



New York State  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  

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# **New York State Education Department Prekindergarten–3rd Grade Writing Instructional Best Practices**



# The Reading and Writing Connection

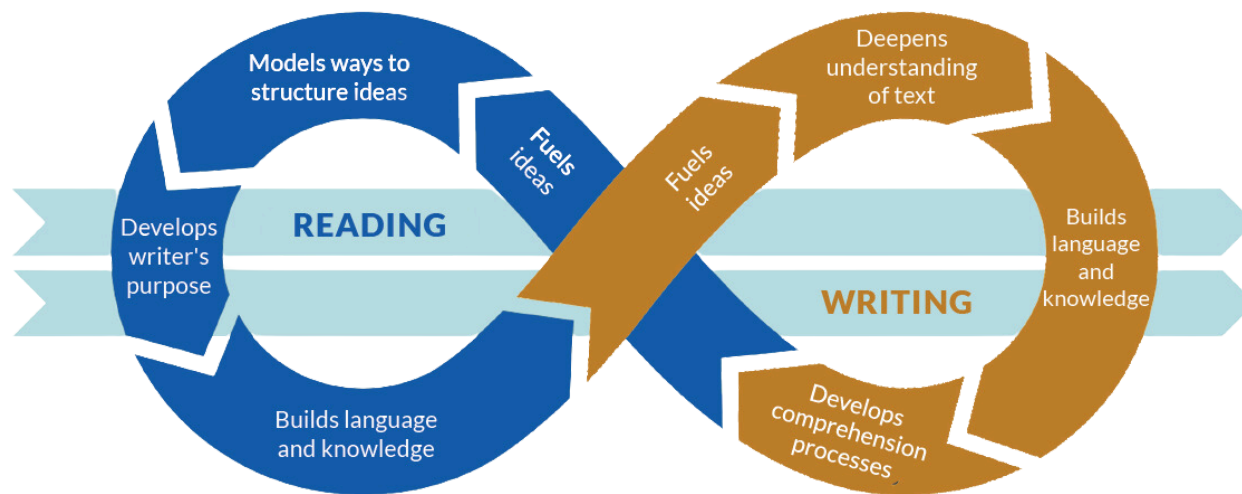
## Introduction

Welcome to the Writing Instructional Best Practices guide. This evidence-based guide is a tool to be utilized when reviewing local school district literacy curriculum and instruction for evidence- and scientifically-based reading instruction prior to submitting the attestation required per Education Law §818. The purpose of this guide is to help facilitate discussions among district leaders, building leaders, literacy leaders, and teachers to reflect on the instructional best practices and literacy curriculum for students in prekindergarten through third grade. The instructional best practices should be used by literacy leaders to talk with school building leaders about literacy instruction at the local level and what adjustments may be needed. The included Prekindergarten-3rd Grade Literacy and Writing Instructional Best Practices and interventions align with the requirement of literacy instruction based on the body of research known as the Science of Reading.

The New York State Education Department is dedicated to providing all students with access to high quality literacy education, which is culturally responsive and follows evidence-based practices, commonly referred to as the Science of Reading. Therefore, this supplemental guide identifies best practices in writing instruction that are aligned to the New York State Next Generation English Language Arts Standards and integrates the four principles identified in the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework (CR-SE). For further information regarding the Science of Reading: The Role of Writing, please see the [NYSED Literacy Briefs](#), authored by Dr. Nonie Lesaux (Professor of Education and Human Development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education) and Katie C. Carr, M.Ed.

## The Connection

Effective literacy-learning opportunities require recognizing the vital role of writing in developing literacy skills and the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing. As students improve their writing, they also enhance their reading proficiency and critical thinking about texts. Likewise, increased reading strengthens writing skills, fostering lifelong literacy success.



Graphic is from the NYS Literacy Brief 3 [The Science of Reading: The Role of Writing](#).



