Research-Based Curriculum

Write TIME For Kids

Complete Supplemental Program

Based on Respected Research

Analyzing Mentor Texts

An important part of teaching is the implementation of instructional models that impact student learning (Pham 2011). Teachers have much to consider, as students in their classrooms come to them with a variety of interests and needs. Whether teachers consider learning theories, instructional settings, or instructional approaches, balance is the key for meeting the varied needs of students in their classrooms. In terms of literacy instruction, research suggests that balance is critical and that students need both skill instruction and a focus on the purpose and meaning of print (Pressley et al. 2002).

This guide addresses numerous research-based instructional models and approaches that can give the variety and balance needed. From the intricacies of reading and interpreting text to the use of the writing process and writer's workshop to the implementation of assessment methods, the information in this guide serves as a valuable resource as teachers guide students through the exciting journey of becoming proficient readers and writers.

Today's standards for reading require students of all ages to take a more critical look at the texts they read. In keeping with this goal, we now ask students to participate in close reading, answer questions with explicit information from text, and read articles and books at varying levels of complexity.

Close Reading

College and career readiness standards for English language emphasize the importance of close reading. This involves more than a cursory reading of articles and stories. It requires a student to examine text analytically, deeply exploring the meaning and author's purpose for writing. By teaching students to read closely, we encourage them to uncover extensive meaning in the text, focusing on and discovering key ideas and details. This strategy of exploring text requires students to engage, make observations and think critically, leading them to new depths of comprehension. However, Catherine Snow and Catherine O'Connor (2013) caution that close reading should not take the place of rich discussion of text, given that, "the most productive use of close reading will entail its frequent and consistent use as a tool within the context of broader academically productive classroom discussion" (8).

Text Dependency

Text dependency is another important facet of reading instruction. In the past, teachers focused on activating students' prior knowledge and experience to help make sense of text. Now, the emphasis is on students answering questions using explicit evidence from the text.

Keep in mind that text-dependent questions are not merely literal and do not, inherently, involve lower levels of thinking. While they can be literal, more advanced text-dependent questions will challenge students to deeper levels of understanding, encouraging them to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the text as they provide textual evidence to support their answers.

Research to Practice

Text dependency requires the use of textual evidence, whereby students use specific words in texts to justify their answers. As in close reading, providing textual evidence encourages students to read like detectives. They do not merely read texts; they investigate them. A teacher encourages this kind of investigation by asking text-dependent questions.

The following are examples of text-dependent prompts and questions that may be used in the Analyzing the Mentor Text section of each lesson:

→ Identify the sentence that states the main idea.

→ Which words from the text describe what it means to be *exuberant*?

→ Which part of the text helps you infer what will happen next?

→ Which words from the story describe the setting?

In contrast, here are some examples of questions that are *not* text dependent:

→ What is the main idea of the article?

→ What is the meaning of the word *exuberant*?

→ How would you describe the main character's personality?

→ What do you think will happen next?

Strategy to Practice

Close reading is reading like a detective. When close reading, have students read a text multiple times. Encourage them to think and wonder about the text, to ask questions, to think about the author's word choices, and to explore deeper meanings.

1. Have students independently read the text the first time.

2. Encourage students to reread the text, focusing on questions they have about words, characters, events, or new concepts.

3. Prompt students to ask questions about the author's choice of words and anything else that comes to mind regarding the text.

4. Ask students to attend to deeper meanings conveyed in the text, asking them to ponder the author's purpose, the connections between the topic and students' experiences, and connections between the text and other texts students have read.

Text Complexity

Today's standards also emphasize the use of text complexity, which provides the opportunity to scaffold students understanding and assist them in thinking more critically about the texts they read (Fisher, Frey, and Lapp 2012). College and career readiness standards highlight qualitative and quantitative measures for text complexity as well as specific reader consideration.

- *Qualitative* measures of text complexity address text attributes, such as meaning and language clarity, text structure, and visual device usage.

- *Quantitative* measures of text complexity address factors such as sentence length, word familiarity, and syllable count.

- *Reader consideration* refers to the background knowledge and experience each individual brings to the text and is impacted by personal interest.

The figure below illustrates the three areas of consideration for text complexity and how they work in unison.
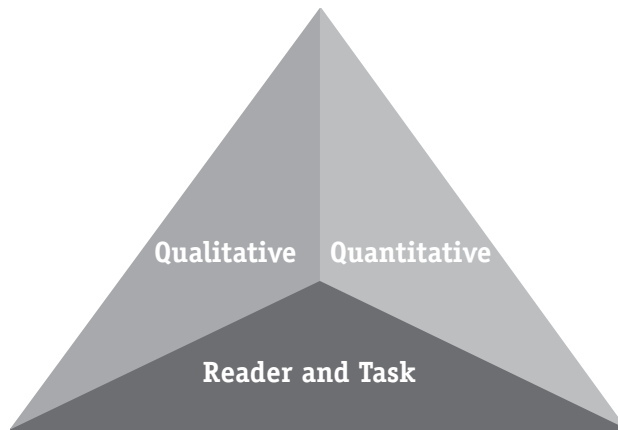
National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers 2010.

