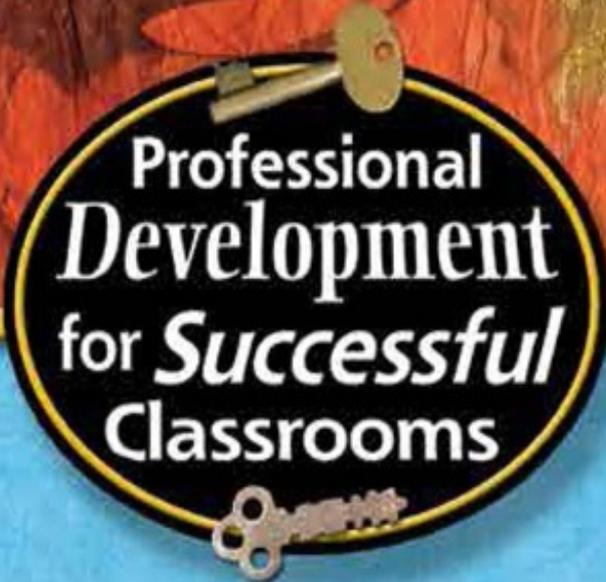# Professional Development for Successful Classrooms

Improving Student Writing Skills

Garth Sundem

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Your Physical Classroom

Your classroom environment can define not only how your classroom will "feel," but can also help you implement different types of writing instruction. For example, you might choose to use the space around your walls as permanent learning centers, or you might instead leave this space empty, allowing for room to spread out students' desks. You might designate a section of your classroom to house reference materials or to use for small group instruction. You might even throw cushions in this space and use it as a reward reading nook. The choice will depend on what type of instruction you use in your classroom.

In addition to large-scale functionality, the materials you provide can contribute to or detract from the efficiency of your instruction. Will students who forget their pencils need to interrupt your lesson to ask if they can go to their cubby or locker, or will these students sign out a pencil from an organized materials area, knowing they will pay for it with clean-up time during a break? Likewise, will you provide students with the art materials they need to illustrate and publish their work, or is this a step that you will ask students to accomplish at home or in the school computer lab?

Researchers have noted that "good design does not happen accidentally, and when classroom designs are in the planning stages, the first priority should be the needs of the students" (Rogers, 2005, p. 1). Conscious design in general, and classroom design in particular, is the first step toward effective instruction.

How Is Your Classroom Organized for Learning?

Directions: Define your classroom organization priorities by circling the number that best represents how you feel about each choice (with "1" strongly agreeing with the opinion on the left and "10" strongly agreeing with the opinion on the right).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Students feel comfortable in my classroom.							The classroom promotes on-task behavior.		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Students will learn to bring necessary writing supplies to class.							I will save instructional time by providing supplies if needed.		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Students will need to move around during class.							Once seated, students should remain so.		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I plan to have reference materials and research resources available.						Students will be responsible for the majority of research as homework.			

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
My classroom needs to be partitioned to facilitate small group interaction.						Most of my assignments will be individual as opposed to collaborative.			

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Direct instruction will take the majority of class time.						Student exploration of assignments will take the majority of class time.			

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
My classroom needs only to function for writing instruction.							My classroom needs to function for multiple subjects.		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I prefer a quiet classroom.							I prefer a collaborative classroom.		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I have extra space in my classroom.							Every inch of my classroom is used for seating.		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I prefer an open, clean classroom with little distraction.							I prefer a classroom packed with creative influences.		

Directions: Reference the chart on the preceding page when answering the following questions. Take your time and answer each question honestly.

1. What trends do you notice in your preceding answers?

2. Which three choices are most important to you?

3. What three organizational tools will you use in your classroom to make sure each of these choices is as you wish?

4. Describe your ideal classroom.

Basic Seating Arrangement

The closer students are to one another, the more likely they will be to chat. Conversely, the more compartmentalized you keep students' space (i. e., in separate desks as opposed to tables), the less likely they will be to interact. Linda Shalaway observes that the days of 30 desks lined in neat rows facing the teacher's desk up front are long gone. She recommends clustered groups of four or a U-shaped configuration where everyone has a front row seat (Shalaway, 1999). There are many points in your writing class at which students will need to talk, for example, during peer editing, shared brainstorming, or small group instruction. Collaboration is a useful skill to foster, as well as a useful teaching technique, but left to its own devices it can encourage off-task behavior. Depending on your daily level of student-student interaction, you may choose to leave rows of desks as your standard and ask students to cluster their desks as needed, or you might use a "talking table" for group interaction in addition to student desks (this helps create a distinction between areas where students may talk and areas where they should be working independently). Leaving desks clustered as your norm encourages interaction, but can also be a distraction. Consider also including in your room a preferred seat or couch to which students can earn access by on-task behavior, exceptional writing, or simply on a rotation system (this is the positive motivation version of the outdated "dunce chair" at the front of the room—a disciplinary device that couldn't be more counterproductive).

