



An Overview of
Integrated Literacy

**A Comprehensive Framework
for Research-Based Instruction
in Reading and Writing for Grades K-12**

Created by

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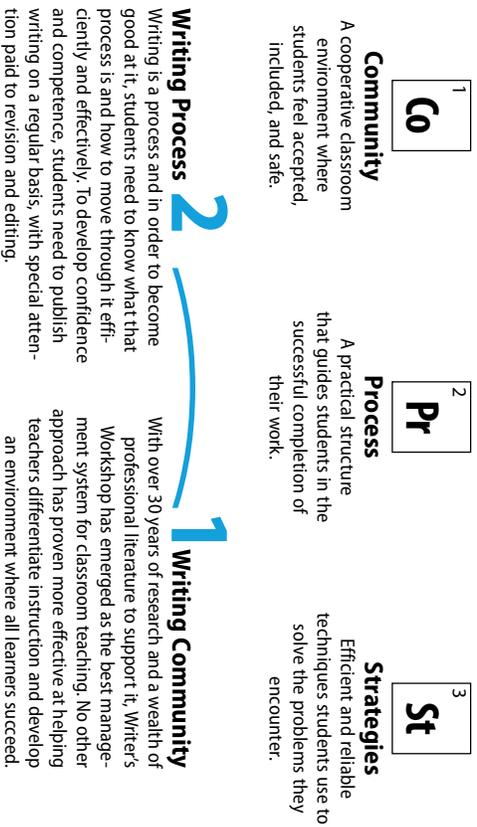
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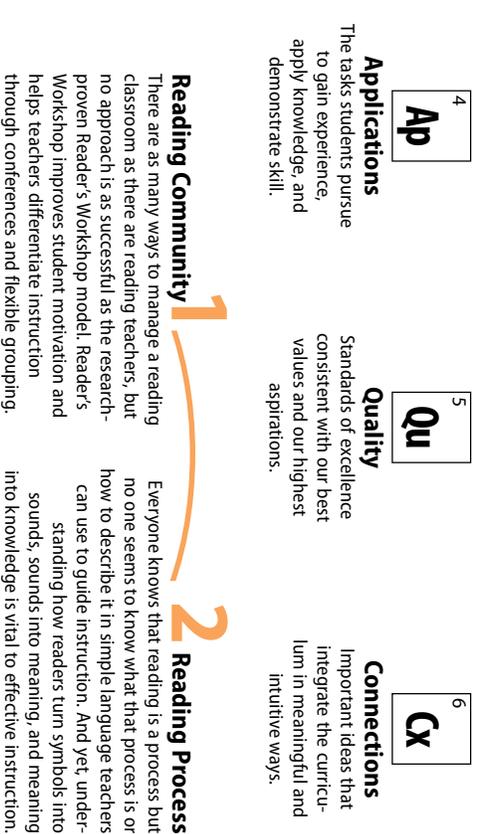
*The best way to teach is the way that makes sense
for you, your kids, and your community.*



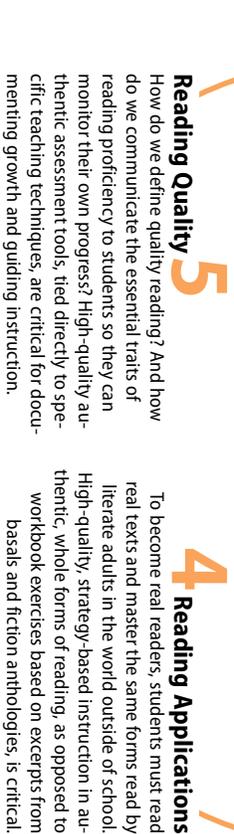
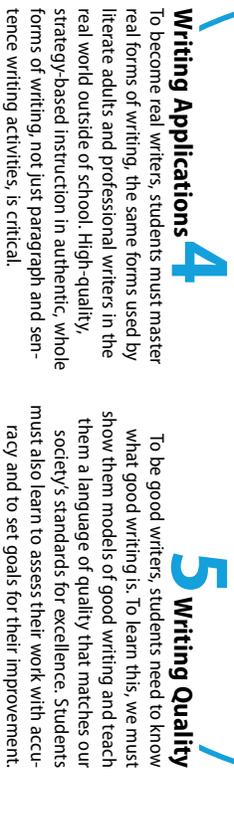
The Integrated Literacy™ Instructional Framework



Writing



Reading



The Elements of Effective Instruction

1
Co

COMMUNITY

A cooperative classroom environment where students feel accepted, included, and safe. Learning is a social activity; we learn from the company we keep. Our first duty as teachers is to keep the company in our classrooms friendly, supportive, and inviting of the risk-taking learning requires.

