Evidence-Based Principles and Practices for Writing Instruction

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The Writing Process (handout)

The Big Picture of Writing
Writers construct meaning from **prior** learning and experience and **new** learning.

Text should:
- make sense for the intended audience
- have only enough information to be understandable

Principles of Effective Writing Instruction

1. Address attributions, beliefs, and level of **motivation** for writing. Instructors need to identify, understand, and address negative beliefs and motivations with targeted instruction.
2. Provide **explicit instruction**. Explicitly and systematically teach the strategies, skills and knowledge of proficient writing. Instructors should provide a lot of support when a new concept or skill is introduced. They should gradually decrease support as learners gain competence and self-efficacy.
3. **Target specific difficulties** instead of teaching everything to everyone. Look at student writing to see what common errors are being made and address them with mini lessons.
4. Provide **individualized instruction** with materials that are at the right level of challenge and with appropriate feedback provided while learning.
   Writing instruction should meet individual needs and learning goals. Conduct writing conferences with students either individually or in small groups.
5. Provide **opportunities to practice** skills. Allow more time for practicing writing in different contexts, with different genres and for different purposes. Offer choices of what to write and how far to go with a draft and whether and how to revise drafts.
6. Promote the **transfer of skills** so students get in the habit of using different kinds of writing for real purposes outside the classroom.
7. **Integrate reading and writing**. Make explicit the reading-writing connection.
   When students improve their reading skills it helps them improve their writing skills and vice versa. Refer to the publication *Writing to Read* on the TEAL website.
   teal.ed.gov/writing-read
8. Explicitly teach the **foundational skills** necessary to support proficient writing until they become automatic, if necessary. (e.g. spelling, handwriting, keyboarding)
9. **Model** writing strategies and support learners' **self-regulation** of the writing process.

10. Create classroom environments and protocols that **support learner motivation and persistence**.

Practices for Effective Writing Instruction

1. **Writing Strategies-**Teach students strategies for planning, drafting, revising, and editing their compositions.
2. **Summarization**- Explicitly and systematically teach students how to summarize, in writing, the passages they have read. For a good description of how to teach your students how to summarize see pages 93-96 in Susan McShane's *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults*. lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf
3. **Collaborative Writing-** Offer instructional arrangements in which students work together to plan, draft, revise, and edit their compositions.
4. **Specific Product Goals-** Assign students specific, clear, reachable goals for the writing they are to complete. Create and use rubrics with your students so they can self or peer evaluate whether they have reached their goals.
5. **Goal Setting**- Help students learn about and make the decisions that all good writers make. Set clear goals for writing that are specific to the purpose and type of writing task.
6. **Word Processing-** Use computers and word processors as instructional supports for writing assignments.
7. **Sentence Combining**-Teach students to construct more complex, sophisticated sentences by combining shorter, simpler sentences. Include exercises and application to real-life writing.
8. **Prewriting/Planning**- Teach and allow ample time for students to practice prewriting activities such as making lists or diagrams prior to writing. This helps students generate relevant content prior to writing and to complete texts. Provide opportunities for students to engage in activities designed to help generate or organize ideas for composition.
9. **Inquiry Activities**- Use the inquiry approach (including clear goals, analysis of data, using specified strategies, and applying the analysis to writing). Students engage in analyzing immediate, concrete data to help develop ideas and content for a particular writing task.
10. Analyzing text and responding to it is part of the new GED test for both writing and social studies – extended response.
11. **Process Writing Approach**- Teach students the process approach to writing (planning, drafting, revising and editing as an iterative process). Interweave instructional activities to stress extended writing opportunities, writing for authentic audiences, personalized instruction, and cycles of writing.
12. **Study of Models and Modeling**- Provide students with opportunities to read, analyze, and emulate models of good writing. Discuss the features of good essays and learning to imitate those features. Model the writing process by writing a first draft in front of your students on the board or overhead.
13. **Writing for Content Learning**- Teach students how to use writing as a tool for learning content material.

Grammar

Teaching grammar as an isolated skill is not effective!! Teach it in the context of the student's own writing (e.g. checklists, peer editing, mini lessons, and identifying, analyzing and correcting the most common errors for the class).

Writing Territories

This is a writing activity to help build comfort and fluency. Topics consist of things that happen to us or the stories we tell people. All students will have something to write about with this approach.