In addition, many teachers utilize learning centers, which are areas of the room where students go to perform tasks such as collaborative editing, publishing (with organized supplies), brainstorming, small group instruction, etc. Managed efficiently, learning centers "provide children with opportunities for making choices, working with others, being involved in hands-on activities, and becoming fully engaged in learning" (Bottini & Grossman, 2005, p. 274). Like a designated talking table, learning centers can help ensure on-task behavior in the main seating arrangement by defining and separating the areas in which students may and may not interact.

Your other option, of course, is to populate your room with overstuffed chairs and couches (check your building regulations first!). For this, you will likely need to be an adept strategist or have a couple of years of teaching experience. However, a creative room can encourage creative writing—the final decision is, of course, up to you.

Seating Charts

The seating arrangement of your class can be one of the most powerful tools in encouraging consistent, independent work. Luckily, it is one of the easiest pieces to change as new personalities assert themselves, and you gain a clearer picture of your class dynamic. Generally, you will not want to cluster students who have difficulties focusing; however, isolating these students need not mean relegating them to corners or to the back of the class. Popular theory has held for some years that difficult students should, in fact, sit closer to the front. However, disruptive behavior up front will be seen by all and can be more disruptive than if the student is further back. Again, keep these ideas in mind and don't be afraid to let your seating chart evolve as your year progresses.

Small Group Instruction Area

Donald Graves (1989) notes that good classrooms have always stressed group as well as individual responsibility. One way to do this while also emphasizing differentiation is with an area of your room designated for small group instruction. This should be a creative area of your room where you can get together and make a bit of noise without disturbing other students who are working independently. If resources permit, use this area only for small group instruction and ask students to decorate the space, making it their own. Consider separating it from the main work environment with a stand-alone rack of books or small partition. As small group instruction will occur at every ability level, this should not be a stigmatized area of the room; rather, it can be a special place for intimate discussion (Radencich & McKay, 1995).

Daily Information Board

For each writing period, you will want whiteboard or bulletin board space to chart the day's activities. As students enter the classroom, they should reference the Daily Information Board instead of asking, "What are we doing today?" Figure 1.1 is an example of the type of Daily Information Board that might be used with a writing workshop.

Figure 1.1: Sample Daily Information Board

Introduction	Authentic Spelling: Test words/create new note cards	
Mini Lesson	Preview Author's Chair procedures	
Independent Writing	Class	Teacher
	Finish incorporating revision ideas, proofreading, publishing, and any outstanding activity sheets.	Help match writers with editors; distribute appropriate Peer/Adult Critique sheets.
Sharing or Wrap-up	Share a couple of Author's Chairs	

Storage for Writing Materials

Instead of asking students to complete work at home, many teachers now allow time for in-class completion (Hong, Milgram, & Rowell, 2004). This means that students will rarely have to transport their materials home, and you can organize students' writing folders in your classroom. Never letting student materials out of your sight helps to avoid lost assignments, misplaced drafts, and the dreaded homework-eating dog. Of course, if you choose to go this route, you will need a system for storing these writing folders. A good method is to use a storage box per class, in which you will file the folders alphabetically. Either decorate the boxes or encourage artistically talented students to decorate their class boxes; the second method gets you out of some preparation and helps students take ownership of their clasroom environment.

Resource Materials

In a designated area, organize dictionaries, thesauruses, stylebooks, English language usage guides, rhyming dictionaries, etc. For use in generating ideas, it is useful to have materials such as a book of world records, farmers' almanacs, and magazine collections such as *National Geographic*. The more books the better, as your goal is to immerse students in a literary environment (Morrow, 1997).