2
Pr

PROCESS

A practical structure that guides students in the successful completion of their work. The key to producing a good product is to use a good process. It's not enough to show kids *what* to do; we have to show them *how* to do it, too. And that means introducing them to processes that scaffold their success.

3
St

STRATEGIES

Efficient and reliable techniques students use to solve the problems they encounter. A strategy is a set of steps a learner can use to solve a problem. Learning is full of problems. Our obligation is to teach students, regardless of their ability, the best strategies successful people use to solve them.

4
Ap

APPLICATIONS

The tasks students pursue to gain experience, apply knowledge, and demonstrate skill. We all learn best by doing things; experience is our greatest teacher. The assignments we give must be chosen not for the ease with which their results can be measured, but for their potential to help students learn.

5
Qu

QUALITY

Standards of excellence consistent with our best values and our highest aspirations. We must always be helping students answer the question "What is good work?" and connecting their experience of quality with that of our society's accepted authorities and most acclaimed producers.

6
Cx

CONNECTIONS

Important ideas that integrate the curriculum in meaningful and intuitive ways. We do our students a disservice when we present to them a view of the world characterized by arbitrary academic divisions that determine what they may learn and what they may not. Life is integrated; school should be, too.

7
Au

AUTHENTICITY

Real things done the way real people really do them for real reasons that really matter. Education is preparation for successful independent adult life in the world. What is the point of teaching kids to do things in school that no successful independent adult would ever do outside of it?

8
Di

DIFFERENTIATION

Designing instruction that affords each student an equal opportunity to achieve legitimate success. The best learning occurs at the intersection of challenge and interest. Only by honoring the interests of our students and challenging each one appropriately can we help them all succeed.

9
Ex

EXPLICITNESS

Stating our expectations clearly and explaining to students how we will help them succeed. Clear communication is essential in the classroom. When we ask students to do things, we have to explain to them what we want them to do, why we want them to do it, and how we know it's good.

10
Mo

MODELING

Doing what we expect our students to do and telling them how we do it while we do it. Modeling is the best teaching technique we can use because it takes advantage of students' natural capacity for imitation. When we explain our actions as we model, our teaching becomes even more powerful.

11
Ch

CHOICE

Allowing students to select from a reasonable range of responsible options in appropriate situations. Life is all about choices. So while we have our children in the protective environment of school, it makes sense to let them experience the power of choice in ways that will prepare them for the future.

12
Ow

OWNERSHIP

Acknowledging the connection between choices, results, and responsibility. When learners have no ownership in their learning, school becomes meaningless and irrelevant. Ownership is the key to helping disengaged students transform themselves into self-motivated and self-managing scholars.

What Does “Integrated Literacy” Mean?

Part 1 of 4: Applying the Logic of Real Life to Make Teaching and Learning Easier

In school we like to separate things. Every subject has its own well-marked boundaries defined by the concepts we decide to teach, the materials we use to teach them, and the tasks we assign. Unfortunately, the real world outside of school isn't quite as neat and tidy. When we look for things in our lives like reading, writing, math, social studies, or science, distinctions begin to blur, categories break down. It seems that the more we try to classify the knowledge and skills we value in life, the more integrated life appears.

The problem of school being one way and life being another is nowhere more evident than in the traditional model of Language Arts. In school, reading and writing are distinct tasks separated sometimes by different class periods and often by different tasks. We read novels but write essays. We read the Classics but write about the contemporary. We immerse our students in poetry for its artistic and cultural value but expect them to master the prosaic skills of functional business and academic prose.

Integrated Literacy is different. Through a thoughtful reorganization of the traditional Language Arts curriculum, it seeks to restore the normal state of affairs in the learning lives of children and their teachers by affirming that reading and writing are not separate skills but reciprocal processes defining the single skill of literate communication. The more school reflects this reality, and the logic of life in the world, the easier our teaching becomes and the better our students perform.

INTEGRATED STRATEGIES

Writing strategies used for comprehension in reading; reading strategies used for revision in writing. Writers become readers when they revise; readers become writers when they analyze and respond. Why not take advantage of this and teach appropriately? All authentic writing strategies can serve as effective reading comprehension strategies, thus giving students twice as much time to learn while teachers have only half as much to teach.

