

This one step—choosing a goal and sticking to it—changes everything. — Scott Reed

As we begin a new school year, we all take a moment to reflect on both the past year's successes and the opportunities for growth. As we look back on students' achievements both in class and on standardized testing, we often determine to make writing a stronger focus in the upcoming year. We know that our students require necessary writing skills but are unsure how to move this knowledge from a *wish* to a *goal*. What can we do in our practice to make our students stronger writers?

1. Make writing a non-optional part of the curriculum. Set a time to write every day and keep that time sacred.
2. Focus on the writing process. Students must be able to generate ideas, organize their thoughts, write a rough draft, revise their writing, edit their writing, and publish for an audience.
3. Teach the writing process in specific, small steps.
4. Allow students to productively practice their new skills in many settings.
5. Provide specific, timely feedback.
6. Celebrate writing successes!

Primary Students

Many kindergarten and first grade students begin the school year needing to learn how to form their letters. While they develop these fine motor skills, teachers may still work on prewriting skills. Writers must be able to generate ideas. One way to practice this skill with young students is to play the game "1, 2, 3, What can it be?" Show a common object, such as a box. Ask students what else the box might be. **You are not asking what the box could hold.** For example, if the box held cars, it could be a garage. Put a grasshopper inside and it become an insect condominium. As students brainstorm ideas, record their thoughts on chart paper. The ideas can be turned into either written or dictated sentences. Students can illustrate their new sentences.

Intermediate Students

Intermediate students will often state "I don't have anything to write about." Help change this mindset by spending time generating ideas with your students. Have students write a basic noun at the top of a sheet of a paper. Examples can be: dogs, clouds, weather, red, whatever you'd like. It is best if the word does not relate to any content being taught, so students do not try and guess the right response. Give them two minutes to write down as many ideas as they can related to that topic word. For example, the topic **red** could be strawberries, sunrises, crayons, correcting pens, roses, etc. Students should share their ideas, listening for interesting ideas presented by classmates. Keep these lists of ideas in the Pre-Writing section of their writing notebooks. For an extension, ask students to list formats they could use when writing about this topic. For example strawberries could be written in the format of a recipe,

Other ideas can be found in the *Write Now—Right Now Writing Program*.

Visit: www.writenow-rightnow.com for more information.