Supplies Checklist

Rather than wasting instructional time as students hunt for supplies, many teachers choose to keep an organized assortment of emergency writing materials. Consider asking students to "pay" for supplies with classroom

cleanup time during a break or by helping with other organizational tasks. The list below represents supplies that you might consider keeping in your classroom. Create a list like the one below, and put a check next to the items/ideas you already have in your classroom. You could also put an "X" next to the ones you have decided against and an "O" next to the items you plan to include in your classroom but have not yet gotten. Once you get these materials, keep them organized where students can find them independent of prompting—the last thing you want is to spend your time retrieving supplies when you could be teaching. It is also a good idea to create a checkout list for students to sign when they borrow materials, in order to keep track of your materials.

✓	**Supplies Needed**
	Pencils
	Tape
	Writing pens
	Drawing pens
	White computer paper
	Construction paper
	Lined paper
	Scissors
	Dictionaries
	Thesauruses
	High-visual magazines
	Classroom fiction library
	Informative posters
	Ready-to-return box
	Computers

	Glue
	Red pencils
	Encyclopedias
	Almanacs

Classroom Layout

In the space below, draw the floor plan of your ideal classroom. How will you organize the primary learning space? Where will you store supplies? If you plan to partition your room, how will you do so and what will each space be used for? Where will your desk sit and will it be a focus? Where will you organize reference materials? If you are currently in a classroom, use this basic layout to start. If you like, create a checklist of ideas for use in designing your ideal space.

Chapter 1 Reflection

1. Describe how you plan to organize your classroom (seating, centers, supplies, etc.).

2. What do you see as the major instructional advantages and challenges of this system?

3. List elements of successful classrooms you have visited.

4. Ideally, what elements of classroom design will you work to include as the year progresses or in later years (i. e., what is your wish list)?

Frameworks for Classroom Time

The framework you choose for your classroom time will determine the majority of what you do on a day-to-day basis. Will students come to expect a period-long lesson with homework used to reinforce the learning? Will they expect to use the majority of the class period to work individually on their writing projects? Choosing a framework for your instruction will help you define your daily procedure and will help students become comfortable with the routine of your classroom.

Just as the writing process itself is cyclical (revisions might prompt additional brainstorming), so too does what you teach affect how you will structure your classroom environment. For example, in a classroom that depends exclusively on direct instruction (lecture format teaching), you may do away with a space for small group interaction. If you are teaching a writing workshop, you will need to set up your room for students to be comfortable during collaborative writing times, such as peer editing. Thus, after using this chapter to help you define your standard use of classroom instructional time, you may want to revisit the previous chapter.

On the following pages are three popular methods for organizing instructional time. Notice that while they are presented as distinct procedures, in actual practice you may draw from each. These techniques are not as black-and-white as they may seem at first. You will likely want to create your own guidelines for your use of classroom time, perhaps drawing from all three of those described below. However, taking the time to define your daily procedure can help you ensure efficiency and routine—both necessary to effective writing instruction.

Direct Instruction

While you want students to discover through experimentation which writing techniques work for their personal learning style, there is still certainly a need for direct instruction—you need not force students to reinvent the wheel of writing without first teaching them the skills that have proven successful over the years.

In its most basic form, direct instruction looks like the standard college lecture in which a teacher talks and students listen. During this time, students

may take notes and discuss the learning with the teacher or as a class. At the end of direct instruction there is an easily defined skill or pool of knowledge for which the student will be accountable. In most direct instruction scenarios, you will want to assess student learning through a quick end-of-period discussion, quiz, or take-home assignment. As teachers, it is usually easy for us to rely on direct instruction, as it is the traditional technique by which we were likely taught while we were in school.

Also, direct instruction can be the easiest format in which to teach the maximum amount of information in the least amount of time (Kameenui, 1995), and it generally allows you to compartmentalize learning. For example, you could teach a period-long lesson on the elements of grammar, which students would understand independently of its application to writing (as seen on many standardized tests). As you can see, direct instruction relies heavily on creative lesson design and, if focusing on this technique, you will need to locate, organize, learn, and design interesting and engaging lessons for the majority of days spent in school.

