Write from the Beginning...
and Beyond

Setting the Stage

Preview Packet

THINKING MAPS®   TEACHER'S GUIDE

Write from the Beginning... and Beyond

Setting the Stage

Jane Buckner, Ed. S.
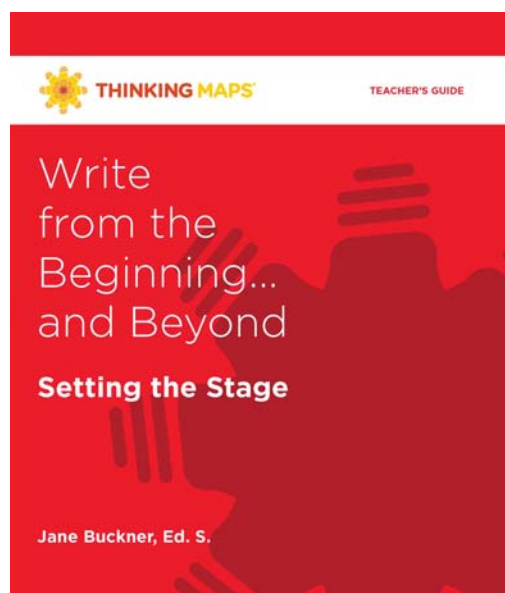
Spiral-bound
Training Manual

THINKING MAPS

WRITE FROM THE BEGINNING...AND BEYOND

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SETTING THE STAGE

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jane Buckner, Ed.S

A native of North Carolina with over forty years of experience in education, Jane Buckner began her career as a teacher in the Gaston County, North Carolina, school system where she taught numerous grade levels for seventeen years. Jane taught "at-risk" as well as advanced students where she successfully employed the writing techniques used in *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond.* During her teaching career, she was the County Teacher of the Year and served on several state task forces to develop curriculum to use in state early childhood programs. Later, she became an Instructional Specialist for K–12 and Title I Coordinator for her district office, serving in this capacity for eight years. As an Instructional Specialist, Jane developed and implemented system-wide criterion referenced tests for first and second graders that were aligned with the state's standards and included a developmental writing component. She also worked closely with early childhood teachers, both individually and in support group settings, to improve the quality of literacy instruction in early childhood classrooms. While in the Central Office, Jane started the first district-level Pre-K program. This project was recognized as a part of the national A+ school initiatives and was visited by then Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander. During her employment with the Gaston County, North Carolina, school system, Jane was trained by Dr. David Hyerle in *Thinking Maps: Tools for Learning* and, seeing their value in the education of all children, she was instrumental in incorporating Thinking Maps into her school system. In addition to her responsibilities as an Instructional Specialist, Jane served as an adjunct professor at Belmont Abbey College, teaching in both the graduate and undergraduate programs. She is credited with developing the first Pre-K Certification training program for the college.

In 1996, Jane joined Thinking Maps, Incorporated, as an International Educational Consultant. She currently serves as the Director of Consulting for Writing and as an author with the company. In addition to *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond,* Jane also co-authored *Write . . . for the Future,* a secondary writing program currently being implemented in numerous areas of the United States and Canada. Her most recent publication, *Thinking Maps: Path to Pro ciency for English Language Learners,* was inspired in part by her six years of work with the Language Acquisition Branch of the Los Angeles Unified School District to create English Language Development training for their teachers. Jane has spent extensive time working with teachers in numerous areas of California, Texas, Arizona, and other states with heavy English Learner populations to help them provide quality instruction for these students.

Jane is also a contributing author in Dr. David Hyerle's book *Student Successes with Thinking Maps*.

In addition to her work as a consultant and author, Jane has presented at numerous state, regional, and national conferences. She currently resides in Belmont, North Carolina, with her husband, Joe.

Write from the Beginning...and Beyond
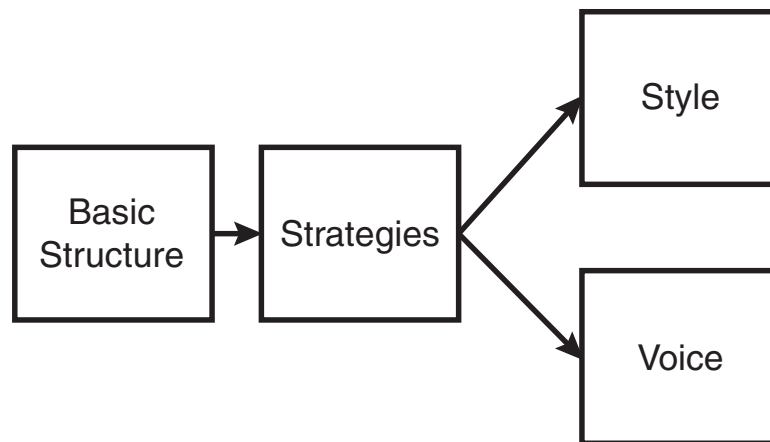
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Overview

§ **What is *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond?***

Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond is a revision and an extension of the original *Write . . . from the Beginning*, which was published in 2000. It is a developmental, vertically aligned writing program for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The focus of the program is on early and continuous training in those criteria that are necessary for successful writing achievement beyond the early school years. When using the program, teachers within a school develop a common, targeted focus and accept a shared accountability for school-wide writing performance.

§ **What is the purpose of *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond?***

The purpose for implementing *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond* is to give both students and teachers in grades K–8 the knowledge and skills necessary for age-appropriate writing instruction and achievement. When using the program, teachers receive instruction in writing expectations for their particular grade levels, as well as for the entire K–8 continuum. As a result, the teachers are equipped to meet the individual needs of those students requiring instruction both below and beyond grade-level expectations. As teachers use modeled writing, improvement rubrics, and focused mini-lessons, students establish a solid foundation in the writing process and <u>excellent writing proficiency</u> becomes the expectation.

Since writing proficiency begins with an understanding of the basic construction of a particular type of writing, the first instruction students receive is focused on this basic structure. Once students show proficiency in composing the basic structure, they are then instructed in the different strategies that are unique to that particular mode of

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│  Basic   │ ───▶ │          │ ─────────────────▶ │  Style   │
│Structure │      │Strategies│                    │          │
│          │      │          │ ─────────────────▶ │  Voice   │
└──────────┘      └──────────┘                    └──────────┘
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writing. As the students become more proficient in the use of the strategies, a strong style and voice emerges in the writing.

Each grade level has specific goals for each type of writing. The philosophy behind *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond* is that **each teacher owns 1/13 of a student's writing pro ciency**. If any teacher fails to uphold his or her responsibilities, then the child does not receive the instruction needed and the workload for the teachers in subsequent grade levels is increased.

§ **How is *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond* implemented?**

Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond is designed to be implemented <u>only in those schools which have received training in Thinking Maps</u>. The program uses a site-based training model as well as a Training of Trainers model in which representatives from individual schools attend the training and, in turn, deliver the training to their own school staffs. The key to the successful infusion of *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond* within any school is a <u>sustained</u> professional development plan involving training in multiple modes of writing over time. The types of writing and the pace of the trainings is a site-/district-level decision. Guidance can be provided with the Thinking Maps consultant who works with the school and trained trainers.

§ HOW WILL I MEASURE SUCCESS WITH *WRITE FROM THE BEGINNING . . . AND BEYOND?*

Success in writing achievement is determined at the individual student level through the use of an analytical improvement rubric to evaluate overall student progress in a particular mode of writing. The improvement rubrics use a twenty-point scale to assess skills in both conventions and content proficiency. The goal is for each individual student to score a <u>minimum</u> of sixteen to eighteen points consistently before moving on to more advanced instruction. Once proficiency for a grade level has been achieved, the assessment of the student's writing is then completed on the rubric for the next grade level. A student may be assessed using the rubric from any grade level; the teacher determines which rubric best matches the individual student's instructional needs. Kindergarten students, unlike students in first through eighth grade, are assessed on a six-point rubric and their proficiency is demonstrated with consistent scores of five to six points.

Success in writing achievement can also be determined for each individual classroom and for an entire grade level of a school. Each classroom teacher completes a report of the strengths and weaknesses of her classroom as a whole. The goal for each classroom is that 80% of the students taking the assessment will score a minimum of sixteen points. Additionally, school reports can be prepared by grade levels. The school reports identify grade-level strengths and areas needing improvement. The school goal is that 80% of the students taking the assessment will score a minimum of sixteen points.

Overall success of the program is determined by ascending proximity to the established goals by individual students, classrooms, and grade levels within a school. The goal at each of these levels should be **excellence in writing** for all students. Once the program is established, teachers should continuously raise the expectations for their own grade levels. For example, the teachers may decide after the first year that 82% of their students will demonstrate proficiency, and so on.

