

*Welcome to*

# WRITING WORKSHOP

**ENGAGING TODAY'S STUDENTS  
WITH A MODEL THAT WORKS**



**STACEY SHUBITZ & LYNNE R. DORFMAN**

*Foreword by Kate Roberts and Maggie Beattie Roberts*

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“If you’re looking for ways to infuse new life into your writing workshop or a lifeline to get started, *Welcome to Writing Workshop* is for you. Stacey and Lynne share practical, quick, and doable ways to make the research-based writing process work in your classroom.”

—JEFF ANDERSON, AUTHOR OF *PATTERNS OF POWER: INVITING YOUNG WRITERS INTO THE CONVENTIONS OF LANGUAGE, GRADES 1–5*



“Chocked to the brim with the day-to-day advice that teachers want and need, *Welcome to Writing Workshop* is an instant classic.”

—RUTH CULHAM, AUTHOR OF *TEACH WRITING WELL*



“After reading *Welcome to Writing Workshop*, you’ll have the knowledge and practical ideas you need to inspire EVERY writer in your classroom.”

—MARIA WALTHER, FIRST-GRADE TEACHER AND INSTRUCTIONAL SPECIALIST,  
INDIAN PRAIRIE DISTRICT 204, AURORA, IL  
AND AUTHOR OF *THE RAMPED-UP READ ALOUD*



“If you are looking for the behind-the-scenes work that goes into a writing workshop, *Welcome to Writing Workshop* will be your go-to resource. It will be your mentor text as you plan instruction and develop systems and structures to bring writing workshop to life in your classroom.”

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“With a pronounced reverence for teachers, for students, and for the literacy giants whose shoulders we all stand on, Stacey and Lynne offer us a bright, undiluted vision for what writing workshop can (and should) be.”

—SHAWNA COPPOLA,  
AUTHOR OF *RENEW! BECOME A BETTER—AND MORE AUTHENTIC—WRITING TEACHER*



“Stacey and Lynne’s book is like having your own personal literacy coach at your fingertips. I’ve had many teachers request a professional book like this, and now it’s here.”

—PAULA BOURQUE, AUTHOR OF *CLOSE WRITING AND SPARK!*  
*QUICK WRITES TO KINDLE HEARTS AND MINDS IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS*

“In *Welcome to Writing Workshop*, Stacey Shubitz and Lynne Dorfman do exactly for teachers what we strive to do for our student writers: meet them where they are and help them take those next steps to be successful at their craft.”

—KAREN BIGGS-TUCKER,  
AUTHOR OF *TRANSFORMING LITERACY TEACHING*  
IN THE ERA OF HIGHER STANDARDS: GRADES 3–5



“With passion and expertise, Stacey and Lynne have thought of everything from the big ideas to the small details to ensure writing workshop is joyful, purposeful, and meaningful for students.”

—KATIE EGAN CUNNINGHAM,  
AUTHOR OF *STORY: STILL THE HEART OF LITERACY LEARNING*



“*Welcome to Writing Workshop* is a guide full of important information for new and veteran teachers. Stacey and Lynne bring together the latest research in teaching writing and putting students at the center of their learning.”

—DR. LORRAINE DEROSA,  
ELEMENTARY SUPERVISOR OF LITERACY  
LOWER MERION SCHOOL DISTRICT



“*Welcome to Writing Workshop* gets right to the point: teaching writing through the workshop model IS necessary and possible in every classroom.”

—DR. AILEEN HOWER,  
GRADUATE PROGRAM COORDINATOR FOR THE M.ED. IN LANGUAGE AND LITERACY  
AND ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LITERACY AT MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY



“With clarity and conviction, Stacey and Lynne remind us of what is possible when we remember that students—not testing, standards, or mandates—should be at the heart and soul of our teaching.”

—DR. GRACE ENRIQUEZ  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, LANGUAGE & LITERACY DIVISION,  
LESLEY UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENT EDITOR,  
CHILDREN’S LITERATURE REVIEWS, LANGUAGE ARTS

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# WRITING WORKSHOP

“Welcome to Writing Workshop compiles the latest thinking on the teaching of writing into an incredibly practical guide that will be a go-to for the next generation of writing teachers.”

—ELIZABETH MOORE,  
LITERACY CONSULTANT AND COAUTHOR OF  
UNITS OF STUDY FOR TEACHING OPINION, INFORMATION, AND NARRATIVE WRITING GRADE K (2013),  
AND UNITS OF STUDY FOR TEACHING READING GRADES K–2 (2015)



“Welcome to Writing Workshop is the book I have been longing for. If you are a teacher new to writing workshop—this book is for you! If you are a seasoned teacher or literacy leader—this book is for you!”

—DR. KRISTIN N. RAINVILLE,  
DIRECTOR OF TEACHER PREPARATION,  
SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY



“Building on the voices of experts like Atwell, Graves, and Calkins, Shubitz and Dorfman add their own take on the writing workshop. With a heartfelt emphasis on growing writers, they identify methods and materials that sustain the approach throughout the school year.”

—DR. PAULINE SCHMIDT,  
DIRECTOR OF THE PA WRITING & LITERATURE PROJECT,  
WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY



“In addition to guiding readers through the basics of establishing an effective writing workshop, Stacey and Lynne include nuggets of wisdom learned through years of working with young writers that ensure the journey to authorship is both meaningful and joyful. This book will be included as a foundational professional development resource for our elementary staff.”

—DR. NANCY SNYDER,  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT,  
WEST PERRY SCHOOL DISTRICT



“With their insight and practical knowledge, Stacey and Lynne help us create a writing workshop that is safe, inviting, and productive. Every writing teacher needs this book.”

—JENIFER JONES,  
2ND–5TH ELAR/SS CURRICULUM COORDINATOR,  
CYPRESS FAIRBANKS ISD

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**Stenhouse Publishers**  
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## FROM STACEY

*For Marcia and Gerald Shubitz, who value education and lifelong learning. I feel fortunate—every single day—that you are my parents.*



## FROM LYNNE

*To friend and colleague Frank Murphy, a teacher of writers who writes! Thank you for supporting my efforts to continue writing professional books and, every so often, nudging me to try other writing formats, too.*



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## Welcome to Writing Workshop Videos

The videos are an integral part of our book that appear on our online companion website [sten.pub/WritingWorkshop](http://sten.pub/WritingWorkshop). As you read the chapters, you will find video icons we hope you will use to watch teachers and students engaged in the work of writing workshop. Below is a list of videos with a brief description that should be watched in conjunction with the explanations we provide within the chapters. Watch the videos when you need to think again about an important concept or routine. They are there to support you and cheer you on! We hope the videos, together with our discussions in the text, welcome you to a model that works—writing workshop—where everyone's a writer.



[http://sten.pub/  
WritingWorkshop](http://sten.pub/WritingWorkshop)

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## Foreword

In the childhood story *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams Bianco, the Rabbit, new to the nursery, sits at the feet of the Skin Horse, a longtime companion and friend of the young boy. With a strong desire to make sense of his new world and role, the Rabbit seeks the advice of a wise mentor—a toy with experience, wisdom, and insight. The Rabbit asks, “What is REAL?” The Skin Horse ponders for a moment and responds, “It’s a thing that happens to you.”

“You become.”

We had similar moments on our road to becoming teachers—moments when our younger selves sought the advice of more experienced colleagues; moments when our mentors saw promise in our youth. For Kate, it was in college. She wrote a personal essay for the first time, and when she read it aloud, her professor looked her straight in the eye and said, “You are a writer.” And thus, she became one. The combination of a mentor’s confidence and a hidden desire to become a writer created a spark that helped shape Kate’s newly formed identity as writer. For Maggie, it was in high school. She sat in her guidance counselor’s office, seeking advice of her major in college. After listening to Maggie talk about wanting to help children as a therapist, her counselor slid a pamphlet for a teaching scholarship across the table and said, “Have you ever thought about teaching?” The rest, as they say, is history.

