Instructional Supports for Diverse Writers

Grades 4-9

Saskatchewan

Contents

Instructional Approaches and Strategies for Diverse Writers

Writing is central to learning and social interaction. Through writing, students not only demonstrate their learning but also deepen their understanding of new concepts, as they reflect on thought made visible on a page or screen (Peterson, 2014). Writing is a fundamental means of communication.

Skilled writers spend time planning, monitoring, evaluating, revising, and managing the writing process. Students who find writing a challenge often have difficulty employing these skills. For many of these students, writing difficulties are due to lower level transcription skills (e.g., spelling, printing, handwriting) rather than higher level composing skills (e.g., generation of ideas, editing, revision, organization). Reluctant learners, learners with limited experience or learners on a different developmental trajectory may struggle with the higher level compositional skills. Teachers determine the barriers to learning for each student and provide opportunities and appropriate support to make the writing process accessible to all learners. (Refer to Supporting All Learners.)

Every student writer needs access to the same high-quality writing instruction in all subject areas. Saskatchewan curricula are the starting point for instructional planning. Meeting the instructional needs of diverse writers can best be accomplished through frequent, explicit, intensive and individualized support based on appropriate and ongoing assessment to identify the student's strengths and needs. (Refer to The Adaptive Dimension for Saskatchewan K-12 Students.) This document details instructional approaches and strategies that can be employed by teachers to support all writers. This support should be provided within the context of the writing process, not through isolated and fragmented drills on specific writing skills.

Writing Challenges	Writers who are proficient …	Writers who are less proficient …
knowledge of writing	• have extensive knowledge about writing genres, devices and conventions.	• have limited knowledge about writing and believe good writing is related to form and mechanics rather than substance and process.
approach to writing	• engage in a multidimensional process that involves planning, composing, evaluating and revising.	• focus more on generating content resulting in papers that contain a list of ideas rather than organized and extensive discussion of the topic.
planning for writing	• devote a significant amount of time to planning and thoughtfully developing goals that guide what they say and do.	• are better at *saying* rather than *writing* about what they know as they may have difficulty accessing what they know in order to write. • seldom utilize advance planning strategies, often jumping to first draft of sentences that are just rewritten in subsequent drafts.
generating content	• usually generate more content than needed, eliminating unnecessary information during the revision process to create content that is precise and purposeful. • use skillful language and develop content that is well organized, precise and purposeful.	• produce short texts that lack focus, contain little elaboration or detail, include ineffective word choice. • have difficulty retrieving information from memory, utilizing outside resources and translating ideas into written form.
revising	• engage in extensive evaluation and revision processes (refining word choice, organization of content, transitions, flow, etc.) that improve their compositions.	• find evaluating and revising text difficult and tend to focus revisions on mechanics and neatness of work.
transcription skills	• have ease of writing fluency.	• have difficulty transcribing their thoughts into written form, have difficulty with punctuation, spelling

		and capitalization and produce letters slowly.
persistence	• devote significant time and effort to composing.	• dedicate minimal time to, and have limited engagement with the process of writing. • may not view writing as a skill to be learned.

(Adapted from Santangelo, Harris & Graham, 2008)

Refer to ESSP Writing Rubrics, Writing Continuum 1-12

Moving Students to Proficiency in Writing

Writing is an indispensable tool for learning and communication. We use writing as a medium to gather, preserve, and share information, tell stories, create imagined worlds, influence others, maintain personal links with family and friends, explore who we are and combat loneliness. The permanence of writing makes ideas we are studying readily available for review and evaluation, enhances student learning and understanding. For all of these reasons, students need to acquire the skills, strategies and knowledge to become competent and effective writers (Graham, MacArthur, Fitzgerald, 2013).

The following are instructional considerations for moving challenged writers toward writing proficiency.

1. **Model writing**
   "If we want our young writers to improve, we have to plant ourselves in the middle of our classroom and demonstrate how we approach this confusing thing we call the writing process" (Gallagher, 2011, p. 224). When students see teachers grappling with writing it reveals to them that writing does not simply flow at will. Writing is a skill to be learned. It is a process and a product of multiple revisions for refinement.

2. **Parrot good writers through mentor texts**
   Study examples of good writing from quality professional writers in all writing forms. Coach students through examples from actual writers. Show students how scientists, historians, engineers and mathematicians approach writing. Analyze their writing and determine what they have in common in their approaches to writing. Then have students imitate the writing. Providing quality models of writing for students offers

them solid support to move them beyond what they can write on their own.