Developmental

Shared Accountability

Write from the Beginning... and Beyond

K-8 Continuum

Common, targeted focus
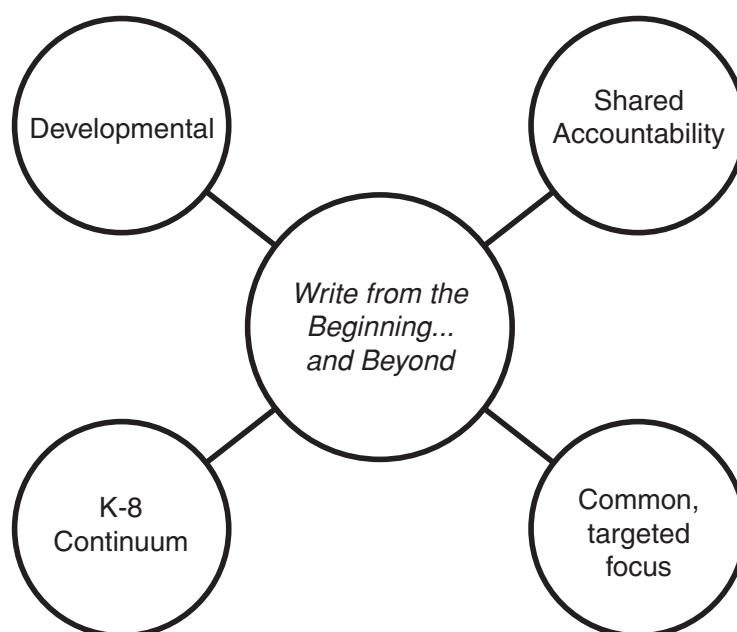
§ WHAT MATERIALS WILL I NEED TO IMPLEMENT *WRITE FROM THE BEGINNING . . . AND BEYOND?*

Each teacher who receives training in grades K–8 should have a copy of *Thinking Maps: A Language for Learning* to use as a reference. In addition, each teacher will need the *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond* introductory binder (*Setting the Stage*) and at least one spiral-bound book related to a specific mode of writing. For example, a school trained in Thinking Maps would purchase *Setting the Stage* for each teacher and then might purchase a copy of *Narrative* as its beginning focus for school-wide writing implementation.

Modes of writing included in *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond* are:

- Narrative Writing (personal and imaginative)

- Response to Literature

- Expository Writing (to inform and explain why)

- Argumentative Writing (persuasive, problem solution, and the formal argument)

- Summary Writing

* Elements of Descriptive Writing are incorporated into each of the modes of writing.

§ Intended Outcomes

After <u>proper</u> implementation of *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond:*
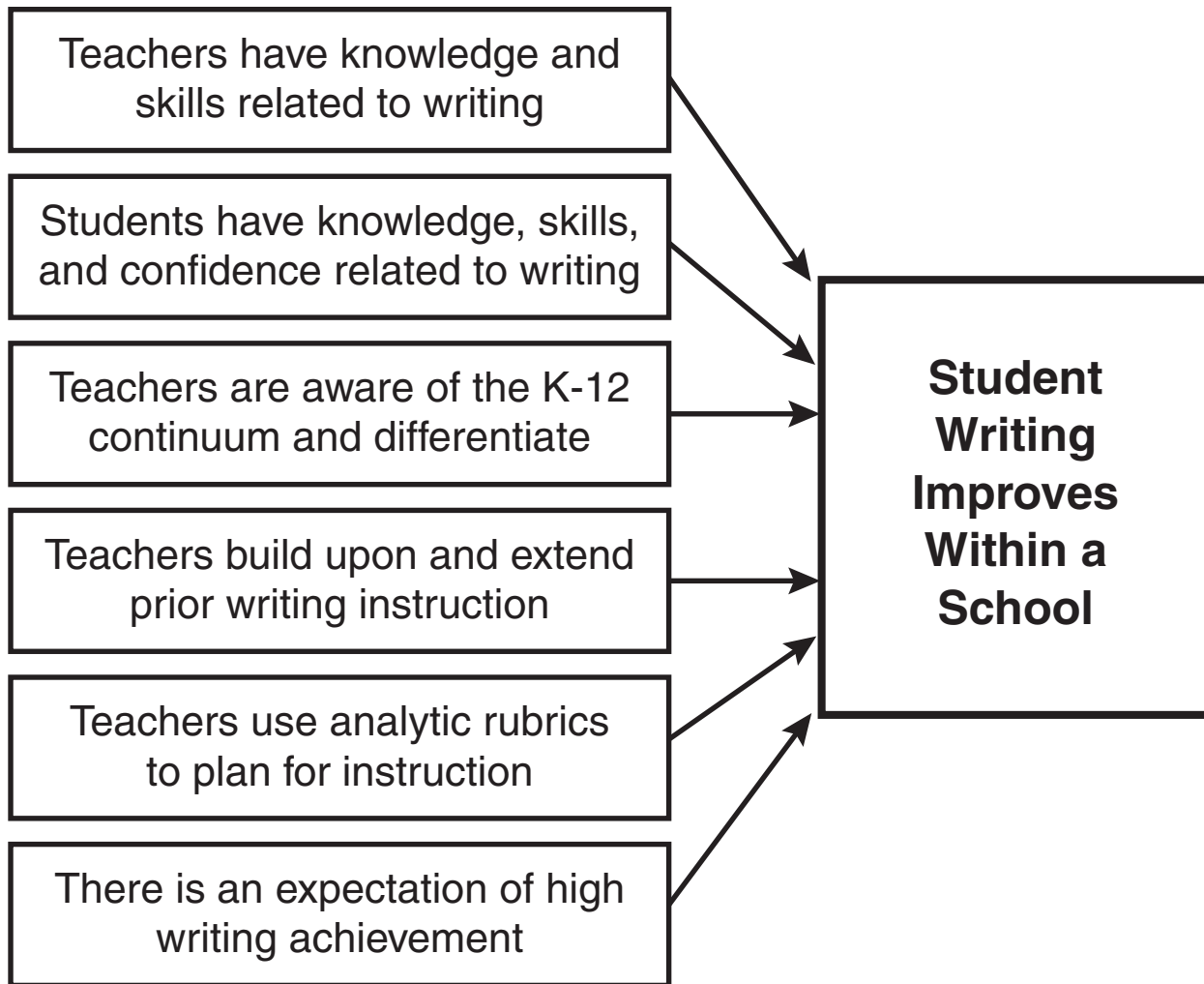
Your students will . . .

- understand the terminology and concepts related to effective writing

- produce compositions for a variety of purposes

- self-assess their writing performance and articulate a plan for improvement

- use Thinking Maps cooperatively and independently to organize and plan for writing

Your teachers will . . .

- understand the terminology and concepts related to effective writing as they apply to grades K–8

- model and provide instruction for composing for a variety of purposes

- assess individual student writing performance as well as the overall writing achievement of their classrooms

- develop mini-lessons focused on individual student and overall classroom needs

Your school will . . .

- establish a common focus and shared accountability for student writing performance

- provide continuous writing instruction for students to include a variety of purposes

- instruct students according to their individual levels of writing achievement, regardless of grade-level placement

- identify areas of strengths and areas needing improvement by grade levels and to develop a plan for meeting those needs

- commit to continuous progress in writing proficiency with the goal of excellence for all students in accordance with their cognitive abilities

Teachers have knowledge and skills related to writing	
Students have knowledge, skills, and confidence related to writing	**Student Writing Improves Within a School**
Teachers are aware of the K-12 continuum and differentiate	
Teachers build upon and extend prior writing instruction	
Teachers use analytic rubrics to plan for instruction	
There is an expectation of high writing achievement	

§ **WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF *WRITE FROM THE BEGINNING . . . AND BEYOND***

Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond is designed to be used as a core writing program or as an essential supplement to other writing programs that a school or district is using. For example, those that use the six traits of effective writing will immediately see how these traits can be taught using the mini-lesson component of *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond*, as well as how they can also be assessed using the analytic rubrics that are provided. Since writing composition is such a comprehensive topic, no single program will ever be able to provide <u>everything</u> that students need to satisfy the ever-changing state standards or to prepare for the ever-evolving writing assessments. The most successful writing programs begin with a core program and supplement as needed.

Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond does provide a solid structural core foundation for writing instruction that is vertically aligned by mode of writing and is designed to be used from kindergarten through eighth grade. Since multiple grade levels are included in each of the manuals, teachers can differentiate instruction for their students based on their individual and/or group needs by selecting models of writing that are most appropriate for their students. It is also helpful for teachers to see the continuum of how writing develops across the grade levels.

When implementing *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond*, <u>all</u> of the teachers in a school or district work towards the goal of excellence in student writing one mode at a time.

Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond **has   ve basic components:**

1. Focused Modeled Writing (aligned with a specific mode of writing)

2. Mini-Lessons (designed to address the essential criteria of effective writing)

3. Analytic Rubrics (intended to improve writing instruction)

4. Unassisted Writing (writing that is not directly modeled by the teacher)

5. Self-Assessment of Implementation by Grade Levels and Schools (to ensure the most effective program implementation)

Grade Level

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Characteristics and Goals

Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond is a developmental, vertically aligned writing program for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. One of the requirements for a <u>developmental</u> writing program is that each of the teachers understands the characteristics and goals for the students in their grade levels. These include knowing:

- The behavioral and emotional characteristics of the students
- The major focus of writing instruction at their grade level
- The criteria for assessment at their grade level
- Student capabilities when advancing to the next grade level
- What a "writing" classroom looks like at their grade level
- The types of writing students should be composing at their grade level
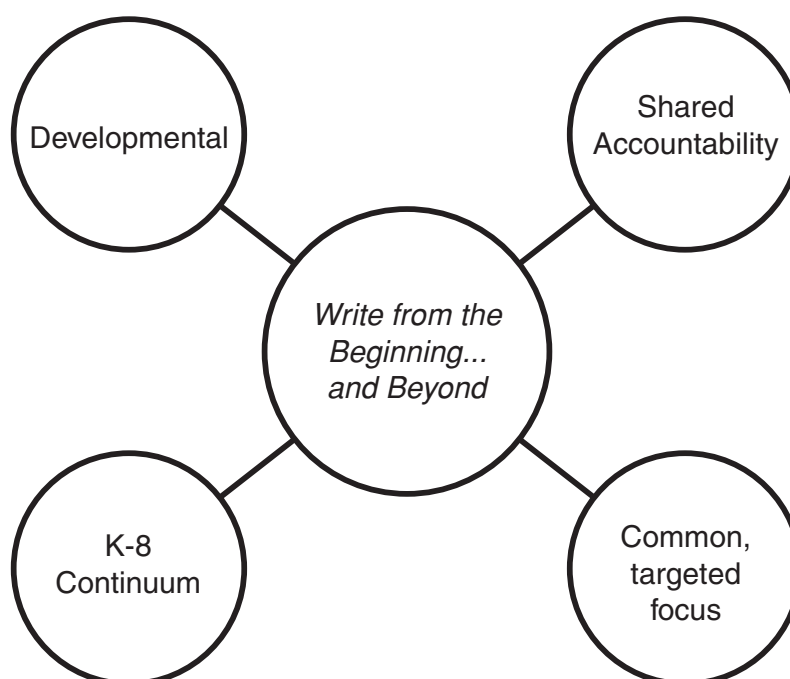
ESSENTIAL CRITERIA FOR WRITING

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IN ALL DOMAINS/MODES

The focus of *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond* is on early and continuous training in those **criteria** that are necessary for successful writing achievement beyond the early school years. When using the program, teachers within a school develop a **common, targeted focus** on these criteria and accept a shared accountability for school-wide writing performance.

For teachers to be able to implement this part of *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond,* they must understand the **traits or criteria** that are essential components of **all** types of writing, regardless of the mode or purpose:

- Main Idea/Focus

- Support and Elaboration

- Coherence

- Organization

- Conventions

- Voice
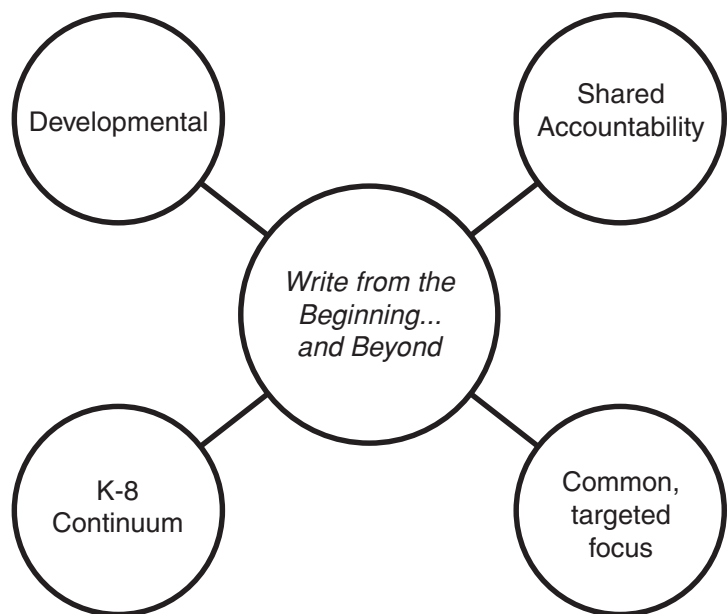
It is equally important for teachers to understand what each of these essential components "looks like" in the writing of their students.

Teaching and learning writing involves many complex and interwoven layers. In order to compose well, a student must understand the content and the organizational patterns and strategies of a particular mode of writing, have knowledge of the context of the writing and the audience, and be able to apply the appropriate conventions within the piece of writing.

One strategy for teaching and learning writing is to break apart the complex and interwoven layers into "bite size" pieces. Since all writing, regardless of purpose or organizational pattern, requires certain essential criteria, it is important for teachers to teach these specifically to their students.
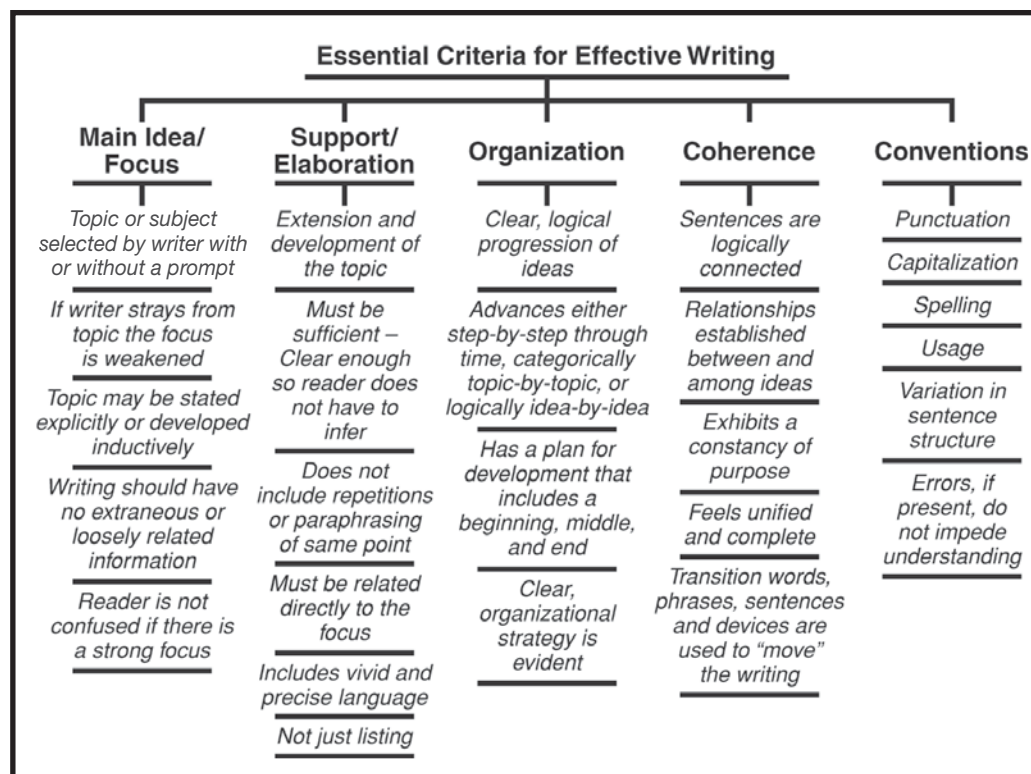
When teachers provide instruction on the essential criteria of writing, the students will:

- be able to focus attention on just one feature of writing at a time.

- be able to focus on areas of strength as well as areas of weakness.

- be knowledgeable about the expectations of good writing.

- be more self-regulated and critical readers of their own writing.

- be able to provide constructive feedback to the writing of their peers.

Using the essential criteria for teaching and evaluating writing also helps teachers:

- focus their assessment of student writing on the most critical features of the writing.

- provide students with instruction in the most appropriate feature to improve their writing.

- give equal weight and instructional priority to each of the essential features of writing.

On the following page is a **Tree Map** with information about each of the essential criteria of effective writing. Succeeding pages provide more detailed information about each of the criteria and what they actually look like in student writing.

Essential Criteria for Effective Writing

Main Idea/ Focus	Support/ Elaboration	Organization	Coherence	Conventions
Topic or subject selected by writer with or without a prompt	Extension and development of the topic	Clear, logical progression of ideas	Sentences are logically connected	Punctuation
If writer strays from topic the focus is weakened	Must be sufficient – Clear enough so reader does not have to infer	Advances either step-by-step through time, categorically topic-by-topic, or logically idea-by-idea	Relationships established between and among ideas	Capitalization
Topic may be stated explicitly or developed inductively	Does not include repetitions or paraphrasing of same point	Has a plan for development that includes a beginning, middle, and end	Exhibits a constancy of purpose	Spelling
Writing should have no extraneous or loosely related information	Must be related directly to the focus	Clear, organizational strategy is evident	Feels unified and complete	Usage
Reader is not confused if there is a strong focus	Includes vivid and precise language		Transition words, phrases, sentences and devices are used to "move" the writing	Variation in sentence structure
	Not just listing			Errors, if present, do not impede understanding

Style and Voice develop in a piece of writing as students apply what they have learned about strategies, word choice, and varied sentence structures.