You probably have a story like this—a time someone named a part of your dormant and undiscovered talent into being, awakening your calling to become a teacher.

This book is that calling. This book is the Skin Horse looking at all of us, calling us to become the real writing teacher we want to be.

Stacey and Lynne have managed to achieve the almost impossible: they have written a book that speaks to the highest goals we can have as writing teachers, while holding our hands every step of the way, helping us make

it happen. We need this book. We needed it a long time ago, and we need it now. We, meaning our profession, but also “us,” the authors of this foreword.

We needed this book when we began teaching. Back then, we were flailing around, trying new things, aware of the goals of writing workshop but less clear on how to make those goals a reality for our students. It was all trial and error and, oh goodness, so much error.

For any new teacher entering the teaching of writing, this book is the course you will need to provide students with empathic, powerful, productive, dreamy teaching. In it, you will be introduced to the basics of writing workshop, the goals and beliefs of writing workshop teachers, all while centering students by listening to their hopes and dreams. Stacey and Lynne write passionately and knowledgeably about these beliefs—they have lived them, they know they work, and they know you can do it.

Paired with their beliefs about the teaching of writing, Stacey and Lynne use their years of experience and craft a vision of writing workshop that is a sustainable, productive space for kids and teachers. You will find page after page of practical advice for how to manage twenty or more students’ individual writing goals. Or how to consider what to teach your students and how to be as responsive as possible. Or how to give feedback to students that can nudge them in new directions in their writing. Or how to take students through a writing process so that each is able to go at their own pace, yet still be pushed in new directions by their writing partners, themselves, and you.

These are no small feats, but under the care of these authors, you feel you can do it. Stacey and Lynne are like the older sisters who take you under their wings and help you get ready for the big dance. They know what you need before you do, and by the end of your time with them, you are transformed, and so are your kids. If you are new to workshop, this book will help guide you with love, high ideals, and clear instructions for how to make it all work.

Of course, we are not new to workshop, and perhaps, neither are you. Perhaps, like us, you have been teaching writing workshop for a while, or your district has a writing workshop-based curriculum. At first, when



we began this book, we felt like veterans. “Oh, we will probably know the stuff in here,” we thought. We knew how to write a minilesson (though Stacey and Lynne’s explanation is so clear and practical that we can’t wait to share their take with teachers). We knew a bit about paper choice and materials (though their explanations for how to create systems for kid-centered choice feel fresh). We did, in fact, “know” some of the stuff in here.

Yet this book feels revolutionary to us. Not because it taught us what writing workshop is, but because it reminded us of what writing workshop used to be.

These days, writing workshop in many schools serves the standards and expectations of the district, the system, and even the tests that kids experience. While choice over what to write is present, there’s not much time to nurture that choice, or, worse yet, the choice has been taken away—the choice of genre, purpose, or even audience does not exist as it once did. While there is independent writing, often there is such an abundance of work to be done just to get through the unit that kids don’t have much time to wander, explore, or create. In some ways—big and small—writing workshop has morphed into an overly standardized, teacher-centered shell of what it used to be.

This book reminds us of what the promise of writing workshop was and can still be. Writing workshop can put children first—their interests, their knowledge, their creativity, pacing, and needs. As we read this book, we were reminded of our writing workshops of old. Workshops were places where kids could invent, create, engage, and discuss their writing with great freedom and support. They were places where students’ voices were heard, cherished, and nurtured. They were places that we studied genres together and walked alongside great writing teachers in the pages of mentor texts. Writers wandered through the process, talking with one another, celebrating progress. You know, like real writers do.

Because that was the promise of writing workshop—that we should treat our students like real writers in the world. What Donald Murray, Lucy Calkins, Don Graves and others did was to show us the power of sitting down with a child, listening to their ideas, and helping their writing come



alive. Not to make sure that all of our kids reach all the standards that have been put upon them by outside forces.

The promise of writing workshop is that if we help every child become a writer, they will write and think well. This book shows us ways we can thread that needle—how we can reach for high standards yet not at the expense of the heart and soul of our classrooms.

In many ways, we wish we could go back in time with this book in our hands. As new teachers, we would have been so much *better* with the advice we find in these pages. And yet we are also so glad that we have this book now—to reset our focus on our North Stars, to remember what is true and precious about a classroom full of young writers—their energy and creativity and abilities to write their own world into being.

—Kate & Maggie

# Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the many opportunities we have had to learn from teachers, students, administrators, and conference presenters across the country. Friends, family members, and colleagues have been our cheerleaders, encouraging our work on this project. When we came together more than three years ago to discuss the idea for a new book, we enthusiastically agreed on our title, *Welcome to Writing Workshop*, and embarked on a journey to help teachers everywhere imagine a writing workshop and embrace the idea of being a teacher of writers who writes.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the teachers whose classrooms are featured in this book: Katie Bristol, Kathryn Cazes, Kelsey Corter, Laura Deutsch, Deborah Driscoll, Diana Erben, Rachel Federbush, Shelly Keller, Amy Lynch, Cary S. Harrod, Suzanne Meyer, Molly Murray, and Kathleen Neagle Sokolowski. Your students are fortunate to work in such beautiful, kid-friendly spaces.

Melanie Meehan, thank you for organizing a full schedule to view writing workshop in action and interview teachers, administrators, and students from Tootin' Hills Elementary School in Simsbury School District. Thanks to classroom teachers Missie Champagne, Lisa Jacobs, and Lesley Turner for permitting us to videotape your writing workshops and interview you, too. Maggie Seidel, thank you for welcoming us to your school and allowing us to interview you about writing workshop. Betsy Gunsalus, Director of Curriculum in Simsbury, thank you for answering all our questions. Melanie, you were not only the tour guide, but led small groups, conferred with students, and modeled for us what a literacy coach can do to support teachers and writing workshop.

From Upper Moreland Primary School, we would like to thank teachers Kolleen Bell and Kelly Gallagher for their contributions of a kindergarten conference and second-grade status of the class session, respectfully.

“Mommy was working on the book.”) What an enjoyable journey this has been!

I am inspired by my colleagues—who are brilliant educators—at *Two Writing Teachers*. Thank you, Lanny Ball, Kelsey Corter, Deb Frazier, Betsy Hubbard, Melanie Meehan, Beth Moore, and Kathleen Neagle Sokolowski for collaborating on TWT, and, most important, for your dedication to teaching young writers.

I have deep gratitude to the Slice of Life community, which gathers on Tuesdays year-round and every March at *Two Writing Teachers*. I am inspired by your stories and am fueled by your comments. Thank you for helping me grow as a writer.

Many thanks to Anna Gratz Cockerille, Grace Enriquez, Michelle Haseltine, Laurie Higgins, and Mary Howard for your willingness to answer my literacy questions. You always help me grow as an educator.

Thank you to my former students—at P.S. 171 and at The Learning Community—for teaching me how to teach writers.

Speaking of P.S. 171, I will always be grateful to my former principal, Dimitres Pantelidis, who provided me with the resources to launch and sustain writing workshop. In addition, he gave me the gift of time, so I could attend professional development to help me learn as much as I could about the teaching of writing during my first years in the classroom. In addition, Pat Werner, who was my literacy coach during my first year of teaching at P.S. 171, spent many hours chatting with me after school helping me to understand how to engage my students with a writing workshop. While the miles between us have kept us apart for years, I will always be thankful for Pat's wisdom and friendship.