3. **Build background knowledge**
   Students have to possess background knowledge before they can create a meaningful piece of writing. Provide lots of varied reading for students. If you want students to write about totalitarian governments, Saskatchewan's natural resources or the power of protest music, they will first need to build solid background knowledge.

4. **The first idea is not always the best idea**
   Share with students that often they may need to think beyond their first idea for writing to get to their best idea. Students can brainstorm a list of writing ideas and try writing drafts for a couple of ideas to determine which is their most plausible and engaging idea.

5. **Spend more time in deliberate writing practise**
   Teaching students how to write well takes lots of time. Providing students with deliberate practise that focuses on coaching in specific areas (e.g., work choice, flow, sentence structure, organization) that are most challenging to them is necessary for students to move from struggling writers to skilled writers.
   Adapted from Gallagher (2011)

Conferring for Writing Improvement

Conferring (conferencing) with students is essential for moving student writing forward. It addresses students' specific needs at a given time in the writing process. Conferences involve the teacher and student sitting side by side engaging in a conversation about the student's piece of writing. [Kittle: read & write beside them](#)

1. Keep conferences brief (under 5 minutes).
2. Students must come to the conference with a purpose and a focus on one aspect of their writing, e.g., "Will you check my grabber lead to see if it draws you into my writing?", "Do my verb tenses agree?", "Is my thesis statement clear?". Conferences are not for reviewing the entire piece of writing; focus on one aspect of writing.
3. Conferences may focus on a recently taught strategy, skill or concept that students were to incorporate into their writing.
4. Keep feedback productive and positive. Coach instead of correct students to identify their strengths in the piece and what areas they feel need improving. Ask students what they need to move ahead and discuss next steps in their writing process.
5. Review with students the goals they set for their writing piece and monitor their progress.

6. Make some jot notes at the end of each student conference to record conference topics and interactions. Add this information to your on-going evaluation and monitoring of student progress (Daniels, Zemelman & Steineke, 2007; Gallagher, 2011).

Instruction Considerations

Students are best able to engage in learning when they feel supported, encouraged and have teachers who recognize their learning strengths. When planning for instruction, teachers start with curricula, considering the intent of the outcomes and accompanying sets of indicators. After teachers have attained a thorough understanding of the outcomes and considered the types of evidence that might demonstrate student achievement of these outcomes, they can begin planning to ensure that the outcomes, assessment, and activities are aligned. Curriculum outcomes are not to be adapted.

There are a variety of instructional approaches and adjustments that can be implemented to help students overcome their challenges with writing. One resource Saskatchewan teachers can use for student instructional support is [The Adaptive Dimension for Saskatchewan K-12 Students](). The Adaptive Dimension permeates all curricula, courses and programs. It enables teachers to respond to student diversity, including their strengths and needs, interests, backgrounds, life experiences and motivations. Teachers can make adjustments to any or all of the four variables when using the Adaptive Dimension: learning environment, instruction, assessment and resources.

Teachers building strong, healthy relationships with students is an essential dynamic in students' engagement and their ability to achieve success in writing. The following are other considerations for maximizing student learning and supporting achievement.

1. Establish nurturing, supportive and pleasant learning environments to develop students' motivation and passion for writing. Building trusting relationships is essential in order to overcome any previous feelings of frustration and failure students may have had during the writing process.

2. Provide students with authentic examples of writing genres and investigate the unique characteristics of the genre. Discuss why authors may have chosen specific genres for their writing format.

3. Strategy instruction can greatly improve students' writing knowledge, motivation and proficiency. Strategy instruction is an enhancement to other essential elements of writing proficiency including vocabulary enrichment, spelling, word usage and mechanics.

4. Focus more on what students require to learn in the moment (specific genre vocabulary and format, unique spelling, etc.) for a particular writing piece rather than following pre-determined criteria for conventions.

5. Model writing for students and engage in writing with students, especially learners who find writing tasks difficult. When teachers work through the writing process (including revisions and reflection) students understand that writing is not a one-step event and teachers more easily anticipate the needs of students who find writing a challenge.

6. Motivate and engage writers with choice in their writing topics. Provide them with essential background knowledge and opportunities for writing conversations with peers and their teacher often during the writing process. Refer to Writing, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education.

7. Establish predictable and consistent writing routines to allow students several opportunities to apply previously taught strategies/skills.

8. Consider using a writing workshop format. Writing workshop focuses on highly structured and very predictable *conditions* created in a classroom for engaging in the processes of writing. These are conditions that encourage quality writing, such as time to write, choice in writing topics, teacher demonstrations of writing and engagement in peer and teacher-student writing conversations. Writing workshop includes time for teachers to assess the needs of students and provides frequent, intensive, explicit and individualized student support. Refer to All Children Can Write.