Research to Practice

The lessons in *Write TIME For Kids* emphasize close reading, text dependency, and text complexity—important areas required by state and national standards. Each lesson provides teacher prompts, encouraging students to read and reread the highly engaging corresponding text and to take a closer look at the details. The lessons also encourage students to use specific examples from the text to support their opinions and responses to questions. For example, students are not only asked to identify the main idea, they are also asked for its specific location within the text. The text-dependent questions in all *Write TIME For Kids* lessons help students evaluate the text critically and delve into deeper content meaning. Finally, the text cards are purposefully provided at varying difficulty levels and cover a range of topics. Lessons associated with the cards focus on text structure, word meaning, and language use—all elements that are important to text complexity.

Reading and Writing Connection

Decades of research have pointed to the connection between reading and writing. Robert Tierney and Timothy Shanahan (1991) along with the National Writing Project (2015) assert that reading leads to better writing, writing leads to increased ability in reading, and that both processes work together for a student's overall achievement. While studies indicate that as students become better readers, they also become better writers. Recent research suggests that writing about reading improves overall reading comprehension. According to Tierney and Shanahan (1991), since reading and writing are both communication activities, writing about texts causes students to be more thoughtfully engaged with a text. Thus, teaching writing should be focused on meaningful, interactive activities that emphasize process over product. This involves exposure to print, adult observation, and opportunities for independent writing. Students should be supported in their invented spelling efforts, encouraged to communicate through writing, and provided with writing opportunities across the curriculum. Educators should provide literacy experiences that build on the relationship between reading and writing (Gambrell and Mazzoni 1999).

The ultimate goal of reading is the comprehension of text. In the early years, teachers emphasized letter-sound relationships. After all, phonological awareness is the most recognizable characteristic of proficient readers. However, it is imperative for educators to remember that, while the identification of letters and sounds is important for reading success, reading is, first and foremost, a meaning-making process.

A meta-analysis of studies involving the connection between reading and writing revealed that students in grades 2–12 benefit from writing about the material they read and that, by doing so, students increase their reading comprehension (Graham and Hebert 2011). In addition, Lennea Ehri (2000) reported that understanding and using letters and sounds in writing helped young readers recognize and comprehend words in text.

An extensive report by the Carnegie Corporation (Graham and Hebert 2010) details the important role of writing in the development of reading. Effective practices identified in the report include the following:

- provide personal responses to text in writing,
- write text summaries,
- write notes about text, and
- answer and create questions about text in writing.

It is also important to note that the modeling of reading comprehension and writing is an essential strategy for teachers to employ. Merely asking comprehension questions or instructing students to write about text is insufficient. Students benefit from observing these processes modeled by proficient adults. For example, a study by Block (1993) focused on comprehension instruction with second and third graders. This study revealed that students whose teachers modeled thinking and reading comprehension strategies performed better on comprehension and vocabulary tests and were able to transfer comprehension strategies to "out-of-school applications." Similarly, Baumann and Ivey (1997) found that in a program focused on strategy instruction, second-grade students increased their overall reading performance, specifically developing word-identification, fluency, and comprehension skills.

Research to Practice

A key focus of *Write TIME For Kids* lessons is the connection between reading and writing—using writing to better understand what is being read. Each lesson begins with reading the text and delving deeply into the featured topic through multiple readings to explore it. Additionally, each lesson includes several writing components, such as evaluating and working with new vocabulary and honing in on the author's language usage. Moreover, each lesson concludes with a written piece created by each student, utilizing the featured skills and following the stages of the Writing Process.

Strategy to Practice

Go beyond having students read and answer questions by asking them to perform the following tasks:

➡ Ponder the topic before reading by writing about what they already know about it;

➡ Write questions they have about the text and asking those questions of classmates;

➡ Draft their own stories and articles in the same genre as the text they read;

➡ Write summaries of the text; or

➡ Record their personal reactions to or feelings about the text.

The Writing Process

The writing process is a framework to help writers develop, write, and prepare a final piece of writing. It involves five stages—prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The writing process helps students understand that writing is not a one-time event that involves writing and completing a written piece in one sitting. Rather, the writing process is just that—a process. It begins with thinking and planning, moves into the actual writing, and then involves the more intense work of evaluating the work, improving upon it, and readying the work for sharing. The emphasis is on the process rather than the final product, helping students become proficient writers overall, as opposed to being the author of one good piece. The Writing Process, a publication of Capella University (2015), describes the writing process as a nonlinear process that "helps writers produce stronger, more focused work because it highlights connections and allows for movement between...the phases of writing" (3).

Numerous studies over several decades highlight the effectiveness of using the writing process during instruction. A study by Donald Bruno (1983) indicated that the writing achievement of third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders instructed with the writing process far exceeded the achievement of their peers, who were taught with traditional methods where teachers ask students to write but offer minimal guidance through the process. A study by Ronald Honeycutt (2002) noted improved writing quality, increased self-regulation strategies, and decreased negative emotions about writing when students were engaged in the writing process. Likewise, Ho (2006) found that the writing process, used with students in Hong Kong schools, increased writing achievement and improved students' attitudes toward writing.

