



## ***Teaching the Youngest Writers: A Practical Guide***

*By Marcia Freeman*

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*Teaching the Youngest Writers* describes the attributes of an active community of the youngest writers and how to create such a community. It guides teachers through the elements of writing, the nature of written text, and the writing process. It describes classroom tested practices, writing-process mechanisms, management techniques, and appropriate lessons and skills that successful teachers use to help children become fluent writers.

*Teaching the Youngest Writers* is a guide for teachers who work with emergent writers who, initially, are not able to read today what they wrote yesterday. This book teaches about writing content. It describes techniques and characteristics found in a variety of the major genres. *Teaching the Youngest Writers* provides practical skills and support to ensure success for all young writers.

### **About the Study Guide**

This guide is designed to facilitate professional development in a collegial book study atmosphere. Four professional development sessions include discussion points, guiding questions, workshop activities, and classroom applications. To create a successful professional development experience, consider the following tips:

- Before you begin, seek input about teacher schedules and preferences. Try to arrange your professional development so that participants will be able to attend every session.
- Provide copies of *Teaching the Youngest Writers* for all participants. Meaningful application of the skills and activities discussed at each meeting depends upon access to the resource between meetings.
- Provide discussion questions ahead of time and encourage participants to become familiar with the material covered in each session prior to the meeting.
- Provide time between each meeting session to allow teachers the opportunity to apply the skills and be prepared to share their successes and challenges in implementation.
- At each meeting, allow for discussion before beginning the planned workshop activities. Teachers will gain understanding by articulating their successes and challenges faced when implementing the skills.

## **Session One**

Daily Writing Workshops: Introduction, Chapters 1-4

### **Guiding Quote:**

“Teachers who create successful writing communities value what children have to say and believe that children can and will write. They model strategies for solving the puzzle of writing.” (page xvi)

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What are the components of a classroom that promotes writing?
2. What planning is necessary to organize a classroom for the daily writing workshop?
3. What does a teacher need to know in order to begin using writing workshop?
4. What do the students need to know about daily writing workshop?

### **Workshop Activity:**

1. Divide the participants into five groups and assign each of the five groups a chapter to read and review. Have each group read their assigned chapter and discuss the key ideas.
2. Have each group report on their chapter making sure to focus on the goals of the chapter and any key ideas or terminology necessary for understanding.
3. Create a chart that identifies the strengths of using the workshop model and any barriers seen that could hinder implementation.
4. Discuss solutions to any concerns or questions the group may have regarding implementation.

### **Classroom Implementation:**

Review the information in the introduction through chapter four. Plan for implementation of the workshop model and gather materials needed. Survey the lesson ideas and activities and plan for instruction.

### **Looking Ahead:**

Be prepared to discuss the challenges and successes of implementing the writing workshop model. Encourage teachers to bring student samples to the next session to facilitate discussion.

## **Session Two**

The Writing Process in the Primary Grades: Chapters 5-10

### **Guiding Quote:**

“Do not confuse copying from the board with writing. While this may help children with the mechanical part of writing, it is not composing. Nor, is handwriting practice composing. The writing component of daily writing workshop must be devoted to children composing. They will imitate and use the lessons from your models. They will write about what they see, know, think, imagine, and remember.” (page 41)

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the difference between prewriting and writing? What is important about the prewriting component?
2. What are some options for sharing writing?
3. What is the difference between revision and editing?
4. Why is it important to publish student work?

### **Workshop Activity:**

1. Review student samples. Use the seven stages (pages 34-36) to identify what stages and characteristics are present in the samples. In small groups, identify target skills and activities that would be appropriate for each stage.
2. Divide the participants in five groups. Assign each group one chapter to review and identify key points and strategies.
3. Encourage each group to lead a discussion about their chapter with the whole group.

### **Classroom Implementation:**

Survey the chapters and identify at least two strategies that will be implemented before the next session. Use the lesson ideas and activities to plan for instruction.

### **Looking Ahead:**

Be prepared to discuss the challenges and successes of implementing daily writing workshop. Encourage teachers to bring student samples to the next session to facilitate discussion.

### **Session Three**

Writing Content in the Primary Grades: Chapters 11-15

#### **Guiding Quote:**

“Young children are naturally observant. We can use descriptive writing to make use of their natural curiosity and observational prowess. We can encourage these traits and help them build a rich vocabulary of descriptive language.”  
(page 87)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What are target skills and how do we know what skills should be taught?
2. What are the characteristics of descriptive writing?
3. What are the similarities and differences between personal expository and personal narrative writing?
4. What are some of the composing skills necessary for young writers?

#### **Workshop Activity:**

1. Review student samples. Identify the strengths of the samples with regard to descriptive attributes, supporting details and specificity. Develop plan for instruction based on the identification of a target skill to be used in the next lesson.
2. Divide the participants into five groups. Have each group read and discuss one of the chapters identifying key points and strategies.
3. Have each group report on their chapter and share specific skills, lessons, or ideas that would be beneficial when implementing daily writing workshop.

#### **Classroom Implementation:**

Encourage teachers to read about picture prompted writing (pages 80-86). Plan and implement a lesson using picture prompted writing.

#### **Looking Ahead:**

Be prepared to discuss the successes and challenges of implementing this type of lesson. Encourage teachers to bring student samples to facilitate discussion.

## **Session Four**

Evaluation, Parent Education, Questions/Answers: Chapters 16-18

### **Guiding Quote:**

“Keeping good records will help you organize writing sessions, plan lessons, and evaluate student progress. It will save your sanity.” (page 131)

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What are some strategies to maintain organized records and evaluate progress?
2. How do we assess student writing?
3. What do we communicate to parents to gain support for the process?
4. What are some of the resources available to assist with implementation?

### **Workshop Activity:**

1. In small groups, review the student samples. Identify the strengths of the samples and determine an appropriate target skill for the next lesson.
2. Review the question and answer chapter on pages 138-139. Make a list of additional questions and use the book to find the answers.
3. Provide the participants time to discuss and prepare materials necessary for efficient record keeping and evaluation.

### **Classroom Implementation:**

Participants should plan for continued review of materials and peer support to effectively implement the daily writing workshop. Use lessons and strategies from the resources to assist with the process.

### **Looking Ahead:**

Identify desired resources, materials, and literature that are not available at your site and explore funding sources you can use to acquire these resources.