# The Reading and Writing Connection

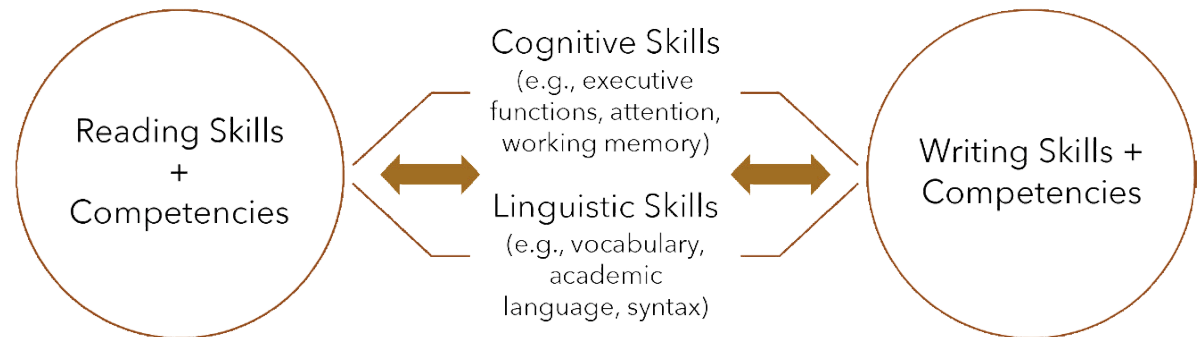
## High-Impact Practices and Developing the "Big 6" and Writing

High-impact practices highlighted in the NYSED Literacy Briefs are crafted to assist educators in applying evidence-based strategies that improve literacy instruction. These practices emphasize the development of the "Big 6" reading components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and oral language, while also nurturing vital writing skills. By combining explicit, systematic instruction with authentic reading and writing opportunities, these practices enable students to build foundational skills, enhance their comprehension of texts, and effectively articulate their ideas in writing. Rooted in the Science of Reading, these methods ensure that literacy instruction is engaging and is tailored to how students learn most effectively, fostering academic success across various subjects.

### More Reciprocity!

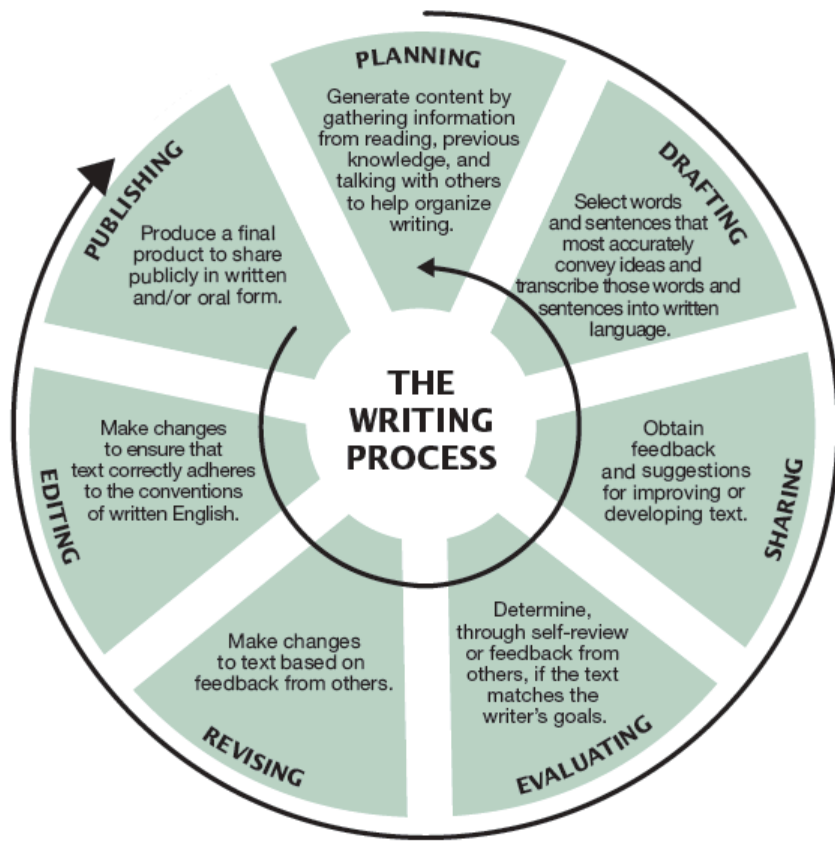
The aim of fostering reciprocity between reading and writing is to leverage the interrelationship of these skills to enhance overall literacy development. Reading enriches students' comprehension of language, structure, and concepts, while writing enables them to actively engage with and expand that understanding. Together, they form a dynamic cycle where advancements in one skill bolster growth in the other, promoting critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication.