INTEGRATED FORMS

Students reading the same text forms we want them to master as writers. 90% of what students study in traditional Language Arts curricula revolves around fiction, drama, and poetry. But the literate tasks we pursue in the world outside of school are more likely to involve non-fiction reading and writing. To prepare students appropriately, we must allow them to study in school, during both reading and writing, the same authentic text forms they will need in life.

INTEGRATED ASSIGNMENTS

Authentic tasks that exercise reading, writing, and critical thinking skills simultaneously across the curriculum. One of the best things about teaching Language Arts is that reading and writing apply to every subject. That means we can use a wide variety of content to stimulate literacy learning. With content-neutral strategies, we can even allow students to select their own subject matter and still be assured that they will be involved in disciplined and valuable learning.

INTEGRATED ASSESSMENTS

A single system, for both reading and writing, used by teachers to assess students and by students to assess themselves. Why should teachers assess students with one set of tools and give students another set with which to assess themselves? Why should we deal with rubrics for every new assignment that comes up? In order for assessment to be valuable, it must be simple enough for everyone to understand and fast enough for anyone to use any time they need it.

INTEGRATED STRUCTURE

Shared classroom procedures based on a symmetrical model of Reader's and Writer's Workshop. Students need thoughtful consistency. Why should they spend time and energy learning a new set of procedures and expectations that change with each unit they study? When teachers create a workshop-style environment where procedures for the writing classroom mirror those of reading, management becomes easier and student participation improves.

INTEGRATED PHILOSOPHY

A consistent set of beliefs that apply to both reading and writing. Traditionally, in the Language Arts, we have offered a confused curriculum. We read together but write individually. We follow a textbook in reading but follow our whim in writing. Students learn better when teachers operate out of a consistent set of beliefs regarding what good reading and writing look like, what good readers and writers do, and how these things should be taught.

What Does “Integrated Literacy” Mean?

Part 2 of 4: Integrating Reading and Writing Through Shared Strategies

Much of the information we encounter when we read has a narrative component. Narrative forms are also common when we write. The ability to summarize ideas in sequence is also a key thinking skill. With one solid strategy, taught in both reading and writing, we can help students master any information that is organized sequentially.

READING

Using the Transition-Action-Details strategy to summarize information from a textbook. In this example, a student is creating a summary of information from a textbook chapter on the origins of the conflict in the Middle East. The Transition-Action-Details strategy can be used to summarize any kind of information. It’s perfect for plot summaries in fiction, historical events in Social Studies, the stages of a scientific process, the steps in a math problem, and all types of procedural writing.

Transition	Action	Details
When the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of World War I,	Great Britain ended up administering Palestine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • League of Nations’ Mandate System. • League Covenant Article 22.
In 1917, at the urging of Zionist groups in England,	The British issued the Balfour Declaration.	The declaration expressed support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”
During the years of the Mandate, 1922-1947,	Many Jews immigrated to Palestine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly from Eastern Europe. • Fleeing Nazi persecution in the 1930s.
In 1947,	The UN proposed splitting Palestine into two states.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One state for Palestinian Arabs, the other for Jews. • Jerusalem internationalized. • Resolution 181 of 1947.
In 1948,	Israel declared its independence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel attacked by Arab nations. • Won war and 75% of Palestine. • Half the population of Palestinians left or were thrown out.
In 1967, as a result of the Six Day War,	Israel came to occupy the remaining territory of Palestine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The West Bank was formerly under Jordanian control. • The Gaza Strip was controlled by Egypt.

WRITING

Using the Transition-Action-Details strategy to organize the events in a personal essay. In this example, a student is using the Transition-Action-Details strategy to pre-write a narrative essay. The Transition-Action-Details strategy works for all forms of narrative writing including personal essay, fiction, biography, and anything where the writer needs to recount a sequence of events. It’s also perfect for technical writing where lists of instructions are required.

