

The Four Blocks™ Literacy Model



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Writing

- Writing is a social process
- Teaching “process writing” is associated with higher average writing proficiency among students
- Research strongly suggests that the most beneficial way of teaching grammar is through the student’s own reading and writing
- Spelling progresses in developmental stages and is best taught in the context of reading and writing, and in patterns rather than rules



Writing

Goals:

- To have children view writing as a way of telling about things
- To develop fluent writing for all children
- To allow students to learn to read through writing
- To teach children to apply grammar and mechanics in their own writing
- To teach children particular writing forms
- To maintain the self-confidence and motivation of struggling writers



Writing the Four-Blocks Way is Research-Based because it:

- Emphasizes self-selected writing in K-2
- Emphasizes focused writing in 3-5
- Teaches transcription (handwriting and spelling) skills systematically



Writing
Daily Schedule

- Mini-lesson (5-10 minutes)
- Students write/teacher conferences (15-20 minutes)
- Sharing (5 minutes)



Writing

Five Cycles of Writing Instruction

- Cycle 1 - Self-Selected Writing and Sharing
- Cycle 2 – Process Writing with Editing, Conferencing, Publishing, and Sharing
- Cycle 3 - Process Writing with Revising, Editing, Conferencing and Publishing
- Cycle 4 - Focused Writing with Revising, Editing, Conferencing and Publishing
- Cycle 5 – Single Draft Focused Writing

Writing the Four Blocks Way



Writing Cycles by Grade Level

	K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Upper Grades
EARLY in the year	Cycle 1	Cycle 1 Cycle 2	Cycle 1 Cycle 2	Cycle 1 Cycle 2	Cycle 1 Cycle 2 Cycle 3
MOST of the year	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 2 Cycle 3	Cycle 2 Cycle 3	Cycle 3 Cycle 4
LATE in the year	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 3	Cycle 4 Cycle 5



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Writing Mini-lessons

Teach a variety of Mini-lessons

- Procedures
- Writing Craft
- Conventions
- Revising (Cycles 3-4)
- Editing (Cycles 2-4)



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Writing Mini-lessons – Procedures


- Rules for writing time
 - ✓ Where to find/how to manage materials
 - ✓ Where to put papers
- What to do when...
 - ✓ Don't know what to write
 - ✓ Don't know how to spell a word
 - ✓ Finish writing the piece you are working on
 - ✓ Need help or have a "non-writing" need



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Writing

Mini-lessons – Craft

- choosing a topic
 - sticking to the topic
 - narrowing the topic (small moments)
 - adding on to a piece
 - saving all writing and using it as a resource for future topics or revisions
 - rereading for clarity and completeness
-  • how to “set a scene”

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Writing Mini-lessons

Craft: Creating a List of Ideas

My Writing Ideas

- Chris* - traveling to India
- Liver Foundation fundraisers
- Kaitlin* - First Grade summer school
- Santa Claus, Indiana
- Me* - retirement
- reading
- Pets* - Kaitlin Sally
- Eli
- Max

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Writing

Mini-lessons – Convention

- capitalization
- punctuation
- spelling
- leaving spaces between words
- grammar and usage
- developing paragraphs

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Writing Mini-lessons

Convention: Spelling

"Today I am going to write about a trip I took to Australia. (I can add that to my idea list!).

I went to Australia in 1995. The flight was very long but great. I had all of the seats in my row to myself. We saw two movies on the way. I landed in Sidney. My friend was already there. We stayed there for a few days then took the train to Brizban. The train ride was auful. The guy sitting next to me was stranj.



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Writing

Mini-lessons – Editing (Cycle 2)

- inserting spaces between words
- using capital letters
- using correct punctuation
- using commas in a series
- using consistent verb tense



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Writing

Mini-lessons - Editing

1. Put your name and date on all writing.
2. Sentences* makes sense.
3. Sentences* begin with a capital letter.
4. Sentences* end with punctuation (. ? !).
5. Circle misspelled words.
6. Use capital letters for names and places.
7. Sentences* stay on topic.



