

# **ELEMENTARY WRITING CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

Developed by The Elementary Writing  
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## Background, Purpose and Theory of Action

Oakland Unified School District currently does not have a district adopted writing curriculum in its elementary schools. Currently schools managing with the writing instruction in Open Court, or supplementing instruction with some other program. This is not compatible with the District's stated objectives to have all students reading and writing proficiently by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and to graduate students ready for college and career.

This project is an extension of the Writing Proficiency Project's work of improving district-wide writing achievement K - 9. Currently, we have a systematic, high-quality, standards-based and comprehensive writing assessment to help teachers assess specific writing needs of their students. This performance-based assessment is called the Process Writing Assessment. Using the PWA, teachers can now address the first two parts of the inquiry process: "Here's what" (data), and "So what?" (inquiry). This curriculum writing unit is a first attempt at addressing the third part of inquiry: "Now what?"

The WPP, a joint collaboration between the Bay Area Writing Project and Oakland Unified School District, has at its core a belief in the abilities of teachers as professionals and in the power of teachers working collaboratively together to create their own materials. Teachers know best what works in their classrooms; when teachers come together to create their own materials, there is an opportunity for an exchange of ideas, for deep reflection on of what good instruction looks like.

## Methodology

In this spirit, five teachers were selected/volunteered to create a standards-based, OCR aligned, writing curriculum for fifth grade. After researching and discussing best practices of teaching writing, effective teaching strategies for all learners, and the key writing standards for fifth grade, the group developed a list of essential (non-negotiable) elements that a writing curriculum in Oakland must have (pages 4 - 6). The Writing Curriculum Team also created a lesson flow map to use as a guide for how lessons should be sequenced.

Next, the team backwards- mapped the key standards for each of the units. This determined what standards would have to be addressed in the final unit of the year. The team mapped out the unit and then developed lesson sequences. After these lesson sequences were field tested in their respective classrooms, the final curriculum was created.

## Next Steps

Although there is no current funding to continue this work, the plan is for the team to work with other 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to develop lesson sequences for units 1 - 4 (**Summer 2010**). These teachers will meet for one day after each unit has been completed to analyze student writing and revise the units (**September - June 2010 - 2011**). This expanded group will then lead teachers at grades K - 4 to develop and field test writing units for their grade levels (**Summer 2011 to June 2012**).

## Elements of an Effective Writing Curriculum

1. Tied to the curriculum
2. Includes mini-lesson and support
3. Includes Author's Chair and celebration of writing
4. Portfolios and student friendly rubrics to show growth
5. Opportunities to research and input for meaningful content
6. Thinking Maps/Graphic Organizers
7. Should emphasize content first, then mechanics/grammar
8. Support for EL learners
9. Mentor texts - to identify elements of good writing
10. Opportunities for peer talk
11. Outcome based, has an authentic purpose
12. Robust pre-writing
13. Moves student to independence
14. Includes creative writing and poetry
15. Gives students choice
16. Includes vocabulary development
17. Response to Literature
18. Fun/Quick Writes
19. Aligned with standards/key standards to prep for 6<sup>th</sup> grade
20. Includes critical life skills and critical thinking
21. AED/ELL support
22. Differentiation for strategic and accelerated learners
23. Rigor (aim high, provide support)
24. Developmentally appropriate
25. Should produce better outcomes (better quality of writing)
26. Includes formative and summative assessment and rubrics

## Non-Negotiable Best Practices and Strategies for an Effective Writing Curriculum

Name	Strategy or Best Practice?*	Writing Process	Target Groups
Peer Conference	Best Practice	Revision	All
Scaffold and modeling (I do/We do/You do)	Best Practice	Any	All
Mentor Text	Best Practice	Pre-draft	All
Rubric/roadmap (student friendly)	Best Practice	Any	All
Graphic Organizers	Strategy	Pre-draft	EL, AED
Explicit teaching and oral/written practice of language structures	Strategy	Pre-draft, drafting and revising	EL, AED
Building Background and motivation	Best Practices	Pre-draft	All
Author's chair/celebration/publication	Best Practice	final draft	All
Portfolios	Best Practice	Final draft	All
Sentence lifting	Best Practice	revision	All
Public Conference	Best Practice	Revision	All

Best Practice = a research-based practice for effective teaching of writing  
 Strategy = a research-based strategy for teaching students any content

## Priority Writing Standards for 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

### 1) Writing strategies

Multiparagraph narrative with plot (Beginning/Middle/End), setting description

Multiparagraph expository writing with introduction + support paragraphs and conclusion AND transition expressions that link the paragraphs.

### 2) Research and Technology

Locate content information from a variety of sources (including bibliography)  
Use thesaurus to find appropriate words

Evaluation and Revision: Identification AND application (sentence variety, text organization, and paragraph organization)

Adding, deleting and rearranging

### 3) Writing Applications: purpose

Narrative with plot/conflict and description, Persuasive, Research reports, Response to literature ( inference/conclusion, identifying themes, developing interpretation, evidence from text)

*ALL genres except Narrative involve the evidence and are expository within content areas.*

### 4) Written and Oral Language Conventions

Transition words to connect words, phrases and ideas  
Correct verb usage