Transition	Action	Details
Last summer,	I went on vacation with my family to the ocean.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We go almost every year. • It’s fun because there’s a lot to do. • I get to do a lot of exploring with my dog.
On the third day,	I was walking with my dog along a cliff overlooking the beach below.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About 75 feet up from the beach. • On a path with trees and brush and big piles of rocks by the edge.
As we got up to the highest point on the cliff,	We saw a small animal scurry under some rocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It startled me at first but then I realized that it was probably more afraid of us than we were of it. • I just kept on walking.
All of a sudden,	My dog ran after the animal and jumped over the rocks to try to get it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He likes to chase things. • I was amazed at how fast he ran. • He got close to the rocks but didn’t stop. He just went right over.
[No Transition]	I ran after him, looked over the edge of the cliff, and found him clinging to some brush hanging by his paws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was so scared. • I thought he’d gone over the cliff and had fallen all the way down. • He looked scared, too.
At first I didn’t know what to do. Then,	I tried to reach over the rocks to pull him up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I grabbed a piece of the branch and pulled him up with it. • I just kept telling him to hold on. • He was just as scared as I was.

What Does “Integrated Literacy” Mean?

Part 3 of 4: Integrating Fiction and Non-Fiction Through a Unified Model of Comprehension

Many students who read literature relatively well perform poorly when reading non-fiction outside of Language Arts. One reason for this is a disparity in teaching methods: we use one approach for fiction and a completely different approach for non-fiction. By integrating strategic comprehension instruction with a single set of strategies that can be used for both fiction and non-fiction texts, we help students leverage their strengths to address their weaknesses.

FICTION

Using the “Read Like a Reader” and “Read Like a Writer” strategies to analyze fiction. In this example, a student is creating a structured response to a short story using a set of twelve reading strategies. On the reader’s side, we focus on understanding the message the writer is trying to put across.

READ LIKE A READER

Question: *Is this a fantasy story where people have special powers? If Eddie can really fly, why aren't his parents more freaked out about it?*

Predict: *I think Eddie's flying is going to get him in trouble.*

Infer: *Eddie's parents seem strange. They don't sound like real people, more like characters from a TV show.*

Connect: *This reminds me of Harry Potter and X-men.*

Feel: *I feel sorry for Eddie. I think he's going to be lonely because people aren't going to understand him.*

Evaluate: *I think the beginning is good. This is the kind of story I like: realistic but with something weird in it.*

Eddie Takes Off

Eddie had always been able to fly, but it wasn't until his fifth birthday party that he realized that it would turn out to be a bit of a social problem. Until that embarrassing day on the Johnsons' lawn, Eddie's parents had treated his airborne peculiarity as something of a childish whim. "Boy's gotta stretch out, learn what he can do," said his father. "I just worry that he'll hurt himself, you know, bump into the ceiling or get his eye poked out by a bird, I don't know..." said his mother. For the young Eddie, flying was just another discovery about his developing body, like learning that he could reach out his arm and ring the bell on his cradle railing, or finding that he loved the taste of peas. The first time his parents came into the nursery and found Eddie hovering a foot or two off the floor it came as a bit of a shock. But, after all, parents are forever discovering special little things about their children. Eddie's mother thought that perhaps they should take their son to see a specialist, but his father vetoed the idea. "It's not like anything's wrong with him, and I don't want him getting a complex about it."

READ LIKE A WRITER

Ideas: *A flying baby boy in a realistic setting, is cool.*

Organization: *The opening is great. The author has us wondering about Eddie's flying ability, his parents' strange reaction, and the embarrassing incident.*

Voice: *The author's voice is light-hearted and playful, just like a flying baby boy.*

Word Choice: *The phrase "airborne peculiarity" in the second sentence is great.*

Sentence Fluency: *The longer sentences sound smooth.*

Conventions: *Normally, when quoting characters in a story, you start a new paragraph for each new speaker.*

The “Read Like a Writer” strategies are based on the Six Trait assessment model providing further integration with writing.

NON-FICTION

Using the “Read Like a Reader” and “Read Like a Writer” strategies to analyze non-fiction. In this example, the same student is using the same strategies to analyze a non-fiction newspaper article. On the writer’s side, we focus on how the writer is putting across the message. In particular, we look for writing techniques that improve the quality of the piece so we can learn those techniques and apply them in our own writing.

READ LIKE A READER

Question: *How does the Texas test compare to other state tests in terms of how hard it is? How do states decide how hard to make their tests?*

Predict: *Texas will be shown to have one of the easiest tests in the country.*

Connect: *Many articles are coming out now talking about how states are making their tests easier so more kids will pass.*

Infer: *George Bush and Rod Paige benefited from all the talk about improvements in Texas schools. But those improvements weren't real.*

Feel: *I'm angry. I don't think the kids in Texas are getting a fair deal. They think they're getting a good education, but they're not.*

Evaluate: *This is a good article on a very important topic. The writer has done a good job of backing up his ideas with specific examples.*

A Miracle Revised

Measuring Success; Gains in Houston Schools: How Real Are They?