Two of my cousins, Scott Shubitz and Jared Peet, and their spouses, Tiffany Hensley and Annie Infantino, are dedicated educators. I am grateful to have all of you to call upon personally and professionally.

My mother-in-law, Linda Schaefer, is a retired literacy coach and classroom teacher. However, she remains one of my go-to people when I need a sounding board about literacy. Thank you, Linda, for your continued willingness to “talk shop” with me even though you now spend your days as a devoted grandmother my children adore!



Writing Project. If you don't already have them, pick up the *Units of Study—Writing*, a valuable resource and teaching tool that will help you grow as a teacher of writers.

We have been fortunate to have our dear friend and editor William Varner with us throughout this journey. Bill, your support means everything to us. Thank you for answering all our questions and always believing in us. You helped us grow as writers and imagine the possibilities for this book. Thanks to everyone in the Stenhouse family, including Dan Tobin, Jay Kilburn, Stephanie Levy, Amanda Bondi, Lynne Costa, Shannon St. Peter, Nate Butler, Faye LaCasse, and Jill Backman, who have in various ways offered support and mentorship.

## *From Stacey*

In 2010, I dedicated *Day by Day: Refining Writing Workshop Through 180 Days of Reflective Practice* in memory of my first-grade teacher, Carol Snook, who encouraged me to write. A few years ago, I received a consulting request from a school close to where I grew up. During my conversation with the school's curriculum director, she revealed that she had noticed the *Day by Day* dedication to Carol, with whom she had taught in the 1980s. "You know Carol used the workshop model to teach writing, right?" this curriculum director said. I was stunned into silence—and then tears. Suddenly, everything fell into place. Carol called us writers. She encouraged us to write about a variety of topics. She featured our published books in the classroom library next to the bound books. It was clear to me that my incredible first-grade teacher was ahead of her time! I am thankful to Carol, since she planted a seed that blossomed into a writer. I cannot imagine a life in which I am not writing.

To my dear friend, colleague, and mentor, Lynne Dorfman: I recall the day we met for breakfast in Lancaster, and you approached me about coauthoring this book. Thank you for your willingness to wait until Ari was a few months old to begin. I'm thankful you became part of Isabelle's and Ari's lives while we were writing this book. (I think it helped Isabelle, especially, to get to know you so she wasn't resentful of all the times

“Mommy was working on the book.”) What an enjoyable journey this has been!

I am inspired by my colleagues—who are brilliant educators—at *Two Writing Teachers*. Thank you, Lanny Ball, Kelsey Corter, Deb Frazier, Betsy Hubbard, Melanie Meehan, Beth Moore, and Kathleen Neagle Sokolowski for collaborating on TWT, and, most important, for your dedication to teaching young writers.

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Speaking of P.S. 171, I will always be grateful to my former principal, Dimitres Pantelidis, who provided me with the resources to launch and sustain writing workshop. In addition, he gave me the gift of time, so I could attend professional development to help me learn as much as I could about the teaching of writing during my first years in the classroom. In addition, Pat Werner, who was my literacy coach during my first year of teaching at P.S. 171, spent many hours chatting with me after school helping me to understand how to engage my students with a writing workshop. While the miles between us have kept us apart for years, I will always be thankful for Pat’s wisdom and friendship.

Two of my cousins, Scott Shubitz and Jared Peet, and their spouses, Tiffany Hensley and Annie Infantino, are dedicated educators. I am grateful to have all of you to call upon personally and professionally.

My mother-in-law, Linda Schaefer, is a retired literacy coach and classroom teacher. However, she remains one of my go-to people when I need a sounding board about literacy. Thank you, Linda, for your continued willingness to “talk shop” with me even though you now spend your days as a devoted grandmother my children adore!



My children, Isabelle and Ari, light up my life. It is my hope you will come to see yourselves as writers, no matter what path you take in life.

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### *From Lynne*

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fill it with joy. That joy often comes from being with the people we love. Little moments like birthday celebrations at Nectar make writing days easier and more productive!

To PAWLP friends, Nancy McElwee, Janice Ewing, Rita Sorrentino, Patricia Smith, Tricia Ebarvia, Dana Kramaroff, Matthew Bloome, Jen Greene, Brian Kelley, Kelly Virgin, Brenda Krupp, Judy Jester, Patty Koller, Chris Kehan, Diane Quinn, Reese Martin, Teresa Moslak, Rita DiCarne, Sharon Williams, Warren Kulp, Peter Suanlarm, and Frank Murphy—you are dear colleagues who offer support, great advice, and the gift of friendship. Patti and Phil Sollenberger, you have been there since before the first *Mentor Texts*. How can I ever thank you for introducing Rose and me to our editor, Bill Varner! To my KSLA friends, Michael Williams, Ginny Williams, Frani Thomas, Jan Pizarro, Linda Horner, Pam Brandon, Anna Landers, Jane Helman, Hollie D’Agata, and Aileen Hower: you have always cheered me on!

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To Stacey Shubitz, my coauthor and dear friend, I give my heartfelt thanks for your dedication and hard work, your attention to detail, and your willingness to collaborate on a book I have always wanted to write. Our “Unworkshop” days at Highlights Foundations, lunch dates in Lancaster, Skyping and phone conferences, and video-editing days with Ralph at your home have all made this project worthwhile and satisfying.

To my wonderful goddaughters, Alex, Brooke, and Cait, and their wonderful spouses, Steve, T.J., and Kevin, thank you for all the joy and love you give to me, filling me with renewed strength to work harder and smarter! The time we spend together is always precious time.

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## *Introduction*

# Welcome, Teachers of Writers

I enter the room and immediately am impressed with the scratch-scratch sound of writing instruments moving across pages. Here, there seems to be choice. The youngsters, probably varying in age, use pencils of all sizes sharpened to a point, many of them with “No. 2” printed on the side. Others favor a pen. These students cross out their mistakes by drawing a thin line through the unwanted word or words. It is as if they still want to keep the words they are tossing away, or perhaps they are not sure about their value and will decide when the work is finished. Sketches and drawings also sometimes appear along with the words.

A few students sit at tablets and tap away at the keyboards. Others stand and write while resting one foot on a swing bar. I pass children who engage in serious conversation in whisper voices. Their eyes light up as they share the words they have written. I can almost feel the flutter of their hearts as they praise and polish each other’s work. They are eager to hear what their peers have to say about their work. The writers nod and scribble on sticky notes, sometimes passing these squares to their partner.

The room is filled with writing and whispering voices and charts. As I look around the room, it seems everything is homegrown. A few children approach a chart labeled “Why Authors Use Dialogue” and sit on the rug before it with their notebooks opened. Where is the teacher? Ah, there she is, sitting on the carpet. She, too, is writing in a small notebook. She stops for a moment, looks around the room, and smiles.



*I will come back again tomorrow to observe writing workshop. I must admit, it feels somewhat like a magical experience to me. I feel compelled to share this story with anyone who will listen.*

## *What Our Book Has to Offer*

We warmly welcome you to experience writing workshop in a new light or for the very first time with our newest adventure in writing, *Welcome to Writing Workshop: Engaging Today's Students with a Model That Works*. This book stems from our heartfelt beliefs about the place of writing workshop in elementary schools. The notion of writing workshop originates from the real-world experiences of writers everywhere. Each student in our classroom is a working author. The teacher is a working author, too, and a coach, guiding young authors as they imagine the possibilities for their craft. A workshop approach is designed to emphasize the act of writing itself—students spend most of their time putting pencil to paper, not just learning about it. Students learn how to find their own topics to write about, because we know choice will help to create engaged writers, not just compliant ones. In writing workshop, students are part of the assessment process as well, managing their own development as they work through a wide variety of writing projects in a sustained and self-directed way.

