

How to carry out the recommendation

.1 Teach very young writers how to hold a pencil correctly and form letters

Early writing instruction should begin with demonstrations of how to hold a pencil comfortably between the thumb and forefinger, resting on the middle finger. Teachers also should show young writers the most efficient and legible ways to form each letter, regardless of whether print or cursive script is used. Teachers also should show young writers the most efficient and legible ways to form each letter, regardless of whether print or cursive script is used. Because handwriting is a motor skill, it works best to practice in multiple short sessions. Students also should apply their handwriting skills in sentences and in authentic writing activities .

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.2 Teach students to spell words correctly

A relatively small number of words (850) account for 80 percent of the words elementary- grade students use in their writing. Teachers should help students learn to spell words they commonly use. Although many elementary schools have an explicit spelling curriculum, teachers should connect spelling instruction with writing as much as possible. Students should be encouraged to learn words they frequently misspell, as well as words they wish to include in their writing. Teachers also should help

students acquire the skills they need to generate and check plausible spellings for words .

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.3Teach students to construct sentences for fluency, meaning and style

Students should learn to write strong sentences that convey their intended meaning and engage readers. Teachers should focus sentencelevel instruction on sentence construction, encouraging students to consider the meaning and syntax of the sentences they develop. Teachers also should explicitly demonstrate how sentence construction and sentence mechanics, such as punctuation and capitalization, interact to form strong sentences. Students also need instruction on how to use a variety of sentence structures in their writing .

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.4Teach students to type fluently and to use a word processor to compose

Students should be introduced to typing in 1st grade. By 2nd grade, students should begin regular typing practice. By the end of 2nd or 3rd grade, students should be able to type as fast as they can write by hand. Instruction in typing should be accompanied by instruction in how to use a word processor .

Recommendation 4: Create an engaged community of writers

Level of evidence: Minimal

Students need both the skill and the will to develop as writers.⁹⁷

Teachers should establish a supportive environment in their classroom to foster a community of writers who are motivated to write well. In a supportive writing environment, teachers participate as writers, not simply instructors, to demonstrate the importance of writing. By taking part in writing lessons and activities, teachers convey the message that writing is important, valued, and rewarding .

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.1 Teachers should participate by writing and sharing their writing

Teachers should model how the ability to write affects their daily lives, demonstrate the importance of writing to communicate, model the perseverance required to create a good piece of writing, and express the satisfaction that can come from creating a meaningful text. For example, a teacher could draft a letter or an email to a friend in front of students, thinking out loud to make the invisible act of composing — which occurs internally for experienced writers — more visible to students .

.2Give students writing choices

Teachers should provide opportunities for student choice in writing assignments — for example, choice in selecting writing topics or the freedom to modify a teacher-selected prompt. One way to foster choice is for students to keep a notebook in which they record topics for writing .

Teachers also need to provide instruction and opportunities for students to practice writing to prompts .

.3Encourage students to collaborate as writers

Teachers can encourage students to collaborate throughout the writing process by brainstorming ideas about a topic, responding to drafts in a writing group, or helping peers edit or revise their work. Collaboration also can take the form of collaborative writing, whereby students jointly develop a single text .

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.4Provide students with opportunities to give and receive feedback

Students need to know whether their writing is accurately and appropriately conveying its message. One way students can determine

this is by sharing their writing and responding to written and verbal feedback from the teacher and their peers. Although teachers should provide feedback to students through teacher-student conferences and rubrics, peers also should be encouraged to participate in the feedback process. Students also need to be taught strategies and appropriate language for written feedback .

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Strategies for Improving Expository Writing and Analytical Thinking

Teaching Basic Writing Skills provides teachers with flexible, targeted strategies for the development of written language .

It presents research-based techniques to add clarity, structure, and precision to students' expository and narrative writing. The writing activities can be adapted for a wide range of abilities and has been successfully implemented in grades K-12 in every content area .

Teaching Basic Writing Skills Helps Students :

Write to Learn

Write to Understand

Write to Construct New Knowledge

Write to Study

Write to Question

Write to Communicate

Write to Prove a Point

Teaching Basic Writing Skills Helps Teachers :

Place intense focus on expository writing

Implement proven writing activities

Engage students in deep writing instruction, that requires them to think analytically

Bridge the application of writing to support reading, speaking, listening, and content-area learning