As a student at Jefferson Davis High here, Rosa Arevelo seemed the “Texas miracle” in motion. After years of classroom drills, she passed the high school exam required for graduation on her first try. A program of college prep courses earned her the designation “Texas scholar.”

At the University of Houston, though, Ms. Arevelo discovered the distance between what Texas public schools called success and what she needed to know. Trained to write five-paragraph “persuasive essays” for the state exam, she was stumped by her first writing assignment. She failed the college entrance exam in math twice, even with a year of remedial algebra. At 19, she gave up and went to trade school.

“I had good grades in high school, so I thought I could do well in college,” Ms. Arevelo said. “I thought I was getting a good education.”

In recent years, Texas has trumpeted the academic gains of Ms. Arevelo and millions more students largely on the basis of a state test, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, or TAAS. As a presidential candidate, Texas's former governor, George W. Bush, contended that Texas's methods of holding schools responsible for student performance had brought huge improvements in passing rates and remarkable strides in eliminating the gap between white and minority children.

The claims catapulted Houston's superintendent, Rod Paige, to Washington as education secretary and made Texas a model for the country. The education law signed by President Bush in January 2002, No Child Left Behind, gives public schools 12 years to match Houston's success and bring virtually all children to academic proficiency.

But an examination of the performance of students in Houston by The New York Times raises serious doubts about the magnitude of those gains. Scores on a national exam that Houston students took alongside the Texas exam from 1999 to 2002 showed much smaller gains and falling scores in high school reading.

READ LIKE A WRITER

Ideas: *Saying that the five-paragraph essay is the problem is a great detail because everyone can relate to it.*

Organization: *Starting with a story about a girl who is an example of the main idea is a good technique because it draws us into her story and makes us care.*

Voice: *The writer mixes the objective voice of a news story with the more personal voice of feature writing.*

Word Choice: *The phrase "After years of classroom drills" and the writer's choice to put "Texas scholar" and "persuasive essays" in quotation marks tells us these things aren't real.*

Sentence Fluency: *I like the alliteration in phrases like "Texas miracle in motion" and "discovered the distance."*

Conventions: *In the headline, the use of the semicolon in the same phrase with a colon is very unusual.*

What Does “Integrated Literacy” Mean?

Part 4 of 4: Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum Through Shared Writing Strategies

Kids need to think critically in every subject they study. But rarely do we show them a single strategy that can be used in any situation where critical thinking skills are required. The What-Why-How strategy is unique in this regard. As a template for complex logic, and an all-purpose tool for higher-level analysis, it is unrivaled in its simplicity and effectiveness.

PERSUASIVE ESSAY

Using the What-Why-How strategy to pre-write a persuasive essay. In this example, a student is using the What-Why-How strategy to plan out a persuasive essay in response to the prompt: “Some kids get allowance, some don’t. Some get a little, others get a lot. Explain how you feel about allowance and try to convince your readers that you’re right.” Once the essay has been blocked out on the chart, writing it up is easy. For an essay with a very basic organizational structure, the writer can simply “write across the rows” with each row turning into a logically organized paragraph automatically.

What	Why	How
Allowance works out better when parents think carefully about how much their kids should get, what they get it for, and what they can spend it on.	Some kids have so much money that it really isn't good for them.	A kid in my class gets \$50 a week and he's always bragging about how much money he has
	Some kids get money just for doing normal stuff or for not getting in trouble.	Our neighbors give their kids money just to stop being bad. But it doesn't make them any nicer.
	Sometimes parents take away their kid's allowance and the kid doesn't think it's fair.	My mom took away my allowance once because I didn't clean my room but I just forgot to do it.
	Allowance is a good way for kids to learn about money.	I save some of my allowance every week so I can buy something really special.

What do you think?	Why do you think it?	How do you know?
This is the writer's opinion, thesis, or main idea. By creating extra rows in the “What” column, writers can support multiple thesis statements.	These are the reasons the writer holds the particular opinion, thesis, or main idea in the “What” column. Three to six reasons are usually sufficient for a strong essay.	These are supporting details. In research writing, these are the citations. In a lab report, this is data from an experiment. In a reading response, it's a quote from the text.

HISTORY TEST

Using the What-Why-How strategy to answer an essay question on a Social Studies test. In this example, a student is using the What-Why-How strategy to respond to the following essay question on a U.S. History test: “Was Abraham Lincoln really as honest as his nickname suggests?”

