



The Meadows Center
FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION



10 Key **Writing** Policies and Practices for All Schools

with strong evidence of effectiveness from high-quality research
—including selected grade-level descriptions of student skills—

© 2016 The University of Texas at Austin/The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk
Licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 4.0

10 Key Writing Policies and Practices for All Schools with strong evidence of effectiveness from high-quality research

All students can become proficient writers if:

1. Students **read, write, and discuss ideas every day in every class** (e.g., English language arts, math, science, social studies).
2. Students **read and write a variety of text types throughout the school year**. Students learn how to recognize styles from reading different types of texts and then apply this knowledge to their own writing for a variety of purposes and audiences.
3. Students learn **writing-to-learn strategies**, such as note taking, journaling, and summarizing, in all classes.
4. Student learning is supported and measured through a **variety of informal and formal reading, writing, and speaking activities in all content areas** (an example of an *informal* activity is reading a text, marking parts that were confusing, and discussing with a small group; an example of a *formal* activity is an oral presentation on a researched topic).
5. Students learn that **writing is a thinking process**. Students learn to draft ideas and plan their writing but are flexible when writing and learn to revise based on ideas and purpose.
6. Students learn **strategies for planning, revising, and editing** written work to make targeted improvements. Students are provided with **specific writing goals**.
7. Students learn to **revise ideas, organization, and word choice before editing to correct spelling, grammar, and syntax**.
8. Teacher **feedback during drafting focuses on ideas, development, and organization**. Teacher **feedback during editing is based on what students have learned**; students are expected to use correct spelling patterns and punctuation appropriate to the grade level.
9. Students learn how to **correctly use source material** in their writing. Students learn the difference between **quoted text and paraphrasing** and how to use both in their writing.
10. Students learn the **handwriting and keyboarding skills** necessary to write fluently.

LITERARY TEXT EXAMPLES

Autobiographies, biographies, personal narratives, short stories, poetry, dramas and plays, mysteries, folktales, myths, fables, memoirs, obituaries, cartoons, comic strips

INFORMATIONAL TEXT EXAMPLES

Expository and Procedural:

Essays, reports, summaries, analyses, newspaper and magazine articles, definitions, directions, interviews, letters, reviews, critiques, how-to guides, newscasts, notes

Persuasive:

Essays, editorials, advertisements, sales pitches, campaign speeches

Grade-Level Descriptions

Below, we describe what writers at various grade levels can do. However, no matter the grade level, all students need frequent opportunities to see and hear adults read (and write) aloud. Students of all ages benefit from having others read aloud to them and discuss the text. Hearing others “think aloud” and “write aloud” supports the writing process and shows students how writers think and revise for meaning. Students of all ages should be encouraged to read for pleasure and actively engage with texts. Teachers and parents can support a love of literacy by discussing what students are reading and writing.

By the end of kindergarten, students can write or dictate stories in chronological order, short poems, lists, captions, and invitations. Students understand that writing goes from left to right, can identify most letter names and sounds, and can read simple words and short books. Students can spell a few words correctly (common words, names) but may use phonetic spellings for many words. However, students can read what they have written and should be praised and encouraged to read and write.

By the end of first grade, students can write brief stories that include a beginning, middle, and end; compose short poems; and write short pieces about topics of interest. First-graders can revise their writing for ideas and edit their writing to correct some spelling and punctuation errors. First-graders can spell common words correctly but still use many phonetic spellings for unfamiliar words. At the end of first grade, students can form sentences that begin with capital letters and end in periods, exclamation points, or question marks.



By the end of third grade, students can write imaginative stories that include details about characters and the setting while developing a plot that builds to a climax; compose poems that include sensory details and poetic structure (e.g., rhyme, meter); and write brief compositions that include a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion. Third-graders can write letters appropriate to the purpose and audience (e.g., friendly letter to a pen-pal) with correct conventions (e.g., salutation, date). Third-graders can write persuasive essays for specific audiences that include a position and supporting details. Third-graders have infrequent spelling errors for common words and rarely use phonetic spellings. Students can read grade-appropriate books independently and should be encouraged to read for 30 minutes a day to develop reading and comprehension skills.





By the end of fifth grade, students can write stories that include an engaging plot, characters, setting, and dialogue. They can write advanced poetry (e.g., with alliteration, similes, metaphors) and compose a text about a personal experience that reveals their thoughts and feelings. Fifth-graders can write multiparagraph essays that include well-structured introductions and conclusions, a clearly stated topic, and logical organization with a variety of sentence types and transitions to link ideas and paragraphs.

Students can revise their writing based on feedback from themselves, peers, and the teacher. Fifth-graders may still spell unfamiliar multisyllabic words incorrectly, but spelling errors are less common as students learn and apply common letter patterns and combinations. Students have learned common syllable patterns and can read longer words and figure out meanings of unfamiliar words based on parts (affixes and roots), context and pictures, and tools such as glossaries and dictionaries. Students can read for at least 45 minutes a day and build knowledge and vocabulary through reading texts from all subject areas (e.g., science texts, novels, biographies, social studies texts).

By the end of middle school, students can write stories that include a range of literary strategies and devices (e.g., analogy, conflict, point of view, irony) and sophisticated poetry (e.g., personification, idioms, hyperbole). Students can write multiparagraph essays (two to three pages) with a clear introduction, detailed support, and a strong conclusion. Students can construct solid thesis statements and build upon them with well-reasoned evidence. Middle school students can revise their writing to focus on meaning and edit to correct errors. Spelling mistakes are rare. Students can read more complex texts in all subject areas, and independent reading builds vocabulary and knowledge.



By the end of high school, students can write engaging, original stories with well-developed conflict and resolution, clear themes, complex characters, and a range of literary techniques (e.g., dialogue, suspense, mood, tone). Students can write in several poetic forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads) that use a variety of techniques (e.g., structural elements, simile, metaphor, hyperbole). Students can write sophisticated essays (7 to 10 pages) that demonstrate advanced analysis and reasoning. Essays are clearly organized with in-

troductions, conclusions, and supporting details. Students can use rhetorical devices (e.g., appeals to logic, emotions, ethical beliefs) and include several perspectives to persuade the reader. Student writing regularly goes through several rounds of revisions (with feedback from peers and teachers) and is free of grammar and spelling errors. Students can read complex texts in all subject areas. Students know and use strategies for reading and learning from complex texts (e.g., rereading difficult sections, using tools such as dictionaries and thesauri, using note taking and summarization strategies).

—www.meadowscenter.org—