The only criticism found in the literature relates to the implementation of the writing process, as some teachers do not spend the time needed in the prewriting stage, a key piece of the process.

Research to Practice

The lessons in *Write TIME For Kids* emphasize all stages of the writing process, incorporating teacher engagement in each phase, so students can think and develop their thoughts about writing before they begin to write. Teacher modeling is also emphasized in the lessons to cultivate developing writers. This modeling continues through the stages of revising and editing, demonstrating the thoughts and level of engagement required to continuously improve written work. The lessons in *Write TIME For Kids* also include Collaborative Writing activities that encourage students to work together through the steps of the writing process. Each stage of the writing process is featured on the subsequent pages. These can be used as posters or given to each student for future reference.

Strategy to Practice

Support students as they engage in all five stages of the writing process. Be aware that this is a process that spans time. For example, students may need more than one day for drafting or revising. Also, provide time for students to write stories and articles just for fun. Not every piece of writing needs to be taken through the entire writing process.

Traits of Good Writing

The Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (Kozlow and Bellamy 2004), now called Education Northwest, identifies six key areas that comprise excellence in writing—ideas, voice, word choice, organization, sentence fluency, and conventions. These are accompanied by the presentation of written work. These traits have been widely used in classrooms for many years, but in addition to the broad acceptance of this approach to writing instruction, the 6+1 Trait Writing model has been the focus of ample research. A study conducted in Oregon schools in 2010 revealed a significant increase in fifth-grade student writing skills when instructed by teachers trained to use the traits (Coe et al. 2011). An earlier study by Arter, Spandel, Culham, and Pollard (1994) also investigated the effectiveness of 6+1 Trait Writing instruction and found that groups of fifth graders had significant gains in writing ability over those students not receiving this kind of instruction. Another study by Coe (2000) analyzed the writing of students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 and found that students instructed with the 6+1 Trait Writing model had a 79 percent pass rate on standardized writing assessments.

Some of the writing traits are also more appropriate for older students and can be quite difficult for younger students, such as sentence fluency and voice. While younger students may try working with these traits, they may be more successful with ideas, organization, and word choice. The rubrics associated with each of the traits help teachers to evaluate student work and make plans for future instructional needs. It is important to recognize that the focus should be on one genre at a time rather than trying to address all of them in every piece of writing. The 6+1 Traits are described below.

Ideas
Ideas are the foundation of good writing. To write effectively, one's ideas must be sound, clear, and thoroughly supported.

Voice
Voice is a unique quality of the writer that sets the tone or mood of the writing. The writer's voice shows his or her personality.

Word Choice
Precise and careful word choice is essential for good writing and involves using suitable language. It also uses lively verbs and descriptive words that convey a message.

Organization
The writing's organization is its structure. Sometimes the structure has a precise format, such as in a problem/solution essay, and sometimes the structure is prescriptive. In either case, the organization should be clear.

Sentence Fluency
Good writers are careful to vary sentence length, to use understandable syntaxes, and to be sure that one sentence flows easily into the next. These things together comprise sentence fluency.

Conventions
Conventions are all those elements of grammar and mechanics that make writing understandable. The process of checking one's conventions is called *editing*.

Presentation
The final, culminating stage of good writing (*other than it being read by others*) is presentation. Presentation is akin to publishing. It often involves incorporating visual materials with writing in order to emphasize key ideas.

Research to Practice

Write TIME For Kids emphasizes the 6+1 Traits of writing within the structure of the writing process. Depending on the text students read, the traits are affirmed, allowing students to emulate the author's techniques. Combining the six traits, the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing), and writer's workshop (a structure by which students participate in writing instruction, free writing, planning, drafting, and conferencing with the teacher) is supported by research by Betty Higgins, Melinda Miller, and Susan Wegmann (2006) as a strategy that leads to increased student writing achievement.

Strategy to Practice

The original 6+1 Trait Writing rubrics are most appropriate for students in grades three and up. Many teachers are not aware of the rubrics created for grades K–2, which can be found on the Northwest Education website (http://educationnorthwest.org/traits/traits-rubrics). These rubrics validate those very early stages of emergent writing, such as the following:

➡ making scribbles

➡ drawing pictures

➡ using some recognizable letters

➡ the ability to order words and drawings

➡ copying environmental print

➡ attempting phonetic spelling

➡ attempting the use of punctuation

Writing in the Genres

Learning to identify and write in different genres helps students become better writers while simultaneously strengthening their reading comprehension. Both reading and writing in different genres help students develop a sense of their reading and writing skills and enables them to anticipate the structure of the texts they read (Tompkins 2013).

Research to Practice

The genres featured in *Write TIME For Kids* help students develop useful writing skills that will assist them as they progress through school and into careers.

Opinion/Argument

Opinion/argument writing involves clearly expressing an opinion and providing evidence to support it. The purpose is to write convincingly using logic, compelling reasons, and emotion.

Informative/Explanatory

The goal of informative/explanatory writing is to help readers better understand the author's purpose and the topic. Facts and details are used to explain and expand on key points. With this genre, students write in an objective manner. They gather information from reliable sources and report the information in accurate and engaging ways.