What	Why	How
Lincoln was honest about many things in his life but he was not always honest about the difficult subjects of slavery and race relations in America, especially while he was running for president. Like many politicians, Lincoln was good at telling people what they wanted to hear.	While campaigning for the presidency, he told northern voters he favored racial equality. But while campaigning in the South he told voters there that he supported the idea of whites being superior to blacks.	“Let us discard all quibbling about this man and the other man, this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position.” —Speech in Chicago, July 1858 “...while they do remain together [blacks and whites] there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.” —Speech in Charleston, Sept 1858

READING RESPONSE

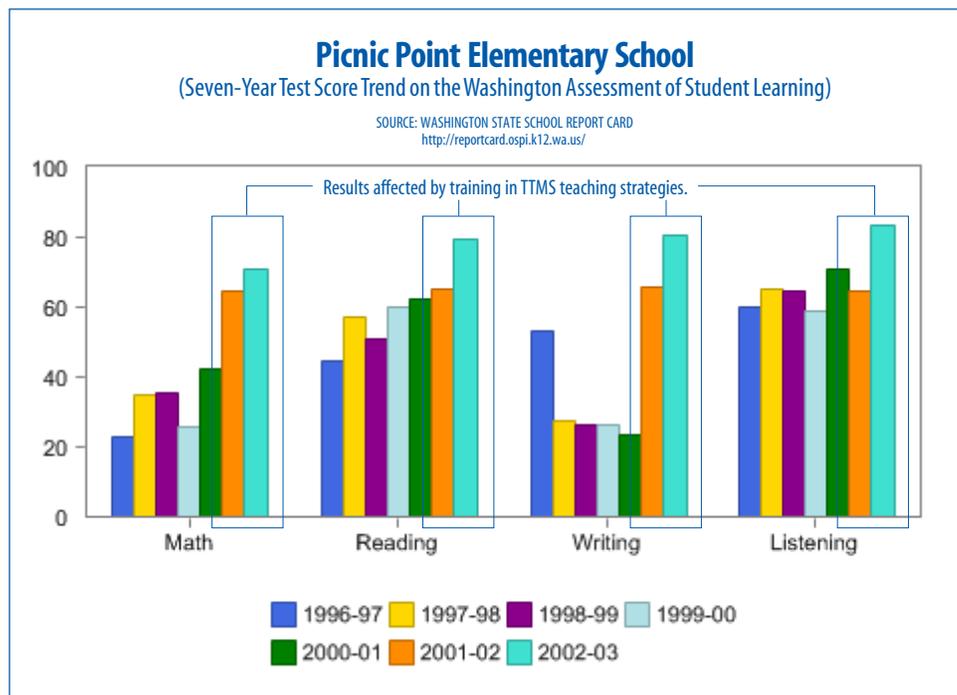
Using the What-Why-How strategy to support an inference in a work of fiction. In this example, a student is making an inference about the parents of a little boy who has suddenly started flying around the house. In the “How” column, the student has noted the two passages upon which her inference is based.

What	Why	How
Eddie's parents seem a little strange. They don't react to their son's ability to fly in the way I think normal parents would act.	They speak in clichés. They sound like people on a cartoon or in a sitcom. They don't seem very smart or responsible.	“Boy's gotta stretch out, learn what he can do,” said his father. “I just worry that he'll hurt himself, you know, bump into the ceiling or get his eye poked out by a bird, I don't know...” said his mother. (page 3) and ... his father vetoed the idea. “It's not like anything's wrong with him, and I don't want him getting a complex about it.” (page 4)



Picnic Point Elementary School Besting the Testing Without Over-Investing

In the spring of 2001, Teaching That Makes Sense was invited to work with Picnic Point Elementary School in Mukilteo, WA. The task was to help the school make significant progress on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. On a budget of less than \$10,000 over two years (for both training and materials), we helped the school make great gains.



Test Score Success was No Fluke, Says Picnic Point Principal

Mukilteo Beacon Newspaper, Pages 18-20, Mukilteo, WA, September 18, 2002

Last week was a fun time to be a part of Picnic Point Elementary School.

The WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) results were released and the school logged record jumps in math and writing scores.

This time last year, it was a different story.

Pressure to raise WASL results was increasing, but Picnic Point's writing scores were going down.

Test Score Success, cont.

There was a sharp decline from 1997 to 1998, followed by a steady erosion each year thereafter. After the school hit an all-time low last year with just 23.2 percent of students meeting the standard, principal Lora Wilson knew things had to change.

