Click on the links below to go directly to those sections—

**Marketing Flyer**

**Curriculum Guide**
(Several of these pages have been intentionally blurred)

**Sample Mini-Lessons and Student Tip Sheets**
New education standards bring new writing requirements to special education and autism classrooms. Handwriting instruction and filling out worksheets won’t cut it anymore. Students are now expected to share and communicate through writing.

Researcher Dr. Janet Sturm designed a comprehensive curriculum that gives educators the right tools to teach students with complex instructional needs how to write and then measure their writing progress.

It’s called First Author Writing Curriculum, and it’s the ONLY writing curriculum of its kind. It will help you meet your new curriculum writing requirements and prepare students for the alternate assessment. Perhaps most importantly, with First Author, your teachers will become joyful and fearless as they view each student as an Author! Your students will proudly say, “I’m an Author!”

If you’re using Handwriting Without Tears, First Author will help your teachers move from teaching letter shapes year after year into teaching writing with the proper accommodations.

If you’re using a district-created writing curriculum, First Author will help systematize instruction and speed up progress monitoring.

If you don’t have a dedicated writing curriculum, you may need one to help your students meet the new standards. First Author has you covered!

“In my 24 years of teaching I have never known my students so well.”

Jenay Prytula
Special education teacher who used First Author Writing Curriculum and software for three years in her classroom.

3 out of 4 Special Ed Directors say that new standards will change the way writing is taught in special ed classrooms

Included in this Sampler

Sections of the Curriculum Guide help you become familiar with the instructional philosophy behind the curriculum.

Two scripted Mini-lessons with Student Tip Sheets walk you through a lesson.

Research Validated!
First Author Writing Measures was published in Topics in Language Disorders, a respected peer-reviewed journal

Get pricing and more information at donjohnston.com/firstauthorcurriculum
CURRICULUM GUIDE

First Author™ Curriculum

Dr. Janet M. Sturm
A comprehensive writing curriculum for beginning writers

First Author™ Curriculum

Dr. Janet M. Sturm
Acknowledgments

The First Author Writing Curriculum would not have been conceivable without the creative freedom and trust given to me by two special education teachers, Sue Courington and Melissa Kleiman. Without them, I would still be saying this type of instruction was possible, but would not be able to show that it was achievable with these unique, diverse learners. These teachers allowed their classrooms to be a place for experimentation and trial-and-error, and offered me the opportunity to develop and refine all components of this curriculum, with their students, over a seven year period. The Central Michigan University graduate students who travelled with me weekly to these classrooms also deserve enormous praise for being fearless and joyful, especially in the early years, and for bravely working alongside me to maximize the potential in each student.

I am thankful for the team of educators at The Bridge School who were the first to “give it a try” with their students who have severe speech and physical impairments. Their honest and thoughtful collaboration, enthusiasm for this curriculum, and creative expertise in executing it resulted in incredible outcomes for students at the school.
I also very much appreciate the numerous teachers who participated in the NIH STTR First Author research project. They implemented the First Author Writing Curriculum with eager, positive energy and proved that this curriculum was feasible for students across the age span, and with a broad range of disabilities (i.e., intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, physical impairments, and complex communication needs).

I am eternally grateful to my colleagues, Kathleen Cali, Maureen Staskowski, Mary Hunt-Berg, and Nicki Nelson for their belief in this work and for their ongoing feedback and encouragement throughout the years. Kathleen Cali merits a special thank you for being a constant sounding board for ideas and for reviewing and editing all aspects of this work. Without her feedback and support, I would have been unable to develop each component of this curriculum to its optimal level. I would like to extend a special appreciation to the team of individuals at Don Johnston, especially Ruth Ziolkowski, for sharing in the vision for the First Author projects across the years.

