

# What is Writing Workshop?

Writing Workshop is a daily opportunity for students to use skills and strategies to create authentic writing. Students rehearse, draft, revise, edit, and publish their writing around genres such as narrative, informative, and poetry. They use real authors as mentors as well as teacher and student examples of quality writing. Often, students work in partnerships to further develop their writing. During Writing Workshop, teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all of their students.

## Important Ideas from Writing Workshop:

- ✚ Students need an **extended time** to write, just as they do to read.
- ✚ We are looking at the **process** not just the product (finished writing piece). We look for **progress and growth** throughout the unit. We note as the students begin to incorporate the practiced skills and strategies.
- ✚ Students have **personal investment** in Writing Workshop. Each student chooses a topic that matters to them within the unit of study.
- ✚ We **explicitly teach** them skills and strategies. There are many opportunities to practice and incorporate these strategies as most spiral throughout the year.
- ✚ We help students become **independent writers** by maintaining structural routines and procedures of workshop. We also use charts for students to reference, create partnerships for support in writing, and show them writing in the real world.
- ✚ Sound spelling and **spelling approximations** are okay. It is imperative that students are able to put their thoughts on paper. However, we do have expectations for spelling. We want students to use the spelling they know and resources they have (word wall, environmental print, etc.). We also want

them to note when they are unsure of the spelling of a word so that they may go back to fix it at a later time.

- ✚ We need to **CELEBRATE** what the students ARE doing and encourage them to stand on the shoulders of their best work.

## TIPS for helping your child grow as writers:

- ❖ Storytell with your child at home. Share real stories that have happened to you, and encourage them to tell you a real story.
  - As you storytell, use sequence words such as first, next, then, and last.
  - Tell the same story many times and continue to add more detail.
- ❖ Discuss ordinary events that have happened during the day (eg. Stepping in a puddle, taking the dog for a walk, cooking macaroni and cheese). We want children to see the value of the "small moments" in their lives.
- ❖ Writing for many real purposes is rewarding.
  - Ask them to help make a grocery list.
  - Have them write a thank you note.
  - Let them make a to-do list.
  - Ask them to write directions to go some place.
  - Have them write directions to make something or how to do something
- ❖ Have them write in a variety of ways. Let them use sidewalk chalk, markers, frosting, shaving cream, etc. Incorporate writing into your everyday activities and games.
- ❖ Let your child see you write - a report for your job, an email, a list, etc.
- ❖ Create a book together. It may be a book about your vacation, holiday, or special time in your family.
- ❖ Encourage your child to keep a journal. They may write about their day, collect pictures or quotes they like, sketch, etc.
- ❖ Make a special place for writing. Put together a writing toolbox with pens, markers, paper, cards, etc.
- ❖ Help them expand their vocabulary by noticing and using interesting words.

- Word association games. Call out a word and have your child say what he/she thinks of. This will help your child make word connections in writing.
- Be more specific. Say a word like *run* and ask your child to think of a more vivid word like *gallop* or *sprint*.
- ❖ Notice and praise your child's effort in writing. Try to focus on the content. For every error your child makes, there are a dozen things done well. Resist the tendency to focus only on errors of spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical parts of writing.

**Reading and Writing are interdependent. So as you read together:**

- ❖ Notice interesting writing. For example, "Look at how the author used big letters to show that I need to read this in a loud voice." Or "I noticed the author decided to describe the flower by telling me the color AND how sweetly it smelled."
- ❖ Have your students point out words they have been learning in Word Study.
- ❖ Notice punctuation marks and how the author used them to help the reader say it the way the author wanted it to sound.
- ❖ Read different types of writing and talk about them: narrative (stories), essays (opinions), informative, poetry, etc.
- ❖ Read books by the same author and talk about the author's style of writing.