When you think of a math class, you likely picture direct instruction. In fact, most writing textbooks still follow this model. For example, you may explain the use of parentheses and spend the remainder of the period completing an activity sheet that emphasizes the use of parentheses, having students finish the assignment at home, if necessary. Alternately, you may spend a period reading aloud a passage as a class, discussing the passage to check for comprehension, and then completing a short assignment based on the passage. At the end of a direct instruction unit on research techniques, you may have students write a report to demonstrate their learning. This is how writing has been taught for years.

In direct instruction, you teach, and students listen and learn. That being said, direct instruction is generally the least active form of learning, and too much reliance on this technique can lead to bored and unproductive students (Flowers, Hancock, & Joyner, 2000).

The Writing Workshop

According to Lucy McCormick Calkins (1986), "If students are going to become deeply invested in their writing, and if they are going to draft and revise, sharing their texts with each other as they write, they need the luxury of time" (p. 23). One format that allows this time, as well as a discovery-based approach to writing instruction, is the writing workshop. In this approach, teachers shift the focus from teaching to writing. However, a writing workshop also incorporates elements of direct instruction, using it to teach mini lessons during the first five to 15 minutes of class time. For the

remainder of the time, students work on their own (authentic) writing projects, with an emphasis on the writing process.

Basically, a writing workshop consists of three components: (1) a 15-minute mini lesson; (2) approximately 20 minutes of independent student writing; and (3) 10 minutes of some form of sharing to wrap up the workshop. The beauty of a writing workshop is the emphasis it places on everyday writing and also the ability to free your time for small group instruction or even individual guidance, both of which are invaluable in differentiating your classroom to meet diverse needs (Ray, 2001).

As opposed to a direct-instruction classroom, a writing workshop relies less heavily on creative lesson design. As students will be spending the majority of their time involved in independent work, the goal of your mini lesson can be to teach one specific skill with high takeaway value, and as it will be only 15 minutes long, you can ask students to remain focused even if your lesson is information-based

A writing workshop depends on routine to create an environment of diligent and independent student work. As Calkins (1986) points out, "Setting aside predictable time for writing … allows children to take control of their own writing process" (p. 25). Workshop format also depends on well-planned scaffolding, in which you start with directed assignments and solid due dates and gradually release your control, moving toward authentic writing and making students accountable for a specific amount of portfolio work, but without project-by-project due dates.

Following is a usable assignment-by-assignment framework for starting and running a writing workshop.

Assignment 1

You choose the topic, for example, "About the Author," which also works well as a beginning-of-the-year icebreaker. During your mini lesson, you model one step of the writing process; during this time you can also explain the mechanics of your workshop and reinforce your classroom routine. During independent student work, students use the exact same technique to complete this step on their own. It is also a good time to circulate around the class to offer help and guidance as needed. At the end of each period, ask students to share ideas, difficulties, or brief sections of their writing (being especially aware of creating a positive reading experience) As speedy students finish, have them write for fun, complete an extra-credit assignment, become editing partners for peers, or read a book of their choice. At the end of the assignment, the class reads their papers aloud in the format of an Author's Chair (discussed in depth on page 29).

Assignment 2

Again, you direct the topic. For example, you may choose to have students write about their personal hero. You model the prewrite and the draft, allowing students to complete the rest of the writing process with minimal prompting. Students finish at a defined due date, and you close the project with time set aside for Author's Chair.

Assignment 3

You start to release your topic constraints by asking the students to write a piece of descriptive writing about a topic they know well. You ask students to preview their topic and prewriting with you before drafting and offer small group and individual help as needed. During this time, your mini lessons are drawn from key curriculum components rather than spent reinforcing the mechanics of the writing process. You still ask for a traditional due date and close with Author's Chair.

Assignment 4

Before beginning this next assignment, you ask students to brainstorm a list of possible topics, perhaps in the form of "I will write to _____ about _____ so that _____." For example, "I will write to my school principal about skateboarding so that he/she will allow skateboards on the playground." Once students have listed many possible topics, allow them to choose their next writing assignment. At this point, you have the choice of releasing traditional due dates in favor of simply requiring a certain number of portfolio materials by the end of term, or you may choose to release only topic requirements and, for now, keep due dates (depending on the first few workshop assignments and the ability of your class). Releasing due dates has the advantage of little downtime for early finishers, as they will be able to start their next projects without waiting for the class to catch up. Releasing due dates also allows you to end many periods with an Author's Chair or two, rather than doing them all at once. It also allows a steady stream of assignments ready for assessment rather than the traditional pile.

