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STRATEGY GUIDE

Write Alouds



Grades K - 12

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Strategy Guide Series Teaching Writing

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ABOUT THIS STRATEGY GUIDE

Young and/or poor writers need to observe experienced writers at work in ways that will actually help them to write more effectively themselves. Write-aloud lessons, known as modeled writing, will help you to provide authentic explanations for your students, demonstrating how writers actually go about constructing various kinds of texts.

RESEARCH BASIS

Readers use metacognitive processes to comprehend text: adjusting reading to purpose, self-monitoring and questioning, and reflecting on an author's purpose. Think-aloud, in which a teacher verbalizes his thinking for students while reading a text, improves students' understanding of these processes.

Writing is also a complex cognitive activity. Research has demonstrated that students improve their writing ability when cognitive strategies are demonstrated for them in clear and explicit ways. Students learn the forms and functions of writing as they observe and participate in writing events directed by knowledgeable writers, particularly when these events are followed by opportunities for independent writing. Instruction that makes writing processes visible to students is key to improving their writing skills. Several excellent instructional frameworks for writing, including modeled, shared, interactive, guided or independent writing, can provide strong support for students' successful writing based on the level and type of teacher support that is provided for students. During write-aloud, like think-aloud, teachers verbalize the internal dialog they use as they write a particular type of text, explicitly demonstrating metacognitive processes.

STRATEGY IN PRACTICE

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Write-aloud is taught to small groups or a whole class in briskly paced, 10- to 15-minute lessons. Model your own writing of a short text, generally choosing one particular aspect of a genre to write-aloud (such as an opening or closing paragraph of a longer essay or a dialogue between characters).

- Plan write-aloud lessons for types of writing that present particular challenges to your students. Prepare for the lesson by writing your own short texts and developing awareness of your own decision-making while you write.
- Tell students that you will be verbalizing your own thinking for them as you write. Ask students to pay attention to the decisions you make as you write, and remind them that they will be producing this same type of text themselves.

- Explain to students what kind of text you will be writing and what you want to accomplish as you write this text. If you are writing a persuasive essay, for example, remind students very briefly that you will need to convince readers of your own point of view. For narrative dialogue, point out that characters' talk should explain the main problem of the story.
- As you write (using chart paper or document viewer), make verbal statements that describe your own decision-making processes:
 - Now I need to summarize my main points. I think I should look back at my outline of points that I made in the rest of the essay.
 - Hmm, what can I have this character say now in order to show how upset she is?
 - How can I spell this word? It will help if I say the word slowly to myself first.
- After you have completed the write-aloud for a short text, ask students to comment on what they noticed about your thinking during the activity. You may want to ask students to talk about what seemed to be most important to accomplish as you were writing. You might also ask students to describe what you were thinking about as you wrote a challenging part of the writing.
- It may also be useful to ask students to talk about their own thinking and decision-making used while they are writing this same kind of text or to work with a partner to write their own example.

RELATED RESOURCES

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LESSON PLANS

Grades **3 - 5** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

[How-To Writing: Motivating Students to Write for a Real Purpose](#)

It's not easy surviving fourth grade (or third or fifth)! In this lesson, students brainstorm survival tips for future fourth graders and incorporate those tips into an essay.

Grades **3 - 5** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

[Thoughtshots Can Bring Your Characters to Life!](#)

Students will walk a mile in the shoes of *Solomon Singer* as they learn how to use flashbacks, flash-aheads, and internal dialogue to develop realistic characters.

Grades **3 - 5** | Lesson Plan | Minilesson

[Choosing Clear and Varied Dialogue Tags: A Minilesson](#)

In this minilesson, students explore the use of dialogue tags such as "he said" or "she answered" in picture books and novels, discussing their purpose, form, and style.

Grades **2 - 5** | Lesson Plan | Unit

[History Comes Alive: Developing Fluency and Comprehension Using Social Studies](#)

Let the power of imagination and inference serve as a "time machine" to bring Benjamin Franklin into the classroom! History and science come to life in a dialogue with Franklin the inventor, developed through lesson activities that incorporate research, imagination, writing, visual arts, and drama.

STUDENT INTERACTIVES

Grades **3 - 12** | Student Interactive | Organizing & Summarizing

[Essay Map](#)

The Essay Map is an interactive graphic organizer that enables students to organize and outline their ideas for an informational, definitional, or descriptive essay.

Grades **3 - 12** | Student Interactive | Organizing & Summarizing

[ReadWriteThink Notetaker](#)

Useful for a wide variety of reading and writing activities, this outlining tool allows students to organize up to five levels of information.

CALENDAR ACTIVITIES

Grades **1 - 12** | Calendar Activity | July 7

[Write letters that make things happen!](#)

In a small group or as individuals, students write letters related to a unit of study or particular topic they have studied.

PRINTOUTS

Grades **3 - 12** | Printout | Graphic Organizer

[Essay Map](#)

Use this graphic organizer to develop an outline for an essay that includes an introductory statement, main ideas, supporting details, and a conclusion.

Grades **3 - 12** | Printout | Graphic Organizer

[Persuasion Map](#)

Use this graphic organizer to develop a persuasive stance for an essay, speech, poster, or any type of assignment that incorporates persuasion.

Grades **K - 6** | Printout | Graphic Organizer

[Character Map](#)

Who are the characters in this story? Students will examine what a character looks like, what a character does, and how other characters react to him or her.

Grades **5 - 12** | Printout | Writing Starter

[RAFT Writing Template](#)

Students can utilize this printout to organize their writing as they learn to use the RAFT strategy. This printout enables students to clearly define their role, audience, format, and topic for writing.

STRATEGY GUIDES

Grades **K - 5** | Strategy Guide

[Persuasive Writing](#)

This strategy guide focuses on persuasive writing and offers specific methods on how you can help your students use it to improve their critical writing and thinking skills.

PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY

Grade **K** | Professional Library | Book

[Building a Foundation for Preschool Literacy: Effective Instruction for Children's Reading and Writing Development \(Second Edition\)](#)

This book focuses on best practices for providing preschoolers with early literacy instruction.

GAMES & TOOLS

Grades **3 - 8** | Game & Tool

[Letter Generator](#)

The Letter Generator shows children the key parts of a letter and lets them practice writing either a friendly or business letter.

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