

# Using A Writing Workshop

**Special Area:** Connections

**Grade level(s) served:** 1-4

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## I. ABSTRACT

The Writing Workshop approach to teaching writing will be demonstrated. The workshop consists of three segments: a minilesson, writing and sharing. During segment one, the teacher models real writing for the class and a skill or strategy to be emphasized. All Core Knowledge writing, spelling, grammar and usage skills can be taught in this segment throughout the year. The next segment includes students writing as well as individual editing conferences between student and teacher. Sharing is the last segment where a few students will discuss their writing with the class. The class will ask the author questions about his/her work. The Writing Workshop is an effective way top help children develop a love for writing as well as cover Core Knowledge content.

## II. OVERVIEW

- A. Content from the *Core Knowledge Sequence*
  - 1. All the content listed under Grammar and Usage
- B. Topics to be addressed
  - 1. The Writing Workshop is a method of delivering specific content

## III. RESOURCES

- A. See Bibliography

## IV. PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- A. Major Focus
  - 1. Building fluency in writing
  - 2. Employing the writing process
  - 3. Refining and applying knowledge of phonics
  - 4. Building confidence as a writer
- B. Getting Started
  - 1. Procedures
  - 2. Stages of Writing
- C. Mini lessons
  - 1. Qualities of a mini lesson
  - 2. Types of mini lessons
  - 3. Focused writing
- D. Let the Writing Begin
  - 1. Conferencing
  - 2. Editing
  - 3. Record keeping
- E. Publishing
  - 1. Author's Chair

## V. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS

See Appendices

## **VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## **Appendix A**

### **Major Focus:**

- Building fluency in writing
- Employing the writing process
- Refining and Applying knowledge of phonics
- Building confidence as a writer

#### **Segment One (5-10 min.)**

- Teacher presents a mini lesson to model real writing and a skill or strategy to be emphasized

#### **Segment Two (15-20 min.)**

- Students write on self generated topics
- Individual conferences occur
- Teacher and student pick one piece to edit for publication

#### **Segment Three (5-10 min.)**

- One or two students briefly share while sitting in the Author's Chair
- The author answers questions from classmates about the writing

## **Appendix B** **Getting Started**

You will need:

- An overhead projector or chart paper
- Writing and publishing materials
- Individual student folders or notebooks
- Editor's Checklist
- Plan for conferencing and sharing

## **Appendix C**

### **STAGES OF WRITING**

1. Scribbling consists of marks on paper that are not letter-like.
2. Drawing refers to pictures.
3. Letter-like forms are marks on the paper that have strokes, curves, or circles that have letter-like characteristics.
4. Letter Strings/Pre-phonemic Spelling is stringing letters together without attempting to represent letter sounds in any systematic way.
  - 4.1 “Random” means that random letters are selected.  
**EGTPWKCBAORKQWOFJNW**
  - 4.2 Repeated Patterns refers to spelling with the same letters or patterns of letters.  
**AKAYKYAKAYAAKAYKYA**
5. Invented Spelling means that an attempt is made to represent phonemes or syllables in words with letters.  
**V BOE WF V BALN WOKD NTU V HOS**
6. Transitional Spelling means that some, but not all, words are spelled conventionally.  
**TH BOY WIF TH BALN WALKD INTO TH HOUSE**
7. Conventional Spelling means that each word is spelled in the correct and conventional way.  
The boy with the balloon walked into the house

## Appendix D

### What is a Mini-lesson?

A brief focused session (5-10 min.) that teaches strategies through demonstration, using thinking aloud and writing in front of the classroom.

Teachers provide modeling to children by sharing what they write. The teacher plans aloud what they are going to write and actually writes it on the overhead while students observe and read what is being written

### **Qualities of a Mini-lesson**

- Short
- Focused on a few teaching points
- Gentle invitation to write
- Responsive to the needs of the class
- Allows learners to observe how a writer uses a strategy
- Presenter shares everything he or she knows about a strategy modeling how it works and benefits readers

### **Types of Mini-lessons**

- Procedures
- Qualities of Good Writing
- Focused Writing

#### Focused Writing

- Brainstorming and organizing
- Paragraphs
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing
- Narrowing the Topic
- Read, Research, Take Notes
- Writing Reports

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Date Taught</b>	<b>Date Taught</b>	<b>Date Taught</b>	<b>Date Taught</b>
<b>Types of Writing</b>				
• story				
• report				
• letter				
• poem				
• description				
Beginning, middle, end paragraphs				
Correct letter formation and spacing				
Complete sentence				
• subject				
• predicate				
<b>Parts of Speech</b>				
• nouns				
• verbs				
• simple adjectives				
-er, -est				
Past tense regular verbs (-ed)				
Past tense irregular verbs				
Plural nouns (s)				
Plural nouns (es)				
<b>Capital letters</b>				
• first word in a sentence				
• proper nouns				
• I				
• Holidays and months and days of the week				
• Names of countries, cities, states				

• Main words in titles				
• initials				
<b>Correct use of end punctuation</b>				
• period				
• question mark				
• exclamation point				
<b>Commas</b>				
• between day and year				
• between city and state				
Apostrophe and how it is used in contractions				
Common Abbreviations				
Synonyms				
Antonyms				

**Appendix E**  
**Talking Writing**  
**Or**  
**Writing Conference**

The focus of the writing conference is on meaning in order to help the students develop awareness. The point is not just to correct mechanical errors but also to have the writing make sense or say what the writer wants to say.

