

Integrating Writing with Your Reading Adoption

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You have reading resources and may be noticing the instructional holes where writing is concerned. **The question is: How do we integrate reading with writing when they're often viewed as isolated subjects?**

While at first glance EW is often seen as a writing only resource, lessons are strategically designed to provide direct instruction of the much needed skills students are missing to read and comprehend well. **In order to read for deep comprehension (referred to as close reading) it's essential that students learn how to deconstruct the texts they're reading and to examine them through "author's eyes."** It's critical that students have a knowledge of the tools and techniques authors use to organize their thoughts. Students must also understand and recognize the salient features of a particular genre as well as certain "road signs" in the text that point to the author's motivation, intention, and purpose within the piece.

Reading with "Author's Eyes"

By learning the specific techniques authors use for each genre, students begin to understand the strategies involved in communicating effectively through writing. **To fully engage students in reading (and writing), they must learn to read with "author's eyes."** A key benefit of learning to read with author's eyes is that it creates a powerful reading-writing connection. Think about the attention paid to annotating texts. This is essentially an analytical reading activity, but it also informs writing. Then, when students approach a writing task, they will do so with a much greater understanding of how authors do what they do, and are in a much stronger position to begin to imitate that. Close strategic reading enhances writing, and understanding the organization of writing enhances strategic reading. It's a symbiotic relationship.



Understanding Narrative & Informational Techniques

By applying the annotation process every time students read, the reading-writing connection becomes more indelibly linked. What follows is a chart that connects writing techniques to textual clues. As one or the other is taught, the counterpart should also be acknowledged. Having these conversations when interacting with any text will provide endless opportunities to teach writing in a brush stroke.

Writing Techniques & Close Reading Questions

Informational Writing Techniques	Textual Clues - Close Reading Techniques
Organization, Introduction	What is this text all about?
Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas	What will you learn about this topic?
Productive Questions	Describe one key detail and explain its significance.
More Powerful Details	Cite evidence in the text that illustrates this point in a more powerful way.
Conclusion	Summarize the most important information you gleaned from the text.

Narrative Writing Techniques	Textual Clues - Close Reading Techniques
Entertaining Beginnings	What is the setting and purpose for the story action?
Elaborative Detail	What character, setting, or object(s) are critical to the story?
What Feelings Look Like (show don't tell)	How does the character feel? What is his/her POV? How do you know? Cite evidence in the text.
Suspense through story questions	What does the main character (protagonist) wonder, worry, fear? How do you know? Cite evidence in the text.
Main Event	What is the story really all about? What was the character's problem or conflict? What action took place that changed things? What did the main character want and how do you know?
Conclusion	How was the conflict or problem resolved?
Extended Endings	What did the character learn or realize, hope or wish? What part of the story made the biggest impression on the main character? How do you know? (relates to theme).

5 Easy Ways to Make the Reading and Writing Connection

1. Understand genre, author's purpose and organization.

For each genre, the foundation is built for analyzing each skill within the full organization of text. Students begin this understanding by annotating the provided exemplars. The dialogue for this process as well as the incorporation of the necessary inferencing and summarizing opportunities creates the bridge that students will eventually cross as their “author’s eye” becomes more developed and they move into all other texts. While several lessons with exemplars are provided, no lesson is considered to be a “one and done” lesson. Instead, this analysis and annotation continues throughout the year with all other texts students encounter.

The Reading Link: Opportunities to analyze text present themselves with every reading experience. In your reading adoption, students will experience a variety of text types within one given unit. It’s important to examine the genre, discuss the organizational framework the author employed and use that information to help predict the author’s purpose. All of this work leads to the ability to summarize a text.

2. Teach skills in isolation.

Each genre of writing has a unique set of skills and features. In narrative writing, one of those skills is elaborative detail. In informational/expository writing, it’s broad yet distinct main ideas. Through our methodology, skills are introduced explicitly through whole class instruction. This develops the common language needed to discuss text more deeply and focuses on one skill at a time while breaking down the writing process for students.

The Reading Link: The literacy launch begins at the awareness level, developing common language and vocabulary to discuss genre and author’s purpose. When reading, be sure to bring these same “writing” conversations to your reading adoption and other content area texts. In a brush stroke, these listening and speaking opportunities enrich oral vocabulary while building on the reading/writing connection. Students’ ability to successfully address comprehension questions begins with oral expression.

3. Develop ORAL language before ever putting pen to paper.

We have a saying here at EW- “Students can’t write what they can’t articulate.” Allow plenty of time to discuss ideas, build vocabulary, and share suggestions – either with a partner, in a group setting, or as a whole class. Discussion builds oral language and confidence and helps students to articulate what they want to express in writing.

The Reading Link: Having practiced these skills in isolation, be sure to point them out when reading. For example, note how teaching narrative elaborative detail in writing creates a greater ability to more precisely visualize characters, settings and objects. When asked to define character traits or answer questions about motivation and conflict, students have the experience and awareness of the techniques which they can use to articulate their response and effectively find the evidence to support their thinking.

4. Break writing into manageable chunks.

Authors and writers often write in sections: a block of dialogue, a description, or a main idea paragraph. Rarely do they write in one, long blur. For example, ask students to write **ONLY** an introductory paragraph for an argumentative essay about why Sport XYZ is the best sport. Focusing on one skill and being able to finish it helps students to see that writing does not need to be a marathon.

The Reading Link: Use the knowledge gained from these writing lessons in your reading experiences by asking students to identify various skills the author used. Where did the author add a block of elaborative detail? Why did the author include a specific block of dialogue? Or, underline the paragraph where the author focuses on the habitat.

5. Model what you want them to produce.

Students need to see how the process of writing works, so you must model the skill that you are working on. Let them “hear” the thought process of the author as you verbalize what goes through your mind as you choose your words. Modeling creates an environment where students first see a written sample come to life and then feel more secure in their own attempts. Allow them to borrow words/phrases from your model as they learn through imitation.

The Reading Link: Learning to read is not instinctive. Good reading is about the ability to transform print into spoken language in order to comprehend the meaning of words, sentences and paragraphs. During reading, you often use a Think Aloud strategy to uncover your thought process as a reader and to help students create a mental model of the text they are reading. Likewise, learning to write is not instinctive. The same process needs to occur in writing. It’s not enough to use a mentor text or pre-written segment to showcase writing and expect that students can reproduce that in their own writing. A true model in writing includes asking productive questions and using the responses to transform oral language into written expression. You uncover the thought process of the author as you engage in this type of modeling.

Our Mission

Empowering Writers' mission is to offer high-quality, flexible professional development, utilizing comprehensive resources and coaching support that enables teachers K-8 to be effective writing instructors. The result is capable and confident students who can communicate effectively in all forms of expression, verbal and written.

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