

Making Writing Workshop Work: Engaging Reluctant Writers

Everyone Reading Annual Conference
2014

Abigail Helfat, Ed.M.

I work'd hard
ON whiteing alot
of lines on
each page. i
did this good
well. So I did
it ON all
The pages.

I WENT SO
fast I couldnt
see where I
was going. I saw
Someon in the way.
I thid TO STOP but
I was going TO

Tyler

Signs of a struggling writer

- Avoids writing tasks
- Short attention span
- Can't complete free-writing exercises
- Misbehaves during writing time

NOVEMBER 6, 2006 Monday

Over the week end I went to see biffrint cinds of leafs.

Wen we stoped we saw the marathon.

You know that in cencel park

over the week end lots of Aags

come. I saw a show named How to

SEXED in bishnis with ~~at~~ tring. I saw

Leard how to ^{do} devishin 2x aneything.

My friend Saide from North Carnay came

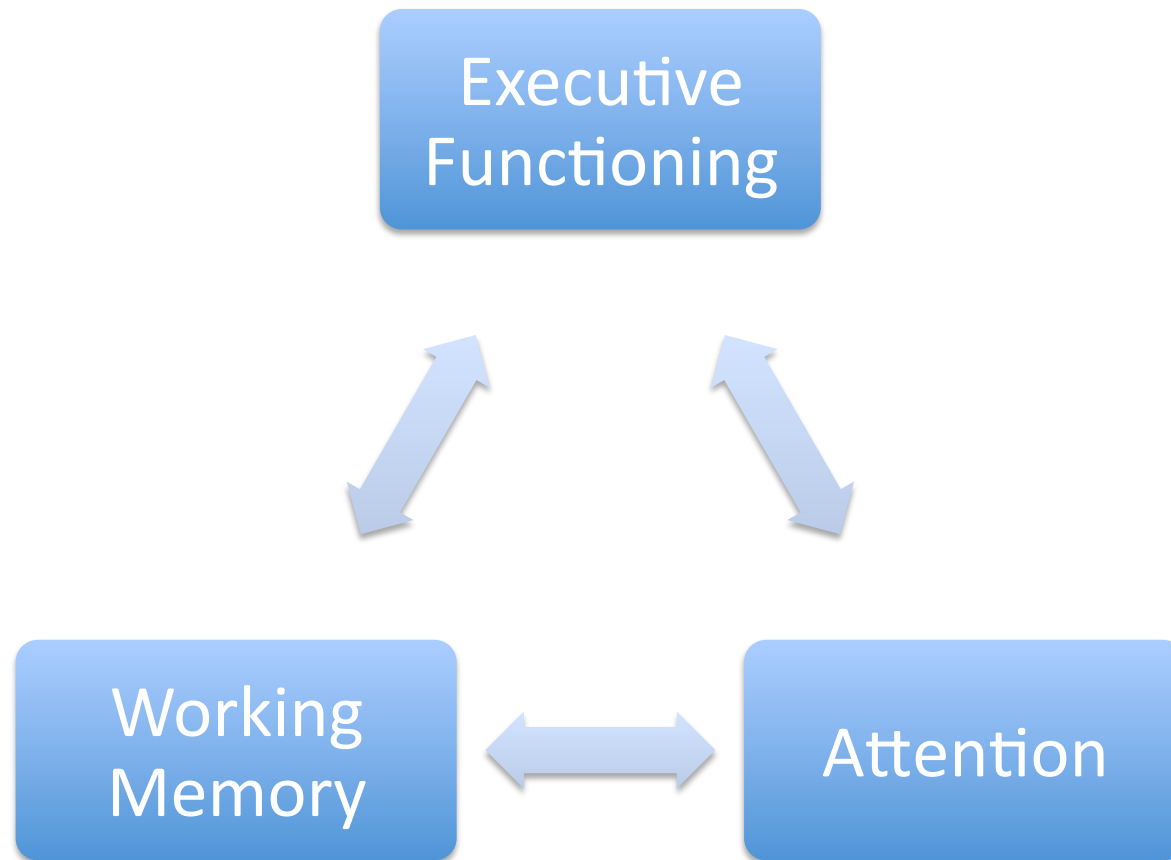
to visit. we hade a magnifims time

and that was my week end. week

Writing is hard!

- Topic choice
- Spelling
- Grammar rules
- Handwriting
- Expressive language
- Working Memory
- Planning, organizing, editing
- Text structure

Cognitive Demands of Writing



How do we motivate and support?