In a writing workshop classroom, emphasis is placed on sharing work with the class, on peer conferring and editing, and on the collection of a wide variety of work in a writing folder. Teachers write for and with their students, sharing their own work as well. The workshop setting encourages students to develop a writing identity; in other words, they are raising themselves to a conscious level of “I am a writer, and what I have to say is important now.” A writing workshop approach helps student writers take their writing seriously, to be engaged rather than simply compliant.

In our book, we offer routines, tips, advice, and resources, as well as short, focused video clips, for teachers in grades K through 6. We know process writing is not a new idea, and yet we do not often see a true writing workshop taking place in many of the classrooms we observe. We hope the video clips do exactly that: offer glimpses into many of the components of



a true writing workshop that we discuss in the pages of this book. Video clips appear in chapters and are best viewed while you are reading about their content rather than in isolation. For example, in Chapter 6, “Independent Writing Time,” you will find a heading about leading a mid-workshop interruption. If you read the text and then view the video where fourth-grade teacher Catherine Gehman talks about this important strategy, it will make good sense and stay with you. In all of the places where we share a video clip, you’ll note that the text explains and the video further illustrates each practice.

We know that having the time to write is crucial for our students, and yet some teachers give away writing time for test preparation or allow students to read their independent reading book. The time to develop as confident, effective writers is too important to give away to other activities. We strongly feel our students need to become competent writers to be able to participate as global citizens. Writing is the most powerful tool we have to think aloud on paper, organize our thoughts, and make our thinking visible and permanent. We know writing workshop is most effective when it occurs daily. Then students know that their teachers and school officials believe that writing is important.

We know teachers do a better job with a writing-workshop approach than any other method. Writing cannot be taught solely from a scripted program. Without a true understanding of the writing workshop approach, teachers have to rely on a one-size-fits-all program format. Although it is comforting to have a script or instructions on what to do each day, teachers must be able to assess student work to make informed and responsive choices about instructional decisions. They must be able to provide high-quality feedback on a regular basis, knowing what to specifically praise and what to work on to move each individual writer forward. Writing workshop asks the students to make deliberate choices about their writing. Choice in writing workshop is as important as choice in reading workshop. This choice will help students be actively engaged, reflect on their growth and set goals, and imitate the writing process of mentor authors.



How can we expect students to produce high-quality writing in the classroom and on standardized test writing prompts without establishing extensive writing routines that give students the models to imitate, time to create and revise, tools to use, and opportunities to choose writing topics they care about? This book discusses how to establish the right environment to grow writers, and how to establish writing workshop procedures, routines, and management practices to use the writing time allowed by your daily schedule most effectively. By breaking down the components of writing workshop and detailing everything from explanations of writing process and writing traits to small-group strategy lessons and minilessons about craft moves, this comprehensive book will provide the know-how you need to feel confident and comfortable as a teacher of writers.

At the end of each chapter is a section called “When You’re Ready” that offers another chance to extend your thinking and learning. We hope you will find these sections challenging and rich in possibilities.

## *Who Should Read This Book?*

*Welcome to Writing Workshop* will help both novice and veteran teachers implement their own workshops in their own classrooms with more confidence. Reading specialists and support teachers can benefit from the experiences and descriptions of key components of writing workshop since they often support struggling readers and writers in small-group situations. This book is for administrators, too, who will observe writing workshops and offer praise and polish. We use our combined years of classroom experience as writing teachers and literacy coaches to share real classroom experiences and validate their suggestions and conclusions. Our study guide to accompany this book is on the Stenhouse website. We hope professional learning communities and teacher-initiated partnerships and book clubs will use our book to grow in confidence and knowledge of how a teacher of writers builds and maintains a community of writers in writing workshop.

Enjoy the journey, and please write along the way. Happy writing (and reading)!



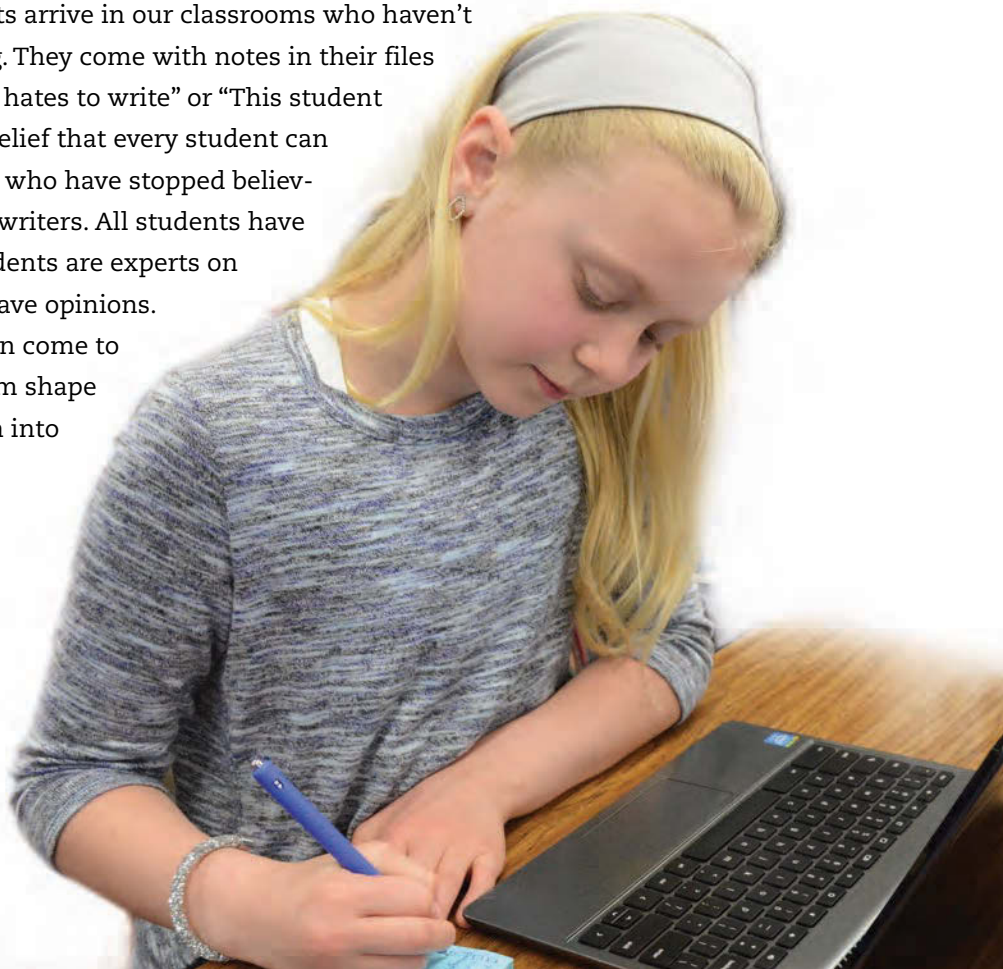
## Chapter 1

# What is Writing Workshop?

### *A Guiding Belief: Everyone Can Learn to Write*

We've all had students arrive in our classrooms who haven't produced any writing. They come with notes in their files saying, "This student hates to write" or "This student can't write." It's our belief that every student can write—even the ones who have stopped believing in themselves as writers. All students have stories to tell. All students are experts on topics. All students have opinions. We take what children come to us with and help them shape what's inside of them into writing on the page.