Most importantly, I would like to thank the incredible students in each special education classroom. These students trusted me, when I knew I needed to earn that trust, and I hope that my efforts helped them become proud authors. Each learned that they had unique, meaningful ideas to share with others. Every writing session was a constant surprise as they took risks and learned to believe in their own success. The lessons they taught me along the way were invaluable, and I hope that their role as authors opens new social, vocational, and academic opportunities for each of them.
What’s Included in First Author Writing Curriculum

Teacher Resource USB
- Teacher Tools and Forms
- Student Tip Sheets
- Posters
- Parent Letters
- Awards and Certificates
- Toolkit Binder Tabs

Curriculum Guide

Writing Measures

Mini-lessons and Tip Sheets

Student Resources

Posters
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Overview

*First Author Writing Curriculum* is a comprehensive, classroom-tested writing curriculum for beginning writers. It was designed to provide explicit daily instruction in both writing, and speaking and listening that is grounded in early writing development. *First Author Writing Curriculum* draws from practices of writing instruction that have been scientifically-derived. (See Table 1 in the Appendix for a summary of the evidence-based foundation of the *First Author Writing Curriculum*.)

Research Support

A beginning writer is one who is learning to use written language to express communicative intent, and beginning writing is defined as starting with emergent writing (drawing, scribbling, and writing letters) and ending with conventional writing abilities, usually acquired by second or third grade for typically developing children.

(Sturm, Cali, Nelson, & Staskowski, 2012, p. 299)

This curriculum was designed with consideration for Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to offer instructional supports and accommodations that support students with complex instructional needs including those with:

- Mild to significant disabilities
- Intellectual disabilities
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Physical disabilities
- Complex communication needs

*First Author Writing Curriculum* is comprised of three key components that are part of the instructional framework.

**Mini-lessons** emphasize a target concept for the day and contains an easy set of steps to deliver the lesson. Mini-lessons are intended to be repeated with variety over time to foster student independence in use of writing strategies.

**Writing Time** offers each student an opportunity to write about a self-selected topic and create a writing product that can be shared.
Author’s Chair provides students with a crucial learning environment where they share their writing. Students learn to value writing as communication with others.

First Author Writing Curriculum draws upon principles of cognitive strategy instruction. Mini-lessons are a time to introduce the concept, provide modeling, and offer guided, collaborative learning opportunities. Writing Time and Author’s Chair offer repeated, guided opportunities to practice lesson concepts and foster generalization.

This curriculum provides a comprehensive group of measurement tools to assess and monitor small increments in students’ development of writing, communication, and behavior. The First Author Writing Measures were developed to be valid, reliable, and easy to use. These writing quantity and quality measures offer educators tools to assess and monitor progress, inform instruction, and celebrate even the smallest gains in written language for beginning writers of all ages.

The Student Accomplishments for Communication and Classroom Behavior tool was designed to support educators in demonstrating the positive changes that occur not only in students’ ability to engage in successful interactions, but also their overall capacity to regulate their behavior successfully in the classroom.

Use of varied approaches, which integrates process-based approaches with strategy instruction and includes writing skill and text structure instruction, is one of ten essential components of best practices of writing instruction.

Troia, 2014
First Author Writing Curriculum Components

First Author Writing Curriculum is a process-based writing instructional approach. It is paired with cognitive strategy instruction and social interaction training. This is accomplished through extensive modeling and collaborative, constructive learning.

Students communicate and write through all components of instruction and learn that writers compose texts to make meaning with others (Sturm, 2012b). Writing is also viewed as an in-the-head process where students learn to become strategic thinkers, monitor their cognitive resources, and self-regulate during the writing process.

Important!

What is Cognitive Strategy Instruction?

Cognitive strategy instruction teaches students explicit and systematic steps to engage in all aspects of the writing process (planning, composing, and revising) (Graham, 2006; Graham & Perin, 2007). It is embedded into an instructional approach and includes the following features that were described by Harris and Graham (1996):

- Introduction of the strategy
- Discussion of goals and purposes
- Modeling of the strategy
- Guided practice feedback
- Independent performance and generalization

Mastery of strategy steps is accomplished by providing students Tip Sheets that offer scaffolds for strategic, skilled thinking, and by offering repeated opportunities to employ the strategy in meaningful contexts.

Mini-lessons

The purpose of each Mini-lesson is to provide students with explicit instruction. Lessons are repeated with variety to build student skills and foster independent performance and generalization.
“When I first started this writing program I thought well, yeah, okay, good … but now … I would never have thought, after 30 something years of teaching, that some of the kids you are getting to write, were capable of writing.”