Vocabulary is precise/unique. Students strive to select just the right word

There are a variety of sentence structures in the composition

The writer exhibits a closeness to the subject and allows the reader to know how he feels about the subject

There is a sparkle and personality in the writing – it exhibits a "freshness" of expression

The writer might take a chance with something new – varies the regular pattern of writing

"...the magic that is hard to describe" Donald Graves

→ A Student exhibits Style and Voice in a Composition

§ Main Idea/Focus: What Does It Look Like at Each Grade Level?

The assessment of writing proficiency requires that the writer clearly establish a focus while fulfilling the assignment of the writing prompt. If the prompt is "Write about a time when you did something special with your mom, dad, or another adult," then the writer would be expected to tell about one particular experience that was special. The reader should understand the events immediately before, during, and immediately after the experience and understand why that particular event was special for the writer.

If the writer retreats from the subject matter presented in the prompt, the main idea or focus is weakened. If the reader is confused about the subject matter, the writer has not effectively related a main idea. If the reader is interested and not confused, the writer probably has been effective in relating a main idea.

An effective piece of writing establishes a single focus and sustains that focus throughout the piece. More importantly, the writer must think about what his writing about the topic will communicate. The writer must determine not only <u>what</u> his writing will be about, but <u>why</u> he is writing about that particular subject. Without this understanding, student writing can become lists of loosely related events or facts with no central idea holding them together. Therefore, it is important for students to always be aware of their <u>reason</u> for writing about a particular subject and to convey this reason, when appropriate, to the reader.

Immature writers have difficulty with main idea and focus when they do not view their writing in its whole context. They often engage in a linear process of moving to the next event or next sentence in their writing without considering how the parts relate to the whole piece of writing. **Since focus drives all the other essential criteria of effective writing, it is crucial for the students to understand the importance of this feature.** The time for students to consider focus is before they begin to write—during the planning stage of their writing. This will help them determine what to include and not include in their writing. Knowing their audience will also guide what to include and not include in a piece of writing.

Guiding Questions for Teaching and Evaluating Main Idea/Focus

- What is the main point of your drawing/writing?
- What is your drawing/writing mostly about?
- What do you want your reader to know about your topic?
- Is there anything in your drawing/writing that should not be included?

§ Conventions: What Do They Look Like at Each Grade Level?

Conventions are the surface features of writing: mechanics, usage, and sentence formation.

The *mechanics* of writing do not exist in spoken language; therefore, the students have to consciously learn how to apply mechanics in written compositions. The mechanics include spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and correct paragraphing.

The term *usage* refers to the conventions that are present in both written and spoken language. Usage includes word order, verb tense, pronoun agreement, and subject-verb agreement.

Sentence formation refers to the structure of sentences, the way that phrases and clauses are used to form simple and complex sentences. This involves the deliberate crafting of sentences by rearranging and combining ideas for a more compact sentence structure. Eventually, students will progress from using simple and compound sentences to using longer and more complex sentence structures.

Effective writers understand that others will be reading their compositions and, therefore, attempt to make their message easily understood and interesting through the use of varied sentence patterns. However, even the most interesting writing can lose some of its integrity when the writer does not attend to punctuation, capitalization, subject-verb agreement, verb tense selection, correct pronoun usage, and proper spelling. For example, the writer who scripts

> "some we big blast of blew red and purpl otrs wizzed around the sky like a balon when you blo it up and let it go my favrte was the one that looked like a candilear"

is not nearly as effective as the writer who scripts

> "Some were big blasts of blue, red, and purple. Others whizzed around the sky like a balloon when you blow it up and let it go. My favorite was the one that looked like a chandelier."

Early teacher modeling is essential to the development of the conventions of print in young children. Long before a kindergarten student actually uses a period and a capital letter in his writing, he should have had extensive exposure to these elements through watching his teacher write. Eventually, those elements begin to show up in kindergarten student writings, often with a bit of exaggeration.

Attending to the conventions of print should be a strong component of the first grade writing curriculum. Capitalizing the first word in a sentence, the word "I," and proper names should be the expectation with every piece of writing. No less important is the use of punctuation at the end of each sentence. By focusing on and insisting upon the inclusion of these conventions, the teacher helps the children understand that others will be reading their work and that every effort should be made to help readers understand. Sentence combining and extending should also be a part of the first grade writing instruction, as well as varying the beginnings of sentences.

With the basics of punctuation, capitalization, sentence combining, and sentence extending in place, second and third grade students should focus on the correct use of other conventions of print, such as quotation marks. Varied sentence patterns also become a greater focus as writers attempt to capture their readers' attention. Special attention should be focused on the importance of correct spelling at this level.

As the students continue through the grade levels, consistent, extensive teacher modeling and numerous student corrections of their own errors are the key ingredients to improving a command of conventions. Attending to these concerns should be a part of the everyday curriculum in a language arts classroom. With many students, persistence will correct errors, although the upper-level language arts teachers often feel a "sense of defeat" in this area. However, through mini-lessons and personal corrections, the teacher emphasizes that others will be reading the piece of writing and that the writer should make every effort to assist the reader in understanding.

There are two cautions that must be observed when teaching conventions in the classroom:

- Conventions should not be taught in isolation, as this has been proven to be an ineffective method of instruction. The students should have the opportunity to apply what they have learned about conventions to their own writing.

- Attention to conventions too early in the writing process can interfere with a student's writing progress. The student's motivation to write often suffers when teachers focus on conventions first and ideas last. The proper place for teaching conventions is at the end of the writing process, during the editing phase, when students are preparing their writing for publication.

## Guiding Questions for Teaching and Evaluating Conventions

- Is each of your sentences a complete thought?

- Do you have any run-on sentences?

- Do you have any sentence fragments?

- Do you have subject-verb agreement?

- Do you use a consistent verb tense in your writing?

- Do you use pronouns correctly?

- Have you used end punctuation for each of your sentences?

- Have you used capital letters for the first word in your sentences?

- Have you used capital letters for each proper noun?

- Have you spelled your words correctly?

- Have you used paragraphs correctly?

MINI

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LESSONS

§ WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A VERTICALLY ALIGNED WRITING PROGRAM?

Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond is a developmental, vertically aligned writing program that focuses on those criteria that are necessary for successful writing achievement. These criteria are taught through modeled writing and **mini-lessons** in all *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond* classrooms.

When a writing program is vertically aligned, all teachers in a school will be teaching the same criteria in a manner that is consistent with the developmental and cognitive characteristics of their students. The essential criteria of effective writing are: Main Idea/Focus, Support and Elaboration, Coherence, Organization, Conventions, and Voice.
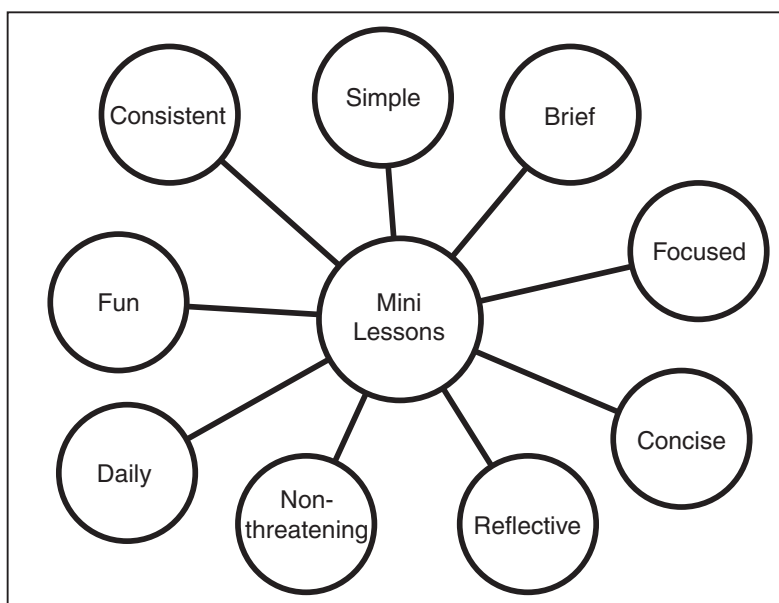
§ What are mini-lessons and how do they work?

An effective strategy for teaching the essential criteria is the use of mini-lessons. Lucy Calkins (1986, p. 168), who first used the term mini-lessons, found that "the ritual of beginning every writing workshop with a whole-group gathering brings form and unity to the workshop." Mini-lessons can do just that in the classroom when they are used to direct the attention of the writers to some aspect of good writing.

Simplicity and brevity are essential for effective mini-lessons. The length of a mini-lesson can vary from five to twenty minutes depending on the attention of the students and the amount of activity involved. The teacher presents focused information concisely and directly.

§ What comprises the content of mini-lessons?

There are two basic sources for the content of the mini-lessons. One source is from daily observation of the students and their needs. The other is from their scores on the rubrics.

The content of mini-lessons can also focus on exposing students to elements and terminology of good writing before it will ever be seen in their work.

Both types of mini-lessons help the classroom community work together while nurturing the development of individual writers.

§ How should mini-lessons be planned?

Because of the responsive element, mini-lessons focused on the daily observation of the students cannot be planned ahead of time. However, mini-lessons focused on exposure to the terminology and elements of good writing can be used from year to year as the teacher lays the foundation for writing proficiency beyond the first grade.

