

This document provides a summary of Recommendation 2a from the WWC practice guide *Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers*. Full reference is on the last page.

CONTENT: **Writing**  
GRADE LEVEL(S): **K–5**  
LEVEL OF EVIDENCE: **Strong**

## Recommendation

# Teach students the writing process.

Teachers can help students become effective writers by teaching and supporting them to apply a variety of strategies for each component of the writing process. Teachers should explain and demonstrate writing components and how they can be used alone or in combination in order to teach students to apply strategies flexibly throughout the writing process.

## How to carry out the recommendation

1. Teach students strategies for the various components of the writing process.

### Instructional strategies from the examples

- Teach strategies for each component of the writing process.
- Teach basic strategies early on and introduce more complex ones later.

### South Carolina standards alignment

**ELA:** K-2.W.MCC.1, K-2.W.MCC.2, K-2.W.MCC.3, 3-5.W.MCC.1, 3-5.W.MCC.2, 3-5.W.MCC.3

**TEACHER:** INST.PS.1

Students need to learn strategies for each component of the writing process. Basic strategies such as POW (pick ideas, organize notes, and write and say more) should be introduced in the early grades (1 or 2), while more complex strategies such as peer revising should be introduced in later grades. The table below provides a chart of various writing strategies, how students can use them, and the appropriate grade levels for each.

Component of the Writing Process	Writing Strategy	How Students Can Use the Strategy	Grade Range
Planning	POW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>P</b>ick ideas (i.e., decide what to write about).</li> <li>• <b>O</b>rganize their notes (i.e., brainstorm and organize possible writing ideas into a writing plan).</li> <li>• <b>W</b>rite and say more (i.e., continue to modify the plan while writing).</li> </ul>	1–6
	Ordering ideas/outlining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorm/generate ideas for their paper.</li> <li>• Review their ideas and place a number by what will go first, second, third, and so on.</li> </ul>	1–2
Drafting	Imitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select a sentence, paragraph, or text excerpt and imitate the author’s form (see Recommendation 2b, examples 2 and 3).</li> </ul>	1–6
	Sentence generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try out sentences orally before writing them on paper.</li> <li>• Try multiple sentences and choose the best one.</li> <li>• Use transition words to develop different sentence structures.</li> <li>• Practice writing good topic sentences.</li> </ul>	3–6
Sharing	Peer sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In pairs, listen and read along as the author reads aloud.</li> <li>• Share feedback with their writing partner, starting with what they liked.</li> </ul>	2–6
	“Author’s Chair”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit in a special chair in front of peers and read their writing (see Recommendation 4, example 6, for more detail).</li> </ul>	K–6
Evaluating	Self-evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reread and ask these questions:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the ideas clear?</li> <li>• Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2–6

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the writing connect with the reader?</li> <li>• Are sentence types varied?</li> </ul>	
	Self-monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-assess and ask these questions, either out loud or internally:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did I meet the goals I developed for my writing? If not, what changes should I make to meet my goals?</li> <li>• Did I correctly use strategies that were appropriate for this task? If not, what should I change?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Record their answers to self-assessment questions on a chart or teacher-provided questionnaire in order to track their progress toward writing goals and strategy use.</li> <li>• Congratulate themselves, and inform their teacher, when they meet their goals.</li> </ul>	3–6
Revising and Editing	Peer revising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place a question mark (?) by anything they do not understand in their writing partner’s paper.</li> <li>• Place a carat (^) anywhere it would be useful to have the author include more information.</li> </ul>	2–6
	COPS (editing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the COPS editing questions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did I <b>C</b>apitalize the first word in sentences and proper names?</li> <li>• How is the <b>O</b>verall appearance of my paper?</li> <li>• Did I use commas and end-of-sentence <b>P</b>unctuation?</li> <li>• Did I <b>S</b>pell each word correctly?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2–6

## 2. Gradually release writing responsibility from the teacher to the student.

### **Instructional strategies from the examples**

- Use gradual release to teach writing strategies.
- Provide background on the strategy, including why it is helpful.
- Model the use of strategy multiple times to introduce it.
- Evaluate student understanding and adjust as needed.