Sue Courington, Classroom Teacher, April 10, 2008

During the focused 5-15 minute Mini-lesson, principles of cognitive strategy instruction are utilized to systematically target concepts. Start each lesson by asking enthusiastically, “Who in here is an Author?” Pass out the Tip Sheet that provides pictures and text content support, reinforces attention, and facilitates processing of information.

As the lesson begins students are provided with a strategy description and the goals and purposes for the day. Opportunities for guided practice and feedback of lesson concepts are an essential part of each lesson. Educators model “think-alouds” that demonstrate communication and writing skills. They also role play to illustrate core concepts (e.g., good listening).

Student are active participants by:

- Voting on lesson content (e.g., choosing the topic to write about that day)
- Giving feedback during role playing activities (e.g., providing input on the quality of the behavior being targeted such as eye contact)
- Acting as collaborative contributors to co-constructed writing products (e.g., writing a plan for the future)
**Writing Time**

Writing Time is held immediately following the Mini-lesson. The learning goal of this component is to support students in producing a writing product that can be shared with others. Students have meaningful opportunities to apply new writing skills and ownership of their writing is fostered by supporting students in using self-selected topics and text types.

During Writing Time students are divided into small work groups where they vary in writing ability. Each student is provided with essential or specialized writing tools that support them in ease of text production. For example, a student who is unable to use a pencil to form letters is provided access to the alphabet through a laminated alphabet board or through computer tools. For any beginning writer, drawing often serves as the planning phase. Because many beginning writers cannot use words to tell educators their topic or draw a recognizable drawing they are offered accommodations through individualized photo images (more on this later).

By the end of each writing session the goal is for each student to have a photo image or drawing and a writing product that can be shared with the group.

**Research Support**

Effective writing instructional programs provide daily times for students to write. Through extensive practice, students gain the skills and strategies needed to become effective writers and gain confidence in their writing abilities.

From What Works Clearinghouse—Teaching Elementary Students to Become Effective Writers (Graham et al., 2012)

**Author’s Chair**

The instructional focus of Author’s Chair is to provide students with an opportunity to read (or have a chosen reader share) what he or she has written. Authors give feedback to others and celebrate writing. The Author’s Chair is considered a place of honor. There are lots of ways for students and teachers to collaborate together to create a unique Author’s Chair for the classroom:

- A special chair
- A special quilt (squares created by students)
- A special arch (students can sit under) or backdrop
Author’s Chair is held weekly and students can choose to share their best or favorite writing for that week. Immediately after the student shares his or her writing he or she asks the group, “Any questions or comments?” Peers and educators take turns (three speakers per Author) communicating with the Author. Involvement of all students is promoted by—

- Use a Talking Stick to help students know whose turn it is to talk
- Use an Author Board (or pocket chart) set up by the Author’s Chair to state the writing topic or the text type

Author’s Chair provides opportunities for students with a range of abilities to find common ground (e.g., I love race cars. You and I have that in common), use a public speaking voice, foster communication skills (e.g., use eye contact or engage in multiple communicative turns on a single topic), and develop their love of writing. With accommodations and instructional scaffolds all students are able to be successful.

The Author’s Chair is decorated by the students with ideas generated collaboratively by the group. Some ideas for decorating include:

- Using photos of the students (laminated or ironed on special fabric)
- Voting on color choices and spray painting a wooden chair
- Affixing glitter, gems, ribbon, pompoms or other craft materials
- Adding drawings (e.g., on special fabric for a quilt)
- Using stickers representing favorite topics

**Author Conference**

Occasionally following a Mini-lesson or Writing Time, an Author Conference is held with students. After a Mini-lesson an Author Conference is used to support lesson objectives and enable a small student group to apply concepts with adult support. An Author Conference can also be conducted after Writing Time to discuss writing goals and achievements and provide feedback on the student’s writing process or product.
Author’s Chair is the “carrot!”

During Author’s Chair students quickly learn that writing is something we share with others. Students will look to see who has their hand up to make a comment or ask a question. Students enjoy being the center of attention and have everyone focus on what they have to share! Even if it is a tough day at school students often show you their best selves during Author’s Chair.

