

This document provides a summary of Recommendation 1 from the WWC practice guide *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively*. Full reference is on the last page.

**CONTENT: Writing**  
**GRADE LEVEL(S): 6-12**  
**LEVEL OF EVIDENCE: Strong**

## Recommendation

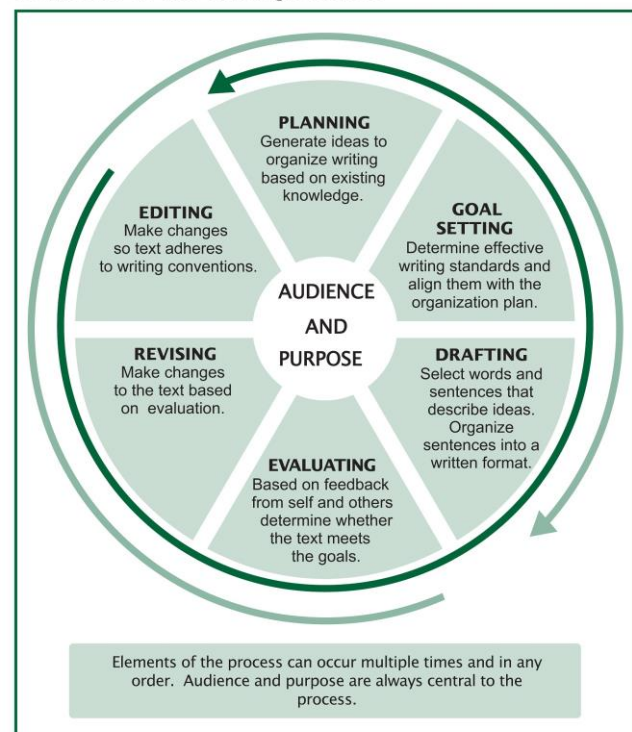
# Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle.

The most effective way to teach writing is through (1) explicit and direct instruction and (2) utilizing a Model-Practice-Reflect cycle. Explicit and direct instruction suggests teaching students specific components of the writing process in addition to learning how to select and execute the steps of the writing process strategies. Through the second method, students should be able to observe a strategy being used, practice the strategy on their own, and then evaluate their own writing and use of the strategy. These strategies applied in tandem support improvement in student writing.

## How to carry out the recommendation

1. Explicitly teach strategies for planning and goal setting, drafting, evaluating, revising, and editing.

Elements of the Writing Process



Note. Adapted from page 7 of the practice guide.

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

- Use resources like the National Writing Project to become familiar with best strategies for the writing process.
- Expose students to the different strategies used for the writing practice and begin to have students practice the different strategies.
- Explicitly teach students on each of the strategies for the writing process.

### **South Carolina standards alignment**

**ELA:** W.MCC.1, W.MCC.2, W.MCC.3, W.RC.6

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

Introduce students to the writing process and the different strategies used within the components of the writing process. Practicing the writing process helps students better direct their thinking and better understand that there are multiple ways to approach each of the elements. Students need explicit instruction on each step of the process, including specific steps in each strategy and how to execute them effectively. Teachers can identify the best strategies through professional learning communities, such as the National Writing Project, or various publications. Process strategy examples can be found on pages 7–14 of the practice guide referenced on the first page of this document

## 2. Instruct students on how to choose and apply strategies appropriate for the audience and purpose.

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

- Provide a rubric or list of questions for students to use when selecting the best writing strategy. Ensure that students consider the audience and purpose for the writing.
- Have students write a reflection on which strategy they used, the reasoning for that strategy, and if it was beneficial for the identified audience and purpose for the writing.
- Encourage students to practice different writing strategies in different contexts.

### South Carolina standards alignment

**ELA:** WW.RC.6

**TEACHER:** INST.PS.1, PLAN.SW.2, INST.TH.1, INST.TH.2, INST.TCK.1, INST.TCK.2, INST.TCK.3

Teachers should provide students with a rubric or list of questions for selecting the best writing strategy when considering the audience and purpose. Teachers should consider adding a writing assignment in which students need to describe a specific strategy they used for their assignment, what encouraged them to use that strategy, and how it was or was not beneficial for a specific purpose or audience. Other options could be having students use writing strategies in different contexts, while also assessing how well the modified strategy worked. Sample questions for strategy selection, audience identification, and purpose identification can be found on pages 14–16 of the practice guide.