“We started looking seriously at our writing program in the fall of 2000 to determine why our efforts up to that point had been unsuccessful,” Wilson said. “It was then that we decided we couldn’t do different things in different classrooms and make any headway.”

Wilson and her colleagues looked at several programs and decided on “Writing That Makes Sense,” a writer’s workshop-based approach designed by Steve Peha of Teaching That Makes Sense, an education consulting company in Seattle, WA.

“Writer’s Workshop is a philosophy and a classroom management system; it’s not just a set of lessons. The essence of workshop-style teaching — what makes it ‘workshop’ as opposed to traditional — is not so much in what you teach, but how you teach it,” Peha said. “It’s all about the way you relate to your students in the classroom and teaching based on their needs.”

Yes, the days of writing 500-word essays on the history of toothpicks are over.

“The kids choose their own topics,” fourth grade teacher Sharon Feather said. “And when they’re writing about themselves, it seems they never run out of information.”

The kids notice the difference, too. First grader teacher Joy Jacobsen said, “One little boy told me at the end of the year that he had become an author. He sees himself as a writer now, not just a kid.”

Today, Picnic Point students don’t ask, “How many sentences is my piece supposed to be?” They ask questions like, “What am I trying to say? What will my audience want to know? Is this a good lead? Do I have the right ending?” They read their pieces over and over making sure all the important facts are there rather than counting each individual word and forcing the paper to fit the assignment.

“The change in writing instruction from the traditional teacher-directed approach to Writer’s Workshop is 180 degrees,” Wilson said.

Of course, change is never easy. “Slowly trying to incorporate the new with the old for a smooth transition did not work,” Wilson said. “The teachers who enjoyed the greatest success were those who took a leap of faith, threw out their old ways, and put the new approach into action.”

It paid off.

This year, 64.2% of Picnic Point’s fourth graders met or exceeded the standard, the highest number in the school’s history, almost triple last year’s results, and well above the state average of 49.5%.

“With this attention to writing, I’m not surprised our scores went up — I was absolutely confident they would,” Wilson said.

But as Feather said, it isn’t just about test scores.

“**Slowly trying** to incorporate the new with the old for a smooth transition **did not work**,” Wilson said. “The teachers who enjoyed the **greatest success** were those who took a leap of faith, **threw out their old ways**, and put the new approach into action.”

Test Score Success, cont.

“The ability to write and communicate your thoughts are lifelong skills that students will need long after they’re finished with school.”

Writing wasn’t the only area where Picnic Point made great gains through better writing. They also picked up 22% in math. According to the more detailed data supplied by the state, students made significant gains in communicating concepts and problem solving strategies, two areas of the math test that require students to write extensively.

“Not only is writing involved in math, but the kids are instinctively organizing their thoughts better in all of their subjects,” Feather said.

Picnic Point only began working with Steve Peha right before the previous year’s test. “I’ve never seen a school make so much progress in so little time,” Peha said. “This just shows what a dedicated group of educators can achieve when they put the needs of their students first and seek out research-based best practice methods.”

“This year we are **continuing our focus on writing**,” Principal Wilson said.

“**Our PTA has budgeted money to help us pay for more consulting time.**

We are **not going to let go of something** we have seen to be **so good for our kids.**”

Wilson said the single most important factor in the school’s success was that all teachers are using the same good methods.

“Students don’t have to learn a new set of expectations as they move between grade levels,” she explained. “And we aren’t wasting time re-teaching at the beginning of the year. The students remember what they’ve learned.”

“My students want me to read their work and conference with them as soon as it’s done,” Feather said. “They’re learning how to critique their own writing and suggest improvements.”

“Many of our students who used to hate writing now write voluntarily at school and even at home,” Wilson said. “They write letters, they keep journals, they even write during the summer.”

“At first when Steve talked to us about Writer’s Workshop, I thought it would be way too hard for my first graders,” said first grade teacher Joy Jacobsen. “But it isn’t. They picked it right up.”

And the parents are happy, too. Karen Higman, whose daughter, Kate was in the Ms. Feather’s class, said she’s seen remarkable improvements in her daughter’s writing skills.

“And the kids who really struggled with writing in the past have gained confidence in themselves and their abilities,” she said.

“Mrs. Feather is the best teacher I’ve ever had,” said Kate Higman. “I go back and visit her all the time this year.”

Karen Higman credits the support of Picnic Point’s administration, along with an active PTA.

