



Empower Your Students To Be Better Writers

Overview

Writing is an essential skill that supports students' success across all subject areas and is crucial for their future academic and professional achievements. However, studies show that a significant number of students in the U.S., particularly in middle school, struggle with writing proficiency. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only about [24% of eighth graders](#) in the U.S. perform at or above the proficient level in writing. This gap highlights the urgent need for effective interventions to improve students' writing abilities.

The Secondary Writing Toolkit is an evidence-based resource designed to help middle school students develop and refine their writing skills, specifically in argumentative writing. By participating in this study, schools will contribute to research aimed at addressing these critical challenges in student writing and receive compensation for their participation.

The study will be a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) from December 2024 to May 2025, involving middle school English Language Arts (ELA) teachers and their students. Schools can earn up to \$2500 for participating and teachers can earn up to \$180 for their participation.

Sign up here: <https://forms.gle/y5ZgmA2YtbygZahdA>

Details for the study are in the pages below.

What do you mean by Randomized Control Trials?

Randomized control trials (RCTs) are used to fairly compare different groups in a study and ensure that any change can clearly be attributed to an intervention. For you, this means your school will be **randomly** assigned to one of two groups:

- Control Group: You continue with your regular writing instruction without any changes and do some data collection.
- Toolkit Group: You will apply the practices from the Secondary Writing Toolkit to see if it improves your students' writing skills.

Control Group

- **Benefits**
 - \$2500 compensation per school for **changing nothing** in how they typically teach writing.
 - \$100 compensation per teacher for completing data collection activities.
 - Access to the Toolkit after the study
- **Requirements and Commitment**
 - Continue instruction as per usual
 - Teachers must maintain a daily log about your writing instructions for 10 days between Fall and Spring semester (approx 15mins per day, 150 mins total)

Toolkit Group

- **Benefits**
 - Early access to the Secondary Writing Toolkit that IES has invested millions into
 - Professional Development opportunity for teachers
 - A measurable difference in students' writing ability
 - Up to \$180 per teacher to participate in the Professional Development and data collection activities
 - \$15 for administrators to fill out a short survey
- **Requirements and Commitment**
 - At least two ELA teachers in 6th, 7th or 8th grade must participate
 - Toolkit group teachers will participate in Professional Learning Communities on writing and try a couple of lessons in class to see if it improves their students' argumentative writing.
 - Toolkit group teachers will be asked to participate in 9 Professional Learning Communities (1 hour each, 9hours total) at a pace the school decides and test some lessons with their class. This must be done before the Spring ELA assessments.

- Toolkit group will nominate a 'Peer Facilitator' who will be asked to facilitate the PLC's, attend a two hour workshop in Jan and attend 6 monthly Coaching sessions. (8 additional hours total)

Overview of Module Topics, PLC Sessions, and Sample Schedule

Module title and practice guide recommendation	Sessions	Sample schedule
Module 1: Reading and Writing to Improve Students' Arguments Recommendation 2: Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.	PLC Session 1.1 PLC Session 1.2 Try out one or more lessons PLC Session 1.3	December: Week 1 December: Week 3 January: Week 1
Module 2: Writing Strategies for Planning, Goal Setting, and Drafting Recommendation 1: Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle.	PLC Session 2.1 Try out one or more lessons PLC Session 2.2	January: Week 3 February: Week 1
Module 3: Writing Strategies for Evaluating, Revising, and Editing Recommendation 1: Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle.	PLC Session 3.1 Try out one or more lessons PLC Session 3.2	February: Week 3 March: Week 1
Module 4: Formative Assessment to Improve Students' Writing Recommendation 3: Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.	PLC Session 4.1 PLC Session 4.2	March: Week 3 April: Week 1

What is the time commitment?

Administrators	Coordinating PLCs Data collection (Administrator Survey)	2 hours 10 minutes
Teachers	Participating in PLC sessions, trying out lessons Data collection (Instructional Log, Professional Learning Tracker, Focus Group)	12 hours (1 hour for each PLC, 3 hours for trying out lessons) 4 hours
Teacher Leaders	Participate in teacher leader coaching community Prepare to facilitate PLCs	See teacher hours above plus: 8 hours 9 hours
Students	Participating in lessons	3 – 8 hours (depending on how many lessons teachers try out)

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Further Information:

Recruitment website: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/region/pacific/Recruitment/3>

Infographic about the practice guide and toolkit:

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/pacific/pdf/SecondaryWritingPracticeGuide_Toolkit_Overview.pdf