



*"Practice is the best of all instructors."
Publilius Syrus*

Being a grandmother is wonderful! Watching my granddaughter learn and explore has been a joy! For the past few months she has been expanding her world through learning to crawl and walk. Infants are a role model in the importance of practice for all of us. They spend countless hours learning to support themselves on their hands and knees, rocking back and forth. Once that skill is mastered, these tiny humans are on to the next skill, learning to pull themselves up on any surface! This is followed by cruising along furniture and walking while holding on to a supporting hand. It is only after all this practice that babies move to becoming toddlers through taking their very first independent step.

The art of practice does not end in toddler-hood. Whether a child plays soccer, plays the piano, or participates in dance lessons, we all know how critical it is for a child to practice the skills they need to be successful. Countless hours of drills and scales helps a child improve in their chosen activity. Successful coaches and mentors know the importance of practicing not until you can do the skill right, but rather until you can't do it wrong.

As adults, we also recognize the need to practice in order to be our best. Whether we play a musical instrument, are learning a new cooking technique, or playing *Words With Friends* on our phone, we know that practice makes us better. In our role as teachers, we continually practice and refine our craft.

As teachers, we need to give our students the gift of practice. Providing students both skills they need to be successful and the time needed to practice those skills is a true gift! Think how much our students will grow with the gift of learning from the best instructor—practice.

Resources We Use

Common Lit—This website provides leveled passages on a variety of topics for Grades 3—12. Written on a variety of topics, Common Lit is a resource teachers can use to meld reading, writing and content area curriculum. www.commonlit.org

Pebble Go—This website provides a wealth of reading passages for students in K—2. The reading selections are a valuable resource for primary teachers as they combine reading, writing, and content areas. A free trial subscription allows teachers to sample the program prior to purchasing the program. www.pebblego.com

Practice in Writing Instruction

We know our students will benefit from writing consistently, but how can we best ensure this takes place in our classrooms without just having students write more? How can we know we are providing students the practice time they need in order to be successful writers?

- *Create a dedicated writing instructional block in your daily schedule.* In order to provide your students the necessary time and opportunity to learn and practice writing skills, you must create a time in your schedule dedicated to this goal. We recommend that primary teachers allot 30 minutes a day for writing instruction and intermediate teachers create a 40-minute writing daily writing block.
- *Determine what skills are needed for students to progress.* What do your students need in order to be successful? If mastered, what part of the writing process will help your students the most? Do your students need practice in writing topic sentences or adding details to their sentences? Be mindful of areas of need as you plan students' practice activities. Determine if your students need more instruction, more modeling or more feedback.
- *Provide students with something meaningful to practice.* Think about what skills students have been introduced to in writing. Students should spend their time practicing those skills. For example, if you have been working with your students on different types of sentences, this should be the focus of their writing practice. If writing is a part of your ELA rotations, be sure your students are practicing a skill to which they have been introduced.
- *Create new ways to practice.* It is difficult for many of us to keep our enthusiasm high when we are asked to do the same thing day after day. Look for new and interesting way to practice needed skills. Create a scoot game for writing topic sentences, having students compose possible topic sentences for a variety of prompts. Students can practice fluency by expanding a basic sentence with a partner. Read picture books and rewrite the incomplete sentences found in the text. A favorite book to practice this skill is whose mouse are you? By Robert Kraus. Students may rewrite the mouse's answers in complete sentences. [scholastic.com/teachers/books/whose-mouse-are-you-by-robert-kraus/](https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/books/whose-mouse-are-you-by-robert-kraus/)

Poetry Corner

Word choice is crucial to writing poetry. Poems written about autumn naturally lend themselves to vivid word choice.



"Fall" by Aileen Fischer

The poem describes the changes that take place in the month of October, from locking the garden gate to putting away the swing set. As you read the poem with students, identify the changes that happen as the weather turns colder. Students can list activities they do with their family as the season changes.

The poem ends with the phrase, "I wonder if the ladybugs have any place to go." Students can write their own "I wonder" sentences. For example: *I wonder what bears dream about while they hibernate in their caves. I wonder if any birds get lost as they migrate south for the winter.*

<http://jpronan1776.blogspot.com/2011/10/fall-by-aileen-fisher.html>

"Leaves" by Elsie Brady

In the poem "Leaves," the author compares the two ways leaves might fall from trees. Some leaves drift to the ground, while other leaves swirl and dance their way to earth. As you read this poem together, students may identify the different verbs the author used to describe the leaves' journey to the ground.

<https://anemoneone.wordpress.com/2010/11/08/leaves-by-elsie-n-brady/>

"Gathering Leaves" by Robert Frost

The poem describes a person gathering leaves into a pile or mountain. Discuss with students what is happening in the poem. What is the author's feelings toward leaves? What specific words does the author use to describe the leaves' appearance?

www.poemhunter.com/poem/gathering-leaves/

Make a Note of That

When it comes to taking notes, students often fall into two categories. The first type of student takes copious notes on everything he reads, highlighting so much information that his paper turns from white to yellow. The second type of student writes only a few words, leaving the notes with no background or context. Neither strategy proves successful. As in all aspects of writing, students require specific instruction and practice in taking notes.