## 3. Model strategies for students.

### Instructional strategies from the examples

- Utilize a gradual release of responsibility strategy to model the writing process. Begin with “I do” and model the thinking process for selection and applying each writing strategy. Include examples with errors to demonstrate the solutions to writing issues. Then, model the “We do” portion together in whole group. Next, have students work in pairs or individually for the “You do” portion.

### South Carolina standards alignment

**ELA:** W.MCC.1, W.MCC.2, W.MCC.3, W.RC.6

**TEACHER:** INST.MS.3

The “I do,” “We do,” “You do” instruction model provides students with opportunities to observe strong writers, attempt to emulate the high-quality elements of writing, and then evaluate their writing compared to those elements. This model illustrates to students the thought process behind the selection and application of each strategy and how it can help them write effectively. Teachers should include examples of modeling statements with errors and corrections to best demonstrate solutions to those issues. Sample modeling statements can be found on pages 20–21 of the practice guide.

#### 4. Provide students with opportunities to apply and practice modeled strategies.

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

- Provide regular, frequent opportunities for students to practice the writing strategies in classroom activities, across multiple content areas.

##### **South Carolina standards alignment**

**ELA:** W.MCC.1, W.MCC.2, W.MCC.3, W.RC6

**TEACHER:** INST.AM.7, INST.AF.5, INST.GS.1, INST.GS.2, INST.GS.3, INST.GS.4

Teachers should incorporate frequent opportunities for students to practice implementing writing strategies into all classroom activities. This should occur across all content areas, so students understand how strategies can be adopted for a variety of disciplines. Practice model samples for differing content areas can be found on pages 22–23 of the practice guide.

#### 5. Engage students in evaluating and reflecting upon their own and peers' writing and use of modeled strategies.

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

- As students practice a strategy, instruct students to reflect on the use of their strategy and discuss with other students how the strategy worked or did not work for them.

##### **South Carolina standards alignment**

**ELA:** W.MCC.1, W.MCC.2, 2.MCC.3, W.RC.6

**TEACHER:** INST.AM.7, INST.AF.5, INST.GS.1, INST.GS.2, INST.GS.3, INST.GS.4

After students have had a chance to practice a particular strategy, they should reflect on their use of the strategy or discuss with other students how the strategy did or did not work for them—the goal is for students to understand how certain strategies can lead to effective writing. Writing reflection and evaluation tools can be found on pages 24–27 of the practice guide.

**Instructional adjustments for increasing use of strategies**

Identified Challenge	Instructional Adjustment
Students have not internalized strategies.	Reteach the steps of the strategies. Create visuals of strategy steps to post or distribute in the classroom.
Students lack confidence in applying strategies.	Provide opportunities for students to evaluate, select, and explain why they chose to use different strategies.
Students occasionally apply strategies.	Provide positive written or verbal feedback when students use strategies to improve their writing.
Students do not appear to be applying strategies; however, their writing has improved.	Students may be implementing strategies automatically. Celebrate and continue to monitor student progress.

## Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>I teach my students specific writing strategies, but then they don't seem to use them while composing.</i>	Explore the reasons why students are not implementing strategies and respond accordingly. See the table on page 3 for instructional adjustment ideas based on the challenges identified.
<i>For some of my students, strategy instruction doesn't seem to improve their writing achievement.</i>	Teachers should assess why certain students' writing is not improving and then tailor their instruction based on each student's skill level. This can occur by simplifying and streamlining the steps for strategies.
<i>I struggle to be a strong writer—how can I teach my students to be effective writers?</i>	Teachers can strengthen their writing by doing assignments they ask students to complete, by understanding that writing is not always complex or long, by viewing writing as a progression of steps, or by joining a support group with other teachers. Use this opportunity to reflect, discuss, and model personal growth with your students.
<i>I model the use of rubrics for my students, but my students' self-assessments aren't accurate.</i>	Teachers can model the use of rubrics by first using the rubric to annotate and compare two pieces of student work. Then the students, in pairs, can annotate each other's writing by discussing how the rubric criteria can change or by assessing the degree to which students have confidence in their writing. Finally, require students to submit a completed rubric with their writing.
<i>How can I help my students to feel comfortable reflecting on their own work?</i>	Teachers should demonstrate the reflection process multiple times, while modeling how self-criticism is helpful to improving one's writing skills.

Reference: Graham, S., Bruch, J., Fitzgerald, J., Friedrich, L., Furgeson, J., Greene, K., . . . Smither Wulsin, C. (2016). *Teaching secondary students to write effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002). 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/22>