Children, according to Donald Graves, direct their attention to the concerns the teacher addresses. If mini-lessons deal primarily with the conventions of print, the students will be concerned first with correct mechanics. However, if the mini-lessons deal mostly with content and the qualities of good writing, children will work on these elements. Therefore, it is important to maintain a balance in the planning and presentation of mini-lessons.

KINDERGARTEN MINI-LESSON TO TEACH MAIN IDEA/FOCUS

Objective: The learner will begin to associate individual concepts/ideas as a part of a larger, more inclusive concept (main idea).

Materials:
- dry erase or chalk board for display
- pictures of items that are used/seen at the beach (bucket, shovel, sandcastle, ocean, etc.)
- pictures of items that are used/seen at school
- pre-drawn Circle Map for each student

Activities:

- The teacher draws two Circle Maps on display board and writes the word "beach" in one of the maps and in the other map she writes the word "beach" with an X on top of it to indicate "not at the beach."
- The teacher shows pictures of items one at a time and asks if the item would be found at the beach, and the students place the pictures accordingly.
- After the activity, the teacher explains that the class has been working on the main idea of "beach."
- Next, the teacher draws a new Circle Map on the board with a question mark in the center. She explains that the students are going to guess the main idea.
- The teacher then places the pictures related to school one at the time inside the Circle Maps. Students are encouraged to determine the main ideas related to the items.

Follow-up:

- Each student is given a piece of paper with a blank Circle Map on it.
- Students are instructed to write/draw a main idea in the center of the Circle Map and to draw related items in the outside circle.
- The teacher can supply a list of main ideas if desired or needed.
- At the conclusion of the activity, the students are encouraged to share their main ideas with the group.

Time Frame:

This mini-lesson can be completed in one, two, or three sessions depending on the needs of the students and the time available.

Second Grade Mini-Lesson to Teach Support and Elaboration

Objective: The learner will begin to use adjectives purposefully and selectively.

Materials:

- paragraph with an excessive number of adjectives
- blackline master with multiple Bubble Maps

Activities:

- The teacher reads aloud a piece of writing that is overstuffed with adjectives, such as the one below.

  > One warm, sunny, bright day a big, black, furry, angry cat sat on the big, gray, wooden porch watching the little, brown, plump mouse with long, white whiskers eating a piece of orange, yummy, square-shaped cheese. In his big, furry, black, silky head the mean, angry, fierce cat planned how to catch the little, brown, plump, silly mouse for his delicious, nutritious, delightful, wonderful lunch.

- The students are instructed to recall as many nouns as they can from the reading and to assist the teacher in creating a Bubble Map supplying the adjectives that were used to describe each of the nouns.

- The teacher leads a discussion about the main idea of the passage. For example, in the paragraph above a hungry cat is planning how to catch his dinner. The paragraph that was read orally is then displayed for the students to see. The students decide which nouns need descriptive words and which are the best descriptive words to use. The adjectives selected should be those that create the clearest picture in the reader's mind about the main idea of the paragraph.

Follow-up:

- The teacher instructs the students to work in pairs to write overstuffed paragraphs about any topic that they choose.
- The paragraphs can be exchanged between pairs with instructions to eliminate unnecessary adjectives and to select only the most appropriate adjectives.
- As an alternative, the teacher can supply the paragraphs that the students use.

Time Frame:

This mini-lesson can be completed in one or two sessions depending on the needs of the students and the time available.

Upper Level Mini-Lesson to Teach Voice

Objective: The learner will write an essay with an assigned voice.

Materials:
- dry erase board
- a Tree Map
- chart paper
- markers

Activities:

- The teacher begins with a class discussion on how specific words or phrases used in a piece of writing often reveal the writer's voice. For example, "It is time to go to bed. You have to get up early in the morning to get ready for school" would reveal the voice of a mother or father.

- The teacher draws a large Tree Map on the board with "Homework on Weekends" as the main topic and "Student's Voice," "Parent's Voice," and "Teacher's Voice" as the subtopics.

- The teacher divides the class into thirds and assigns each group one of the voices on the Tree Map. The students write words and phrases on chart paper that would reveal the voice of the assigned person. The students must establish the position of "should" or "should not" through their voices.

- Each group should share their selected words and phrases with the large group. The large group can provide feedback and make suggestions for additions to each group's list.

Follow-up:

- Students are asked to select one of the voices that they heard in the class presentations and to write a paragraph using that voice either supporting or not supporting assigning students homework on weekends.

- When the paragraphs are completed the students should share with the large group and the group determines which voice and which position is being represented.

Time Frame:

This mini-lesson can be completed in one or two sessions depending on the needs of the students and the time available.

Thinking

◆

Journals

§ What Are Thinking Journals?

Journal writing is a common practice at all levels of schooling. Many of the benefits have been documented by teachers at all grade levels. Some report that it helps to clarify concepts for students. Others report that it is a "safe" and non-threatening means of communicating, resulting in greater student participation.

Unfortunately, in some situations daily journal writing can become an empty exercise without feedback or follow-up. In other circumstances, journal writing can become a way to fill time or occupy the students. Journal writing can be beneficial if a purpose is established for both the teacher and the students.

To write well one must first think well. One way to engage students in thinking is to use Thinking Journals. Many of the Thinking Journals will begin with a Thinking Map. Others will not. All of the journals will involve individual "think time" for the students, followed up by sharing or debriefing.

§ How can Thinking Journals be structured?

There are a variety of structures that a teacher can use for the Thinking Journals. With younger students, she may have a journal devoted specifically to a particular type of thinking, such as sequencing. The students would, therefore, keep a sequencing journal consisting of several pieces of paper stapled together and covered with construction paper. The front could feature a picture of a Flow Map or the words "Thinking About Sequencing."

It is important for the teacher to limit the number of Thinking Journals used at a time to not more than two with younger students. These should have different colored covers and the teacher should emphasize the thought process prior to the students writing in their journals.

Older students might have a single journal devoted to those entries that begin with a Thinking Map and a separate journal that involves thinking that might not begin with a Map. The topics used for their journals should be more abstract and thought provoking, rather than simple and obvious. In particular, the teacher could use these journals as a way to review and clarify information for the students. As an extension, the teacher could ask for justification or evidence to support their ideas.

§ How should Thinking Journals be integrated with other writing instruction?

Care should be taken that Thinking Journals do not replace focused modeled writing that is mode specific. Rather, the journals should be used in addition to the regular writing instruction and at a different time during the day. In some instances they can be used as "sponge" activities, transitional activities, or as a way to review information.

It is not necessary to use a Thinking Journal everyday; however, it is beneficial to use them once or twice during the week, depending on the time available and content connections that can be made.

The greatest value of the journals will rise out of the classroom discussions as the students are encouraged to think deeper and in a more unique way. The challenge will also involve selecting sophisticated vocabulary, big ideas, and those thoughts that others may not have.

Following are some ideas for Thinking Journals that span several grade levels. The teacher should add to these suggestions with ideas of her own and those inspired by course content.

Thinking About Sequencing: What is the quality from most desirable to least desirable?

In this type of Thinking Journal, the students are asked to construct a Flow Map in their journals. They are provided a list of attributes or words that vary in quality and are asked to complete the Flow Map by sequencing the attributes or words from the most desirable to the least desirable. Remind the students to create a title for their Flow Maps.

What is the sequence of Quality from the most desirable to the least desirable?

Title of your sequence_____
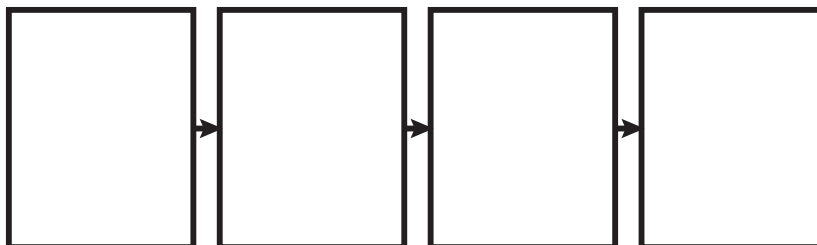
At some point during the day, the teacher debriefs with the class or allows the students to share in small groups or pairs. This activity can be followed by writing one paragraph relating a sequence of sizes or values from greatest to least.

Ideas might be to sequence:	Additional Ideas:
the attributes from most to least desirable (e.g. hard worker, honest, pretty, mean)	
the adjectives from most to least desirable (e.g. gorgeous, cute, attractive, feminine)	
the qualities from most to least desirable (e.g. good student, good athlete, best singer, best hair)	
snacks from best to worst in nutritional value	
stories from most to least interesting	
the characters in a story from most to least desirable friend to have	

Marie Clay's Seven Basic Principles

◆

# of Children's Early Writing

§ Recurring Principle

Marie Clay applies the label "recurring principle" to the idea that writing consists of the same moves or shapes repeated over and over again. This recurring principle may be seen in the drawings as well as in the writing of young children. It may involve scribble, drawings or symbols, single letters, single words, or several words that the child has mastered.

Following are some examples of student work that display the recurring principle.