Adding Components to the Writing Workshop

The Writing Workshop is a basic structure into which you can place many different components. However, as stated before, your workshop depends on routine, which can be hurt by the on-the-fly addition of components that break the daily classroom flow. Beware of adding anything until you have successfully created a routine with the elements you already use.

At first, you may simply ask students to transition successfully between the

mini lesson, independent work, and sharing. As you add elements, be sure to prepare students in advance and then place these elements firmly into a weekly schedule so that students know, for example, that every Friday they will be responsible for Authentic Spelling instead of journaling. Make sure you retain a focus on the basic workshop framework and on students writing independently for the majority of the period, rather than overly compartmentalizing your instruction into an ongoing list of components. With that in mind, you will want to choose consciously and sparingly from the following list.

While the components below are described in the context of a writing workshop, you could easily transform many of them for use with direct instruction. Consider adding any or all of the following components to the structure of your writing workshop (each is described on the following pages):

• Author's Chair

• Journal Writing

• Assignment Packets

• Peer Revision

• Authentic Spelling

• Authentic Writing

Author's Chair

Author's Chair is an activity during which students share their published work aloud with the class—it is the culmination of the writing process and the point during which students will show off the product they have worked so hard on. It can also be terrifying! Thus, prior to your first Author's Chair, you will need to create a supportive classroom environment in which students feel comfortable sharing their work.

One way to do this is to encourage students to read short pieces or excerpts from longer works before jumping into a full-blown Author's Chair. Looking over a student's shoulder, you may notice an especially vivid sentence or paragraph in his/her writing; ask this student to read his or her work aloud as a model during the sharing/wrap-up portion of your writing workshop. If you can, make sure that every student gets a chance to read at least once during the first unit's writing process. And when they do, praise them highly. You will quickly know which students need a little extra support and which love to be in the spotlight. While the latter may ask if they can read aloud every day, your time is better spent bolstering your hidden introverts. Make sure that the

class claps for each presenter, and always elicit three comments from students about what they liked in the piece. Save constructive criticism for elsewhere in the writing process.

In Author's Chair itself, make sure you create a clean distinction between this time and the rest of your writing workshop. Students should not be working while their classmates are reading aloud. Ask students to clear their desks of all distracting materials (i.e., everything) and to give their full attention to the reader. Again, students should clap at the end of each presentation and offer compliments.

The decision whether or not to force students into Author's Chair is up to you and can be made on a case-by-case basis. In the real world, writing can be shared from a distance, and many writers have been known to prefer the solitary approach, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Rick Bass, Annie Dillard, and Edward Abbey, to name a few. However, an audience is still a necessary element for writers. If students are unwilling to read their work aloud, you may offer to read it for them, but the experience of reaching an audience with their writing remains important.

During your first few assignments in which students will be finishing projects at or near the same date, you might schedule a few days specifically for Authors' Chairs. In later projects, you may have one or two students finishing a project every few days, and you can use the last couple of minutes of almost every period for the few Authors' Chairs that trickle in.

Journal Writing

At the beginning of each period, students may write in their journals about the day's prompt, or they may free-write. As students enter the class, encourage them to find their writing folder and to have a seat. You may also ask that students not enter the room until they are ready to start work—allow students the extent of their valuable break, but ask that they leave their break behavior and noise level outside. On the board, you will have written the day's writing prompt. Students will use the sections of their notebooks dedicated to journaling to write their thoughts (either freely or based on the prompt). Let them know that writing journals are for their eyes only. Content in the journals will never be graded, although they may earn points for journaling a certain amount every day. Students may also use their journals to keep track of ideas for use in their larger assignments or with small group instruction if they have no draft in progress (Barlow, 2001).

Assignment Packets

For each major assignment, you may ask that students turn in not only their published work but also evidence of each step of the writing process. Students will staple into a packet their prewrite, draft, evidence of revision, evidence of editing, any required parent/teacher suggestions, and finally their published work, with a cover sheet that makes assessment easy. Collecting an assignment packet encourages a thorough use of the writing process, as well as the responsibility and organizational skills necessary to turn in a packet of materials.