**Figure 1.1** A student engages in independent writing on a Chromebook.



## *Writing Workshop Defined*

So, what exactly is writing workshop? The act of writing is complex, and so is the instruction writing teachers must provide for all the students who fill today's diverse classrooms. The structure for writing workshop is simple: it is student centered and based on the belief that students become successful writers when they write frequently, for extended periods of time, and on topics of their choice. Yes, it is challenging to keep track of twenty or more writers who are in various places in the writing process and/or who are writing for different audiences and different purposes. Although it may be daunting at times to keep track of everything and meet each writer where they are, the process of writing has similar components. All writers have a purpose for writing and a target audience. Writers make decisions about topic, genre, and form. They may decide along the way to designate this piece as a writer's notebook entry or to carry it through to publication. Student writers may have the option of deciding whether this piece will be submitted for a grade or remain in a showcase portfolio. They also have (or should have) the choice to abandon the piece before completion and start a new one, unless, of course, it is a grade-level benchmark piece or standardized test requirement everyone must complete. In writing workshop, we develop the habits young writers need to form so writing is a routine they value and even enjoy. We work to help writers acquire the cumulative knowledge they need to develop and hone their craft. The focus in writing workshop is entirely on the writer. We help writers develop the skills, strategies, and craft that will sustain them across multiple pieces of writing in various genres.

The Exhilaration of  
Writing Workshop  
<http://sten.pub/ww01>

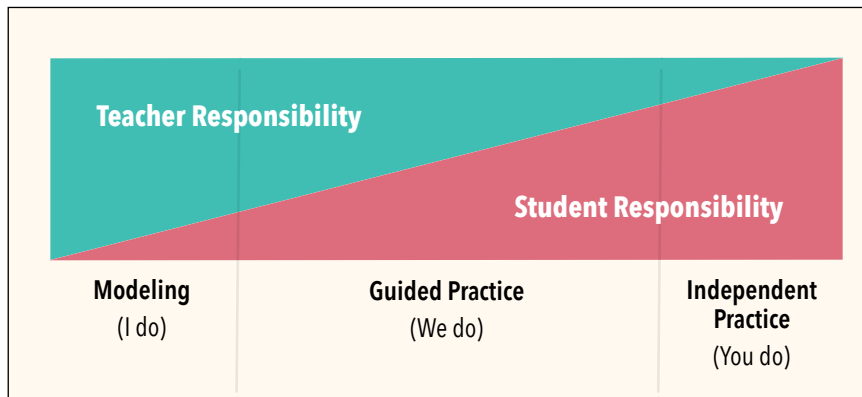


Frank Murphy,  
sixth-grade teacher

## *When Are We Most Effective in Helping Student Writers Grow?*

We believe the way to help students become writers is to work with each child within his or her zone of proximal development, or ZPD. Using the gradual release of responsibility model (i.e., I Do, We Do, You Do), we challenge students to independently try a strategy or craft move, or engage in a task that requires some risk taking on their part after they have watched

the teacher model and after they have tried it in a shared or guided experience (see Figure 1.2). In this model, students work with teachers, and sometimes other students and mentor texts, to reach their full potential. Lev Vygotsky's framework helps our students forge new attitudes about writing as they become more courageous and more willing to access new pathways. Thus, the ZPD is where the child can be successful trying a new skill or strategy with the teacher's guidance (Vygotsky 1986). That is also why we need to be teachers of writers who write. We need to write so we can take risks and try new strategies and craft moves, too. As writing teachers who write, we are able to experience the same struggles and attempts to problem solve in order to improve our skills as conferrers. When we confer with students as a mentor author, we have the confidence and practical experience to model writing techniques and confer with students as they move through the writing process, taking risks and experimenting with craft and mechanics.



**Figure 1.2** The gradual release of responsibility model of instruction is built on Russian educational theorist Lev Vygotsky's work on zones of proximal development. The responsibility for cognitive work moves slowly from teacher, to a shared responsibility between teachers and students, to independent practice by the students. Emphasis as applied to the writing workshop model is on instruction that mentors students into becoming capable writers when learning and applying new strategies and craft moves they are not yet capable of using independently. The scaffolded model for instruction provides the support students need to be successful.

## *Classroom Management and Routines*

Writing workshop teachers need an excellent management system. Success depends on the routines that make workshop hum like an efficient hive of honeybees. The success of writing workshop depends on kids having a solid understanding of writing process, the qualities of good writing, and how to continually make reading-writing connections.

## *What Else Do Writing Workshop Teachers Need?*

Writing workshop teachers need solid knowledge about how to teach writing gleaned from their own ongoing writing experiences, professional texts about the teaching of writing such as this one, and attendance at conferences (local, state, and/or national). The study of mentor texts is essential. Regie Routman (2005) has sound criteria for defining writing workshop:

- Sustained, daily writing on mostly chosen topics
- Writing for purposes and audiences valued by the writer
- Learning craft moves and playing with language
- Learning how to make writing engaging for the reader
- Conferring to respond and celebrate what writers do well and offering a polish—something the writer is ready to try
- Working toward writing fluency and writing accuracy
- Often, publishing for audiences other than the teacher

## *Our Writing Classroom Reflects Our Values and Beliefs About How Children Learn*

We inform our literacy practices by understanding our belief and value systems, and observe our classroom's physical environment, our routines, and our own writing processes as a writer. A look around a classroom can quickly reveal what is valued: a place to gather the writing community, anchor charts, student writing, a classroom library, easy access to writing materials,

and a place to confer and gather feedback. A teacher is moving around the classroom, stopping now and then to chat with a student about his or her writing, then making a few quick notes. Those notes will provide a way to hold students accountable for a goal or goals they will discuss in a teacher-student conference later that day or week. Earlier, the class gathered on the rug to listen to a read-aloud, a book that will become a mentor text for this classroom. Everywhere, purposeful work is going on—both teacher and students are making decisions about what is the essential work for that day.

## Terminology

Before we move forward, let's get on the same page. Here are some common terms we'll use throughout the book:

- **Writing workshop** is a block of time in the school day in which students are actively involved in writing. It begins with a short minilesson, which provides time for the teacher to teach one strategy that will help the students become better writers not just for the piece of writing they're doing on that day, but for the rest of their lives. Next, students have independent writing time, which typically lasts twenty-five to forty-five minutes. The workshop time ends with a five-to-ten-minute share session. The most important thing to remember about writing workshop is that "In the workshop children write about what is alive and vital and real for them—and other writers in the room listen and extend and guide, laugh and cry and marvel" (Calkins 1994, 19).
- **Minilessons** are short (about ten minutes) and explicit sessions where teachers directly instruct students on *one* writing strategy. Minilessons begin with a connection that activates the students' prior knowledge. Next, teachers share the teaching point, which they demonstrate so students understand how to accomplish that strategy. Then, students are given two to three minutes to actively engage with the strategy, having a go with it on their own or with a partner. Teachers walk around the meeting area to see what students are doing and quickly debrief what they notice, or

A Rationale for  
Writing Workshop  
from a Principal's  
Perspective

<http://sten.pub/ww02>



Maggie Seidel,  
Principal

they have one student or pair of students share what they learned. Finally, teachers link the strategy to the work the students will do on that day and every day as writers.