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Writing

Mini-lessons – Revising (Cycle 3)

Four General Revising Strategies

Adding

- words/phrases, dialogue, missing information

Replacing

- words/phrases, “telling” with showing, the beginning, the ending



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Writing

Mini-lessons – Revising (Cycle 3)

Four General Revising Strategies

Reordering

- sequencing, beginning/middle/end (usually taught after adding and replacing)

Removing

- excess information, words, dialogue (taught last)



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Writing Mini-lessons Grammar and Mechanics

- Grammar in Revision by Adding
 - Adding adverbs (It was *very* hot.)
- Mechanics in Revision by Adding
 - Dialogue
- Grammar in Revision by Replacing
 - Replacing verbs with powerful verbs
(I came ~~raced~~ home.)
 - Replacing nouns with more descriptive words (I raced home from the ~~store~~ *supermarket*)



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How to Make Revision and Editing More Effective

1. Teach students to use an editor's checklist to proofread and correct their own papers during editing
2. Require students to have your approval on revisions before editing, and on edits before recopying



Writing

Mini-lessons – Focused Writing (Cycle 4)

- Letter writing
- Poetry
- Interviews
- Riddles
- Jokes
- Newspapers
- Tales
- Biography/
Autobiography
- Persuasive
- Mystery
- Narrative
- Essay
- Report



Writing

Mini-lessons – Focused Writing (Cycle 4)

- Show them in books
 - Read Alouds, Guided Reading
- Show them in mini-lessons
 - Write a piece using what you know about the genre
- Show them how to use Genre-based Writing Scales
- Show them how to write to a prompt



How to Make Mini-Lessons More Effective

1. Have fewer different kinds of mini-lessons and provide sufficient repetition on each kind of mini-lesson
2. Have each mini-lesson focus on a single teaching point
3. Actively involve the students in each mini-lesson



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Writing Publishing

- Student selects a piece to publish after completing 3-5 good rough drafts
 - Quick edit everything; revise and edit only those pieces for publication
- Variations to publishing
 - Individual books
 - Class books
 - School newspaper
 - Class Web pages



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Writing Conferencing

- Engage students in one-on-one conversations about their writing
- See students regularly
- Maintain records to show growth and progress



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Writing Conferencing

- Focus on the *writer*, not the writing
- Select one teaching point for each conference
- Teaching points should reflect the different mini-lessons you teach; *don't* focus on conventions as the primary teaching point.



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Writing Conferencing

Over the Shoulder Conferences

- Last about one minute per student
- Teacher doesn't sit down

Because...

- Allows you to monitor/respond to the work in progress
- Identify topics for mini-lessons
- Remind students to use info from mini-lessons
- Introduce new information when a student is ready
- Ooh and aah about student writing



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Writing Conferencing

Scheduled Conference

- Meet one-on-one
- Lasts 3-5 minutes
- Should be conversations

Because...

- Develop better writers
- Develop a piece of writing
- Extend/transfer mini-lessons to student writing



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Writing Conferencing

- Early first grade be a cheerleader, not an editor.
- Mid-year first grade begin simple editor's checklist with peer editors
- Second and third grade self-edit peer revise



Writing Conferencing

Forms



Writing Conferencing



How to Make Conferencing More Effective

1. Teach your students how to conference effectively with each other in partners and small groups
2. Have students revise in pairs before teaching them to revise alone
3. Do teacher conferencing with each student before allowing him or her to revise alone



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Writing Sharing

- End the block with Sharing
 - Children first drafts or published pieces
- Because...
- Highly motivating
 - What I write is worth listening to
 - I get ideas from other 'authors'



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Writing Sharing

- Quick Share
- Focused Share
- Few Students Share
- Author's Chair
- Pair and Share
- Small Group Sharing



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Making the Writing Block Multi-Level

- children choose own topics except during focused writing lessons
- children take as many days as needed to write each piece
- teach mini-lessons on a variety of levels
- accept whatever level of first draft writing children can achieve
- during conferences, tailor your instruction for each child