Creating a Culture of Writers

A central principle of the social interactive, process-based approach emphasizes that all students are Authors and everyone in a classroom is also a writing teacher. Educators’ positive perceptions about students, and their capabilities, optimize what can be achieved in your classroom.

• During Mini-lessons, educators use strategies to draw every student in as an active participant, including those with complex communication needs.

• During Writing Time, all students are reminded to “Choose a topic that you want to share in your writing” and “Think about what you want to write and share during Author’s Chair.” Talking with your students using this type of language supports understanding of writing as a form of communication, builds their understanding that people write to share their writing with others, and develops knowledge about writing for specific audiences.

• During Author’s Chair, all aspects of a student’s writing product are shared and praised. For example, a more capable student who has a new topic or text type to share should be praised for this accomplishment. Another student may share a writing product that contains a photo, some scribbles with a pencil, and random letters of the alphabet. Peers and educators might praise this student for choosing a new topic, using their pencil to fill the page with scribbles, or choosing lots of letters of the alphabet to share in his or her writing.
In the *First Author Writing Curriculum* both student peers and the adults in the classroom help celebrate individual student accomplishments in writing as well as speaking and listening. One of the most exciting aspects of the *First Author Writing Curriculum* is watching your students learn and grow. Educators in the classroom will begin to notice the sometimes subtle changes in students (e.g., the student was calm and stayed in the Author’s Chair) in addition to occasional greater leaps forward (e.g., the student wrote his or her first simple sentence or cohesive paragraph).

One way to develop your lens for identifying accomplishments is to discuss “**special moments**” for the day with other adults in the room and **record them on a notepad**. If you are on your own, keep the notepad nearby and record your observations as you see them happening. You might also spend five minutes at the end of a writing session to record quick notes about the gains observed in your students each day.

Celebrating new skills in speaking, listening and writing across all aspects of your writing instruction increases students’ perceptions of themselves as writers by highlighting what they did right, helping students internalize the skills that result in independent performance and generalization. Some examples of students’ speaking, listening and writing accomplishments might include:

- Purposefully pointed to multiple letters on an alphabet board for the first time when asked to “Show me the letters you want to share in your writing today.”
- Wrote an intelligible letter
- Wrote a new text type today—it was a fictional narrative
- Wrote a new topic today—it was about beaches
- Wrote her first intelligible word and it was a label of a picture
- Made a spontaneous on-topic comment

**Quick Tip**

Have fun referring to your students as “Authors” throughout a writing session. For example, if students are interrupting a student writer, jump in using a fun tone of voice saying, “Don’t interrupt the Author! He has more great ideas to get on his paper.” Referring to students as Authors who have something important to share builds their self-perceptions as writers.
• Made an on-topic comment and told why they liked their peer’s writing
• Initiated turn-taking by spontaneously raising his hand for the first time
• After praising an Author using a speech generating device, spoke aloud the words (e.g., said, “cool”)
• While in the Author’s Chair, eagerly looked up to see who wanted to make a comment and pointed to the peer

Be Joyful and Fearless

Students are perceptive—they know when you are enjoying what is happening in the classroom. Teaching writing is not easy for any educator and implementing a daily writing curriculum for beginning writers who struggle may feel daunting. Create a culture that empowers learners by being joyful and fearless and letting your students feel your excitement for them as they embark on a journey as Authors.

Challenge Your Students and Keep Them Safe

Writing is hard, even for skilled writers. Students who struggle with writing may have developed negative perceptions about themselves as writers. Regularly remind each student that they are smart and capable. Tell students that to become a better writer that they need to write and keep on writing. When students are partners in the learning process, and are challenged but kept safe, they will often exceed our expectations! It is important that educators identify the individual barriers to the writing process for each student and set clear expectations that foster student growth in writing and in speaking and listening.

Old Assumptions and New Perspectives

Students with developmental disabilities need access to high-quality instruction from the first day of school to optimize potential for literacy learning and provide access to the power of writing (Sturm, 2012a). Implementing the First Author Writing Curriculum, educational teams should view all students as Authors who have the potential to share and communicate with others.

