lack of time. Why do we write? We write to communicate, to explain, to question. We also write so that someone will hear our voice and read our message. Providing opportunities to share gives students credibility and recognition as writers. Take the time to share!

The following are potential mini-lesson topics arranged by grade range. This is not an exhaustive list, but is something to get you started.

Sample Mini-Lesson Topics Grades K–2

Management

- Developing routines of Writer's Workshop
- Using the writing folder
- Talking with partners

Print Concepts (K–1)

- Distinguishing between letters, words, and sentences
- Using spaces in writing
- Knowing where to begin writing, moving left to right, return sweep

Ideas

- Finding a topic in YOU
- Using books/pictures to generate topics
- Sticking to the topic

Organization

- Using telling, sketching, and writing to organize writing
- Using who, what, when, where, why, and how questions to develop writing
- Creating a beginning, middle, and end

Voice

- Matching voice to character and/or event
- Adding interjections to dialogue

Sentence Fluency

- Building sentences with a naming part (subject) and an action part (predicate)
- Using simple and compound sentences
- Using linking words to show time order

Word Choice

- Using adjectives to "show"
- Using action words
- Adding details with prepositional phrases

Conventions

- Using capitals letters for "I" and proper names
- Adding punctuation (period, question mark, explanation point, quotation marks)
- Editing for spelling of high-frequency words, color words, number words, etc.

Sample Mini-Lesson Topics Grades 3–5

Management

- Using a writer's notebook
- Writing like a writer: five-step writing process/traits of quality writing
- Developing procedures for teacher and peer conferring

Ideas

- Generating writing topics based on people, places, things, and you
- Narrowing the topic
- Zooming in to find details

Organization

- Developing powerful paragraphs
- Writing narratives such as poems and stories
- Writing opinion compositions
- Writing expository compositions
- Including beginning hooks

Voice

- Expressing mood through details
- Writing to an audience

Sentence Fluency

- Creating varied sentence lengths using questions
- Varying sentence beginnings
- Using compound/complex sentences
- Using different sentence types: declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory

Word Choice

- Adding temporal words and phrases to signal event order
- Using specific vocabulary
- Using similes, metaphors, and idioms

Conventions

- Using resources to support writing
- Editing for capitalization, grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Using commas correctly

Sample Mini-Lesson Topics Grades 6–8

Management

- Responsibilities during Writer's Workshop
- Developing routines for sharing writing

Ideas

- Developing a Top 10 topics list
- Using mentor texts to develop ideas
- Using questioning to narrow the topic

Organization

- Organizing writing through text structure
- Creating poetry through form (e.g., diamante, haiku, limerick, free verse)
- Developing a newspaper article

Voice

- Sharing character feelings and traits in writing
- Using R.A.F.T. (Role/Audience/Format/Topic)

Sentence Fluency

- Using a variety of sentence structures to expand and imbed details (compound subjects/verbs, prepositional phrases, semicolons)

- Building complex sentences with independent/dependent clauses

- Using simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentence structures

Word Choice

- Using figures of speech in writing (metaphors, personification, similes, hyperboles, alliteration)

- Creating topic-specific vocabulary using word webs

- Understanding denotation and connotation of words

Conventions

- Using commas, dashes, and parentheses for emphasis and clarity in writing

- Writing with subjective, objective, and possessive pronouns

- Editing with editing marks

Sample Lessons

The following sample lessons are examples of implementing SMART whole-group instruction. A template is also provided for you to use to create your own mini-lessons.

- Sentence Trees

- Let's Write a S.T.O.R.Y.!

- I Know My Audience

- Varying Sentence Types

- Types of Conflict Themes in Literature

- Comparing Historical Documents

Let's Write a S.T.O.R.Y.!
(Grades K–2)

Procedures

Think About Writing

1. Explain to students that writers sometimes use a tool to help them organize their thinking. This helps them stay on track and focused on their story.

Teach

2. Tell students, "Today writers, we will use a tool to help us organize a small moment story."

3. Write the acronym S.T.O.R.Y. on a chart, or display the *S.T.O.R.Y. Graphic Organizer* for students to view.

4. Explain to students that today our small moment story will focus on something that happened to them that maybe did not work out as planned.

5. Use a personal example to complete the S.T.O.R.Y. organizer. For younger writers, you may also choose to sketch and label. Be sure to think aloud throughout the process.