High-Impact Practices (See Briefs 4, 5, 6) Developing the "Big 6" + Writing	Sample Writing Tasks + Products
Collaborative and Culminating Projects, Performances, and Celebrations	Planning documents, scripts, lines and dialogue, schedules, research organizers, signs and posters, self-reflections, writing for a specific purpose and audience
Text-Based Discussions and Writing Opportunities	Graphic organizers, engagement in multiple stages of the writing process, written responses to text-based discussion prompts and questions, book reports, author review, theme analysis, topic-based research work
Engagement with a Variety of High-Interest, Diverse, and Complex Texts	
Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study Skill-Building	Phonics and morphological work and games, opportunities for spelling practices and quizzes, interactive word walls, text annotation that identifies text features, explicit instruction in syntax and grammar
Fostering Understanding of Print Conventions, Features, and Functions	



# The Writing Process and Selection of Instructional Best Practices

## The Writing Process



Graphic is from [Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers Practice Guide Summary](#).

## Elements of the Writing Process

Writing is used for a multitude of purposes and students require explicit instruction with writing in the various genres. The writing process can be applied to all genres and should be integrated into the teaching of writing. As students learn and progress over time, teachers introduce more parts of the writing process and gradually release responsibility to students. Students in prekindergarten and kindergarten can share their pictures and stories, while students in first grade might plan and draft prior to sharing. Second and third grade students would move through all of the elements of the writing process in an order that makes sense for them and their writing piece.

## A Note on Selection of Instructional Best Practices

Writing research for the younger grades relies on the level of evidence for each recommendation using the criteria of validity, effects on relevant outcomes, relevance to scope, and relationship between research and recommendations. Unlike the P-3 Instructional Best Practices for reading, writing research cited in this document does not solely rely on *strong evidence* as this is limited but also relies on *moderate evidence*. According to the IES Guides, “A rating of moderate evidence refers either to evidence from studies that allow strong causal conclusions but cannot be generalized with assurance to the population on which a recommendation is focused (perhaps because the findings have not been widely replicated) or to evidence from studies that are generalizable but have some causal ambiguity. It also might be that the studies that exist do not specifically examine the outcomes of interest in the practice guide, although they may be related.” Writing research surrounding prekindergarten is also limited so please note that these instructional best practices have been taken from multiple sources as seen in the Appendix section under References.



# Writing and Diverse Learners

As diversity across New York State’s student population continues to grow, it is essential for educators to ensure that all students’ strengths and needs are considered when designing and implementing evidence-based writing instruction. Multilingual learners and/or students with disabilities bring a variety of experiences with them to school and require intentional support in their instruction to become empowered, proficient writers. In order to provide comprehensive writing instruction, evidence grounded in second language acquisition and special education must also be considered and applied when designing and implementing responsive writing instruction.