Success of the First Author Writing Curriculum is enhanced when educational teams reflect on past practices of instruction for students with disabilities that has focused on functional drill and practice skills such as copying, tracing, and worksheets and challenge assumptions that may inhibit student performance. The following table provides a brief overview of these assumptions and some new perspectives to consider.
### Table 2
Old Assumptions and New Perspectives on Students with Developmental Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption 1</th>
<th>Old Assumptions</th>
<th>New Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students should show prerequisite literacy skills such as letter formation, phonemic or phonological awareness, or sound symbol connections.</td>
<td>• Exposure to the alphabet through meaningful writing opportunities facilitates the acquisition of early literacy skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption 2</th>
<th>Old Assumptions</th>
<th>New Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading skills occur before writing skills.</td>
<td>• Through repeated meaningful writing opportunities, writing skills may be observed in students with significant disabilities before reading skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption 3</th>
<th>Old Assumptions</th>
<th>New Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional writing is not possible.</td>
<td>• Research has shown that students with significant disabilities can make positive gains in writing when provided with consistent, strategy-based instruction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption 4</th>
<th>Old Assumptions</th>
<th>New Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early writing should be conventional.</td>
<td>• Typically developing children write hundreds, if not thousands of times before becoming conventional writers. • Students with complex instructional needs may require even more meaningful opportunities to write.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption 5</th>
<th>Old Assumptions</th>
<th>New Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For students with significant disabilities, writing skills will be acquired if we teach them in simple, isolated tasks.</td>
<td>• The cognitive, in-the-head process of learning to read and write is the same for all individuals. • Students with significant disabilities need access to frequent, high-quality, explicit instruction that fosters the central goal of writing—to communicate and share with others through text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption 6</th>
<th>Old Assumptions</th>
<th>New Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older students cannot acquire writing skills.</td>
<td>• Adults with significant disabilities who are introduced to systematic writing instruction are developing conventional writing skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Assumptions</td>
<td>New Perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumption 7</strong></td>
<td>• Beginning readers frequently read aloud during sustained silent reading because they have not yet developed their inner voice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken communication isn’t needed during writing.</td>
<td>• Likewise, typically developing students are often communicating and sharing during independent writing time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students with significant disabilities need accommodations that support them in communicating throughout all components of writing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumption 8</strong></td>
<td>• Research evidence does not exist demonstrating that writing with symbols is a necessary developmental first step supporting the development of writing skills for students with significant disabilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbol writing (pictographic writing systems) leads to conventional writing.</td>
<td>• There is also no research evidence indicating that student instruction focused on “writing” with pictographic symbols supports the development of writing with the sounds of one’s language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of symbols adds cognitive load as students must process both the pictographic symbol and the text labels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Using a pictographic symbol set may restrict the range of words and topics a student can compose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pictographic writing systems do not provide students with essential, repeated opportunities to use individual letters to inventively spell and learn the sounds of language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumption 9</strong></td>
<td>• Many students with disabilities have lifelong fine motor constraints that inhibit the ability to produce legible text with ease.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on fine motor skills leads to conventional writing skills.</td>
<td>• Work on fine motor skills is not a writing curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fine motor activities (e.g., copying and tracing) do not enable students to learn that writing is a form of communication.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accommodations that support students with ease of access to the alphabet are crucial to developing beginning writing skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What attitudes and beliefs do you have about your students that match the old assumptions? What new perspectives are you thinking about?
For students with developmental disabilities to develop as writers, writing instruction needs to be embedded in their daily curriculum and include accommodations such as assistive technology.

Joseph & Konrad, 2009

“In my 24 years of teaching I have never known my students so well.”

Jenay Prytula
A special education classroom teacher who has used First Author Writing Curriculum and software for three years with her middle school students who are physical or otherwise health impaired

Getting Started

Here is a quick look at what you will need to get started:

- Mini-lesson
  - Space for all students to gather
  - Flip chart or interactive white board
- Writing Time
  - Computer lab
  - Writing supplies
  - Writing Topic Area
  - Author’s Toolkit
- Author’s Chair
  - Special chair
  - Author’s Board (pocket chart)
  - Microphone

Research Support

“For students with developmental disabilities to develop as writers, writing instruction needs to be embedded in their daily curriculum and include accommodations such as assistive technology.”