9. Have students write for authentic audiences, as writing is a social tool. Student writers need to learn to write in social contexts for real audiences inside and outside of school. Positive reactions from peers and other authentic audiences to writing pieces provides motivation for writers. (Refer to Assessing, Evaluating, and Reporting Student Progress, *Sample K-12 Writing Continuum Checklist*. p. 83-84.)

10. Honour student voice in writing. This helps students discover the power of writing and how it can influence people in the world. When students find their writing voice they develop writing confidence, are motivated to learn the skills of good writing and take control of their writing.

11. Offer students who find handwriting a challenge the option to construct writing drafts using alternative mediums such as; a word processor or providing assistance by alternating between teacher scribing and students writing sections of their text.

12. Allow students to use a spell-checker during word processing. Provide students with mini-lessons on selecting the correct spelling for their word choice. When needed, provide individuals or small groups of students in-context spelling mini-lessons that focus on letter-sound patterns, suffixes and prefixes and word meanings.

13. Focus on making writing lessons very clear with sufficient scaffolding, writing examples and conversations. Infuse technology into writing to promote student engagement.

14. Provide students with frequent feedback regarding their successes and areas for improvement. Do not over focus on errors. Instead, consider spotlighting one element of improvement at a time.

15. Provide extra support during the writing process by dedicating more time to diverse learners during the early phases of the recursive process of gradual release for writing. Prompts and planning tools (e.g., mnemonics, graphic organizers, note cards with strategy steps) can provide student scaffolding for learning a strategy, skill, or proper structure for their writing. (graphic organizers)

Mnemonic planning tool examples:

TREE (persuasive writing planning tool)
T=Tell: what you believe (topic sentence, thesis statement)
R= Reasons: why you believe this
E= Explain: what reasons support your belief
E= End: wrap up (conclusion, zinger sentence)

POW (planning tool for story writing or persuasive writing)
P= pick a topic
O= organize ideas into a writing plan
W= write using the writing process

WWW=Who are the main characters? Where does the story take place? When does the story take place?

What=2; <u>What</u> do the main characters want to do? <u>What</u> happens when the main characters try to do it?

How=2; <u>How</u> does the story end? <u>How</u> do the main characters feel?

For Further Reading:
- Dudley-Marling, C., Paugh, P. (2009). *A classroom teacher's guide to struggling writers: How to provide differentiated support and ongoing assessment.*
- Kittle P. (2007). *Eleven elements of effective adolescent writing instruction.*
- Graham, S., MacArthur, C., Fitzgerald, J. (2013). *Best practices in writing instruction* (2nd ed.).
- Peterson, S. (2014). *Supporting struggling writers.*
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. (2017). *Supporting all learners.*
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2019). EAL Modules (when complete)

(See reference section for complete citations.)

Nonfiction Writing

"Skilled nonfiction writers enrich their work by drawing on strategies, techniques, and craft elements found in every other [writing] genre. Without those elements nonfiction would be thin gruel indeed, something few readers would find appetizing" (Fletcher, 2015, p. 11).

Real-World Writing Purposes		
Purpose	**Explanation**	**Examples of Text Forms**
Express and Reflect	The writer: • expresses or reflects on personal life and experiences; and, • often looks backward in order to look forward.	• historical narrative • anecdote • friendly letter • descriptive passage
Inform and Explain	The writer: • states a main point and purpose; and, • presents the information clearly.	• expository writing • informational writing • procedural writing
Evaluate and Judge	The writer: • focuses on the value of person, object, idea or other events or happenings; and, • usually specifies the criteria to the object being seen as "good" or "bad."	• critical evaluation • editorial

Inquire and Explore	The writer: • grapples with a question or problem; and, • hooks with the problem and lets the reader watch the writer grapple with it.	• personal essay • inquiry research • interview
Analyze and Interpret	The writer: • seeks to analyze and interpret incidents that are difficult to understand or explain.	• literary analysis • critical evaluation
Take a Stand/Propose a Solution	The writer: • seeks to persuade audiences to accept a position on a controversial issue; and, • describes the problem, proposes a solution and provides justification.	• persuasive text • letter to the editor

Adapted from Gallagher (2011) and Bean, Chappell and Gillman (2003)

Energy is created in a classroom engaged in nonfiction writing as students observe, think, converse and connect with each other during the writing process (Stead and Hoyt, 2012). Nonfiction writing that includes thoughtfully planned organization of ideas, well-chosen words and sentence variety (syntax) makes factual text come alive for students.