- Acknowledge that writing is hard
- Directly teach and support ALL skills you expect students to apply
- Give direct feedback each time kids write
- Correct mistakes gently, focus on content
- Help with topic choice and key words
- Find an authentic purpose/audience
- Make the task finite
- Expressive writing is much easier than writing stories
- Use a process approach and apply it consistently

Provide Scaffolding

- Tailor instruction to student needs
- Directly teach foundational skills
- Scaffold the task
 - Timer
 - Organizers/Templates
 - Rubrics
- Scaffold the language
 - Direct teaching of language structures
 - Word Banks
 - Sentence starters

Basic Skill Instruction

- Writing Fluency
- Grammar and Mechanics
 - Rules for capitalization, punctuation
 - Parts of speech
 - Complete sentences (subject, predicate)
 - Word order
 - Punctuation
- Spelling
- Work at the sentence level

Sentence Work

- Children from ages 8-12 should produce sentences that average the same number of words as their age.
- Cues to problems in written output:
 - Short sentences
 - Incomplete sentences
 - Run-on sentences
 - Illogical connections

Bare Bones Sentences

- Teach components of a complete sentence.
 1. The baby naps.
 2. The cat purrs.
 3. The muffins bake.
 4. Cars speed.
 5. Puppies play.
 6. School opens.
- Have students write bare bones sentences with prompts.
- Teach sentence expansion

Sentence Work

- Sentence Expansion
 - Students repeat and use a rubber band to demonstrate
 - I saw a pig.
 - I saw a pink pig.
 - I saw a pink pig play in the mud.
 - Students answer *who, where, when, why?*
 - The boy walked.
 - The boy walked home.
 - The boy walked home because it was getting dark.
 - The boy from my soccer team walked home because it was getting dark.

Text Structure for Writing

- What is required to compose *narrative* texts?
- Highly complex process requiring multiple skills
 - Generation of ideas
 - Planning/organization to develop ideas
 - Drafting the story adhering to narrative text conventions (setting, characters, plot, theme)
 - Review and revision of what was written

Text Structure for Writing

- What is required to compose *expository* texts?
 - Familiarity with topic (background knowledge or research)
 - Knowledge of text type
 - Main idea/details
 - Thesis/supporting ideas
 - Descriptive paragraph
 - Process Paragraph/Sequence of events
 - Compare/contrast paragraph

Writing Process

- Planning
- Drafting
- Revising

Topic Choice

- When they say, **“I don’t know what to write about,”** kids are telling the truth, not stalling!
- Kids waste time figuring out what to write about
 - Assign a topic
 - Give limited choice (2-3 topics)
 - Brainstorm together
 - Use sentence starters if needed

Planning

- “This is the point at which students begin to organize their assignments and thoughts systematically and sequentially.” (Hochman)
 - This stages requires the **most instructional time** (more than is usually given to writing activities overall)
 - Teach students to establish **topic, purpose, audience, type of composition**
 - Use **organizers/outlines** or **templates** to help distinguish relevant info and plan writing

Raby

May 21, 2007

Monday

had a sleepover

went to cornevel

Zeckent place in cake
compit shon

Go to crocos with
cousons

go to grampos house

wach a movie then eat
dinner

go to bed

Drafting

- Free writing and journal responses are **unstructured** activities
- Set aside some writing time to teach **skills**
- Provide **structure** when giving assignments
 - Example prompts:
 - List 3-5 ideas on given topic
 - Circle the best one
 - What is your key idea? Tell a friend then write it down.
 - Use an organizer/outline to record your main points
 - Write 5 sentences about your topic
 - Give time limits for each step of the process

Drafting

- Less experienced/competent/confident writers should be limited to ***one paragraph*** at first
 - Students are often given credit for ***quantity*** rather than ***quality*** of writing
 - Goals should be clarity and accuracy
 - Shorter pieces foster successful attempts at editing
- Writing is based on a complete outline

Paragraphs

- Topic sentences
 - Subject plus a key idea
 - Show them examples
 - Write topic sentences for a group of supporting details
 - Make sure students can distinguish between topic/detail sentences
- Tips
 - Brainstorm numerous sentences about a topic and choose the best one
 - Remind them to use different sentence types
 - Do not have to begin with the topic word

Try it!

- Write at least three topic sentences for each of the following topics
 - New York City
 - Hiking
 - Pets
 - Cooking
- Paragraph work examples--handout

Dylan Liberman

December 11, 2006

Monday

On my weekend I went
to grampos house. At my grampos
grampos house I so my cuzins.

At my grampos house I so
A sord. At my grampos house

I played jack pot with my
cazins. My dog and my cuzins

dog had a playdate in the
back yard.