Joseph & Konrad, 2009
List of Supplies and Materials

Before you get started with the *First Author Writing Curriculum* you will need to get supplies and materials for your students and your classroom.

Order the supplies listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student Items</strong></th>
<th><strong>Total Items</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-inch three-ring binders</td>
<td>One binder per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabbed binder dividers—five tabs</td>
<td>One set per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zippered pouches for three-ring binder</td>
<td>One per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scissors</td>
<td>One pair per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glue Sticks</td>
<td>One stick per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Head Shot Photo Image</td>
<td>One for each student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Classroom Items</strong></th>
<th><strong>Total Items</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talking Stick</td>
<td>One per class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author’s Chair</td>
<td>One per class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply Caddy/ Bin</td>
<td>One per writing table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lined Paper</td>
<td>One stack per writing table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencils</td>
<td>One pencil per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markers</td>
<td>One set per writing table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry erase markers and board</td>
<td>One per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microphone</td>
<td>One per classroom (used during Author’s Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-inch three-ring binders</td>
<td>2-3 for school photos (e.g., field trips)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box for storing magazines</td>
<td>One per classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pocket Chart</td>
<td>One per classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank rectangular laminated cards</td>
<td>One for each student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Included with the *First Author Writing Curriculum* is a Teacher Resource CD. Located on this CD are the contents of the Teacher Tools folder and the Student Tip Sheets folder.
Prepare Student and Classroom Materials

Student Materials

- Prepare an **Author’s Toolkit** for each student. The Author’s Toolkit is a customized three-ring binder with unique writing supports for each student. The binder has tabbed sections (located on the Teacher Resource CD).

Beginning writers are motivated by topics of individualized interest and personal photos, so ask for input from family members. Before the first day of instruction you should have 4-5 pictures or images placed behind the “My Topics” tab of each student’s toolkit. Magazines, catalogs, and the Internet are good resources for topic inspiration. Include topic categories from:

  - **My Life**—pictures of family members, pets, images of hobbies, and favorite foods
  - **My World**—monster trucks, cartoon characters, dinosaurs, favorite TV shows and movies

If computers are being used, pictures and images can be organized in folders on a student’s computer desktop.

Ask parents or guardians to send pictures or images to school, use a USB drive or have them emailed to you. (Parent letters are on the Teacher Resource CD.)

Personalize each Author’s Toolkit by:

- Prominently display student’s name on the cover
- Include a “Head Shot” of the Author
- Later invite students to customize their binder covers with images that represent topics they love!

- For emergent beginning writers, print and laminate **alphabet boards**, three-hole punch them and insert into the front of the Author’s Toolkit before the tabbed sections (provided on the Teacher Resource CD).

- Print sets of **letter tiles**, cut them out, place into a zippered pouch, and insert into the front of the tabbed section. Some students like to glue letter tiles onto their writing. (Letter tiles provided on the Teacher Resource CD.)

- Locate and print the individual student Tip Sheets for the first week of lessons (located in the Student Tip Sheets folder and on the Teacher Resource CD).
Classroom Materials

- Use additional three-ring binders to create topic binders called My School. Include fun classroom activities, teachers, other students, and photos from field trips.

- Label a large plastic box “Magazines” and collect magazines, catalogs, and flyers to inspire writing topics.

- Gather writing supplies including pencils, markers, scissors, glue sticks, and lined paper. Place in bins and caddies in the writing area.

- Identify your Author’s Chair. This special place is where students will share and celebrate their writing with others. Remember, it can be a special chair, quilt or archway. A small microphone can be helpful and encouraging for students.
• Prepare materials for your Author’s Board (pocket chart)—

Laminate rectangular blank pieces of paper (for repeated use) that fit into the pocket (have wipe-off markers available). These lesson board cards are used during the Mini-lessons to collect students’ ideas.