Narrative Nonfiction

Narrative nonfiction encompasses different kinds of writing, such as biographies or personal memoirs. At its core, it is creative writing about real things. The idea is to write a true story but make it "read" like fiction.

Narrative Fiction

Writing narrative fiction involves the telling of a make-believe tale. The writer creates characters and a plot within a setting. The story may be inspired by real people or events, but it involves a high level of imagination and creativity.

Ideas for writing within each genre are listed on pages 19–22. These can be used as posters or given to each student for future reference.

Strategy to Practice

Try these strategies to help your students engage in the writing of different genres:

➡ Introduce students to a variety of genres.

➡ Discuss the characteristics of each genre.

➡ Model writing in different genres.

➡ As you model your writing, engage in thinking aloud so students understand the thought process involved in writing.

➡ Follow up story reading with story writing, and encourage students to mimic the style of the author.

Using a Writer's Workshop Model

Writer's Workshop is described as "a flexible plan that places students and teacher in a partnership for learning" (Cooper and Kiger 2003, 442). Developed by Lucy Calkins, the concept of writer's workshop has been utilized in hundreds of thousands of classrooms over the past few decades. While different people describe it in different ways, the essence of writer's workshop is that students spend a lot of time writing. In his publication, *Welcome to Writer's Workshop* (2003), Steve Peha describes four main steps: mini-lesson, status of the class, writing time, and sharing.

Mini-Lesson

The mini-lesson is a 5–15 minute lesson that focuses on one specific writing skill. Students are encouraged to work on that skill during their writing block that day.

Below are examples of mini-lesson topics:

- writing dialogue
- writing with rhythm
- writing about setting
- writing persuasively
- varying sentence length
- character development
- varying word choice
- providing evidence

Status of the Class

Status of the class involves identifying each student's writing plan for the day. While all students are writing, they are not all in the same phase of the process. One student may be planning and outlining a story, another might be ready to edit, yet another might be ready to have a conference with the teacher.

Writing Time

Writing time is just that—time when the majority of students are writing. They might also be revising, editing, publishing, or meeting with the teacher to conference about a piece of written work. Depending on the age and attention span of students, this portion of the workshop should last somewhere between 20–45 minutes.

Sharing

Sharing is an important step in Writer's Workshop. Each day, 10–15 minutes is devoted to students who want to share what they have written with the class.

Writer's Workshop is applicable for students in K–12. It allows students to learn new techniques, write continuously for an uninterrupted period of time, and share their work. The following pages include some easy-to-use resources for implementing Writer's Workshop: a planning sheet for mini-lessons, a checklist for monitoring class status, a student self-evaluation/teacher evaluation form, and a log sheet for students to record the writing they are working on and their next steps.

Research to Practice

The *Write TIME For Kids* lessons allow students to think like a writer. The lessons have students write various descriptions, paragraphs, articles, and stories. They are also encouraged to engage in conversations with classmates about writing techniques, offering constructive suggestions to partners in peer conferences.

Assessment

Assessment is an important part of the writing process. According to the Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing from the National Council for Teachers of English (2009a), the assessment of writing should be used to improve instruction and increase student learning. For this reason, students should be involved in the assessment process. Engaging in the assessment process helps them take ownership of their work and writing development. It empowers students in their abilities to improve their own writing skills. When a student and teacher work in partnership to evaluate writing and set future writing goals, students experience far greater success than merely receiving a grade for a piece of written work. Lucy Calkins states, "[We] are teaching the writer and not the writing. Our decisions must be guided by 'what might help this writer' rather than 'what might help this writing'" (1994, 228).

Research to Practice

The lessons in *Write TIME For Kids* incorporate various kinds of assessment and encourage students to take a critical and constructive look at their own work. This program honors process as well as product and helps students recognize that writing development takes place over time. The rubrics in the *Teacher's Guides* match the specific skills taught in each particular lesson. The rubrics are designed to make assessing students' work efficient, consistent, and objective.

Strategy to Practice

Students can participate in the assessment process in the following ways:

➡ Review rubric criteria.

➡ Provide feedback to classmates.

➡ Engage in self-evaluation.

Different Kinds of Assessment

Assessing literacy skills can be done formally or informally, formatively or summatively. Formal assessments do not always need to be in test form but may take the form of running records or using rubrics. Informal assessments might take the form of an observation of literacy behaviors with a record of anecdotal notes. It is important that teachers use formative assessments to gauge students' progress over time, rather than performing only summative assessments or tests that come at the end of a unit of study. The goal is to create an accurate, detailed picture of student mastery, misconceptions, and additional learning needs in order to inform subsequent lesson planning.

Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment refers to assessment that resembles real tasks (National Council for Teachers of English 2009b). For example, a teacher who instructs students about developing characters for stories would use authentic assessment by reviewing a student's actual story rather than by giving a test. By using a student's writing for writing assessment, a teacher not only identifies progress and need for improvement, but also informs his or her instruction and areas for enrichment.

Assessment (cont.)