Recurring Principle with Scribble

In the example below, five-year-old Sarah recurs by using linear mock writing. On the left-hand side of her writing is a series of scribbles used to represent writing. The marks appear to be almost the same line after line.


Sarah, aged 5
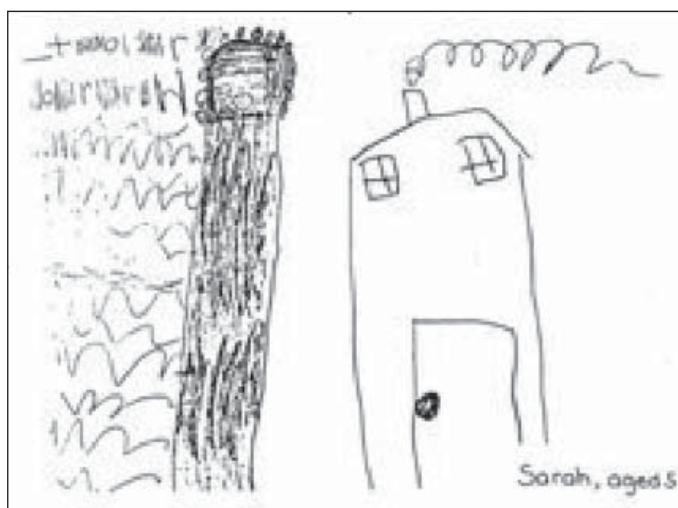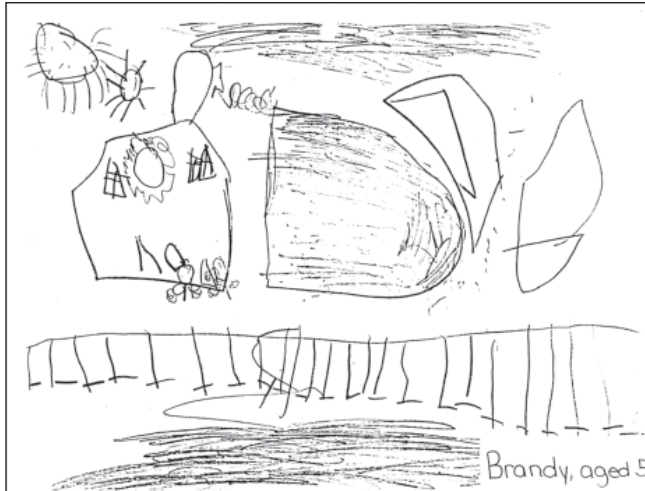
Recurring Principle with Symbols

Five-year-old Brandy, in the example at left, practices the recurring principle by producing the same symbol over and over at the bottom of her page to represent her writing.

Recurring Principle with Single Letter

In the student example to the right, five-year-old Jarrod recurs with the letter /a/ across the top of his page. He has drawn a picture of himself and his mother looking at his baby sister, Tara. He knew how to write Tara's name; however, he used recurrence of the last letter in her name to represent his writing.
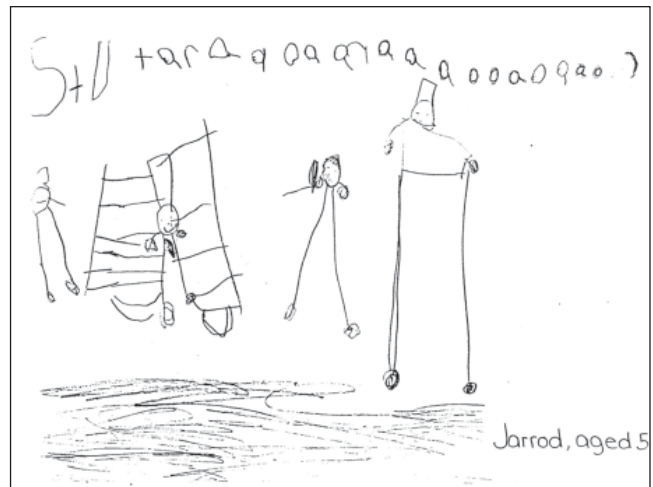
Recurring Principle with Several Words

Six-year-old Leslie shows progression in her writing proficiency to the production of sentences. In this example, she has drawn the rooms in her house. Her dictation, from left to right, read: *Here is the living room. This is my bedroom. This is the kitchen. This is my mother's bedroom.* Leslie demonstrates the recursion principle by using the same sentence structure repeatedly.
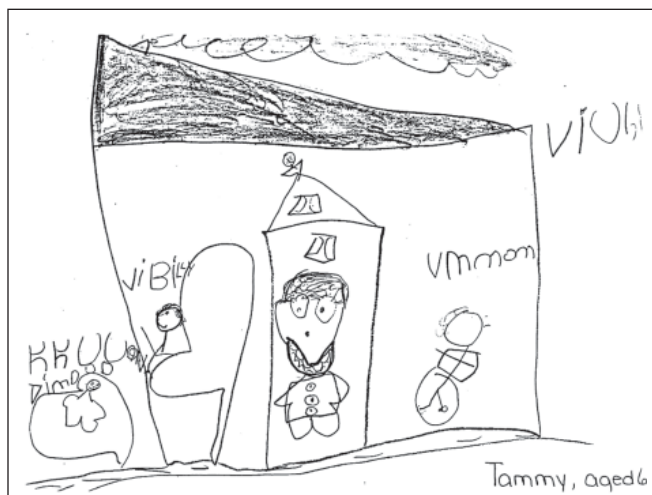
§ FLEXIBILITY PRINCIPLE

Clay applies the label "flexibility principle" to the idea that letters are made up of combinations of a limited number of features. Children who use the principle of flexibility explore the limits of allowable variation in the signs of the alphabet. Clay believes that young children explore how far they can deviate from a form before it ceases to be that form, or how far they can alter a known sign before they have made it into a different sign. Clay believes that practice with the flexibility principle is a positive sign since the same letter may be written many different ways, depending on the reading matter a child picks up. This principle is said to help the children attend to the defining features of letters and to consider what features constitute certain letters.

Following are some examples of student work that display the flexibility principle.

Flexibility Principle with Letters in a Name

Six-year-old Nicole engages in the flexibility principle by using "fat" letters to write her name. Upon completion, she showed her creation to her teacher and waited for validation that it was permissible to "flex" her letters in this way.

Nicole, aged 6

Tammy, aged 6

Flexibility Principle with Single Letters

In the example at left, six-year-old Tammy creates some letters using the correct form. However, in the lower left hand corner of her work she has engaged in flexing her letter. In a conference with her teacher, she was reminded that if the letter she needs is a /k/, then the lines must be straight, and if the letter she needs is an /h/, then the top curve needs to be removed.

§ GENERATING PRINCIPLE

"Generating principle" is the label Clay gives to the idea that a few letters can be made to look like writing if they are written over and over again in varied order. Clay maintains that the child who uses this principle has understood that long statements are generated from a limited number of symbols. The child who explores this principle has advanced beyond the early recurring explorations, in which an entire page might have been filled with repetitions of the same basic mark. The child has realized, according to Clay, that the same symbol repeated over and over again is not writing since writing must have a variety in the arrangement of marks.

Following are some examples of student work that display the generating principle.


Cherry, aged 5

Generating Principle with Labeling

Five-year-old Cherry uses the generating principle as she labels the objects in her picture. She has created a series of letter strings with random labels to name her drawings. For example, she has labeled her heart as "lmbt."

Generating Principle with Names of Classmates

In the sample to the right, Amanda, age six, uses letter strings to explore the generating principle when she attempts to list the names of her classmates. Note that she has included her own name, written correctly, at the bottom of the list and that most of the generated names include letters that are included in her own name.

Amanda, aged 6
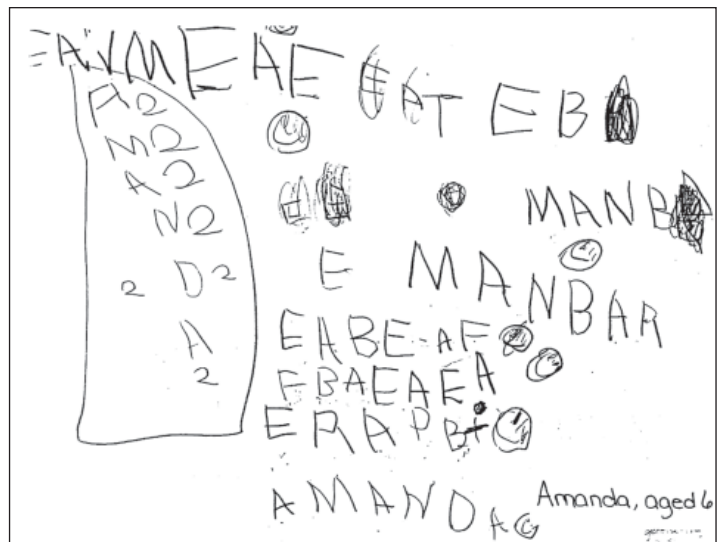
Generating Principle Not Connected to a Story

Daniel, age six, created a random drawing and added a sentence of explanation at the bottom of his page. He has used the generating principle and created a letter string of random letters to represent his thoughts about his drawing.