Engagement in nonfiction writing is promoted in a variety of Saskatchewan content area curricula, for example:

• The Science 6 curriculum suggests students could present results of science inquiries using a specific form of writing, e.g., expository, informational, persuasive, descriptive.

- The Grade 4 Health Education curriculum offers that students could engage in writing in a journal to describe ways for managing stress (including divorce, death and loss).

- The Grade 5 Mathematics curriculum states that students need opportunities to read, discuss and write about mathematical ideas using a combination of personal and mathematical language and symbols.

- The Social Studies 8 curriculum encourages opportunities for students to tell their personal historical stories orally, in writing or through other representations.

The very act of writing helps students to reach deeper levels of understanding, generate new ideas and increase critical-thinking skills. Writing also supports students in retaining learning in the content areas.

There are several forms of journaling students can use to capture their observations, investigations, reflections and experiments, e.g., math journals, science notebooks. Consider introducing students to an engaging form of journaling called an Exploratory Notebook.

Exploratory Notebook is a container for students' exploratory thinking, for activating prior knowledge, trying out topics and creating and beginning the development of ideas. Suggestions for exploratory thinking in student notebooks are:
- making bulleted lists of what the student already knows about a topic;
- listing questions about subjects of interest and starring the most important;
- organizing by selecting topic facts that are most important and chunking information;
- building topic webs and visual representations (e.g., sketch maps, artifacts);
- gathering unique facts and statistics about a topic;
- making predictions about what might be learned;
- collecting topic specific words; and,
- sifting and sorting relevant information from non-relevant information.

Exploratory notebooks help students informally gain a deeper understanding of a topic and give them various touches with a topic. Writing in the notebook can become part of classroom writing that is shared (with peers and teacher) during the process of writing. The notebook has to have intellectual integrity (honesty) and be viewed by students as authentic (genuine) and flexible (Fletcher, 2015). Teaching Authentic Writing

Essentials for Nonfiction Writing

1. <u>Writing in every discipline</u>: "Writing influences content retention and acquisition of academic vocabulary and enhances reasoning ability" (Stead, 2002; Marzano, 2004; Hoyt, 2007). Writing is a tool for learning across subject areas.

"Students need more time to write, and they need more time to be coached how to write" (Gallagher, 2011, p. 232).

2. <u>A culture of inquiry and research</u>: Give student writers opportunities and time to become immersed in inquiry and meaningful research. They require thinking partners to participate in rich conversations and engage in close observations of real things. Use of academic vocabulary when composing nonfiction for real audiences adds strength and purpose to their writing. To support students, teachers can model this writing process in order to develop students' inquiry and research skills.

3. <u>Analysis of mentor texts</u>: Immersing students in a rich variety of nonfiction mentor texts (through read alouds and independent reading) promotes the mimicry of the unique styles, rich language choices and visual and text features of these skilled writers in student writing.

4. <u>Many purposes and multiple text types</u>: Nonfiction writers must develop a sharpened awareness of their purpose and audience for their writing (pragmatics).   They must select genre and corresponding features to match their purpose (inform, persuade, instruct, respond, and narrate).

5. <u>Modelled writing</u>: Teacher demonstrations of writing are vital in helping writers understand how nonfiction texts are molded and crafted. Students observe their teacher creating a piece of nonfiction writing, e.g., the structure, organization, sentence variety, word choice demonstrated through think alouds and the detailed process of writing.

6. <u>Nonfiction text features</u>: Teach students the functions of text features; to visually communicate information (e.g., photographs, illustrations, diagrams, charts) and to draw attention to important ideas and concepts such as titles, headings, captions, table of contents, glossary. As well, it is important for student writers to practice the inclusion of nonfiction text features in their own writing.

"We need to marinate students in the best nonfiction we can find. In order to write well in any genre, they [students] need to have an image of what this writing looks and feels and sounds like. The writing in a classroom can only be as strong as the literature that surrounds and supports and buoys it up" (Fletcher, 2015, p. 57).

7. Visual literacy: Nonfiction writers must understand the power of visual imagery (photographs, graphs, drawings) in writing and how to use visual imagery to enrich their own nonfiction writing.

8. Critical literacy: Learning how to separate fact from opinion is essential for student nonfiction writers. Studying a variety of perspectives, to compare and contrast points of view and to evaluate the accuracy and relevance of information, will help students engage in thoughtful conversations about writing and improve in the construction of their nonfiction writing.

9. Collaboration and partner thinking: Engagement in collaborative conversations promotes deeper and richer thinking and increased use of academic vocabulary. Conversations offer students the opportunity to share personal points of view and develop a sense of audience to add strength to their writing.