Making Decisions about Writing Activities (handout)

POW- A Writing Strategy (handout)

- Pick my idea
- Organize
- Write and say more

Organizing Ideas Before Writing (handout)
Students need a way to organize their thoughts. **Graphic organizers** are a helpful tool. You can find some examples at www.**readwritethink.org** as well as on pages 83-87 in Susan McShane's *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults*.
lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf

Strategies for Revising
Revision is a very important part of the writing process. Revision is often confused with editing. Editing is proofreading a piece of writing to correct errors in grammar and other mechanical problems, whereas revising involves going over the writing to check for logic, clarity, flow, organization and adherence to purpose. Editing fixes specific mistakes on a sentence level. Revising is an analysis of the overall piece of writing. Editing is the very last thing that is done.

Writing Rubrics – a strategy for revising writing   (handouts)
These tools provide strategies and parameters that help evaluate writing. Teachers and tutors can use them to evaluate students' writing and students can use them to evaluate their own and other students' writing.

Writing that Comes from Reading Texts

- arguments to support claims
- conveying complex ideas
- planning, revising, editing
- researching

Most college and workplace writing requires evidence. The ability to cite evidence differentiates strong from weak student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Being able to locate and deploy evidence are hallmarks of strong readers and writers. This requires students to follow the details of what is explicitly stated and make valid claims that square with text evidence. This kind of writing does not require information or evidence from outside the text.

CCRS- Writing Tips

- Listening and speaking should be built into any sequence of activities along with reading and writing.
- "Re-read it, think it, talk it, write it"

CCRS-Video Clip

Getting Ready to Write: Citing Textual Evidence   Grade 6-8   ESL, Adv, ABE, HI

https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/teaching-about-textual-evidence

CCRS- Some ELL Modifications to Consider

- Increased work on writing, spelling rules, listening/speaking, sentence structure, pronunciation
- Students' experiences taken into account
- Students' own culture used as source of materials (writing assignments, readings, discussion topics)

Explicit Instruction/Scaffolding

Introduce
Tell students the goals, purpose, and standards for the writing activity. Address gaps in background knowledge before the activity begins.

Model by Thinking Aloud
Model what you expect the students to do and verbalize your thoughts and thinking process while modeling.

Share Your Own Writing
Writing yourself and sharing your own writing with your students can be part of the modeling.

Provide Guidance and Feedback
Guide students as they write in groups or pairs. Provide support with assistance and encouragement. This includes immediate and constructive feedback. Ask and answer questions. Give many opportunities for practice, if needed.

Allow Opportunities for Independent Practice
Give students enough time to complete the task. Allow students a chance to show they can do it on their own.

Reflect
Help students learn how to reflect (with the teacher or peers) on what they learned. This can also include self-assessment.

Resources for Writing Instruction

Types of Resources Available

- Research on adult writing instruction
- Research-based products
- Professional development opportunities

Research on Adult Writing Instruction

- The evidence base for writing instruction is even more reliant on K-12 research than the research on reading instruction for adults.
- Very few resources discussing the research on reading and writing are on the LINCS website.
- Most resources are on reading alone or reading and writing research combined.
- Writing can be explicitly taught.
- Resources offer specific strategies.

Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Developing Reading and Writing
http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13468

Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools – A Report to the Carnegie Commission Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education   **www.all4ed.org/files/WritingNext.pdf**

Writing to Read: Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading – A Report to the Carnegie Commission   Graham, S., & Hebert, M. (2012). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education   **lincs.ed.gov/programs/teal/publications/writing-read**

TEAL Just Write Guide
https://teal.ed.gov/documents/TEAL_JustWriteGuide.pdf

TEAL Writing Fact Sheets (Fact sheets 1, 7 and 10 focus on writing)
https://teal.ed.gov/resources
Learning to Achieve: A Professional's Guide to Educating Adults with Learning Disabilities
National Institute for Literacy October 2010 Chapter 5 discusses written expression disabilities.
https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/L2AProfessionalGuide_final.pdf

Developing Writers: A Workshop for High School Teachers
A video workshop for grade 9-12 writing and language arts teachers, consisting of eight video programs, a print guide, and a website. Teachers can use these components for professional development in two-hour weekly group sessions, or on their own.
http://www.learner.org/workshops/hswriting/

Learner Web
A learning support system for adults. Individualized Learning Plans and profiles are created for each learner so that support services meet the needs of the individual. The system offers self-paced instruction, face-to-face or online work with a tutor or teacher, assessments, and an electronic portfolio. Currently, Learner Web offers content in a variety of areas, including GED preparation, English language learning, college transitions, and digital literacy. Includes Learning Plans on writing in the College Success and Advising Cluster under Writing: Directed Self-Placement Writing Support Plans.   **www.learnerweb.org**

Tutor Ready Writing
These free online resources provide answers to 22 key questions frequently asked by tutors and teachers about how best to help their learners improve their skills in writing. They are appropriate for instructors who work with native English speakers and English language learners.

tutorready.learnerweb.org