

GLENCOE

WRITER'S WORKSPACE

Research Background for Writer's Workspace

Writer's Workspace is an integrated language arts program that keeps pace with the current trends in the teaching of writing and related communication skills. The skill instruction is based on a solid foundation of easy-to-understand explanations, clear-cut definitions, real-world examples, and skill based assessment. The online environment engages students' attention while providing clear instruction. *Writer's Workspace* provides students and teachers with the tools for developing skills in writing, reading, researching, speaking, listening, critical thinking, and viewing.

Writer's Workspace was developed based on years of feedback and research into writing and grammar instruction. The foundation for the instruction in *Writer's Workspace* is based on:

- User feedback and author research
- Writing Next Report
- Writing to Read Report
- The Reading Writing Connection research of Carol Booth Olson

User Feedback and Author Research

Glencoe/McGraw-Hill has been publishing grammar and composition programs since the 1990's. Founded in best practices and efficacy studies, the development team has responded to user feedback and updated the program to reflect the best practices currently used in the classroom. The research of our consultant team of Dr. Mark Lester, Dr. Sharon O'Neal, Dr. Jacqueline Jones Royster, Dr. Jeffrey Wilhelm, and Dr. Denny Wolfe have provided a solid foundation for instructional pedagogy in the *Writer's Workspace* eBook.

Writing Next Report

Writer's Workspace supports the findings of the Writing Next report published by the Alliance for Excellent Education. Below is a list of the key findings and how *Writer's Workspace* addresses those findings.

1. **Writing Strategies** involves teaching students strategies for planning, revising, and editing their compositions. *Writer's Workspace* integrates strategies for effective writing within the Workshop Editor. The Grammar and Composition eBooks also include a full unit entitled The Writing Process. The Workshop Editor provides step-by-step guidance for prewriting, drafting, revising, editing/proofreading, and publishing/presenting. A professional and student model are included within the *Writer's Workspace* lessons to model effective writing techniques.
2. **Summarization** involves "explicitly and systematically" teaching students to summarize text. The Interactive Reading lessons provide opportunities for students to write summaries after reading a professional model for the writing genre.

3. **Collaborative Writing** uses instructional arrangements in which adolescents work together to plan, draft, revise, and edit their compositions. The online environment of *Writer's Workspace* provides this collaborative opportunity. Features coming soon to *Writer's Workspace* include a multimedia presentation builder where students can develop presentations and share them with their classmates and a sharing tool where students can share their written work with others.

4. **Specific Product Goals** involves assigning students specific, reachable goals for the writing they are to complete and provides them with objectives to focus on particular aspects of their writing. For example, a student may be instructed to write a letter to the editor of the school newspaper about some part of school life he would like to see changed. In addition to this general goal, teachers may provide subgoals, including a statement of belief. Information in the student's letter to the editor must support his predetermined goals and subgoals. *Writer's Workspace* helps students to identify and meet specific product goals. Before students write, the objectives of the writing assignment are clearly identified. The strategies students employ during the writing process provide additional examples. All instruction and supporting examples connect to the broader goals for the writing product.

5. **Word Processing** offers instructional support for all writing assignments. The use of word-processing equipment can be particularly helpful for low-achieving writers. The web-based platform provides students with the ideal space for writing. The Workshop Editor includes traditional word processing tools for students to utilize while they write.

6. **Sentence Combining** involves teaching students to construct more complex, sophisticated sentences through exercises in which two or more basic sentences are combined into a single sentence. A full Sentence Combining unit in each grade level of the Grammar and Composition eBook includes instruction and exercises for descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive writing. All activities in the Sentence Combining unit provides a no-risk context in which students can explore stylistic options, make mistakes, and learn from their mistakes.

7. **Prewriting** engages students in activities designed to help them generate or organize ideas for their composition. From Prewriting Tips to Prewriting Activities to Prewriting Exercises to Prewriting Lessons, *Writer's Workspace* delivers! Prewriting is a skill taught extensively in the Workshop Editor and throughout the Grammar and Composition eBook.

8. **Inquiry Activities** engages students in activities that help them develop ideas and content for a particular writing task by analyzing immediate, concrete data. Many of the Cross-Curricular Activity features for science, math, and social studies are found at the end of each four-page lesson in the eBook and require students to act as analysts. These activities may include performing simple experiments; reordering facts and statistics found on a specific time line; or investigating findings on a historical mural. The writing prompts in the Workshop Editor encourage students to conduct inquiry investigations as they prepare to write.

