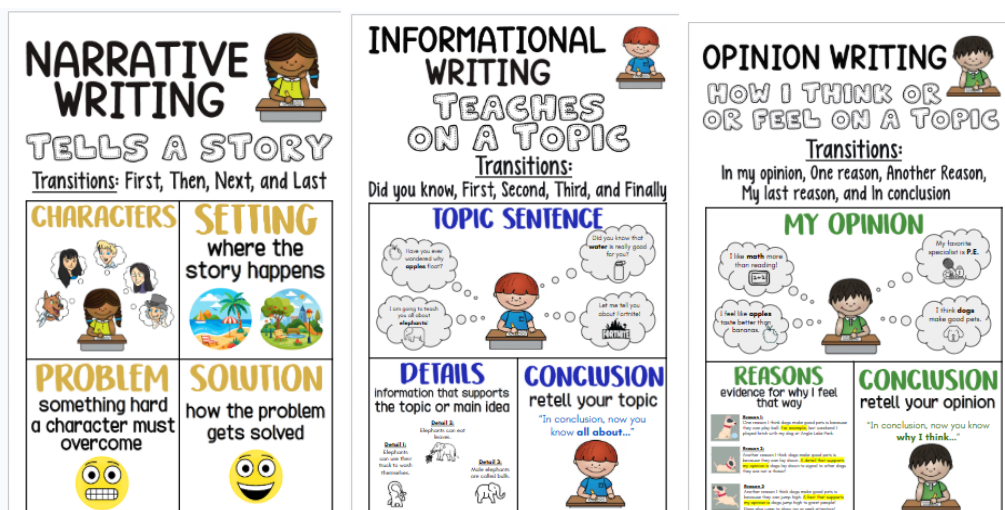
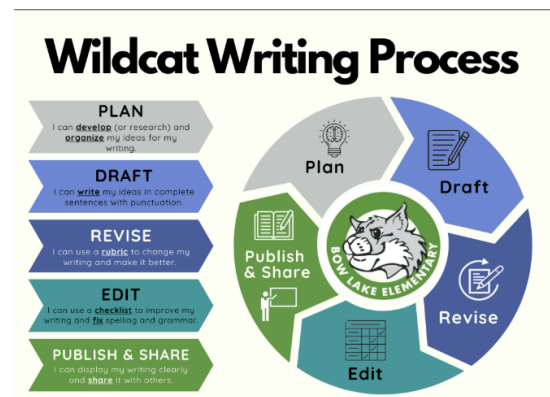


First and foremost, I would like to thank Bob Hurlbut and the Ellison Grant Foundation for granting Bow Lake this grant opportunity. Writing instruction is a passion of mine and this grant allowed me to have the money to bring important materials to our staff and students.

I applied for this grant because I wanted to bring better writing instruction to our educators at Bow Lake Elementary. As a staff, we had been feeling unsettled with our current writing instruction and our test scores were showing it. My job as language and literacy specialist is to lead with research-based instruction and ideas. This led me to the What Works Clearinghouse, the government report of studies done on writing. I decided that we would focus on the findings of the What Works Clearinghouse recommendations 2 (Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes) and 4 (Create an engaged community of writers).

Recommendation 2 has two parts: teaching the writing process and teaching a variety of writing strategies for a variety of writing purposes. Our first objective as a team was to first build common language and visuals for the whole school to define the 'writing process'. Our current curriculum is more of formulaic writing steps; we built a writing process circular model using Jennifer Serravallo's model highlighted in her books "The Writing Strategies Book" and "Teaching Writing in Small Groups". This was to ensure vertical alignment with a whole school model.

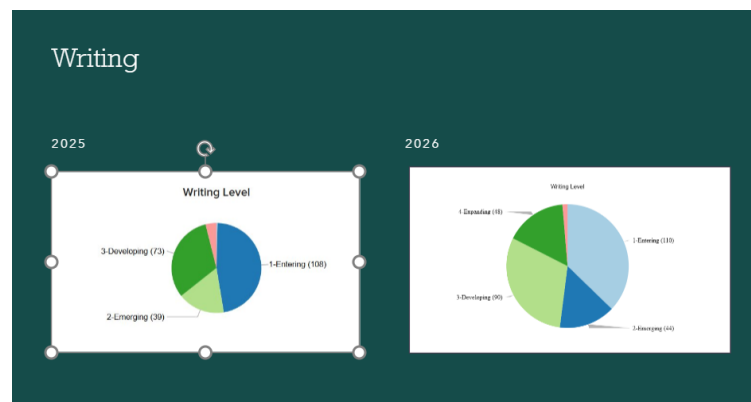


Our second objective was to study “The Writing Strategies Book” and “Teaching Writing in Small Groups”. This will be done in small groups, our grade level PLTs, and in whole group sessions with staff. With the grant we were able to buy a copy of “The Writing Strategies Book” for every classroom and a copy of “Teaching Writing for Small Groups” for anyone who wanted to do a book study. The study of these two professional books allowed us to really reflect on better practices for teaching writing when we met to go over student writing samples from class. We looked at both polished writing and on demand writing to help us understand what was working and what we needed to improve.

Our third objective came from the 4th recommendation of the What Works Clearinghouse: create an engaged community of writers. To us, that meant that every student was writing every day. That meant that we needed to have daily journals for every student, which we also purchased with the grant. Teachers were able to choose how they used them, as long as they used them daily for writing in one of the subjects. Some teachers used them for daily choice writing, others used them for reading reflection, and others used them for math writing.

Did this grant make a difference at Bow Lake? The measure that I decided to use was WIDA, a yearly exam for our multilingual students. One of the domains that it measures is writing from kindergarten to 5th grade. Here is our spring 2025 to spring 2026 comparison:

WIDA is scored on a 1-6 scale. What this pie graph shows is that our levels 3, 4, 5 numbers grew significantly from 2025 to 2026.



*On the graph above, the colors do not match (as much as I tried!). You have to look closely at the numbers which represent the scores on the WIDA.*

That is the impact of better teaching from a focused professional development where we are all on the same page of what works best for young writers. And because we have these professional resources available in every classroom, I expect our writers (and teachers!) to only keep growing in their practice. Thank you again for the opportunity to help our school community.