Portfolio Assessment

A writing portfolio is a demonstration of a student's writing progress over time. It serves as documentation of writing development, not a storehouse for every piece of writing a student completes. It is a form of authentic assessment that demonstrates what students can do rather than telling what they can do (Darling-Hammond 2010, Damiani 2004). At its best, the portfolio is student-driven in many ways. Older students are responsible for adding work to portfolios, while younger students welcome guidance from the teacher in deciding on work samples to include.

Students are often tempted to include only their very best work in portfolios, but with some instruction and guidance, older students become comfortable with including less stellar demonstrations of writing in order to show progress. The use of portfolios for assessment gives students ownership of their development as writers and helps them to reflect on changes in their writing over time (Julius 2000). Additionally, they enable teachers and students to share progress with families. Ideally, the student shares his or her written work, explaining why it was selected for the portfolio and shows how his or her writing has progressed.

Strategy to Practice

➡ Provide each student with a file folder, labeled with his or her name.

➡ Keep all students' file folders in a convenient, easily accessible location.

➡ When a student identifies a piece of writing to put in his or her portfolio, the work is placed in the folder.

➡ A few times a month, allow students to select work from the folder, placing it in a notebook-style portfolio along with an attached form, explaining why the work was chosen for the portfolio and what it demonstrates.

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Writing is about communication, and communication is social; so involving a social aspect to writing is important. Both Lev Vygotsky (1981) and John Dewey (1966) emphasize the importance of social interaction in learning, noting that these interactions increase intellectual development and help students attain higher levels of understanding. Adamantly stated by Grant Wiggins, "Both common sense and research make it clear: Formative assessment, consisting of lots of feedback and opportunities to use that feedback, enhances performance and achievement" (2012, 10).

In Writer's Workshop, arranging for teacher/student feedback is built into the framework. During these conference sessions, it is important for the teacher and student to have a back-and-forth discussion about the student's writing. It is important for the teacher to make positive comments that are constructive, rather than indicating a "stamp of approval." For example, a comment, such as, "You really did a nice job selecting descriptive words," is more constructive than, "Good job!"

Research to Practice

The *Write TIME For Kids* lessons provide opportunities for a variety of feedback. Students are encouraged to have group and individual discussions with the teacher about techniques and strategies. They are also encouraged to engage in conversations with classmates about writing techniques, offering constructive suggestions to partners in peer conferences.

Strategy to Practice

Ideas for constructive feedback:

➡ "The descriptive words you used really help me to visualize the setting."

➡ "What support can you offer for your reason here?"

➡ "I notice you use the word *said* quite a bit. Are there other words you might use instead?"

➡ "You provide two vivid details, but the rubric calls for three. Let's add one more."

➡ "When I read this, I wonder where it takes place. What could you write that would communicate the setting?"

While feedback between peers is also a necessary part of the social aspect of writing, giving quality feedback can sometimes be quite challenging. You may find that peer input is limited or that students are not sure what to say.

Before having students meet in pairs to provide feedback about writing, teach a mini-lesson about how to provide feedback. Explain that all published authors have editors who work with them to improve their writing. Then, differentiate feedback that is constructive from feedback that is not. Discuss the difference between "This is a good article" versus "I love all the detail you included about sharks in your article."

Shared Writing

Shared writing is an important part of the writing process and has been deemed a successful strategy in the development of writers (Fisher and Frey 2013; Patterson, Schaller, and Clemens 2008). It involves demonstration and instruction, and it builds community (Dean and Warren 2012). In shared writing, the teacher and students work together to compose text. Typically, in shared writing, the teacher writes as students dictate. This process helps students see their ideas coming to life on paper and serves as a model for correct spelling, sentence structure, and use of conventions (ReadWriteThink 2015). During shared writing, the teacher can also engage in a think-aloud strategy, modeling how writers think as they write.

Research to Practice

Each lesson in *Write TIME For Kids* involves a suggested shared writing component. This can be found in the Drafting section of each lesson. Adding a shared writing activity before students begin to write helps them engage their thoughts about applying the specific skills for that lesson. It allows them to hear the thoughts of the teacher as he or she thinks aloud and makes decisions about the characters, sequence of events, evidence, or choice of words. Additionally, it is an extra way of providing scaffolding for English language learners (Routman 2011). According to Regie Routman (2011), participating in shared writing inspires student creativity and increases their success as they begin to write independently.

Strategy to Practice

Example of Shared Writing

Teacher: So, we decided to write an informational article about our school carnival. What do you think we should say about it?

Student: It's fun!

Teacher: Okay, it's fun. We could say, "The carnival at Lincoln Elementary is very fun." Let's read that together. Does that sound like a good way to begin? (*yes*) Now, let's think of what to write next.

Student: The people was playing games.

Teacher: Yes, the people *were* playing games. Let me write that down.

Example of the Think-Aloud Strategy

"I'm going to introduce my main character in this sentence. I think it would be helpful if I mention her name, indicate how old she is, and tell what she is doing. Maybe I'll write, 'Sally waited in line to buy tickets.' I think that's a good way of introducing her. Let's think about what we want Sally to do next."

In shared writing, the students and teacher brainstorm the storyline, and students suggest sentences that the teacher adds to the story.

