

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. One important concept for students to grasp is the concept of organization. To *organize* is defined as to put things into a structured whole. Begin a chart with students titled ***"How Things Are Organized."*** As students find examples of organization in the classroom, post a picture of that item, along with a sentence explaining the organization. **For example: Crayons are organized in a box by color. My read-to-self books are organized in my crate.** You might ask students to bring in a picture from home illustrating a way something is organized at home. **For example: Our dishes are organized by plates and bowls.** Continue to gather ideas throughout first quarter.

Intermediate Students

Writing is a process, not a final product. This is a key concept intermediate students must understand. In order to facilitate this understanding and provide your students a place to keep all their writing, each student must have a writing notebook. Provide students with different colored dividers and have them title them with the following.

- In the insert of the cover, students slide a cover sheet on which they have written ***I Am A Writer.*** This is an agreement we all make at the start of the year.
- ***Prewrite—I Gather Ideas and Plan***
- ***Rough Draft—My First Try***
- ***Vivid Vocabulary—I Revise***
- ***Editing—I Fix It Up*** (We also keep any grammar lessons here as a reference)

As we gather ideas, generate plans, discover new words and write drafts, we have a place to store our writing. Setting up and requiring this organizational system will pay huge dividends during the year.

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

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