- **Independent writing** time makes up the bulk of the elementary writing workshop, lasting twenty-five to forty-five minutes. Students practice the strategy taught during the minilesson and/or write using other strategies they have learned. Teachers circulate around the classroom to confer with students or to hold strategy lessons during independent writing time.
- **Conferring** takes place during independent writing time. Typically, teachers confer with students one-on-one, but sometimes they may confer with a writing partnership. Teachers have an opportunity to provide highly individualized instruction to a student during a five-minute writing conference where they explicitly teach the writer one new strategy to help them become a better writer (not to improve just the piece of writing the student is working on that day). There are several types of conference formats, which include, but are not limited to, coaching, compliment, mentor text, Research-Decide-Teach, and strategic. Regardless of the conference type, it's important to remember the words of Donald Murray, who wrote, "[Conferences] are not minilectures but the working talk of fellow writers sharing their experience with the writing process. At times, of course, they will be teacher and student, master and apprentice, if you want, but most of the time they will be remarkably close to peers, because each writer, no matter how experienced, begins again with each draft" (2004, 148).
- **Small-group work** meets the needs of multiple students at the same time. Teachers select three to five children who need to receive instruction on the same writing strategy. Teachers may begin with a compliment for the group, but alternatively, they may dive into instructing the students in the strategy so students will have ample time to have a go with the strategy by practicing it in their writing while still in the presence of their teacher.



- **Share sessions** occur during the final five to ten minutes of every writing workshop. Typically, the class returns to the meeting area with their teacher, who has a couple of students showcase their work. The work showcased in the share session could reflect the day's minilesson teaching point or could be something smart the teacher noticed a student doing during a one-on-one writing conference or in a strategy lesson. However, share sessions can also be opportunities for reflection, partner work, or full-class sharing.
- **Teacher-as-Writer** refers to the notion that teachers of writing must be writers themselves. Workshop teachers keep writer's notebooks, which they share on a regular basis with students, and do the same kinds of writing they're asking their students to do. When teachers are writers, it helps them understand their students' struggles with the writing process, since they've grappled with it themselves.
- **Mentor texts** are pieces of writing used with one or more students to lift the level of writing. "Mentor texts help writers notice things about an author's work that is not like anything they might have done before and empower them to try something new" (Dorfman and Cappelli 2007, 3).
- **Writer's notebooks** are tools to help one live a writerly life. These notebooks can be housed in marble composition books, fancy journals, or digital apps (such as Notesshelf or Penultimate). Regardless of the form, writer's notebooks are places where students can practice their writing on a daily basis. Aimee Buckner contends, "A writer's notebook creates a place for students (and writers) to save their words—in the form of a memory, a reflection, a list, a rambling of thoughts, a sketch, or even a scrap of paper taped on the page" (2004, 4). Writer's notebooks are also workbenches allowing young writers to practice strategies presented in minilessons and to experiment with story ideas, language, scenes, or revisions.

## *Four Types of Writing*

In writing workshop the students' writing often focuses on one type of writing during a unit of study. Curricular demands may require students to write a narrative or an opinion piece. Within the four writing types we describe, students should have choice to decide what to write about. There will be times when we give them prompts; however, students need to learn to make good decisions, including how to find their own topics and purposes for writing.

Within each writing type, teachers and students can make decisions about genres, formats, and even shapes that help us scaffold writing. Each genre, like the four writing types, has characteristics that support the job it is intended to do such as to tell a story or offer an opinion. We often talk about writing as fiction or nonfiction, but in the real world, we have many examples of texts that “mix” the genres. For example, in *Sky Boys: How They Built the Empire State Building* by Deborah Hopkinson, an informational account of the construction of the Empire State Building is framed by a story beginning and ending related in second-person voice to draw the reader in. Narrative writing comprises many subgenres, including folktales, historical fiction, personal narrative, science fiction, and mystery writing. Information writing can include written instructions, reporting, recounting, feature article writing, reports, and biographies. In our daily lives, we write lists as memory jogs, fill out forms and applications, send emails, cards, and letters to friends and family, and sometimes keep a personal diary or journal to record our feelings and daily observations or sometimes to remember our hopes, dreams, and goals.

In writing workshop, we write to communicate our ideas to others; specifically, we find our purpose for writing and our target audience. It is in writing workshop where students gain myriad experiences in writing across the writing types. It is here that our students can concentrate on the act of writing and learn about their own writing process while establishing a writing identity. We want to help our students know themselves as writers. To accomplish this task, we must help them learn about themselves through opportunities to write daily for substantial periods of time in



many genres across the writing types. We study mentor texts and include a writerly discussion about the characteristics of the genre and selected lines or passages from the text. Then we model a craft, convention, or structure for our students by imitating the mentor text before asking them to emulate the mentor text.

## NARRATIVE

A narrative tells a story. The writer cannot simply tell what happens. He or she creates the experience through a balance of both showing and telling. Sometimes, a story writer uses flashbacks or foreshadowing. A narrative creates a mood or tone that appeals to the emotions.

Features:

- A single narrator's voice and point of view
- A single event or series of events re-created in chronological order.
- Details about setting, characters, action, and speech that make up that one event
- Words and sentence structures that create a tone and mood appropriate to the event
- A "So what?" for the reader to understand

## INFORMATION

An information piece focuses on explaining an event or experience that has happened or might happen again. The writer analyzes the features and describes or explains the big ideas through examples, specific facts, and specific details.

Features:

- A single writer's voice and point of view
- A single point being made through content organized in a way that meaningfully supports the point (not necessarily in chronological order)
- Content that has been sorted into categories of ideas that explain the point through anecdotes, specific examples, details, and facts

- Words and sentence structures that create a tone appropriate to the point

## OPINION

An opinion piece offers a message expressing a belief or claim about something; it is the expression of a belief that is held with confidence and often substantiated by knowledge (experience) or proof (citing experts). The focus is linked with a target audience, and the content must be audience appropriate. The writer's job is to offer his or her opinion in a logical, meaningful way.

Features:

- A single writer's voice and point of view on an issue
- A single point being argued through content organized in a meaningful way that supports the point
- Content that has been sorted into reasons that support the arguments through specific examples, anecdotes, facts, details, quotes from experts, statistics, and additional analysis that may include further explanation
- Words, sentence structures, and rhetorical devices that create a tone appropriate to the point and the target audience

## POETRY

Poetry is drawing a picture with words. Poetry takes many forms and often has a rhyme pattern, although some poems do not use rhyme.

Features:

- The easiest way to recognize poetry is that it is usually written in stanzas. Whereas other types of writing are most often organized with sentences and paragraphs, poetry is normally organized into *lines*.
- Poems communicate through the way the words sound and the way the poem looks on the page. White space, verses, and line breaks are important. Poets use the sounds of consonants and vowels to create



emotion. Rhyme, the absence of rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and consonance help the writer play with language.

- An important characteristic of poetry is concentrated language and economy of expression. Words serve many purposes—to convey meaning and to convey feeling. Every word counts and almost all nonessential words have been eliminated.
- Although poems make good sense, they also often work at an emotional or irrational level, too. What causes the strongest emotions is not what the poem describes, but often what it causes the reader to imagine.

## *Mentor Texts*

Mentor texts are examples of exemplary writing that can be studied to lift the level of student writing. As Tom Newkirk describes, “A great mentor text does more than show us qualities of good writing. It provokes something in us—memory, passion, a desire to write, to take our turn” (2018). Once students are shown how to read like a writer (Ray 1999), mentor texts can become powerful teaching tools. We believe there are three distinct types of mentor texts—published, student written, and teacher written—that can be used with students.