Generating Principle Used to Tell a Story

In this example, five-year-old Matthew shows a transition from generating with random letter strings to the recognition and use of some sound/symbol relationships.

He dictated his "writing" as *I was playing with my dump truck. Mama was sitting on the couch with the buttons.* Although he does not use spacing, it is obvious that he is using sound/symbol recognition in the middle of his sentence as he writes "midupruck" to represent "my dump truck."

§ Inventory Principle

Clay describes the "inventory principle" as the tendency of young writers to make ordered lists of the letters or words they can write. Clay believes that young children take stock of their own learning systematically and order the things they have learned into inventories. This includes all of the letters or words that a child has committed to memory and for which he or she does not need a copy. Clay states that the inventory may have several types of structures, such as grouping the members of a limited set or matching equivalent symbols. Clay maintains that these inventories can be useful to the teacher in that they reveal what the child readily knows as well as some gaps that may need to be filled.

Following are some examples of student work that display the flexibility principle.

Jo, aged 6

Inventory Principle with Alphabet and Numbers

Jo, a six-year-old kindergarten student, inventories the letters of the alphabet and her numbers 1–12. Rather than participating in regular journal writing on that particular day, she decided to explore this principle and reveal to the teacher what she knew.

Inventory Principle with Vowels

Nicole, who earlier explored the flexibility principle, demonstrates the inventory principle in this sample of her work. On the upper right-hand side of her paper she has inventoried the names of the people in her family. It appears that she has also inventoried the names of the vowels; however, when questioned she replied that she has seen these letters on the wall of her preschool. The vowels would not represent the inventory principle since she copied rather than understood what she had written.


Nicole, aged 5

Inventory Principle with Family Members

Tammy, who earlier explored the flexibility principle, demonstrates her use of the inventory principle in the sample below. Here she has drawn a picture of her house, as well as a picture of each person in her family. Under each family member picture she has written the name of that person. Tammy has demonstrated for her teacher that she knows and can write the names of her family members.

Tammy, aged 6

Inventory Principle with Classmates

Emmy Lou, age six, has actually explored two different principles in her creation below. She has drawn a picture of her house and inventoried, with accurate spelling, the names of all of the people that she will invite to come to her house. To the left of her house is a list of those who are not invited. These names were created using letter strings and demonstrate engagement in the generating principle.

EmmyLou, aged 6
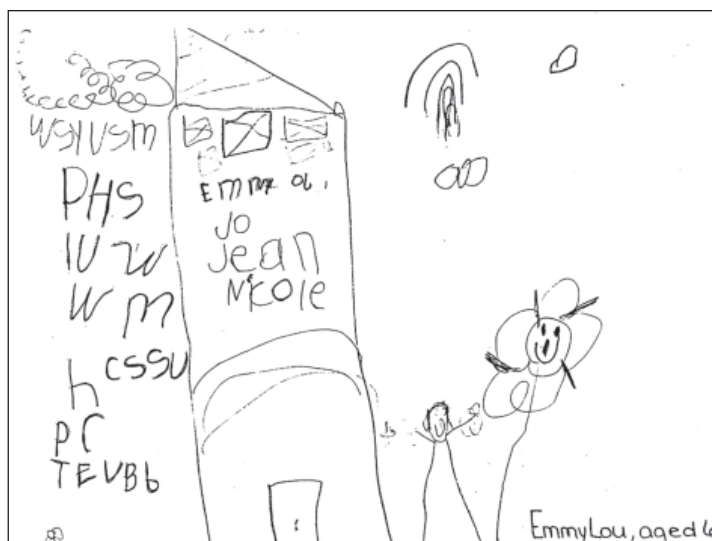
§ CONTRASTIVE PRINCIPLE

Clay describes the "contrastive principle" as a special kind of structuring in which opposites are established or things are compared that are at the same time similar and different. It can be observed in the work of children when they create contrasts as they explore print and shapes. Clay maintains that any variety of contrasting structures may be made. These can include lines and angles of early letters, mirror images of letters, capital and lower-case letters, size of words, meanings, sound, and word patterns. Clay contends that the presence of this principle is evidence of the urge in children to arrange the characteristics of print in some order. The contrastive principle in operation, according to Clay, tells teachers what dimensions of difference the child already can control.

Following are some examples of student work that display the contrastive principle.
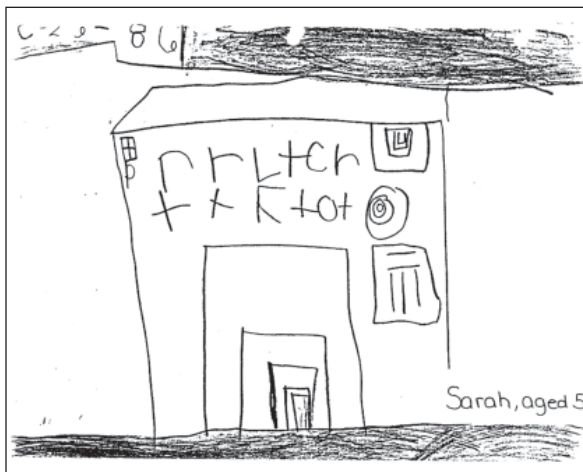
Contrastive Principle with Lines and Angles

Sarah, who earlier explored the principle of recursion, demonstrates to the left her exploration of the contrastive principle. She has drawn a picture of her house and contrasted with lines and angles the size and shapes of the doors and windows of her house. When she does this, she exemplifies how something, in this case doors and windows, can be both the same and different.

Contrastive Principle with Capital and Lowercase Letters

Leslie, who earlier explored the recursion principle using the same sentence patterns, demonstrates the use of the contrastive principle in her writing to the right. Note how she contrasts the capital and lower case /m/ in her drawing and writing about last year's Halloween.
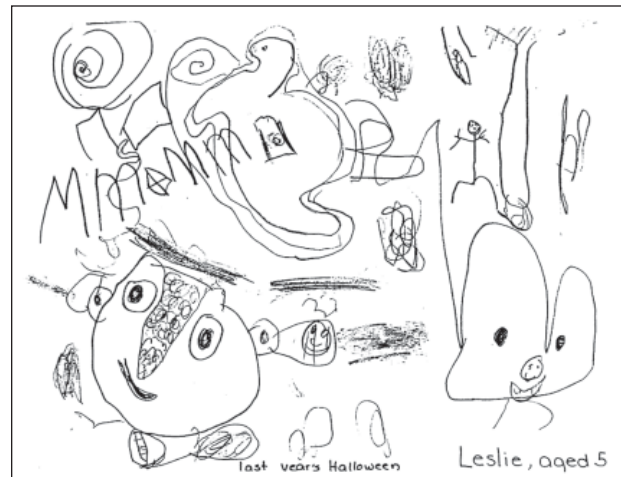
Contrastive Principle with Single Name

In the student sample below, five-year-old Sherry explores the contrastive principle by writing the name of her friend, Brandy, in varied ways: backwards, vertical, with an upper-case /n/ and with a lower-case /n/. Rather than writing sentences about her picture, she has chosen to explore this principle of development.
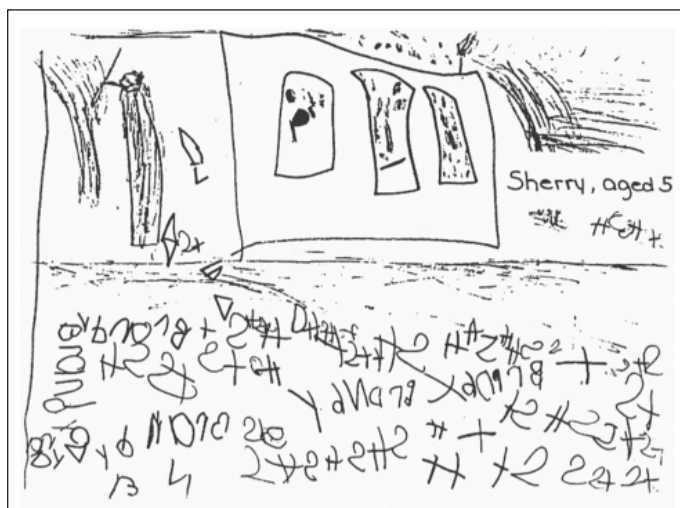
## Contrastive Principle with Word Patterns

Jeremy, a six-year-old kindergarten student, demonstrates a more sophisticated exploration of the contrastive principle. In the sample below, he contrasts how words can be the same and different by substituting initial consonants to create a pair of rhymes. He dictated his words as *house, mouse, sun, fun, dog, fog,* and *gas.* He stated that he could not think of a word that rhymed with *gas.*

§ ABBREVIATION PRINCIPLE

Clay's "abbreviation principle" refers to the deliberate use of one symbol to imply a full word. The child, according to Clay, should be able to fill out or get help in filling out the implied word upon request. Clay indicates that this principle is not a very significant one in young children since it occurs only rarely in their writing. However, a few children have an early awareness of this principle and this awareness, according to Clay, can be interpreted as an indication of advanced achievement.

Following are some examples of student work that display the abbreviation principle.