### **The Values of Conferencing**

- Shows a personal interest
- You help your students discover the elements of writing based on their individual needs
- You meet the needs and levels of various children
- You become a guide rather than a wielder of a red pen

### Suggestions for Conferencing

- Circulate through the room, talking informally (early in the year)
- Designate different children for different days
- Have a record keeping system
- Have the students read to you, don't take the writing away from them
- Raise questions, ask how the student got the idea, what might happen next, etc.
- Don't teach or correct everything at once
- Help the child identify strengths and weaknesses and focus on what needs to be done next
- When the student is ready to edit, guide not just mark their paper

### The Writing Coach

- Inspire the writer with your interest in what he or she has to say
- Focus on meaning
- React as a reader
- Build on strengths
- Help the student “think through” their writing problems by creating an atmosphere of trust and acceptance
- Become a collaborator who helps brainstorm ideas and think more creatively
- Not one right way
- A conversation with a writer

- Praise is most effective when it describes the writing and not the writer
- Question without interrogating, careful not to play “20 Questions”
- Instruction on skills needed by the writer to complete the piece

#### Questions in a Writing Conference

##### At the pre-writing stage

- What do you think you will write about?
- Why are you interested in that?
- How will you begin?
- What are some things that you want to include in your story?

##### At the First-Draft Stage

- What is this draft mainly about?
- What is the most important thing you are trying to say?
- Can you tell me more about this?
- This part isn’t clear. Can you tell me what you mean?
- What will you do next?
- What do you think you can do to make this writing better?
- What’s the strongest part of your writing?
- What’s the weakest part of your writing?
- How can I help you with this piece of writing?

##### During Preparations for Publication

You will focus on mechanics and form. Use these conferences to point out the child’s progress. Help the writer learn to edit mechanics.

## **Appendix F**

### **Editor's Checklist**

1. My name is on the paper.
2. The date is on the paper.
3. My story has a title.
4. I began each sentence with a capital letter.
5. I put a punctuation mark at the end of each sentence.
6. My story has 5-7 complete thoughts.
7. I looked at the spelling and checked the dictionary.
8. I looked for “lost” capitals.
9. I read my story to a buddy to make sure it made sense.

**Appendix G**  
**Writing Conference Log**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Writing \_\_\_\_\_

Strong Points: \_\_\_\_\_

Concerns Addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Writing \_\_\_\_\_

Strong Points: \_\_\_\_\_

Concerns Addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Writing \_\_\_\_\_

Strong Points: \_\_\_\_\_

Concerns Addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Writing \_\_\_\_\_

Strong Points: \_\_\_\_\_

Concerns Addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Writing \_\_\_\_\_

Strong Points: \_\_\_\_\_

Concerns Addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix H**  
**Teacher Observations**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Student's strengths:

September: \_\_\_\_\_

January: \_\_\_\_\_

May: \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of instruction:

September: \_\_\_\_\_

January: \_\_\_\_\_

May: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Comments:

September: \_\_\_\_\_

January: \_\_\_\_\_

May: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix H**  
**PUBLISHING**

“There is no reward so delightful.  
No pleasure so exquisite, as having  
one’s own work known and  
acclaimed by those whose applause  
confers honor.”

Moliere

- ❖ Let the children publish a piece when they have completed three to five good first drafts.
- ❖ A published piece should be something that everyone can read easily, and of which the child will be proud.
- ❖ There are variations for publishing, which could include a class author board, class books, mailing to contests, school or classroom newspaper, and even class-created web pages.
- ❖ Publishing brings a deep satisfaction.

**Appendix I**  
**The Author's Chair: A Sharing Time**

The focus of the author's chair is on the message that the author is trying to convey. In the author's chair the student will mostly share a first draft that they have written. Sometimes they will read a "published" piece. After reading the author will call on class members to tell something that they liked about the writing. Next the author will ask if there were any questions about they writing.

### Some Procedures

The author reads, shows illustrations and calls for responders

The responders begin with "I"

The responders tell the writer what they liked or learned and ask questions to improve understanding

At the beginning of the year the teacher must model sharing, responding and questioning

- I like the way you described...
- I wonder why the character...

Support struggling readers by having them read to you and practice before they present in the author's chair