## **Linguistically Diverse Learners**

Multilingual\* and Emergent Multilingual Learners\* face the challenge of acquiring literacy in a language that they may not already speak. Effective support involves instruction that considers English development while respecting students' skills in their home language\* and their cultural background. Prior schooling, home language literacy, and English proficiency are key factors in designing literacy instruction for multilingual learners. Educators supporting multilingual learners should:

- Connect to students’ experiences by using culturally relevant resources that reflect their experiences and identities. This includes the use of diverse authors, objects, and pictures.
- Teach instructional language and vocabulary development clearly, by previewing key words, teaching contextualized vocabulary, and using visuals.
- Provide individualized feedback that is considerate of the child's language development stage, cultural context, and individual needs.
- Understand the key similarities and differences between a child's home language and English (e.g., phonology, grammar, vocabulary) and leverage the use of cognates to bridge language gaps and enhance language acquisition.
- Develop oral language alongside English decoding skills.
- Evaluate both writing development and language proficiency levels.
- Employ text sets for language and knowledge building and use graphic organizers to support comprehension.
- Encourage home language discussions with same language peers to support building context knowledge.
- Allow students to write in their home language (L1\*) when appropriate and provide authentic writing (e.g., writing about personal experiences) and publishing opportunities.
- Explicitly model writing to support students with sentence construction and paragraph development.
- Design lessons that explicitly connect writing skills with content-area learning (e.g., science and social studies).
- Model writing by scaffolding instruction leading to independent practice.
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in the writing process, work flexibly between the different stages of writing, and focus on the writing process rather than the final product.
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in active, inquiry-based, collaborative learning where students' curiosities can guide further discussion and inquiry.

# Writing and Diverse Learners

## Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities must have access to the general education curriculum (i.e., curriculum that is based on the New York State Learning Standards for the grade in which a student is enrolled). Meaningful access to the general education curriculum means that a student with a disability has the appropriate supports, services, and accommodations to address the student's disability in consideration of the content of the curriculum, instructional materials, how the curriculum is taught to the student, the physical environment, and how the student's learning is measured. Understanding the principals of evidence-based literacy instruction, educators supporting students with disabilities should use the most effective educational practices to ensure all students are taught to read and write.

- Build a comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for literacy to ensure access to evidence-based practices at every Tier of support (Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3) so that students with disabilities have maximum access to highly effective instruction and the opportunity to participate in the least restrictive environment.
- Provide explicit instruction in all literacy (Reading and Writing) skills. Teachers should provide learners with explicit and consistent demonstrations and descriptions, and intentionally scaffold the steps or processes needed to understand literacy content and concepts. As a student's understanding and accuracy increases, scaffolds are reduced until the student models the skill independently and fluently.
- Design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially-designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.
- Facilitate capacity building and effective implementation of evidence-based learning practices that meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- Ensure that students with disabilities are being given the accommodations and supports needed to ensure success in writing, including assistive technology and any other supports listed on their individualized education programs (IEPs).



# Writing

**Writing:** The process of communicating thoughts and ideas through various methods, including scribbles, drawings, typing, or speech synthesis. It involves authentic text generation through planning, drafting, revising, and editing, with flexibility to move between components, and may culminate in a published product.

## Overarching Best Practices and Instructional Considerations for Writing

Teaching writing involves modeling for students so that they acquire the ability to express their ideas clearly, organize their thoughts, and use written language effectively. Although best practices and instructional considerations are tailored to grade-level standards, there are some that can be applied universally across prekindergarten to third grade. This section highlights the overarching best practices and instructional considerations that can span these grade levels. Although prekindergarten best practices are not required as part of the attestation, please consider them as you review writing as part of your literacy program. Research is limited in this area in prekindergarten; however, the PreK Next Generation standards set the expectations.

**Note:** Although the Literacy Instructional Best Practices were taken from only strong evidence recommendations, the Department noted that a moderate evidence recommendation applies to this supplemental writing guide due to the limited amount of writing research in the earliest grades. This has been referenced in the introduction as well and reflected in the research in the Appendix.



### Instructional Best Practices P-3

Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.

Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.

### Instructional Considerations P-3

- Teach writing skills explicitly, using clear, direct language and modeling each skill or strategy.
- Incorporate daily opportunities for students to practice writing in meaningful contexts.
- Gradually release writing responsibility from the teacher to the student.

#### CR-SE Specific Instructional Considerations

- Encourage oral storytelling and shared writing using culturally relevant texts to bridge home language and literacy development.
- Value student voice by providing choice in writing topics, celebrating diverse experiences, and prioritizing expression over correctness while guiding students toward writing conventions.