Take a special photo of each student, type or print student’s first name, affix to bottom of photo, laminate. Used with the laminated rectangles during Author’s Chair so the whole class can see the name of the Author along with the text type or topic of the writing being shared.

The Author’s Board provides a perfect venue for celebrating “Special Moments” that occur during the week. Record a student’s writing, speaking, or listening accomplishment on the lesson card, place it next to the Author’s name card and place it on the Author’s Board.
Before the First Lesson

This is an exciting time! You have your classroom and student materials prepared and are ready to start. Before you begin teaching your first lesson, it is important to gather some baseline writing and profile information about your students and to introduce these to—and get them excited about—the First Author Writing Curriculum.

Baseline Writing Sample

**Developmental Writing Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Simple Sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Complete Sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Complex Sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sentences with Complex Structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Paragraphs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To take a baseline writing sample, ask each student to write about something they would like to write about. Here are some ideas:
- A favourite book
- A family member
- A pet
- A place
- A holiday
- A hobby

**Important!**

Additional writing goals should be taken throughout the year monthly, possibly for three growth in writing. Leads to the First Author Writing Measures and then selecting on page 17 for additional resources and tools to help you.
Students Profile

It is important to take time to think about the specific writing needs of your students prior to the first week lesson. The principle Developing individual Profiles, Lesson Objectives, and Accommodations have been discussed in your training workshops both in and on the Teacher Resource CD. The guide you through constructing your student’s personal learning profile, including:

- Communication level: beginning, intermediate, advanced
- Current writing level: beginning, intermediate, advanced
- Communication profile: language or speaker
- Level on Developmental Writing Scale
- Choosing student outcomes in different levels of learning: Objectives
- Choosing accommodations

Instructional Strategies

The following are strategies to help your students during the lessons. Write a lesson plan and follow it closely.

Mini-Lessons

- Practice: Practice activities that focus on speaking, reading, writing, and listening.
- Practice: Practice activities that are more advanced, allowing students to develop skills and strategies. Allow the students to choose the level of activity, which is important for their success.
- Practice: Practice activities that are more open-ended, such as having students work in groups or pairs to talk about their interests.
- Practice: Practice activities that are more interactive, such as having students engage in role-playing or group discussions.

Teacher Support Model

- Happy
- Neutral
- Sad
• Use a variety of positive verbal and physical cues to engage all students in the activity for example:
• Say, “We have not found out what ________’s choice is yet. We need to get his vote.” Note the choices and encourage the need for communication. Use the model to talk about the final selection.
• After asking, “Who is here to be Authors?” and having that discussion, do not assign any group with a writer, “Hey all you are going to work with ________ and _________. Everyone get their hand up and ________. Everyone needs to work with physical paragraph guides.”
• Tell students, “How much have you added to your writing? You are ready to write as a class if I need you to do so.”
• To work with groups sometimes, “You are going to work with ________, ________, and _________. They are working on ________ and _________. You are going to ________.”

Writing Time
• Make sure your students are using all of their writing tools. Make sure they are able to communicate during writing time. Sometimes if students are using a partner or group, they are not using their writing tools.
• Make sure your students write a “free write” or “write about” the topic of the day. Sometimes a free write is a good way to get a sense of what you would like to share today in your writing.
• “I want you to be consistent in a new topic. What are you writing about today?”
• “I want you to get a sense for a topic by saying ‘Let’s pick something that is related to your life’ and let them write on it. Then let them share with everyone what they talked about doing it ‘partners’ and let them share with each other what you would like to share today in your writing.”
• “Let’s show you what you like.”
• Use a variety of positive verbal and physical cues to engage all students in writing, “You are going to write about your writing goal. Some examples include:”
• “I’ve got all of the different ________ and have chosen to share today. You write a test.”
• “You write your new ________ and paragraph today.”
• “I’ve got ________ today. Look how many colors you want”
• “Write your new ________ today. Look at all of the ________ you’ve chosen to share today. You write a test.”
• “Write your new ________ and paragraph today.”
• “I’ve got ________ today. You write a test.”

