



Case Study: Russell Elementary Made Writing a Success Across Grade Levels, Including Their ESL and GTE Students

Background

Amy Matthews is a second grade GTE (Gifted and Talented Education) teacher at Russell Elementary School in Warner Robins, GA. She has been teaching for several years and has always been passionate about improving her skills as a writing teacher. Amy's school had previously purchased a curriculum for writing instruction. However, they found it challenging to understand and implement effectively. Before finding Simplify Writing®, she had purchased another curriculum from TPT (Teachers Pay Teachers), but it lacked a cohesive progression of writing genres.

Implementation

At the beginning of the school year, the teachers at Amy's school were introduced to Simplify Writing® and given their logins. Amy quickly noticed significant changes in her writing block compared to the previous year. She found the experience of teaching writing enjoyable, and her students were actively engaged in the process. According to Amy, "The changes in my writing block were so drastically different from the previous year. I enjoyed teaching writing and my students were enjoying it as well!"

Amy's primary goal was to become a better writing teacher, as she believed that her enthusiasm for teaching would also foster her students' interest in writing. One of her ongoing struggles was maintaining consistency and student engagement throughout the year without them becoming bored. Simplify Writing® addressed these challenges by providing a structured approach, writing prompts, and handouts, which eliminated the need for extensive preparation and planning. By March, Amy observed her students engaging in peer editing using provided checklists, collaborating to expand their details, and offering encouragement to one another.

Additionally, the leveled exemplars included in the Simplify Writing® lesson plans proved to be a valuable resource. Before commencing writing assignments, Amy and her students reviewed various samples, analyzing what made writing basic, proficient, or advanced. This reference tool helped students strive for proficient and advanced writing throughout the month.

In terms of grammar instruction, Amy initially used a different curriculum that focused on teaching one skill per week. However, she realized the importance of incorporating review and assessment into her grammar block. In January, she transitioned to using the Simplify Writing® grammar lessons integrated into the curriculum and immediately saw positive results.

Outcome

As a school, Russell Elementary witnessed growth in its writing assessment scores. Upper-grade teachers credited the success to the implementation of the Simplify Writing® program. "I talked to the ESL teacher about a former student because he struggled in second grade with writing and getting his ideas on paper. The teacher reported that he didn't write very much, but the content of what he wrote was excellent and he scored a 4, out of 4!" Amy told us.

Consistency across the grade levels is key for students to have success. Amy noted that "Teachers in the upper grades came to observe the primary grades and we were ecstatic about seeing the same graphic organizers, the same highlighter coding, and the same editing checklist they use being used in second grade. We are believers and we are excited to see how Simplify Writing helps our students grow into amazing writers for years to come."

Lasting Impact

The positive experiences and outcomes observed by Amy and her colleagues have made them strong believers in the efficacy of Simplify Writing®. They are excited about how the program can help their students develop into exceptional writers for years to come. The structured framework, engaging prompts, accessible resources, and collaborative elements have proven instrumental in enhancing student engagement, writing proficiency, and the overall writing experience in Amy's classroom and throughout the school.



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