I got
to
touch
it

I went too Washinton
Over my weekend.
First I saw the Washinton
Monumint. Then I went to
the world war II Maman
I went on the stairs ^{of}
of the Lincoln Mumory.
The last thing I did on
Saturday was go to dinner.
It was a big dinner because
my moms very good friends
darter was haveing a
bat mitza. On Sunday
morning I went to the
sinagog for the bat mitza.
Then I saw the white
house. I tuck a peace of
the yown. last I went
to the night party
it was fantastic. My
weekend was very very very

Editing

- Five fundamental techniques
 - Add words
 - Delete words
 - Substitute words, phrases or clauses
 - Rearrange
 - Proofread for errors
- Provide checklists and rubrics for guidance

Editing Activity

- Improve this paragraph by following the directions below.
 - Improve topic sentence
 - Vary sentence starters
 - Add concluding sentence
 - Give examples
 - Combine two sentences
 - Add descriptive words
 - Expand sentences
 - Use sequence words

I went to my friend's party. I had fun. We had cake and ice cream. We played games.

Editing Activity

Last Sunday, Jim invited eight boys to his birthday party. First, we played touch football outside for almost an hour. Then, we had delicious pizza and made our own sundaes. I put sprinkles, hot fudge, nuts and whipped cream on mine. Everyone had a terrific time.

Editing Activity

- Improve this paragraph by following the directions below.

- Improve topic sentence
- Vary sentence starters
- Add concluding sentence
- Give examples
- Combine two sentences
- Add descriptive words
- Expand sentences
- Use sequence words

We went to the circus. It was great. I saw the animals do tricks. I saw clowns. I got popcorn and cotton candy. My grandpa took me there.

Giving Direct Feedback

- Focus on *content* rather than *mechanics*
- Provide *authentic, positive* feedback along with suggestions for improvement
- Teach kids to have meaningful discussions about their work with each other
- Rubrics can help focus your feedback

1. The first pro is trade begins again this is good because it more peaceful. The second pro is that people could have there own land and there was no more lords. The thread pro is having a fort to protect you.
2. The first con is that Guild would rip you off by selling you stuff very expensive. The second con is that trade became very competitive. The thread con is the sanitation was were bad because they did not have a way to collect the garbage and throw it out.

One pro about living in the cities in the middle ages. When someone was put into power it was because of their achievements. It would also be an advantage to live in the city if you were a woman because you could hide in the big city. And the women had a better chance of getting a title as a important man's wife. But the medieval cities definitely had its cons also like if you were to walk so close to the building or you may get human feces and waste dumped on you because they did not have flushing toilets or trash men or anything like that so it was a very unhygienic time and that is another con and the trading was a little complicated.

Assessment

- Consider a **writing fluency** assessment (words written per minute) if needed
- **Spelling** inventory
- Kids can only be held accountable for applying grammar rules that have been **directly taught**
- For **content** and **organization**, assess *only what you have taught*
- Use clear rubrics
- Keep a **portfolio**

Dos and Don'ts

- **NEVER** ask kids to just sit and write
- **DO** give them a clear assignment and a small time limit *or* an amount of writing you expect
- **DO** help break the task into manageable units
- **DON'T** expect kids to apply skills you haven't taught
- **DO** use *each* block of writing time to teach and practice a specific skill
- **DO** give feedback on ALL written work

Dos and Don'ts

- Make writing experiences authentic
 - Topic
 - Purpose
 - Audience
- **AVOID** asking students to write stories
- **DO** spend time on all kinds of paragraphs, reading responses, opinion pieces, essays

Works Cited

- Baker, S., Gersten, R., & Graham, S. (2003). Teaching Expressive Writing to Students with Learning Disabilities: Research-based Applications and Examples. *Journal of Disabilities*, 36(2), 109-123.
- Clammer, V. (2008) Write to Read: Enhancing Sentence Comprehension Through Teaching Writing. Workshop presented at the New York IDA conference, 3/7/08.
- Gersten, R., Baker, S. & Edwards, L. (2009) Teaching Expressive Writing to Students with Learning Disabilities. Retrieved 11/13/11 from <http://www.idonline.org/article/6201/>
- Hochman, J.C. (2011). Composition: Evidence-Based Instruction. In Birsh, J.R. (Ed.). *Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills*. (pp. 405-26). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Isaacson, S. (1996) Simple Ways to Assess the Writing of Students with Disabilities. Retrieved 11/14/11 from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/6208/>
- Richards, R.G. (1999) Understanding Why Students Avoid Writing. Retrieved 11/9/11 from <http://www.idonline.org/article/5892/>
- Richards, R.G. (2008) A Student's Perspective on Writing. Retrieved 4/28/08 from <http://www.idonline.org/article/22746/>