Provide a graphic organizer for note-taking. Students are more successful when given a specific graphic organizer to use for note-taking. Using a graphic organizer that easily translates to a writing plan helps students see the connection between note-taking and informative writing. At *Write Now—Right Now*, we teach students to record their notes using a t-chart, or two-column graphic organizer, which can also be used as a plan for opinion and informative writing.

Determine what you want your students to take notes on. I can remember asking my students to choose a favorite animal and take notes on information they gathered in preparation for writing a report. The students' notes were a conglomeration of random facts. To help students organize their thoughts, I now provide specific areas of information for students to research.

Past Research and Writing Prompt:

Write a report about an animal who lives in Colorado.

Improved Research and Writing Prompt:

Colorado has unique wildlife. Write an essay about an animal which makes its home in Colorado. Include information on its appearance, its habitat and its predators.

Students can now create an graphic organizer to use for note-taking, knowing what areas of information to focus upon.

Make A Note of That continued

Practice taking notes during daily routines. Be on the lookout for opportunities to practice taking notes. Primary teachers can model the note-taking process with students in a variety of ways. As you highlight a *Student of the Week*, model taking notes as the student shares about their family, pets and hobbies. While reading Social Studies texts, take notes on the topic being studied. For example, "What tools does each community helper require to successfully complete their responsibilities?" As you read content area non-fiction aloud, fill in a note-taking chart. Continually look for opportunities to provide students practice with this essential skill. *Write Now -Right Now* provides lessons that go deeper into the note-taking process.

Writing in Response to Math

Today's students are not asked to simply solve math equations correctly. Rather, a good math student must correctly solve a math problem and then present their thinking and solution using good writing techniques. This genre of writing requires a specific skill set. *Write Now—Right Now* is excited to announce a new program—*Writing in Response to Math*. This easy to follow program provides the teacher with step-by-step lesson plans to use with their students as they teach children how to sequentially explain their math thinking. Each program includes samples of math problems addressing the different strands. By following these simple steps, students are able to clearly explain each step they took while solving a math word problem. The new program, *Writing in Response to Math*, is now available for Grades 3, 4, and 5.

Book Nook

because of mr. terupt by Rob Buyea

Told through the eyes of seven different students, this novel describes a year in a fifth grade classroom with their new teacher, Mr. Terupt. As the students try to navigate 5th grade, they are helped by their young and energetic teacher. His unique teaching style and creative ideas make the classroom a safe place to learn—until one snowy afternoon. Written for 5th grade and above, the novel tackles the problems faced by students everywhere. Sharing the book aloud will prompt many classroom discussions. [amazon.com/Because-Mr-Terupt-Rob-Buyea/dp/0375858245/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Because-Mr-Terupt-Rob-Buyea/dp/0375858245/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

The following are some favorite fall picture books we look forward to sharing with our students each year.

The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything by Linda Williams

This classic picture book is a favorite of young and old alike. When a little old lady goes for a walk in the woods, she has no idea what adventures await her. Students of all ages will enjoy acting out the mysterious sounds she meets on her journey. This book is a reminder of the joys of sharing a story together. The surprise ending shows all of us the importance of facing our fears, even when we are scared. [amazon.com/dp/B016VYZI3M/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?encoding=UTF8&btkr=1](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B016VYZI3M/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?encoding=UTF8&btkr=1)

A Turkey for Thanksgiving by Eve Bunting

As Mr. and Mrs. Moose plan their Thanksgiving feast, they send out invitations to all their friends. When Mr. Turkey hears he is invited to Thanksgiving Dinner, he is afraid that he will be served on the table. This delightful picture book shares the idea of friendship and the importance of communication. [amazon.com/Turkey-Thanksgiving-Eve-Bunting/dp/0395742129](https://www.amazon.com/Turkey-Thanksgiving-Eve-Bunting/dp/0395742129)

A Plump and Perky Turkey by Teresa Bateman

The town is searching for a turkey for their Thanksgiving feast. To solve their dilemma, they devise a plan to lure a turkey into town. They advertise for a turkey to model for their art-and-craft show, believing he will never suspect he will soon be dinner. The turkey, however, has other ideas to outwit the townspeople. [amazon.com/Plump-Perky-Turkey-Teresa-Bateman/dp/0761451889/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Plump-Perky-Turkey-Teresa-Bateman/dp/0761451889/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

Teachers In Texas

We are excited to announce that the *Write Now—Right Now Writing Program Grades K—6* is now available aligned with the Texas standards—TEKS. Just let us know you are from Texas when you order, and we will send you the appropriate program.



We love to talk writing! If we can ever be of service or you'd like to chat, please email us at darlene-and-terry@writenow-rightnow.com

Additional ideas and activities can be found in the *Write Now - Right Now Writing Program*.

To view grade level samples, locate additional newsletters and read blog posts, visit:

<http://www.writenow-rightnow.>

The *Write Now—Right Now Writing Program* is now being used in 49 states and four Canadian provinces. How can we be of help to you in your classroom?