Research

In many kinds of writing, it is necessary to gather factual information. For this reason, it is important to teach research skills even to the youngest students. Students formulate questions, learn to locate reputable sources, take notes, and organize their thoughts along with information gathered through research to develop their written work. And with the widespread availability of knowledge on the Internet, it is essential for teachers to guide students to effectively search for information and read critically (Leu et al. 2004). The following genres describe examples of the different kinds of information students may need to research.

Opinion/Argument

Students may need to research related issues to strengthen their presentation of facts. For example, a student who wants to make a case about conserving water may need to conduct research about the amount of water people use each day or how much water a typical person wastes each day. The information gathered from research helps support the writer's opinion and/or the argument made in the text.

Informative/Explanatory

Research is the basis of most informative/explanatory articles. Students can research to learn about scientific topics, such as animals, health issues, and disease. They can research to learn more about a part of the country or to identify what experts have to say about certain topics in order to knowledgably write about it.

Narrative Nonfiction

While narrative nonfiction focuses on the telling of stories, students may need to conduct research to gather facts about their topics to strengthen their narratives. They should be encouraged to conduct research about people and places and use this information to strengthen the telling of true stories.

Narrative Fiction

A fictional story about a real person will require students to learn more about the person they will write about. They might write a fictional story about a fictional character during a real time in history, such as the Civil War era. Students will need to research this period of time in order to write accurately. Additionally, a purely fictional story may require research about the story setting. For example, a student whose story is set in the jungle may need to learn more about the jungle in order to effectively place his or her characters and events in this location.

Students can gather information through the use of books, reputable magazines, interviews with experts, and from the Internet. Remember to monitor students' use of the Internet and teach them how to recognize reputable sources.

Research to Practice

Each lesson in *Write TIME For Kids* provides an opportunity for students to conduct various types of research. For example, one of the Informative/Explanatory lessons has students researching and writing about bats, while one of the Narrative Nonfiction lessons has students researching and writing about someone they know who has an interesting hobby or is really good at something. Each type of writing requires different types of research.

Research (cont.)

Strategy to Practice

Identifying Reputable Sources

1. Explain that while the Internet has a lot of information, it is not all accurate. When we do Internet searches, we find many website options. We need to look at each website carefully to decide if it is a reputable source. For example, say, "If I am searching for information about Mars, I will find a site by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). I know that NASA is the leading organization for space exploration, so that is going to be a reputable source. Another site I find lists a bunch of facts about space, but it does not tell me the name of the sponsoring organization; so I have no idea who wrote this or from where the information came. This would not be a good source for gathering reputable information."

2. Assist students in using precise key words in their Internet searches to target the best information, and help them think through the sites they find to determine whether or not the sources are reputable. For example, encourage students to type a question into the search window (*Where do tree frogs live?*) or use specific key words (*tree frogs location* or *tree frogs habitat*). Demonstrate that more general search terms (*tree frogs* or *frogs*) may not lead to the answers they hope to find.

Recording Facts

When students have found quality sources of information, they need to record the information and make note of the source.

1. Provide students with index cards and rubber bands to keep them together.

2. When students find interesting facts, instruct them to write their facts on the cards using their own words. Say, "If you did not have the text in front of you, what words would you use to explain this fact to me?" If students choose to use the author's exact words, instruct them to put quotation marks around the words.

3. Next, have students write the title and author of the book as well as the page number where the information was found in the upper right corner of the card or on the back of the card. For information found on the Internet, have students record the name of the website as well as the site's URL.

4. Students should continue in this manner, completing new cards for each fact found.

5. Before writing, students should organize the facts in a logical sequence to match their graphic organizer activity sheets. By doing this, the necessary facts are easy to access.

Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

Proper credit must be given for information used in a student's writing, whether it is from a book, a magazine, a website, or another person. Students must tell where they found the information. For developing writers, this can be as simple as writing, "The author of (*title of book*) says..." In addition to this, for more advanced writers, a references page can be provided with the list of book titles and authors. Remember not to complicate this process for young and novice writers. This skill will continue to develop as students learn the more detailed format of in-text citations and reference lists.

Comparing Texts

Among the many standards in the Common Core State Standards is an emphasis on comparing and contrasting texts. Comparing and contrasting is an important skill and, according to a meta-analysis by Robert Marzano (1998), has been shown to have the highest likelihood of enhancing student achievement (Marzano 2007). Students compare, contrast, classify, and analyze—all of which require critical and higher-level thinking. Identifying similarities and differences can take place within multiple contexts at all age levels. At a more complex level, students can learn to compare and contrast texts. For example, within the Opinion/Argument genre, students can read two texts and compare the strength of the arguments made by the authors by analyzing the evidence and making determinations about which argument is most compelling.

Research to Practice

The lessons in *Write TIME For Kids* provide opportunities for students to make these kinds of comparisons between texts. Have students critically analyze each text and explain why and how the texts are similar or different. By participating in text comparison activities, students not only reinforce their abilities to make comparisons, but they also strengthen their writing abilities and change the ways they think about writing through the analysis of texts. Additionally, the Writing from Sources section of the Technology Platform supports this skill.

Strategy to Practice

Comparing and Contrasting Texts

➡ Compare the sub-topics addressed in paragraphs of an article.