“This year we are continuing our focus on writing,” Principal Wilson said. “Our PTA has budgeted money to help us pay for more consulting time. We are not going to let go of something we have seen to be so good for our kids.”

An Interview with Principal Lora Wilson

(1) How did the training provided to your school last year help your teachers and students to be more successful?

As a building we were floundering as we tried to find an approach to improve our writing instruction that our entire staff could embrace. Steve's *Writing That Makes Sense* program looked like something we could get started with fairly easily. His willingness to do model lessons in our classrooms, meet with teachers and parents after school hours, and be available online for questions at all times was the kind of support we needed to make significant changes in a hurry.

The **Writing Strategy Organizer** was a wonderful one-page resource; it was **always at teachers' fingertips**. We put it in every student's writing notebook as well. Students and teachers **referred to it constantly**. It was also a handy reference to share with parents.

By the end of last school year, teachers, students, and parents were very pleased with what we had accomplished. One veteran teacher says she will never go back to the old way of teaching writing. Parents tell me their kids who once hated to write now write at home for fun. One little first grader thanked her teacher at the end of the year for "turning me into an author." Our state standards-based test scores in writing had been at or below 25% for three years. All of a sudden, we jumped above 60% — after only 12 months of training. This is success on many different levels.

(2) How did the materials provided to your school last year help your teachers and students to be more successful?

The *Writing Strategy Organizer* was a wonderful one-page resource; it was always at teachers' fingertips. We copied it and put it in every student's writing notebook as well. Students and teachers referred to it constantly. It was also a handy reference to share with parents.

I am excited to see Steve's new writing strategy notebook where each of the strategies is fleshed out with examples and suggestions for other applications. This will be a tremendous resource for teachers who want more information. But the one-page strategy organizer was the key! It kept everyone focused on the important goals. We were literally all on the same page.

Steve's other organizers — on best practices, writing criteria, writer's workshop, writing process, etc. — were also excellent one-page resources. If teachers have to read too much, it won't get read. Steve includes the best and leaves out the rest. He gave our teachers something they could read and refer to while they were teaching. We also used the one-page organizers with parents when explaining the changes we were making in our writing program and why.

The one-page **strategy organizer** was **the key!** It kept everyone focused on the important goals. We were literally **all on the same page**. Steve's other organizers — on best practices, writing criteria, writer's workshop, writing process, etc. — were also excellent one-page resources. Steve **includes the best and leaves out the rest**.

An Interview with Principal Lora Wilson

(3) Of the six areas in the Writing That Makes Sense Program — writing strategies, writer’s workshop, writing process, writing criteria, writing forms, writing connections — which one made the most difference and why?

It was definitely Writer’s Workshop. It was critical that we adopted this approach. If we had taken the strategies and put them into a traditional scope-and-sequence teaching model, students would not have been able to experiment with the different strategies in ways that suited their individual needs.

It was definitely **Writer’s Workshop** [that made the most difference]. It was critical that we adopted this approach.

The writing strategies were also a big help. The strategies are simple and straight forward, suitable for use at any grade level with only slight modifications. These are not the typical “cute” graphic organizers that get kids to write simple paragraphs and formula essays. Steve’s strategies are applicable to all kinds of authentic writing.

(4) How did the in-classroom demonstrations, particularly the “test prep” sessions with the 4th grade teachers, help you and your staff?

These model lessons were invaluable for teachers, those whose classrooms Steve worked in as well as those teachers we released to observe. Everyone got to see not only how to present the strategies, but also how to manage a workshop-style classroom, and how to take kids all the way through the writing process from pre-writing to publishing in an efficient way. All teachers commented that this series of lessons provided a foundation they could build on to take kids through an entire piece. Seeing the lessons modeled — over several days with same kids working on the same pieces at different stages of the writing process — was essential.

As a principal, I can provide the leadership, but I have to know where I’m going first. **Steve provided the expertise I needed to set goals, monitor progress, and keep everyone focused.**

(5) How did Steve help you personally to be a more effective principal and to move your staff toward research-based best practice writing instruction?

As a principal, I can provide the leadership, but I have to know where I’m going first. Steve provided the expertise I needed to set goals, monitor progress, and keep everyone focused.

Steve is frank and honest. He takes suggestions well. He was very flexible in trying to do whatever it took to accommodate my needs. I appreciated his candor with me when it came down to how to help my school perform at its best. I very much enjoyed working with him and I hope I can continue to do so.