Peer Revision

Many teachers and practitioners have begun to emphasize writing conferences as more productive means of providing an attentive, helpful audience (Freedman, Dyson, Flower, & Chafe, 1987). Peer revision not only benefits the author; rather, both students will gain from collaborating on the process of revision as they work to discover what makes writing *better* (Hughes, 1991). It is through this process of discovery and revision that students learn the tips and tricks they will use when drafting their next assignment. For example, during revision, students may focus on creating more precise word choice, so when they draft again, they will be more aware of their word choice and will have a clearer idea of what constitutes better word choice.

However, in peer revision, students will need to learn both the language and the tact of constructive criticism, as well as your behavioral expectations for independent conferencing . As Dyson and Freedman (1990) point out, "If peer group values conflict with classroom values, children may reject academic demands" (p. 9). Consider delegating authority, establishing a clear system of norms for behavior within the working groups, and monitoring closely the outcomes through increased teacher/student communications (Cohen, Intili, & Robbins, 1979). In terms of the mechanics of peer revisions, you might ask students to offer three compliments before adding two ideas for improvement (this avoids excessive backpatting as well as graceless criticism). Also, consider rewarding specific language (drawn from the Writing Process, the Traits of Good Writing, or your lessons) or especially insightful comments with a classroom reward of your choice. During the first few lessons and perhaps even beyond (judging based on the ability of your class), you may ask students to focus on only one area for peer revision, such as word choice, sentence fluency, ideas, voice, etc. (these are drawn from the Traits of Good Writing, which we will discuss in depth later). Reinforce the importance of peer group sharing as a tool that students will use to make their writing better.

Authentic Spelling

In Authentic Spelling, students use misspelled words from their own writing to create individualized spelling lists. These lists are then tested weekly, as in a traditional spelling program. Authentic Spelling is a strong tool for differentiating spelling lists to fit the widely varying levels of your students (Bartch, 1992). If you use Authentic Spelling in a writing workshop, it will take the place of journal writing on the day used (create a routine and note it on your Daily Information Board, as shown in).

According to Guy LeFrancois in his book *Psychology for Teaching* (2000), information is best committed to longterm memory if it is "personal and has organization that groups it to related material … material not brought to mind frequently enough (not used) tends to fade from memory" (p. 181). By learning to correctly spell words in their own writing, students will reinforce proper spelling with every assignment. A student's writing lexicon is personal, related to what he/she knows and uses with every piece of writing.

During the editing process, students, peers, parents, or the teacher will underline misspelled words (red pencil is useful). Once a week, students will look through their writing and list five of these underlined words on a note card. When listing, students may look up words in a dictionary to ensure the note card version is spelled correctly. Keep these note cards organized in a box and make this box accessible to students (after a few weeks, students should expect Authentic Spelling every day and should complete this entire process efficiently and independently).

On the same day that students create the note cards, have them find the prior week's note card and exchange it with a partner, who will then quiz the student on these five words (students write words on scrap paper as in a traditional spelling test). When finished, the partner scores the spelling test, and the partners exchange jobs. Once finished, students turn in their tests to the teacher for quick notation in the grade book. If you like, you can have students note their Authentic Spelling words in a designated section of their writing journals, allowing you to create monthly or yearly lists of words for which they are accountable (these lists can even follow them year to year).

Authentic Writing

In Authentic Writing, students choose their own topics, with a variety of guidance levels (some prompts, some open topics). For example, in the course of one period, you may have a student writing a persuasive piece about global warming, another writing a narrative about killer space monkeys, and another writing a letter to his/her grandmother. As Hudson (1988) illustrates, the more students control the form and content of their writing, the more likely they may be to perceive even assigned writing as their own.

However, without directed topics, you will undoubtedly encounter students who have difficulties brainstorming anything to write about. Before you can count on students to write authentically, you will need to scaffold them into the process. Be especially sure to teach many lessons on brainstorming and the elements that make a usable topic (i.e., the subject should be narrow and personal). In addition, you might ask students to keep an ongoing list of ideas in a writing journal. If they are ever stymied when searching for a topic, they can always reflect on their journals. Another useful strategy is to use a mini lesson to brainstorm topics as a class and allow students to write down their ten favorite topics for potential use later on.