10. Confidence that all writers can succeed as nonfiction writers: It is through experiences with real things that concepts, understanding, and language are developed. When learners get to touch, think, talk, and wonder, they feel a great sense of connection to their learning and move forward with a powerful sense of intrinsic motivation (Stead, Hoyt, 2012).

For Further Reading:
- Fletcher, R. (2015). *Making nonfiction from scratch*.
- Gallagher, K. (2011). *Write like this: Teaching real-world writing through modeling and mentor texts*.
- Gallagher, K. (2014). Making the most of mentor texts. *Educational Leadership*, 71, 28-33.
 (See reference section for complete citations.)

Essential Writing Strategies Chart
Strategies are in-the-head deliberate and purposeful mental thinking in which learners engage for each unique learning situation during the writing process.

Planning encompasses, molds and illustrates who we are as writers. Planning can take place at any time during the writing process as writers discover new ideas as they write. The back and forth motion of planning and writing continues throughout the writing process. (**Refer to "Important Cognitive Strategies for Composing and Creating Goal" in grade specific ELA curriculum** Saskatchewan Curriculum.)

	Strategy	Definition	Guiding Questions
Planning	**Establishing Purpose and Audience**	Setting the purpose and determining the audience guides the writer (pragmatic and textual cues; refer to grade specific ELA curriculum).	• For whom am I communicating this and for what purpose? • What is my purpose for writing? What writing format will I use? • How will I organize my writing? What style will I use?
	Creating/Generating Ideas	Ideas are the foundation of the writer's message which may take several writing forms. Creating ideas is brainstorming. http://www.ralphfletcher.com/tips.html Peek Inside My Writer's Notebook Beyond Monet, Mind Mapping	• Have I recorded what I already know about the topic? • Have I generated topic questions, wonderings, speculations and predictions? • Have I collected exciting facts, statistics and information (if applicable)? • Have I considered using pictures, charts, webs to help with my planning?
	Activating Prior Knowledge	Writers use their world and knowledge of personal experiences for their writing.	• Am I writing about what interests me? • Have I made connections with what I already know and feel about this topic? • Is my background knowledge adequate or do I need to do more research?

Revising during composing involves making changes in all aspects of writing during the writing process. Writers must distance themselves from their writing to critically evaluate the text for necessary revisions.

	Strategy	Definition	Guiding Questions
Composing and Revising	**Focusing and Developing Ideas**	Ideas incorporate the writer's message and details to make the message clear and interesting. Narrowing Focus in Writing Stretching out a Small Moment	• Is my topic narrow, focused and manageable? Is my message coherent and intriguing? • Do I demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic? • How will I arrange my ideas to make sense? • Do my details work together to support the main idea? • Have I identified and researched a variety of information resources (where applicable)?
	Organizing	Organizing is the evolutionary expansion of ideas in an appropriate structure for the writing (textual cues; refer to grade specific ELA curriculum). Thinking Maps Organizing in Writing	• Does my writing follow a logical and meaningful order? • Do I have a strong lead, body and conclusion? • Have I used paragraphs to group my ideas, transitions and structure to keep an engaging flow? • Does my writing have a clear organizational pattern that will not lose the reader? • Am I writing with an awareness of the reader?
	Choosing Effective Words (Word Choice)	Choosing effective words is the selection of rich, precise words and phrases to create imagery and meaning to boost the strength of the writer's ideas (semantic/lexical cues; refer to grade specific ELA curriculum). Word choice How to Write Descriptively	• Is my choice of vocabulary, terms and concepts appropriate for audience and genre? • Does my writing paint a picture with vivid verbs and concise nouns? • Have I focused on precise words, elaboration and detail when needed and used genre specific terms, literary devices or figurative language? • Have I included striking words that will linger in the readers' memory?
	Expressing Voice	Voice is the combination of choices writers make to express themselves in a piece (fiction and nonfiction writing). Voice builds a bridge from writers to readers (pragmatic cues; refer to grade specific ELA curriculum). Voice & Writing	• Does my writing have strength and conviction? • Does my writing leave an impression with the reader? • Is my writing style and tone appropriate to the task, purpose and audience?
	Crafting Sentence Fluency (structure and flow)	Fluency is the sound of writing, the cadence and flow of language. Strong fluency is demonstrated through creative sentence structure and variety (syntactical cues; refer to grade specific ELA curriculum). Kelly Gallagher, Writing Instruction	• Have I effectively organized words within a sentence structure (syntax)? • Are my sentences well-crafted with a strong and diverse structure that invites oral reading? • Have I included purposeful sentence beginnings to help connect thoughts? • Are my sentences clear? Complete? Interesting? Varied? Correct? • Is my writing easy to read aloud?
	Conferring and Revising	Writing conferences (student-to-student/student-to-teacher) are short, informal conversations that provide guidance through reciprocal, descriptive feedback. To be the most effective, peer revision can be integrated with instruction and evaluation. Conferring Writing Conferencing	• Does my text (organization, work choice, sentence structure) communicate clearly and effectively to my audience? • Have I achieved my purpose(s) and goal(s) for writing this piece? • Have I answered all of the questions I had about my topic? • Have I used multiple, reliable resources when needed? • Have I infused visuals (illustrations, graphs, photos, etc.) when necessary? • Have I incorporated technology to enhance my writing and further engage my audience?

