

The Importance of Writing Instruction

Building a Foundation for Success



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Reading is an essential part of the literacy equation, but there's still a missing piece of the puzzle—writing instruction. Outside of being able to read, recognize new vocabulary words, and effectively use spoken language, literacy refers to the ability to read and write. Oftentimes, the emphasis is placed on reading instruction, leaving much to be desired in terms of preparation to confidently teach writing skills. To help you remedy this in your school/district, we'd like to take a deep dive into the importance of writing instruction, the building blocks of writing instruction, the impact writing instruction has on reading abilities, and how [Writing A-Z](#), our comprehensive solution for K-5 writing instruction, can help.

Why Teach Writing?

With buzz words such as [“The Science of Reading”](#) dominating the world of education, the concept of prioritizing writing instruction isn't seen as being equally important. As a result, many teachers express that they either lack the training to successfully deliver effective writing instruction, or that they lack the time to deliver said instruction. Though both are valid reasons as to why writing instruction may be difficult, we'd like to put in perspective how crucial it is to teach writing in an effective manner.

Though the emphasis is often placed on reading, many educators do not realize that improving writing skills also improves reading skills. Given that they are quite complementary skills, one may think that focusing on reading produces superb writers, but that simply isn't the case. When flipped the other way, meaning that writing produces better readers, this statement is correct in a sense that writing about

information presented in a text facilitates comprehension, improves retention, and helps students gain insight about reading as they compose their texts.

Unfortunately, there is a huge gap when it comes to the production of proficient writers. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 27% of students performed at or above a proficient writing level in 2011¹. Furthermore, two-thirds of students in grades 4 - 12 are seen as low-achieving writers, making it apparent that they are not learning to write well enough to meet the demands of school or the workplace. This doesn't come at much of a surprise given that the years preceding that survey also indicated that writing isn't exactly a strong suit for many students. In fact, according to a 2003 report from the National Commission on Writing, writing of students in the United States is "not what it should be," translating to the \$3.1 billion spent in writing remediation annually². Based on this data alone, it is abundantly clear that delivering quality writing instruction is an absolute must when it comes to producing successful learning and professional outcomes.

The Building Blocks of Writing Instruction

Becoming a skilled writer involves a balancing act between the varying cognitive tasks and skills required to engage in the writing process such as organizing ideas, goal setting, retrieving information from long-term memory, planning, self-evaluating, and more. To support students on this path, it is essential to implement sound explicit instruction. To do so, teachers must first be aware of the building blocks of writing, similar to the familiarity many teachers gain prior to implementing literacy instruction in alignment with [the Science of Reading](#). To do so, we recommend looking to the Keys of Literacy, a model that identifies the five components necessary for skilled writing. According to Joan Sedita, the founder and president of Keys to Literacy, the skills necessary to create adept writers are the following:

- **Critical thinking:** As students begin to write about a subject, they will be required to think about what they want to communicate to their audience. To do so, students will have to gain an understanding of the writing task, utilize the background knowledge they may have, and determine if they need to gather additional information. Note: This step also includes gaining an understanding of the steps of the writing process (planning, drafting, evaluating, revising, and editing). To make this step a little easier, teachers will need to utilize explicit instruction and implement planning, revising, and editing strategies to help them reach their writing potential.
- **Syntax:** It is no secret that students will need to have a sound understanding of grammar to allow them to communicate clearly. As such, this skill involves an understanding of syntax structures.
- **Text structure:** Highly dependent on explicit instruction, this skill involves familiarity about the structure of varying text types, patterns of organization, and associated words/phrases. To aid in the development of this skill, it is important to select lesson plans and instructional tools that provide ample information about how different genres of texts are formatted and the intention of each.
- **Writing craft:** This skill refers to the ability to select the right diction, writing point-of-view, voice/style, and literary devices to meet the needs of the intended audience.
- **Transcription:** Essentially, this skill represents mastery of lower-order cognitive skills such as spelling, handwriting, and keyboarding to allow students to write effectively.

As you can see, creating proficient writers involves the development of a myriad of skills. While this may be a little overwhelming, we want to remind you that you are not alone! To help you on your journey to enhanced writing instruction, we've created a product to completely change the game- [Writing A-Z](#).

How Writing A-Z can Help

Built from the ground up, Writing A-Z allows teachers to confidently deliver writing instruction with ease, regardless of the limited time they have each day to do so. Designed with both teacher and student in mind, Writing A-Z is a comprehensive K-5 writing program created to function as a stand-alone product or a supplement to your current core literacy plan. Writing A-Z acts as the perfect companion for the busy educator by offering:

- Flexible, sequenced, explicit, standards-based lesson plans that follow a gradual release model
- [Embedded point-of-use professional development](#) led by experts that is both brief and insightful, making it easier to fit into a busy schedule
- Pre-and post-assessments to inform future instruction
- Auto-assigned grammar practice to aid with mastery of the syntax skills listed in the Keys to Literacy
- Access to WaLT, our digital writing tool that allows students to complete the writing process 100% digitally while allowing teachers to provide timely, actionable feedback
- The ability to watch students enjoy learning, as Writing A-Z includes access to the [Kids A-Z student portal](#), a place where students can complete tasks and earn cool rewards to increase student engagement

Writing A-Z is truly essential when it comes to providing superior writing instruction, and hence, combatting the gaps in learning that are present today.

Better Writers = Better Readers

As you can see from the data above, we have a long way to go as far as writing abilities in classrooms around the country. Though it may seem a bit overwhelming, especially when considering how much time is spent on reading, we hope this article has prepared you with the information you need to not only build proficient readers, but writers as well. If you are currently considering enhancing writing instruction in your classroom, we'd love to show you how Writing A-Z can help!

[LEARN MORE](#)

Footnote:

1. National Center for Education Statistics (2012). The Nation's Report Card: Writing 2011 (NCES 2012-470). Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
2. The National Commission on Writing. *The Neglected "R": The Need For a Writing Revolution*. The National Commission on Writing, Apr. 2023, https://archive.nwp.org/cs/public/download/nwp_file/21478/the-neglected-r-college-board-nwp-report.pdf?x-r=pcfile_d