If a student-chosen topic is the right hand of Authentic Writing, then real-world purpose is its left. In their book *On Teaching Writing*, Dyson and Freedman (1990) write, "Indeed, in the lives of children … literacy prospers if and when compelling reasons exist for writing …" (p. 4). This purpose can be as simple as the above-mentioned card to a grandmother or as complex as explaining a local environmental issue to government officials. By removing the stigma of purposeless busywork from writing assignments, you provide a clear reason for student work. And by allowing students to choose their own topics, you ensure that students will be interested in their writing.

Whatever the product, it is important in Authentic Writing for students to see their work take flight in the world. Publishing is an integral part of the process —if a student writes to a local official, make sure you actually send the letter; if a student writes an expository magazine article, submit it for publication. Even a rejection letter shows that someone read it!

Page 36 lists places where students can publish their writing. Figure 2.1 on page 37 shows a sample parent permission slip for publishing student work. You will also want to make your administrators aware of the fact that you intend to submit your students' work to publications.

Magazines That Publish Student Writing

There are local, regional, and national magazines that publish student writing. Some are listed below. Be sure to check in your area for other outlets.

Name of Company/ Publication	Address	Notes
The Perfection	1000 North Second Ave. Logan, IA 51546	Will accept nonfiction and

Form Company	**http://www.perfectionlearning.com**	fiction
The Flying Pencil Press	P.O. Box 7667 Elgin, IL 60121	Will accept original writing and artwork from students ages 8–14
Cricket League	P.O. Box 300 Peru, IL 62354 **http://www.cricketmag.com**	Will accept original writing and artwork under an assigned theme or topic from students ages 5–9, 10–14, or 15-adult
Stone Soup	P.O. Box 83 Santa Cruz, CA 95063 **http://www.stonesoup.com**	Will accept original writing and artwork from students through age 13
Highlights for Children	803 Church Street Honesdale, PA 18431 **http://www.highlights.com**	Will accept original stories, articles, and craft ideas
Landmark Editions	Contest for Students 1904 Foxridge Dr. Kansas City, KS 66106 **http://www.landmarkeditions.com**	Have an annual "Written and Illustrated By" contest for students; will accept original written and illustrated stories

Figure 2.1: Sample Parent Permission Slip for Student Publishing

Dear Parents,

As part of our writing curriculum this year, we will be publishing student work in a variety of formats, including in print around school and potentially in other printed sources such as magazines, newsletters, and newspapers. At no time will we compromise your child's privacy. When publishing, your child's safety is our primary concern.

Sincerely,

Mr. Smith

My son/daughter _____ has permission to publish his/her work in the course of the standard writing curriculum.

Parent   Signature:

Direct Instruction and the Workshop

Many teachers feel there is simply too much required instruction to allow donating the majority of each period to independent work. Discovery-based learning might take a bit longer than direct instruction and, if your time is tight, you may need to compromise. However, the workshop and direct instruction need not be mutually exclusive. We have already looked at the role of direct instruction within the workshop as mini lessons, but if necessary, you can move your classroom framework another step toward an emphasis on direct instruction by using some days for workshop and others for lecture-format teaching.

However, alternating workshop days with lecture days is not recommended. In this model, students will have difficulties settling into the routine of independent work time, and you will need to police this time rather than use it for additional differentiated instruction (and thus defeating one main purpose in using the workshop). Students may also forget where in the writing process they are working and may need additional prompting to continue the train of their Authentic Writing thought. Instead, you may consider using direct instruction for however many weeks necessary before switching to the workshop format, using direct instruction to complete necessary curriculum elements and as a "warm up" to Authentic Writing. This approach has the advantage of making the workshop seem special to students.

Many teachers will also take a break from their fulltime workshop for units on grammar or other strictly assessed issues (with this break just before the relevant assessment). Keep in mind, though, the danger of overly diluting the routine of your workshop, on which you will depend for a smoothly operating system.

Writing Topics

Directions: Write at least ten specific purposes for writing (such as "to

inform my grandparent" or "to convince somebody of something") and topics in which you think students will be interested (such as "my best friend" or "what I want to be when I grow up"). When students get stuck, reference this list.

Chapter 2 Reflection

1. How will you use your time in an average writing period?

2. Take a minute to reflect on your feelings about the Writing Workshop in comparison with direct instruction. What components of the Writing Workshop will you use in your classroom (even if you choose not to use the workshop)?

3. How will you use direct instruction in your classroom (even if you choose to use the workshop)?

4. How does your use of classroom time affect your physical classroom setup?

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