During the writing process, teach students the genre-specific textual and visual criteria necessary for completing writing to share.

	Strategy	Definition	Guiding Questions
Evaluating & Publishing	**Attending to Conventions**	Attending to conventions includes the textual editing needed to prepare the polished piece for the reader. (graphophonic cues; refer to grade specific ELA curriculum). conventions in writing	• Do I have correct spelling and capitalization? Have I utilized "fix-up" strategies? • Does the punctuation guide the reader through the text? • Is there a consistent and proper use of paragraphing, punctuation, grammar and usage? • What should I now add, change, delete, or rearrange?
	Polishing and Presenting	Polishing and presenting involves refining the visual look of writing when it is ready to share. Student Self-Assessment	• Is my text clean, edited and polished so it is easy to process by the reader? • Have I included eye appeal in my piece; illustrations, graphics, charts, etc. to support the text, when appropriate? • Does my layout showcase my message and intent?
	Sharing and Reflecting	Students celebrate with sharing of the writing piece and reflect about the writing process and themselves as writers.	• What inspired me to choose this topic/genre? • What do I feel most proud about? • What improvements do I see from my last piece? • Is my writing honest? Is it a piece I want to share with others? • What did I learn from this piece of writing? • Have I taken risks and attempted to incorporate new learnings into my writing?

(Refer to the four variables chart in the The Adaptive Dimension for supports for diverse learners.)

Gradual Release of Responsibility for Writers

"Teach writing as a process not product" (Murray as cited in Newkirk & Miller, 2009, p.1). The gradual release of responsibility instructional model engages teachers in purposeful instruction that is intended to meet the needs of each student. The teacher gradually transfers responsibilities for learning to the students through whole group teacher-modelled writing, shared/interactive writing, collaborative writing and independent writing.

It is important for teachers to plan for a diverse group of learners: students who find writing easy, English as an Additional Language learners, students who struggle and those who need strategic intervention. The gradual release of responsibility model can ensure all students are supported in their attainment of the skills and strategies necessary for success (Fisher, 2008). (Refer to The Adaptive Dimension for Saskatchewan K-12 Students, Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework.)

The gradual release of responsibility supports teachers in providing differentiated levels of support to students, depending on their needs, through small group and individual targeted instruction. Time for strategy or skill acquisition will differ from student to student. Students challenged by writing may need to spend extended time with a high level of teacher support that includes modelled and collaborative small group writing. Positive reinforcement and feedback are essential for students' engagement and involvement as they practice using the strategy/skill during the writing process. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJaT8EqY_Qo, http://www.regieroutman.org/files/6713/7842/4352/Tps_for_shared_writing.pdf)

On-going student formative assessments will help teachers make instructional decisions for students' movement through the levels of the gradual release of responsibility. The gradual release of responsibility is recursive, not sequential. Students will move among the phases of the model on an individual basis, dependent on their comprehension and skill acquisition.

The gradual release of responsibility model can provide students, who find writing tasks difficult, with increased attention as they engage in the process of writing. This improves their chances for writing success and supports students to achieve the curricular outcomes.

(Please refer to the following chart for a detailed explanation of the four recursive components of the gradual release model for writing, the teacher's role and students' role for each phase and links to video examples and articles.)