Engage

6. Ask students to turn and talk with a partner about their small moment story. Remind them to use the acronym S.T.O.R.Y. when sharing their ideas with their partner.

Apply

7. Tell students, "Writers, always think about how important it is to organize your thinking before you begin your writing. Select one of your small moment stories or begin a new story focus on our new S.T.O.R.Y. tool to help guide your thinking and writing.

Note: You may have your students move this writing into a writing format, or save it in their folder to extend and publish at a later date.

Let's Write a S.T.O.R.Y.! *(cont.)*

Write/Conference

8. Distribute copies of the *S.T.O.R.Y. Graphic Organizer* to students. Provide time for them to complete their organizers.

9. Check for understanding and move among students to confer and support. Take time to observe and note students readily attempting the task. Those students demonstrating difficulty may be pulled into a small-group conference to provide additional support. Record observations in a conference log.

Spotlight Strategy

10. Choose one or two students from the class that are successfully working on their *S.T.O.R.Y. Graphic Organizer* and spotlight their work. Remember to recognize different developmental levels of writing. Some students may be illustrating, while others are writing lists.

Share

11. Because students orally shared their stories with their writing partner earlier in the lesson, assign or have students find a new partner to share their writing with today. Remind them to use the organizer to retell each part of the story.

Name _____

Date _____

S.T.O.R.Y. Graphic Organizer

S Setting	T Talking Characters	O Opening and Oops!	R Resolve	Y Yes! Problem Solved!
Where and when does the story take place?	Who is in the story?	How does this story begin and what happens?	What steps do your characters take to solve the problem?	How does everything turn out?

Types of Conflict Themes in Literature
(Grades 6–8)

Standard

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters

Materials

- *Conflict Themes for Famous Literature and Film* (page 75)

Mentor Texts

- any selected text from *Conflict Themes for Famous Literature and Film*

Procedures

Think About Writing

1. Introduce students to five conflict themes in literature:
   - Man vs. Self
   - Man vs. Man/Society
   - Man vs. Nature
   - Man vs. Supernatural
   - Man vs. Technology

2. Introduce students to the *Conflict Themes for Famous Literature and Film* chart that shows examples of these types of conflict in literature and film. Distribute a copy of this chart to students to insert in their writer's notebook.

   Note: This chart may be adapted to match students' experiences, classroom libraries, local curriculum, etc.

Teach

3. Tell students, "Today we will use ideas from themes of conflict to create a cartoon with simple illustrations and captions from a piece of literature or film that shows a theme of conflict. First, let's make sure we understand each conflict category."

4. Have students brainstorm from the list above and work in triads to choose one example of a type of conflict. Then, have students work together to explain how the example fits the theme. Use *Frankenstein* as an example of Man vs. Technology.

Engage

5. Have students turn and talk with their triad group to discuss the possible best choice for a short cartoon they want to create based on the literature, film, or TV examples they selected. Remind students to use the chart to help create their responses. They may add their own literature, film, or TV selection to the chart.

Types of Conflict Themes
in Literature *(cont.)*

Apply

6. Say, "Writers, always think about how important it is to plan before beginning to write." Have students begin to sketch out a simple storyboard with three to seven cartoon boxes to describe their conflict.

- What was the problem?

- Who or what is in conflict?

- What action took place first, then, next, and last?

- How was the conflict resolved?

Write/Conference

7. Send triads off to complete their storyboard and begin drawing and writing their cartoon.

Spotlight

8. Share examples from triads whose work may be good examples for the other students or examples of different types of conflict.

Share

9. Have each triad briefly report and receive constructive feedback on their progress.

Conflict Themes for Famous Literature and Film

Man versus Self

Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine by Evaline Ness

Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Man versus Man/Society

The Cask of Amontillado by Edgar Allan Poe

The Giver by Lois Lowry

The Wizard of Oz starring Judy Garland

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain

Charlotte's Web by E. B. White

Man versus Nature

The Odyssey by Homer

The Great Fire by Jim Murphy

The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway

Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe

Man versus Supernatural

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

The Odyssey by Homer

Man versus Technology

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley (or a movie/literary adaptation)

The Terminator starring Arnold Schwarzenegger

The Matrix starring Keanu Reeves