### **South Carolina standards alignment**

**ELA:** K-2.W.MCC.1, K-2.W.MCC.2, K-2.W.MCC.3, 3-5.W.MCC.1, 3-5.W.MCC.2, 3-5.W.MCC.3

**TEACHER:** INST.MS.3

Each writing strategy should be taught explicitly through a gradual release method. First, provide the necessary background knowledge on the strategy, including why the strategy is helpful. Next, articulate how to implement the strategy and model its use multiple times. Then allow small groups to apply the strategy while monitoring student performance. Once students can use the strategy in a group, give students the opportunity for guided practice of the strategy, with teacher support. Finally, provide students with opportunities to apply the strategy on their own.

During this process, be sure to evaluate students' understanding and adjust instruction when necessary. For example, for students who are struggling to acquire a particular writing strategy, more time can be spent in small-group instruction. Conversely, for those students who are moving more quickly, consider increasing the complexity of the strategy.

## 3. Guide students to select and use appropriate writing strategies.

### **Instructional strategies from the examples**

- Visually display strategies around the room.
- Design activities for the student to select certain strategies and evaluate their use of it.

### South Carolina standards alignment

**ELA:** K-2.W.MCC.1, K-2.W.MCC.2, K-2.W.MCC.3, 3-5.W.MCC.1, 3-5.W.MCC.2, 3-5.W.MCC.3

**TEACHER:** INST.MS.3, INST.TH.1, INST.PS.1

After students have learned how to use various strategies independently, they will need to learn how to select appropriate strategies for a variety of writing tasks. To support them, consider visually displaying strategies around the room by illustrating each strategy and noting when to use it. As students' skills in using a variety of strategies increase, design activities in which students set goals to use specific strategies, evaluate their success, and think critically about how to make the strategy work even better.

#### 4. Encourage students to be flexible in their use of the components of the writing process.

### Instructional strategies from the examples

- Teach students to use strategies flexibly.
- Design activities that require students to use multiple strategies and move back and forth between them.

### South Carolina standards alignment

**ELA:** K-2.W.MCC.1, K-2.W.MCC.2, K-2.W.MCC.3, 3-5.W.MCC.1, 3-5.W.MCC.2, 3-5.W.MCC.3

**TEACHER:** INST.MS.3C

Once students learn to use the various strategies, teachers need to provide instruction and practice using strategies in a flexible manner. Design activities that require students to move back and forth between the components (planning, drafting, sharing, evaluating, revising, editing, publishing) to strengthen their ability to apply writing strategies flexibly.

## Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>Students initially use the strategies/ techniques of writing after they are taught; however, over time they tend to stop.</i>	Once students begin independently applying strategies and techniques, teachers need to monitor their progress. As students develop skills with a specific component of the writing process (planning, drafting, sharing, evaluating, revising, editing, publishing), they may no longer need to rely on particular strategies. However, if a student has stopped using a strategy but is still struggling with a specific component of the writing process, the teacher should intervene and take necessary action, such as targeted one-on-one or small-group instruction.
<i>Teachers need to prepare students to take state assessments, which tend to focus on only a few genres.</i>	Writing for one genre often requires students to use skills they have learned for writing in another genre. For example, even when writing a persuasive essay, including a narrative example may be necessary to support an argument. Therefore, despite the specific prompts on a state assessment, students need to be prepared to write for multiple purposes. Teachers can point out particular skills they are learning that might be useful for the types of writing required for the state assessment.

*Reference: Graham, S., Bollinger, A., Booth Olson, C., D’Aoust, C., MacArthur, C., McCutchen, D., & Olinghouse, N. (2012). Teaching elementary school students to be effective writers (NCEE 2012-4058). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/17>*