Gradual Release of Responsibility Chart

Approach	Purpose	Teacher's Role (Refer to improving teacher practice)		Student's Role
Modelled Writing: *Teacher* to Students **"I do it"**	The *teacher* models the explicit demonstration of writing processes.	- Communicates clear instructional goal based on curriculum expectations. - Identifies and plans for: • providing a brief, focused lesson for whole class; • modelling how proficient writers construct text through reading aloud and demonstration writing; • checking often with students for clarity and understanding; and, • providing significant frontloading (necessary groundwork) that involves effective demonstration. Routman Tips, Power of Mentor Texts		- Understands purpose for listening. - Actively listens and observes the modelled writing (or reading) and the teacher reflecting as a writer. - Asks questions for clarification and understanding.
		Modelling reading of selected text (fiction or Informational) to demonstrate: • a specific writing genre and/or strategy; • thinking aloud as a writer while reading; • unique writing strategy features or genre during read aloud; and, • what and/or how an author has done something well. Power of Using Mentor Texts	**Modelling writing to demonstrate how to:** • plan for writing; • incorporate a specific strategy during writing process; • share thinking before, during and after writing; • explain what is going on in your head as a writer (think aloud); • emphasize a specific text form characteristic; and, • revise during writing process.	
Shared/Interactive Writing: *Teacher* with *Students* **"We do it"**	The *teacher* **holds the pen** and invites *students* to share in the demonstration of writing processes. It is this participation that helps improve confidence in the development of new and previously taught skills.	- Communicates clear instructional goal based on curriculum expectations (can be whole or small group). - Selects a meaningful topic. - Uses shared writing to teach specific writing strategies. - Writes and students are invited to contribute to the writing. - Teaches and reteaches skills and strategies, as needed. - Plans and provides opportunities for: • including students in a risk-taking and collaborative writing environment; • honouring student thinking; • practicing the behaviours to achieve the writing goals of **comprehension, fluency and engagement**; • reinforcing and continuing to demonstrate writing language; • engaging in scaffolded conversations; • celebrating efforts of student writers; • engaging in whole-part-whole teaching (begin with whole process and focus on necessary skills and strategies for specific writing task); • using observations and/or formative assessment to guide instruction; and, • demonstrating problem solving through think alouds. Engaging and Empowering Students to Write, Shared Writing		- Understands purpose of writing. - Participates by: • taking risks by contributing to writing task; • practicing what proficient writers do; • engaging in meaningful conversations; and, • understanding purpose of individual needs and scaffolded support. -Practices, with support, the behaviours to achieve the three goals of proficient writers (comprehension, fluency, engaged writing) by: • consolidating metacognitive strategies to create meaning; and, • participating in conversations about the writing by sharing thinking processes with peers and teacher.
Collaborative Writing: *Students* with *teacher* **Guidance (coaching and feedback)** **"You do it together"**	*Students* collaborate to consolidate their understanding of writing skills and strategies through writing conversations and problem solving (pair writing, small group collaborative writing, peer feedback).	- Determines instructional goal based on observed students' needs and curriculum expectations. - Plans and provides opportunities for: • observing closely progress of small group writing to validate, support, give feedback; • providing timely and specific scaffolding to practice what proficient writers do; • helping students structure language; • gathering individual assessment data; • forming flexible and varied groupings as needed (individual or small group); • engaging in informal and formal student writing conversations and conferences to ask questions, give support and feedback, seek understanding, set future writing goals; • scaffolding conversations to celebrate and build on student's strengths and suggest language and ideas for consideration; • creating opportunities for all students in group to participate; and, • promoting participation in student author's chair during various writing stages to seek feedback from peers and teachers. Collaborative Writing, Routman: Teaching Essentials		- Engages collaboratively in writing with peers in small groups and pairs to practise writing skills, strategies during the writing process. - Participates in writing conversations and feedback with peers. - Shares in the process of writing and encouraging the participation of others. - Listens and supporting peers in writing group. - Converses and confers with teacher to ask questions, give feedback, seek understanding, set future writing goals.
Independent Writing: *Student* **"You do it"**	*Students* write independently to achieve the three goals of proficient writing (comprehension, fluency, engaged writing) during daily blocks of extended writing time.	- Offers support and encouragement. - Connects with students to plan and provide opportunities for: • supporting students with self-selection of appropriate writing topic; • conferring with individual student on comprehension, fluency and engagement; • offering student support and feedback as needed; • continuing engagement in writing conversations; • adding to individual records of observations and conferences to set new writing goals with students; • providing additional support and future instruction as part of the recursive writing process; and, • celebrating student writing and whole class share. https://www.edonline.sk.ca/bbcswebdav/library/curricula/English/English_Language_Arts/English_Language_Arts_6_2008.pdf (AR6.1 ,AR6.2, AR6.3)		- Identifies his/her purpose for writing (enjoyment, gain information, etc.). - Chooses topics, problem solves, monitors writing, self-reflects and set goals with minimal teacher involvement. - Independent writing may include: • building stamina, comprehension, fluency; • engaging in writing conversations and think alouds to demonstrate understanding of writing; • reflecting on prior learning and effectively applying learning to new situations and future writing tasks; • identifying and analyzing effectiveness and competency level of self as a writer; and, • determining appropriate and achievable improvement goals and applying strategies appropriate to improvement goals.