- Published mentor texts are written by writers who have gone through the publication process (i.e., worked with an editor) with traditional and nontraditional publishing options outside of school. Published texts can include, but are not limited to, books, articles, and short stories. Most often, in elementary school classrooms, mentor texts are fiction and nonfiction picture books that showcase the qualities of good writing to students. Teachers may also share and study books of poetry, short stories, or middle-grade novels alongside students in minilessons, strategy lessons, or conferences.
- Student-written mentor texts are pieces of writing created by children. Typically, they’re written by a teacher’s former students and shared with future classes. These student-written pieces can come from any stage of the writing process (e.g., notebook entries,

### Read-Alouds Are Essential to Writing Workshop

<http://sten.pub/ww03>



Lisa Jacobs,  
third-grade teacher

first drafts, published pieces) so students can have a vision of the type of writing they're expected to accomplish. Many teachers have children at several levels of sophistication whose work they regularly keep and archive during each unit of study for the purpose of using it with students at varying stages of development in the future. Students are often inspired by the work of mentor authors who are students from their own class as well as students from a previous year's class. Studying the work of other student writers at their same grade level is highly motivating. It helps create an "I can do that" attitude!

- Teacher-written mentor texts are crafted by teachers in service of the units of study they are teaching. Writing you do—at any stage of the writing process—can be held up as a mentor text for students since you are the living, breathing author who can discuss the moves you made right there in front of your students. Some teachers craft mentor texts for their students using the mirror writing concept (Cruz 2015) so their demonstration text is accessible to their students.

*The way mirror writing typically goes is that teachers choose a piece of student writing that is typical of many students in her class. She then spends some time reading the piece very closely and looking for what the student is doing as a writer. Not looking at what is absent. Looking at what is present. There's a reason for this. We can't mirror something that is not there, only what is there. Then, the teacher usually thinks of a topic she can write about that is different but can hit the same points the student hits (137).*

### Give Yourself Classroom Cred with Your Writers

<http://sten.pub/ww04>



Frank Murphy,  
sixth-grade teacher

By using mirror writing, a teacher can create a piece of writing tailored to a student's ability level, thereby making it an accessible demonstration text.

It is important to note the difference between touchstone texts and mentor texts. "Touchstone texts are books, articles, short stories or poems that



you use with your entire class. These are utilized during the demonstration of your minilessons and/or are read alouds that the whole class can draw on. Mentor texts can be used in two different ways. First, a mentor text can be used to lift the level of a child's writing. Second, a mentor text is not always used with an entire class of kids. Sometimes you might use a mentor text with just one or two students" (Shubitz 2009, 24). However, the most important purpose of a mentor text is to set students up for future writing success:

*Mentor texts empower students to become independent, which is crucial because they will not always have you as their writing teacher. If students develop an understanding of how to tap into the power of mentor texts, they will be able to seek out their own mentors in the future. When they go off into the world, they will be confronted with many types of writing tasks. What a gift we give them when they know how to notice what is striking about an author's writing and develop theories about why an author writes a particular way. Then they are able to translate their observations into sophisticated craft moves on their own. (Ayres and Shubitz 2010, 142)*

## Writing Processes

Writers work through stages of prewriting (generating, collecting, and nurturing), drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and reflecting in a recursive process, often building in opportunities to confer with peers (or their editors) along the way. Although writers rarely take a linear approach, we still see evidence of this routine in elementary classrooms. The recursive process is a chaotic one, often beginning with a gathering of materials, a search for a topic—an idea, a word, a phrase, a sentence, a familiar quote—anything that will help one get started! When teachers talk about writing process to their students, they are trying to describe what writers do in the real world. Truth be told, we cannot talk about “the writing process” since writers tend to have different pathways that work best for them. Thus, we need to talk about writing processes. One way to help students understand



The Writing Process Isn't Linear. So Why Do Schools Keep Pretending That It Is?

writing process is to hold a writerly conversation after students have talked with a partner and/or jotted some notes about the way they went about creating the last piece of writing that was ready to be published in some format. As you rove about the classroom, you can also make some notes of writerly behaviors you've observed. You will discover both similarities and differences about the way your students write. That's a worthwhile starting point. It is good to remember that writing fluency—getting it down—is the first consideration for our elementary school writers. Then, we can talk about form and correctness. The following description is the anatomy of the writing process. It is important to remember that a return to planning (collecting and nurturing) can occur at any point in the process, just as revision can occur as early as the initial planning stage. The Common Core emphasizes the importance of process as well as product, and Graham and Harris (2014) suggest that teaching strategies for planning, revising, and editing text can be an effective way to help students use the process to be more successful.

**Planning** refers to preliminary work, a rehearsal or warm-up for the writing. Planning (sometimes referred to as collecting or prewriting) activities include sketching, observing, reading about topics, rereading a mentor text, talking with a partner, examining photos, responding to writing crafted by the teacher or another adult, researching on the Internet, webbing, mapping, using other graphic organizers, interviewing, and soaking up the world around us. Everything around us can offer writers prewriting experiences. We just have to practice observing our world carefully and intentionally. Talking is an important part of this stage of the process. Oral rehearsal, talking about what we are going to write about, is especially important for our youngest writers. In fact, sometimes, planning involves only talking about our writing. We do not always have to write. Collecting helps a student find ideas and topics to write about. In minilessons, teachers can introduce a variety of strategies designed to help students find topics and generate, shape, and clarify ideas. Writers need a repertoire of prewriting strategies and should be able to determine which ones might be most helpful for their purposes for writing and the topics they choose.



**Drafting** gets the ideas from mind to paper (or screen) as quickly as possible so ideas are not lost. The emphasis here is on content, not correctness. Writers should compose without undue concern for mechanics or spelling. Encourage students to cross out rather than erase as they are creating the first draft so that they can retrieve ideas if need be. It may help students to write on every other line so they can revise more easily at a later point. Although writing fluency is important to the draft stage, some students may find it easier to revise and/or edit as they go along, sometimes dividing a piece into a beginning, a middle, and an end.

**Revision** addresses what is working and what isn't. It is a way of re-seeing or re-imagining the writing piece. Writers examine their drafts and decide whether they should or want to make changes. Often, revision work follows a teacher or peer conference. A good strategy for revision is to first examine the writing for focus. Does it stay on topic and have a point? Next, look closely at the content. Can the writer add to it, delete from it, rearrange or replace words or phrases, or substitute strong, specific words for weak ones?

**Editing** is often saved for the final read(s) but can happen at any stage of the writing process. When the writer is satisfied that a piece of writing makes sense and says what he wants it to say, and when he has developed the content as best he can, it is time to focus on correctness. The writer should be held accountable for making corrections in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar to the best of his ability. Our youngest writers may work on spacing, end punctuation, and letter formation. Inventive spelling is acceptable, but students can be accountable for environmental print and sight words they have learned. In a conference, a teacher may ask the student to work on a convention or grammar issue. Here, it is important to remember that proofreading is difficult even for experienced writers. We cannot ask our young writers to fix everything.

**Publishing** can take many forms: individual student books, class books, classroom newsletters, blog entries on a classroom website, articles for community papers, scripts, letters enclosed in envelopes and mailed, postcards, emails, entries in online writing contests, and author-of-the-week

bulletin board displays. It is important that teachers provide students with frequent opportunities to publish their writing. Publishing serves as a great motivator! Sometimes, a publishing conference with a teacher or other adult precedes the act of publishing.

## *Sharing and Reflecting Happen Throughout the Writing Process*

Sharing gives students a chance to read their writing to a peer and to their teacher and ask for feedback. Ralph Fletcher and Joann Portalupi (2001) suggest that the peer or teacher read to the writer so the writer can be the first person to respond in a conference. Sharing time can be about giving the writer a chance to hear his writing for the first time as it is read aloud to him. The writer can also share the piece, sometimes posing a question or questions such as, “Is my beginning interesting? Does it make you want to hear more?” Sharing can occur at any time—as early as the planning stage or before a first draft is completed. Sharing our writing in the last few minutes of workshop can be related to reflections. Students will not have time to read their entire piece, but they can share revisions to leads, endings, content, and even organizational structures. Sometimes, we can ask our students to share the best sentence they wrote in workshop and explain why they chose it. Students may even have guest author spots in a partner classroom at the same grade level or a different one. A “student of the week” can highlight his or her writing on a special bulletin board and read from the place of honor, “the author’s chair.” The purpose of writing is to communicate ideas to others; it is crucial to give student writers the time to share their writing. Sharing is a big part of the joy in writing workshop!

