Writer’s Workshop

How to Get Started: Setting Up Writer’s Workshop

Writer’s Workshop is an approach to writing in which students are in charge of their own writing. The teacher facilitates the learning through a mini-lesson at the beginning of writing time. The goal of Writer’s Workshop is to get students to develop the same thought processes as real writers.

To set up Writer’s Workshop consider the following questions:

- Where will the central location be for students to access supplies?
- What kind of supplies will you provide for Writer’s Workshop?
- How will you and students track their progress through the writing process?
- Where will you conference with individuals or small groups?
- Where will peer conferencing occur?
- What notebooks, folders, or resources will students use?
- Will you have a visual students can see while you are conferencing so they know not to interrupt you?
- Will you keep a portfolio of students’ published pieces throughout the year?
- What will the expectations be during each step of the writing process?
- What does Writer’s Workshop look like in your classroom?
- What does Writer’s Workshop sound like in your classroom?

Writing Workshop Format

- Mini-lesson (5-10 minutes) – focus is on procedures, process, or craft
- Independent writing (25-30 minutes)
- Individual/small group student conferences
- Peer conferences as needed
- Sharing (5-10 minutes)

We have found the following things useful:

- Correction tape for Interactive Writing
- Chart Paper
- Chart Markers
- Date stamp with stamp pad
- Stapler
• File crate in which to put hanging files for student work
• Trays in which to put different types of assembled blank books (make books that are both portrait and landscape, lined and unlined)
• Writing Workshop pocket folder or notebook for each student
• Illustrating tubs filled with colored pencils and marker
• Unit of Study folders for the teacher to insert lesson plans and ideas for the particular unit

What Matters Most
• Time – make writing a priority in your schedule.
• All parts are important.
• Stamina – children should be able to write for a sustained period. This will increase over time (especially in the lower grades).
• Expectations – children need to know that they need to stick with it and finish a piece of writing.
• You have to know something about a subject to write about it.
• We are always teaching about something.
• Sharing student books from former students is a powerful way to illustrate craft.