➡ Compare the descriptive language used in two articles. Which creates the better visual image?

➡ Identify the evidence provided in two articles and compare them to determine which argument is strongest.

➡ Compare and contrast the main characters of two fictional stories.

➡ Compare and contrast a narrative nonfiction story to a narrative fiction story.

➡ Determine the similarities and differences between two characters.

➡ Compare two well-known authors. What kinds of stories do they write?

➡ Compare and contrast two photographs of outdoor scenes.

➡ Identify the similarities and differences between the work of two illustrators.

Language Support

A wealth of research indicates that vocabulary knowledge is tied to comprehension in students who are monolingual, but the same is true of those students who are learning a second language (Kieffer 2012). While students with limited vocabulary knowledge may struggle in their reading development, there are strategies teachers can use that benefit all students, including those learning a new language. Cristina Gillanders, Dina Castro, and Ximena Franco (2014) suggest creating environments that are conducive to language use, implementing the following:

- asking open-ended questions,

- acting out words and actions in read-aloud books,

- explaining the meanings of words,

- providing time for students to talk,

- using new words,

- engaging students in conversation (not just question and answer), and

- encouraging students to pronounce new words.

One of the best ways to develop language is to help students encounter new words in multiple contexts, not just during a vocabulary lesson (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan 2013). After teaching a new word, use it at other times of the day. Ask students to use the word in their conversations. Encourage them to connect a new word to a similar word in their first language. Suggest synonyms for the word and use them during conversations. When students bring new words into different areas of their daily lives, the words take on new meaning and purpose. Eventually, the student owns the word and it becomes part of their everyday vocabulary.

Students who are in the beginning stages of language learning should be prompted to listen and encouraged to participate using one- or two-word responses. Research also shows that English language learners benefit from making connections with their first language (Burchinal et al. 2012), so utilizing a picture dictionary to discuss word meanings or engaging the family in providing some translation of words and concepts can have positive ramifications.

It can also be helpful to students if the teacher previews text before reading it aloud. For example, a student learning English may get lost in the text of an article about the troubles polar bears face due to the thinning ice in the Arctic. A teacher who previews the text with students first might draw attention to the pictures, showing the polar bears and pointing out that they live in snowy, icy places. Drawing on the title ("On Thin Ice"), the teacher might ask students what would happen to these large creatures if the ice in their home environment becomes too thin? Subsequently, the teacher can tell students that the article will address this issue and go on to explain some of the new words that will be encountered in the text. By taking these steps, the teacher helps engage all students in thinking about the content of the article, while assisting second language learners in making meaningful connections to increase their understanding.

Additionally, it is important to encourage the participation of all students in the reading of texts and in the meaning-making process. Engage students in ways that all students can participate. For example, have students act out various parts of the text. You can also garner the participation of all students in discussing words in different languages. Ask the second language learner to say a word in his or her own language and then make the connection to the word in English.

Research to Practice

All of the lessons in *Write TIME For Kids* are designed to help all learners, including second language learners and advanced writing students, engage with the Mentor Text Cards in meaningful ways, and have successful experiences as writers. Each lesson provides language support and differentiated instruction.

Lesson Vocabulary

Each lesson has a section focusing specifically on new vocabulary. These are words students will encounter in the featured card for that lesson. The meanings of the words are not only defined on the back of the card, but there are also activity suggestions for practicing the words and delving into their meanings.

Language Practice

Each lesson features a language standard and has an instructional component to teach the standard, such as a lesson about subject-verb agreement, conventions of written language, using meaning clues and spelling patterns, or using spatial or temporal words. These lessons provide instructional components, elements of practice, and the opportunity to try out new skills in brief writing activities. These language skills are often incorporated into the larger written piece at the end of the overarching lesson.

Language Support

Each lesson in *Write TIME For Kids* also includes a Language Support section with a suggestion for supporting students before they begin writing, such as offering students opportunities to talk about their ideas, using some of their new words orally, and taking more time in Prewriting before engaging in their own writing.

Differentiated Instruction

Each lesson includes a section with a suggestion to support proficient students in writing as well as scaffolding for less proficient writers. For example, a writing frame is provided for each lesson to guide the student in planning and writing his or her piece before the first-draft page.

Strategy to Practice

Teacher (*pointing to the polar bear*)**:** What is this in Spanish?

Student: Oso polar

Teacher: Let's all say that—oso polar. In English, we say polar bear.

Student repeats "polar bear."

Student: It's big.

Teacher: Yes, the polar bear is big. I think it's very beautiful, too.

Vocabulary Instruction

Emphasis on vocabulary is important for the development of reading and writing. When students are exposed to new vocabulary encountered in conversation or when listening to a reading, they are more likely to recognize those words when they encounter them in print (Cunningham 2005). When implemented appropriately, vocabulary instruction can lead to gains in reading comprehension (NICHD 2000). Merely looking up words in a dictionary and writing definitions is not the best way to bring about these results. Fortunately, there is much research to support appropriate practice for vocabulary learning.

- Students benefit from the instruction of vocabulary they will encounter in specific text (Biemiller and Boote 2006). This can be done through discussion of words in context or the creation of new sentences using vocabulary words.