#### Technology Specific Instructional Considerations

Word processing is a skill that progresses over time as students become familiar with letters. The New York State Education Department of Educational Design & Technology has previously released a guidance memo on [Keyboarding Instruction](#). This memo highlights student exploration of keyboards from prekindergarten-1st grade with an introduction to keyboarding skills beginning in second and more in-depth instruction at third grade.



## Instructional Best Practices

Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.

## NYS Next Generation ELA Standards

- PKW1: Use a combination of drawing, dictating, oral expression, and/or emergent writing to state an opinion about a familiar topic in child-centered, authentic, play-based learning.
- PKW2: Use a combination of drawing, dictating, oral expression, and/or emergent writing to name a familiar topic and supply information in child-centered, authentic, play-based learning.
- PKW3: Use a combination of drawing, dictating, oral expression, and/or emergent writing to narrate an event or events in a sequence.
- PKW4: Create a response to a text, author, or personal experience (e.g., dramatization, artwork, or poem).
- W5: Begins in Grade 4
- PKW6: Develop questions and participate in shared research and exploration to answer questions and to build and share knowledge.
- PKW7: Engage in a discussion using gathered information from experiences or provided resources.

## Instructional Considerations

Please note that the research is emerging for prekindergarten.

Below are some instructional considerations that connect to the NYS Next Generation Writing Standards:

- Teach students how to build fine motor skills (e.g. how to hold writing utensils, finger painting, playdough manipulation, tearing paper, etc.).
- Encourage students to draw pictures to express their ideas.
- Allow students to share their ideas orally and scribe students' ideas while explaining basic conventions of sentences (capitalization, punctuation).
- Create play-based centers that allow preschoolers to experiment with the writing process by having writing materials available in centers.
- Connect classroom theme(s) to collaborative writing projects.
  - Students participate in a shared writing experience (e.g. a letter, a list, a story) where the teacher is doing the writing as needed and students are providing the ideas or pictures, engaging in the writing process.
- Label items in the classroom and draw attention to them when speaking to students.
- Model writing in front of students during morning meeting or other instructional times.

## Instructional Best Practices

- Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.
- Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.

## NYS Next Generation ELA Standards

- KW1: Use a combination of drawing, dictating, oral expression, and/or emergent writing to state an opinion about a familiar topic or personal experience and state a reason to support that opinion.
- KW2: Use a combination of drawing, dictating, oral expression, and/or emergent writing to name a familiar topic and supply information.
- KW3: Use a combination of drawing, dictating oral expression, and/or emergent writing to narrate an event or events in a sequence.
- KW4: Create a response to a text, author, or personal experience (e.g., dramatization, artwork, or poem).
- W5: Begins in Grade 4
- KW6: Develop questions and participate in shared research and exploration to answer questions and to build and share knowledge.
- KW7: Recall and represent relevant information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question in a variety of ways (e.g., drawing, oral expression, and/or emergent writing)

## Instructional Considerations

★ **Please reference the Writing Introduction on page 6 to include all Instructional Considerations.**

- Use oral language skills to support written language skills.
- Encourage students to share their writing and ideas using an “Author’s Chair”.
- Teach students how to hold a writing utensil correctly and form letters fluently and efficiently.
- When utilizing phonics best practices, have students write the letters and words.
- Encourage students to write using invented spelling for words that they do not know how to spell.
- Develop an understanding of basic sentence structure and teach basic principles (including capitalization and punctuation).
- Model strategies for each component of the writing process.

## Instructional Best Practices

- Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.
- Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.

## NYS Next Generation ELA Standards

- 1W1: Write an opinion on a topic or personal experience; give two or more reasons to support that opinion.
- 1W2: Write an informative/explanatory text to introduce a topic, supplying some facts to develop points, and provide some sense of closure.
- 1W3: Write narratives which recount real or imagined experiences or events or a short sequence of events.
- 1W4: Create a response to a text, author, theme or personal experience (e.g., poem, dramatization, artwork, or other).
- W5: Begins in Grade 4
- 1W6: Develop questions and participate in shared research and explorations to answer questions and to build knowledge.
- 1W7: Recall and represent relevant information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question in a variety of ways.