9. **Process Writing Approach** interweaves a number of instructional activities that stress extended writing opportunities, writing for authentic audiences, personalized instruction, and cycles of writing. In every writing activity, students are asked to identify their purpose and their audience. A large emphasis in the reading-writing connection activities is on developing the author's voice- from both a reader and writer's perspective. The instruction within the Workshop Editor is based on the process writing approach where students work through each step of the process to create their end writing product.

10. **Study of Models** provides adolescents with good models for each type of writing that is the focus of instruction. It gives them opportunities to read, analyze, and emulate models of good writing. *Writer's Workspace* provides at least two full-length models- one professional and one student- that students can interact with. Through the use of the models, students read in the writing genre, respond to critical think questions, analyze the author's craft, and annotate models to highlight elements of writing in context.

11. **Writing for Content Learning** uses writing as a tool for enhancing the learning of content material. *Writer's Workspace* offers various opportunities for students to "write to learn." Many of the workshop topics in *Writer's Workspace* ask students to write on a topic meaningful to them and their lives. Students can draw connections as they write which makes their content-area instruction more meaningful. An example of writing for content learning can be found in the research report genre where students are asked to writing a research report on US History, Chemistry, or Biology, for example.

Writing to Read Report

The report, *Writing to Read*, from the Alliance for Excellent Education found that writing practices enhance reading comprehension. The research helped to inform the basis for writing instruction to be grounded in reading. *Writer's Workspace* focuses on the integration of reading and writing to help improve student writing proficiency. For more information about the Reading-Writing Connection, see the next section.

I. Have Students Write About The Texts They Read. Students' comprehension of science, social studies, and language arts texts is improved when they write about what they read, specifically when they

- **Respond to a Text in Writing (Writing Personal Reactions, Analyzing and Interpreting the Text)**
- **Write Summaries of a Text**
- **Write Notes About a Text**
- **Answer Questions About a Text in Writing, or Create and Answer Written Questions About a Text**

II. Teach Students The Writing Skills And Processes That Go Into Creating Text. Students' reading skills and comprehension are improved by learning the skills and processes that go into creating text, specifically when teachers

- **Teach the Process of Writing, Text Structures for Writing, Paragraph or Sentence Construction Skills (Improves Reading Comprehension)**
- **Teach Spelling and Sentence Construction Skills (Improves Reading Fluency)**
- **Teach Spelling Skills (Improves Word Reading Skills)**

III. Increase How Much Students Write. Students' reading comprehension is improved by having them increase how often they produce their own texts.

Reading Writing Connection

In *The Reading/Writing Connection: Strategies for teaching and Learning in the Secondary Classroom (2007)*, Carol Booth Olson's research shows that the reading and writing processes go hand-in-hand. She quotes Dr. Jeff Wilhelm as stating, "Once students have learned how to read, and move through middle school, reading is still regarded as a passive act of receiving someone else's meaning" (p. 3). Olson continues by citing Tierney and Pearson's idea that both reading and writing are acts of composing- either composing ideas from meaning or constructing new meaning through words- and that both require simultaneous processes of what experienced writers do when they compose.

It is for this reason that *Writer's Workspace* integrates reading in the genre in which students will write as a step to completing the workshop. For students to be accomplished writers for an audience of readers, they need to understand how a writer conveys meaning through the written text. Students read in the writing genre to understand how meaning is conveyed to the audience. Then, the student will analyze the author's craft in the Reading Writing Connection activities where students will interpret how an author conveys meaning to an audience. Finally, the student will write their product utilizing the tools they acquired through their reading analysis.

Olson states,

It is precisely because reading and writing access similar cognitive strategies that reading and writing make such a powerful combination when taught in connection with each other. Research suggests that using writing as a learning tool in reading instruction leads to better reading achievement, and that using reading as a resource for elaborating on ideas or for understanding opposing views leads to better writing performance. More importantly, reading and writing taught together engage students in a great use of variety of cognitive strategies than do reading and writing taught separately (p. 14).

Writer's Workspace supports the integrations and connections needed for students to be successful readers and writers.