- Steven Stahl (2005) advocates for repeated exposures to vocabulary in different contexts. This can happen through the use of new words, in classroom conversation, and in other subject areas.

- Incidental encounters with new vocabulary through conversation and in students' literature bring about meaningful learning opportunities (Cunningham and Stanovich 1997). Encourage students to use new words in their conversations with classmates. When encountering featured vocabulary words in students' literature, pause to draw students' attention to vocabulary use in the story.

- Rereading stories with new vocabulary results in greater understanding of the new words (Biemiller and Boote 2006).

- A study by Nash and Snowling (2006) indicates that students have more success learning vocabulary when word meanings are taught in context. This involves highlighting the entire sentence or paragraph in which a word appears and determining a word's meaning based on how it is used and how it makes sense within the text.

- Interactive learning experience through dialogue and interactive read-alouds brings about greater gains in vocabulary knowledge (Leung 2008; Coyne, McCoach, and Kapp 2007).

Research to Practice

Each lesson in *Write TIME For Kids* emphasizes a few key vocabulary words. Different suggestions are provided for word learning, engaging students in interactive experiences, and the learning of words in context. Additionally, you may choose to engage students in other vocabulary activities using the suggestions on the following page.

Problem-Based Learning

What Is Problem-Based Learning?

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a strategy that allows students to tackle problems of interest, to design and investigate projects, and to become advocates in their areas of interest. "Psychological research and theory suggests that by having students learn through the experience of solving problems, they can learn both content and thinking strategies. In PBL, student learning centers on a complex problem that does not have a correct answer. Students work in collaborative groups to identify what they need to learn in order to solve a problem" (Hmelo-Silver 2004, 235).

Why Use Problem-Based Learning?

PBL is real, and it motivates students as they investigate issues that have meaning to them. PBL projects are student-directed and do not lend themselves to passive learning. Students actively engage with topics and with peers as they identify a *problem*, *process* the issues related to the problem, conduct *investigations* about the problem, and come up with possible *solutions* for those problems.

Steps for Problem-Based Learning

1. The teacher can pose a problem or question to students, such as *Why is bullying a big deal?*

2. Students may begin by writing in journals to reflect on the problem. Then, students should engage in a group discussion about the topic and list what they already know about it. In the case of bullying, students might list the reasons some kids bully others and the effects bullying has on those who are bullied.

3. Have groups write a problem statement that includes input from each person. (*Some kids do not like coming to school because they are afraid of being bullied*.)

4. Have groups write a list of possible solutions. Encourage the consideration of all ideas. Even the most unusual ideas may lend themselves to a solution.

5. Have groups select the best solution or the solution they would like to implement.

6. Encourage groups to determine the information they need to gather in order to proceed with the project. Do they need to do research? Do they need to conduct interviews? Are there websites or books that could be helpful?

7. After gathering information, instruct groups to create a solution to the problem that is supported by their research or interviews.

8. Have students plan the presentation of their groups' work. The presentations should include the statement of the problem, the process of investigation, supporting evidence, and a solution to the problem. If groups cannot identify a solution, encourage them to admit that and seek suggestions from fellow classmates.

Planning for Instruction

Pacing Plans

The following pacing plans show three options for using this complete kit. Teachers should customize these pacing plans according to their students' needs.

Option 1 (60 minutes per day)						
Lesson	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
1	Genre Overview Analyzing the Mentor Text	Language Practice	Prewriting	Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment Extensions
2	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting	Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment Extensions	
3	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting	Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment Extensions	
4	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting	Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment Extensions	
5	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting	Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment Extensions	
6	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting	Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment Extensions	
7	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting	Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment Extensions	
8	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting	Drafting	Revising	Editing	Assessment Extensions

Planning for Instruction (cont.)

Pacing Plans (cont.)

Option 2 (1 hour and 45 minutes per day)						
Lesson	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
1	Genre Overview Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment	Extensions	
2	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment	Extensions	
3	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment	Extensions	
4	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment	Extensions	
5	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment	Extensions	
6	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment	Extensions	
7	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting Drafting	Revising Editing	Assessment	Extensions	
8	Analyzing the Mentor Text Language Practice	Prewriting	Drafting	Revising	Editing	Assessment Extensions

Planning for Instruction (cont.)

Pacing Plans (cont.)

Option 3 (30 minutes per day)							
Lesson	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
1	Analyzing the Mentor Text	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting	Revising	Editing	Assessment
2	Analyzing the Mentor Text	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting	Revising	Editing	Assessment
3	Analyzing the Mentor Text	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting	Revising	Editing	Assessment
4	Analyzing the Mentor Text	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting	Revising	Editing	Assessment
5	Analyzing the Mentor Text	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting	Revising	Editing	Assessment
6	Analyzing the Mentor Text	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting	Revising	Editing	Assessment
7	Analyzing the Mentor Text	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting	Revising	Editing	Assessment
8	Analyzing the Mentor Text	Prewriting	Drafting	Drafting	Revising	Editing	Assessment

Note: This pacing option omits the Genre Overview, Language Practice, and Lesson Extensions.

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