Throughout the writing process, students will have many opportunities for reflection. The questions we ask our students during conferences are the same questions we hope they will ask themselves in self-conferences, which we discuss in greater detail in Chapter 7, “Conferring.” Students can use their writer’s notebook to reflect on a goal set in a conference or use a checklist or rubric to reflect on their learning. *Have I used new craft moves*

that helped my writing? How did they make my writing better? What mentor text can I return to for some help with descriptions . . . Creating an anecdote? Using transition words? Although reflection often comes after a piece has been published, it can be used to make changes.

A final word: Not all drafts will be taken through each step of the writing process. Many will not warrant the time and attention final drafts demand. However, students should be familiar with their writing process and many strategies for planning, revising, editing, publishing, and reflection.

## *Final Thoughts*

Writing workshop is more than a philosophy. It is an efficient model for teaching writers. The workshop model allows teachers to create frameworks for individualized, small-, and whole-group instruction, as well as for formative assessment. It works because workshop is rooted in the notion that everyone is a writer and that writers need time to write frequently—daily—if at all possible, for extended periods and (for the most part) on topics of their own choosing.

Lucy Calkins (2018) says there are three levels of a writing workshop. Level one is the *pulling teeth* level, which is a start-and-stop writing workshop filled with worksheets and material found on a variety of paid Internet sites. Level two is the *good student* level, which is where one can see what the teacher taught each day. The kids do what they're told and no more. This level is more about compliance than about engagement. Level three is the *all-in* level where the “work bristles with deep feeling and intimacy.” Children aren't just good students, they are writers. Through the pages of this book, it is our hope that we help you reach a level three, ALL IN, writing workshop!

## *When You're Ready*

Now that you've read our first chapter, take some time to think about what your writing time looks like and feels like. What are your beliefs about writing? What do you value? Then, look at the following list adapted from Richard Bullock's *Why Workshop? Changing Course in 7–12* (1998, 2). Where do

Creating a  
District-Wide  
Culture of Writing  
<http://sten.pub/ww05>



*Betsy Gunsalus,  
Director of  
Elementary  
Curriculum and  
Student Assessment*

The Uniqueness of  
the Workshop Model  
<http://sten.pub/ww06>



*Melissa Schmitz,  
Instructional Coach*

you place yourself right now? Are you a traditionalist? Are you straddling the line between a traditional writing classroom and a writing workshop model? Are you ready to try something new and exciting?

Traditional	Workshop
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teacher, school district, or state designs and implements the curriculum.</li> <li>• Students practice skills and memorize facts, often using workbooks and worksheets.</li> <li>• Content is broken down into discrete, sequential units over lengthy lessons that often take the lion's share of workshop time.</li> <li>• Largely, the way students learn writing strategies is through whole-group instruction.</li> <li>• Writing topics and writing prompts are assigned with little attention to choice.</li> <li>• Products are the focus—the result is more important than the process.</li> <li>• Avoiding mistakes is important.</li> <li>• Summative assessment is valued highly, and almost everything is graded.</li> <li>• Teachers are in charge of evaluating and grading.</li> <li>• Learning is uniform.</li> <li>• Expectations are fairly uniform for all students, with no evidence of small-group or product differentiation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher and students negotiate curriculum, both individually and in groups (within mandated constraints).</li> <li>• Students actively construct knowledge—the concepts and meanings.</li> <li>• Content is presented whole, in meaningful contexts through short minilessons, writerly classroom conversations, and an inquiry approach.</li> <li>• Processes (planning, drafting, multiple drafts for revision and editing; self-evaluation and reflection) are valued as much as the products themselves.</li> <li>• Taking educated risks is valued. Writers grow because they try new strategies, craft moves, and organizational scaffolds.</li> <li>• Choice, collaboration, and challenge are greatly valued.</li> <li>• Instruction is presented in whole-group and small-group formats, partnerships, and one-on-one conferring.</li> <li>• Some writing, such as the writing in a writer's notebook, is not assigned a grade.</li> <li>• Students are assessed by their performances on meaningful tasks, often through portfolios of their work, in conferences, and through daily formative assessment that includes record-keeping such as anecdotal records, checklists, and audiotapes.</li> <li>• Students learn how to reflect on their practices, set goals, and self-assess.</li> <li>• Students sometimes do the teaching, partnering with a peer or with the teacher. During share sessions and mid-workshop interruptions, students can offer valuable tips and suggestions: a noticing, an approach to a problem, a topic worth exploring, or scaffolds for organization.</li> <li>• Learning is expected to be individual and unique. Students are encouraged to imagine the possibilities!</li> <li>• Evaluation is oriented toward success. Students are expected to create something concrete during workshop time.</li> </ul>

## *“A powerful writing workshop roadmap...”*

Stacey Shubitz and Lynne R. Dorfman warmly welcome you to experience writing workshop for the first time or in a new light with *Welcome to Writing Workshop: Engaging Today's Students with a Model That Works*.

Through strategic routines, tips, advice, and resources, as well as short, focused video clips, new and veteran teachers can create the sights and sounds of a thriving writing workshop in their K–6 classrooms where

- Both students and teachers are working authors
- Students spend most of their time writing—not just learning about it
- Student choice is encouraged to help create engaged writers, not compliant ones
- Students are part of the formative assessment process, managing their own development
- Students will look forward to writing time—not dread it

Detailing everything from explanations of writing processes and writing traits to small-group strategy lessons and minilessons about craft moves, this comprehensive book will provide the know-how to feel confident and comfortable in the teaching of writers.

**Stacey Shubitz** is an author and an independent literacy consultant. A graduate of the Literacy Specialist Program at Teachers College, she has experience teaching fourth and fifth grades. She is also the chief of operations and lead writer for *Two Writing Teachers*, a popular blog about the teaching of writing. Visit the blog at [twowritingteachers.org](http://twowritingteachers.org) and follow Stacey on Twitter: @sshubitz.

**Lynne R. Dorfman** has more than 35 years of classroom experience, serving as a classroom teacher, a K–5 writing and literacy coach, and a reading specialist. Currently, Lynne is a literacy consultant and an adjunct professor at Arcadia University. She is co-director of the PA Writing and Literature Project and a co-editor of *PAReads Journal* for Keystone State Literacy Association.

*“In **Welcome to Writing Workshop**, Stacey Shubitz and Lynne Dorfman have crafted a powerful writing workshop roadmap with thoughtful detours along a writer-centered exploration. In a treasure chest of every imaginable detail, Stacey and Lynne show teachers, no matter where they are in this journey, how to transform writing workshop into the child focused process it was always meant to be”*

—MARY HOWARD, LITERACY CONSULTANT  
AND AUTHOR OF *GOOD TO GREAT TEACHING*

*“Readers of **Welcome to Writing Workshop** will find themselves in sure hands. Stacey Shubitz and Lynne Dorfman know classrooms and young writers inside and out. The authors clearly explain the workshop, and how it differs from traditional teaching. The inclusion of short, punchy video clips makes this resource friendly and enormously practical.”*

—RALPH FLETCHER, AUTHOR OF *JOY WRITE*