## Instructional Considerations

★ **Please reference the Writing Introduction on page 6 to include all Instructional Considerations.**

- Teach and encourage the use of strategies for each component of the writing process such as pick ideas, organize notes, write and say more, outlining, and imitation.
- Analyze exemplary texts and direct students to emulate characteristics of exemplary texts at the word, sentence, or text level as a catalyst for the students' writing.
- Teach students to use varied strategies that help them meet their writing goals.
- Encourage students to apply taught phonics skills by spelling words accurately when writing.
- Develop an understanding of basic sentence structure and teach basic principles (including capitalization, punctuation).
- Teach the conventions and concepts of sentences and instruct on how to use a variety of sentence structures in writing--beginning with a series of simple sentences to more complex and varied sentences.
- Expose students to keyboards gaining a general familiarity with letter placement.



## Instructional Best Practices

- Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.
- Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.

## NYS Next Generation ELA Standards

- 2W1: Write an opinion about a topic or personal experience, using clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- PLEASE NOTE: Students in 2nd grade should understand the difference between opinions and arguments and begin to learn how to write arguments with claims and supporting reasons. For example, a student’s opinion could be “I like cupcakes.” A student’s claim could be “Cupcakes are the best snack.” A student’s argument could be “Cupcakes are the best snack because...” with supporting reasons and evidence.
- 2W2: Write informative/explanatory texts that introduce a topic, use facts and other information to develop points, use content-specific language, and provide a concluding statement or section.
- 2W3: Write narratives which recount real or imagined experiences or a short sequence of events, including details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.
- 2W4: Create a response to a text, author, theme or personal experience (e.g., poem, play, story, artwork, or other).
  - W5: Begins in Grade 4
- 2W6: Develop questions and participate in shared research and explorations to answer questions and to build knowledge.
- 2W7: Recall and represent relevant information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

## Instructional Considerations

★ Please reference the Writing Introduction on page 6 to include all Instructional Considerations.

- Teach strategies for each component of the writing process, encouraging flexibility in the use of strategies to help meet writing goals (write or say more, use transition words, and write strong topic sentences).
- Teach students how to brainstorm ideas, organize notes and ideas into a clear sequence or structure.
- Teach students to imitate an author’s craft to emulate the features of strong writing.
- Engage students in self-evaluation, self-monitoring, peer sharing, and peer review for feedback.
- Help students understand the different purposes of writing (e.g. to describe, narrate, inform, persuade, analyze).
- Design writing activities that expand students’ concept of audience (e.g. write a persuasive letter to a local politician, write a story for a kindergarten student).
- Teach students how to edit their writing by modeling correct capitalization, punctuation, and grammar usage.
- Ask students to review their spelling to see if it follows taught spelling patterns, and model using a dictionary or other reference tool(s) to correct spelling.
- Encourage the use of technology and word processing tools to type and revise text.

## Instructional Best Practices

- Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.
- Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.

## NYS Next Generation ELA Standards

Please note: To keep the page concise, only the anchor standards have been included on this page. Please reference the [NYS Next Generation ELA Learning Standards](#) page 49 and 50 for the entirety of the required third grade writing standards.

- 3W1: Write an argument to support claim(s), using clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- 3W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to explore a topic and convey ideas and information relevant to the subject.
- 3W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
- 3W4: Create a response to a text, author, theme, or personal experience (e.g., poem, play, story, artwork, or other).
- 3W6: Conduct research to answer questions, including self-generated questions, and to build knowledge.
- 3W7: Recall relevant information from experiences or gather information from multiple sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

## Instructional Considerations

★ Please reference the [Writing Introduction](#) on page 6 to include all Instructional Considerations.