Jean, aged 5
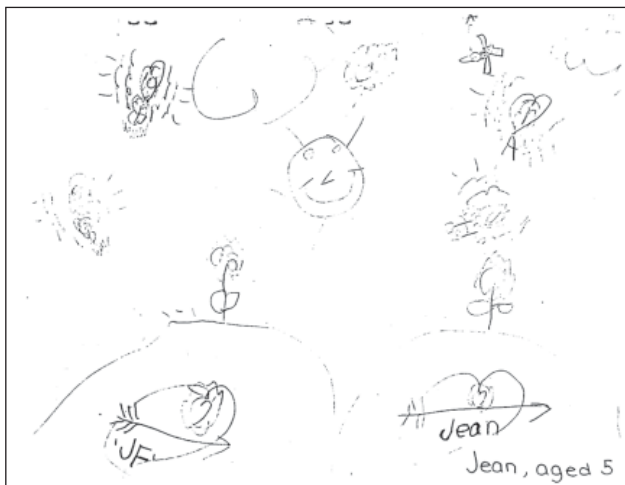
Abbreviation Principle That Is Deliberate

Five-year-old Jean, an early reader, explored the abbreviation principle in the sample to the left. In the lower left-hand corner of her work, she has written her initials. When questioned by the teacher to determine if her actions were deliberate, Jean replied that she had written her initials and proceeded to tell the teacher what each of the letters represented.

Abbreviation Principle That Is Not Deliberate

Five-year-old Jason also appears to be exploring the abbreviation principle, as demonstrated by "USA" written in the upper right-hand corner of his work. However, when questioned about what the letters represented, he was unable to respond. Unlike Jean, in the previous sample, Jason had copied letters that he had seen rather than deliberately abbreviating. Of interest is the fact that Jason was not an early reader.

Jason, aged 5
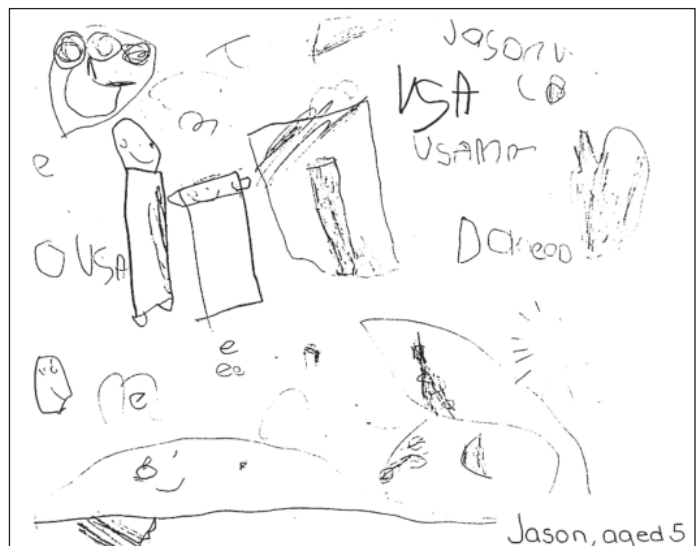
§ Directional Principle

Marie Clay applies the label "directional principle" to the idea in writing that a certain pattern of movements is required to be carried out in a particular sequence. This correct directional behavior of writing begins with a top-left starting position. The writer then proceeds with a left-to-right movement, followed by a return sweep to the left-hand position under the starting point, establishing a top-to-bottom progression. Clay indicates that children who produce a single line of print have begun already to appreciate part of the directional pattern since they have started at an appropriate position and listed their letters from left to right. Clay states that problems with directionality may have a variety of causes, such as drawing a picture first or a false starting position. Another reason Clay cites for the violation of the directional principle in the writing of young children is their tendency to focus on one letter or word at a time. They do not appear to give much forethought to the question of how the whole page is to be arranged.

Following are some examples of student work that display the directional principle.

Directional Principle with a Sentence and a Name

In the writing sample below, six-year-old Wendell demonstrates his understanding of the directional principle. On top of his building is a sentence written in left-to-right progression that he dictated as *Dis is a winder*. Note also that he has written his name in two of the windows on the left-hand side of his drawing, each time going left to right and top to bottom.

Directional Principle with Two Sentences

In this journal page sample, five-year-old Jean draws and writes about a new girl who enrolled in her kindergarten class and cried the first day of school. Jean wrote and dictated: "Today in my class we got a new girl. She was sad." Jean wrote her sentences going left to right and top to bottom across the page, demonstrating a strong understanding of the directional principle.

Jean - February, 1986

## Directional Principle Problems Due to Lack of Forethought

Three months later, Jean wrote a longer piece in her journal and the directional principle was absent from her writing. Starting on the right-hand side of the paper, moving vertically, and then progressing to the left-hand side of her paper, she wrote and dictated: "Today we saw a leprechaun. I caught him. I let him go. He gave three wishes. My teacher was surprised." By just looking at the writing, it appears that Jean is not engaging in the directional principle; however, her teacher noted that she drew a large school in the middle of her paper and problem-solved where to do her writing around the school.

After this incident, the teacher drew lines at the bottom of the student journals to make sure that there was a separate place for writing that would not be interfered with by the drawing.

Nicole, aged 6

Directional Principle Problems Due to Drawing a Picture First

In the writing sample below, Nicole encounters difficulty using the directional principle due to a lack of forethought regarding how much space her writing would occupy. She began by writing "Me and my cousin" on the bottom of the room. Next, she went one line above and continued her thought "was playing in his." Then, she went down into the house and completed her thought with "room." At the bottom of her house, she adds, "He is 3 years old." Nicole's ideas flow and she uses the left-to-right progression; however, the top-to-bottom progression is not in place. Additional evidence of this difficulty can be seen on the left-hand side of the paper. She wanted to write "I love you Miss Buckner"; however, she scratched out her first attempt to write her teacher's name and just inserted it where there was an available space. In time, through observation and teacher modeling, Nicole will understand the importance of the correct placement of her words.
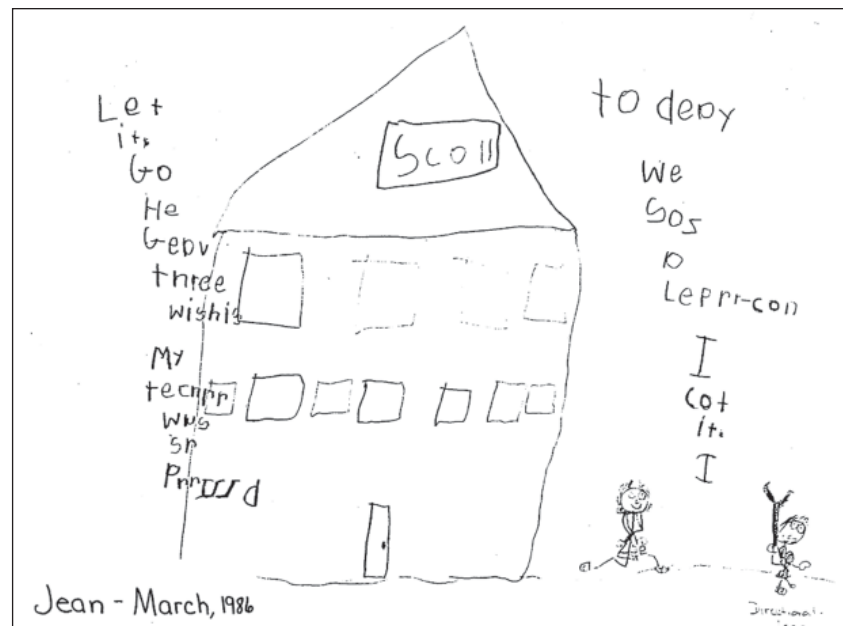
Third Grade Focused Modeled Writing Observation

TEACHER: _____ **DATE:** _____ **TIME:** _____

TYPE OF WRITING:

Narrative	Expository	Argumentative
☐ *Personal Thematic*	☐ *To Inform*	☐ *To Persuade*
☐ *Personal Chronological*	☐ *To Tell How*	☐ *Problem/Solution*
☐ *Imaginative*	☐ *To Explain Why*	☐ *Response to Literature*

PROCESS DAY: **Day 1**   **Day 2**   **Day 3**

PROMPT: _____

Observed Plans/Behaviors	Yes	No	Comments
Evidence of teacher plan			
Teacher clearly states that it is time for "focused modeled writing" and names the mode to be modeled.			
A clear prompt is given related to the type of modeled writing.			
Teacher modeling is evident in an "I do-you do-I monitor" format. During modeling, teacher uses "think-alouds" to explain what she/he is thinking while working.			
Students have the opportunity to create their own plans or write after each step of teacher modeling (ping-pong).			
Teacher monitors and makes suggestions to individuals as they work.			
Teacher adjusts pacing to accommodate student needs.			
Teacher makes anecdotal notes about student work as she monitors.			
Students have a place to store their modeled writing.			
Teacher keeps work samples to document student progress.			
Teacher models multiple types of writing according to a predetermined plan.			
Teacher differentiates instruction and expectations during modeled writing.			
Teacher follows correct process as described in *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond.*			

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