Connecting Reading and Writing: Incorporation of Mentor Texts

Mentor texts are texts that can be used as examples of good writing. They are also referred to as anchor or model texts and are meant to be read and reread, studied and imitated for many various reasons and purposes. Mentor texts support students in trying new strategies and formats, e.g., books, song lyrics, essays, comic strips. They inspire students' writing of all genres (Dorfman, 2013).

"We must teach students to imitate model texts before they write, as they write, and as they revise" (Gallagher, 2014, p. 28).

- Students should read, examine and imitate mentor texts and revisit them throughout the writing process.
- During read alouds and model lessons teachers demonstrate to writers what to look for in mentor texts (e.g., genre conventions, word choice, techniques, spelling, punctuation, patterns).
- Mentor texts should come from a variety of places: professionals, former students, other student writers.
- Instead of focusing students on *what* is written, ask them to study *how* a text is written.
- Compare higher quality and lower quality writing to give students specific insights on how to improve their drafts. (Do not use student writing for this purpose.)
- "Our students stand a greater chance of internalizing and embracing the complexity of writing when they see their teachers struggle to eternalize and embrace the complexity of writing" (Gallagher, 2006, p. 50). Produce mentor texts for your students in five to seven-minute mini lessons, sharing your process through think-alouds. This is appropriate for teachers who are confident writers as well as teachers who are reluctant writers, as students will learn that struggle is part of the writing process for everyone.

Teacher Reflective Practice

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to providing support for students who find writing challenging. A strategy may be very successful with helping one student but not as effective with others. This is why ongoing student assessment for strategy understanding and academic progress is essential. Evaluation demonstrates evidence of success of the strategy and provides

teachers with opportunities to see what instructional modifications need to be made for individual students.

Teachers can evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction and assess the skills of diverse learners, keeping the following in mind:

- Evaluation should be multi-dimensional, focusing on reinforcement of previous instruction, monitoring student confidence levels, attitudes and perceptions during the writing process and assessing students' levels of success with strategy/skill implementation into the writing draft.
- Students and teachers collaboratively recognize and clarify understanding of the taught strategy/skill steps. This clarification demonstrates the personal benefits of the focus strategy for writing improvement and reinforces the worthiness of the students' efforts. This reinforcement can be further strengthened through peer to peer writing conversations.
- Engage in continuous teacher-student conferences focusing on perceptions, processes, successes and outcomes in regard to students' writing. Conferring with students differs from conversing with students as conferring involves an instructional component. Use information gathered from conferring in conjunction with other gathered data to set direction for further instructional support.
- Support students in becoming self-reflective practitioners, discussing their strengths in the writing piece, noting areas for improvement and setting manageable writing goals.
- Evaluation should assess effective use of the strategy/skill over time when used in a variety of writing situations.
- Teachers strive to make a close match among curriculum outcomes, instructional methods, and assessment and evaluation techniques. The evaluation process is carried out parallel to instruction and, like instruction, is cyclical.
- Assessment and evaluation is on-going. It should occur throughout the writing process as it informs teachers of students' progress toward achieving the curriculum outcomes. It also guides teachers in making responsive instructional adjustments based on students' daily progress. (Refer to Assessing, Evaluating, and Supporting Student Progress for further support.)

For Further Reading:
- Danielson. L. (2009). Fostering Reflection. *Educational Leadership*.
- *Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2011). Assessing, Evaluating, and Supporting Student Progress*.
(See reference section for complete citations.)

Conclusion

"Writing is a skill, and students need to mess around with paints before they learn how to paint, plunk at a piano before they are taught scales, fool around with a basketball, get the feel of it, before they are put through a formal practice" (Murray as cited in Gallagher, 2006, p. 31). According to Gallagher, students need to practice writing every day and should write regularly in all subject areas. This will help to build a stable foundation for more challenging writing assignments that lie ahead.

The writing demands required of our students for their futures are intensifying. It is the responsibility of all teachers to recognize that developing writing skills specific to their subject is as important as sharing knowledge about their subject. Teachers must fight for students' right to seek, to create and to develop their individual voices as writers. Teachers can create conditions in classrooms that allow all writers to thrive and to discover. Students will live with more attention and care in our world because they live like writers, and this is in the hands of their teachers (Kittle & Newkirk, 2013).

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