- Teach strategies for each component of the writing process, encouraging flexibility in the use of strategies to help meet writing goals (write or say more, use transition words, and write strong topic sentences).
- Teach students how to brainstorm ideas, organize notes and ideas into a clear sequence or structure.
- Teach students to imitate an author's craft to emulate the features of strong writing.
- Engage students in self-evaluation, self-monitoring, peer sharing, and peer review for feedback.
- Instruct students on how to construct a main idea and provide supporting details.
- Help students understand the different purposes of writing (e.g. to describe, narrate, inform, persuade, or analyze) and provide activities to expand students' concept of audience
- Teach students how to edit and revise their writing by modeling correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar usage.
- Ask students to review their spelling to see if it follows taught spelling patterns, and model using a dictionary or other reference tool(s) to correct spelling.
- Encourage the use of technology and word processing tools to type and revise text.

# Instructional Best Practices: Writing

Use the following statements to reflect on writing instruction. Areas marked as Partially Developed or Not Evident are places to make notes for further learning/professional development or curricular modifications.

Statements	Fully Developed	Partially Developed	Not Evident
Students are taught to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing as aligned to grade-level standards.			
Students are taught the writing process.			
Students have daily opportunities to write.			
Writing instruction aligns with writing standards and curriculum goals.			
Action Steps			



# Glossary

- **Audience:** refers to the reader for whom a piece of writing is intended. Audience can range from the writer who produces the text (e.g., a diary entry) to peers, teachers, parents, or other trusted adults.
- **Emergent Multilingual Learner:** is a prekindergarten student who is identified as having been exposed to languages other than English from birth.
- **Evidence-Based:** An activity, strategy, or intervention that demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on: (1) strong evidence (e.g., experimental studies), (2) moderate evidence (e.g., quasi-experimental studies), or (3) promising evidence (e.g., correlational studies; or (4) a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes, and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.
- **Fluency:** is the ability to communicate ideas in writing accurately and quickly with relatively little effort. Fluency is an important factor in a writer's ability to manipulate sentence structures to produce comprehensible text. Writing fluency also requires automatic or relatively effortless handwriting, typing, and spelling skills.
- **Home Language:** A language learned in childhood in the home environment.
- **Invented Spelling:** is a student's attempt to produce a plausible spelling for an unknown word. This can range from using one letter to represent an entire word (e.g., b for bed), using the first and last sounds of a word (e.g., gl for girl), or spelling a word phonetically (e.g., wuz for was).
- **L1:** The language a person is first exposed to and acquires naturally from birth.
- **Multilingual Learner:** include English Language Learners (ELLs), Former/Ever ELLs, World Languages students, and heritage speakers of World Languages.
- **Purpose:** refers to the objective a writer is trying to achieve with a particular piece of writing. There are four general purposes for writing (describe, narrate, inform, and persuade/analyze), and each purpose has a variety of genres that can help provide context and structure for a particular purpose and audience.
- **Writing:** is the process through which people communicate thoughts and ideas. Writing can include beginning scribbles, drawings, random letter strings, single-letter spellings, invented spelling, or complete sentences and paragraphs. Writing also can include students dictating ideas to an adult or peer for transcription. Writing can be done through paper and pencil, typing, audio recording, or speech synthesis. Authentic writing involves student generation of original text, including sentences, paragraphs, or longer pieces. For example, students might develop a paragraph in response to a writing prompt. Writing from dictation, correcting grammatical errors on a worksheet, and combining two sentences generated by a teacher do not qualify as authentic writing, because students are not generating the content themselves. Measures of writing output refer to the actual quantity of text produced. Some examples of output measures include the number of sentences or the number of words in a composition.
- **Writing Process:** is the approach a writer uses to compose text. Components of the writing process include planning, drafting, sharing, revising, editing, and evaluating. These components are recursive. They can occur at any point during the writing process, and students should learn to skillfully and flexibly move back and forth between the components while composing text. On occasion, an additional component, publishing, is added to the process as a final product to conclude the writing process.

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