FIRST AUTHOR WRITING CURRICULUM GUIDE 25
Write together with your students, modeling the concept that everyone is an author. Do not make your writing too simplified for your group of students. The image below was produced when working with a five-year-old student.

Encourage students to be creative and reflect on their own thinking. Encourage them to think about their own interests and to write about them. If they want to...

When a student is using an alphabet board, ask the writer to...

Record ideas in the writer's notebook in his or her own language. Record ideas in the writer's notebook in his or her own language. Record ideas in the writer's notebook in his or her own language.

One helpful strategy is to ask students to write their own story. Ask students to write their own story. Ask students to write their own story.

Help students write their own stories using a computer program, e.g., "First Author." First Author is a computer program that enables students to write and publish their stories. First Author is a computer program that enables students to write and publish their stories. First Author is a computer program that enables students to write and publish their stories.

Instruct students to write their stories using a computer program. Instruct students to write their stories using a computer program. Instruct students to write their stories using a computer program.
Author's Chair

- Consider having a communication board with photos of all individuals who are present in the classroom. Make sure all students are aware of the activities taking place in the classroom. Make sure all students are aware of the activities taking place in the classroom.

- Have a microphone ready to help students. This will allow students to communicate more easily with the teacher. The microphone can also be used to assist students who are not able to hear the teacher.

- Help students hold up their hands to demonstrate their understanding of the lesson. If a student is not able to hear the teacher, they may be able to use their hands to communicate their understanding of the lesson.

- Encourage students to participate in the discussion. If a student is not able to hear the teacher, they may be able to participate in the discussion through their hands. This will allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the lesson.

- Use a variety of techniques to engage students. Encourage students to participate in the discussion through their hands. This will allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the lesson.
For students who struggle to maintain a topic when making comments to an author, provide verbal cues to keep that student on topic. For example, say “Remember __________ write about __________ today. What would you like to tell them?”

For students who make too many comments to an author or at clear times, for example, ask the student, “What are the three things you would like to tell __________ about their writing today?”
# A Final Checklist for Getting Started

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do You ...</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have student profile completed?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have feedback writing samples?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have your first week of Who lessons outlined?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have student tip sheets ready for your first week?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have each student's Author's Toolkit ready for lesson?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have essential communication tools ready for students who require them?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have essential writing tools ready for students who require them?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a lesson plan?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have an Author's Toolkit ready for lesson?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Important:**

- Options for varied effectiveness can be observed and recorded in a checklist. This will allow for continuous improvement of the curriculum and instruction. A checklist can be created to observe and record the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction, which can be used for future reference and feedback.

- Use the checklist to identify areas of growth and improvement.
- Ask a mentor, teacher, or colleague to review your feedback.
- Schedule a meeting with an administrator to provide feedback.
- Set goals for each task, review and discuss observations and comments.
- Use the feedback to set reasonable, achievable improvement goals.
Your First 30 Days!

To help build your confidence around teaching writing and using the First Author Writing Curriculum, the first 30 days lessons are planned for you. Your first three lessons explicitly teach the components within the curriculum. Review the lessons, prepare for modeling, role-playing, and collaborative writing. Be sure to have all your materials ready before you start.

Use the first 30 days to:

- Establish routines
- Practice/Introduce language of writing
- Create a social learning environment
- Clarify all staff roles

Encourage all educational staff to:

- Build students’ perceptions about themselves as writers
- Refer to students as ‘author’s
- Verbally praise students for the accuracy and inventiveness of their writing
- Remind students to be flexible and patient
- Work together to scaffold students’ ability to write

30 FIRST AUTHOR WRITING CURRICULUM GUIDE
## First 30 Days of Mini-lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1</strong> Author Time</td>
<td><strong>Day 2</strong> Author Time Schedule</td>
<td><strong>Day 3</strong> Author's Chair #1</td>
<td><strong>Day 4</strong> Author's Chair #2: <em>Decorate to Celebrate</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 5</strong> Author's Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have baseline writing samples from ALL your students?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 6</strong> Brainstorming Topics: <em>My Life</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 7</strong> Brainstorming Topics: <em>My School</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 8</strong> Brainstorming Topics: <em>My World</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 9</strong> Places to Get Topics: <em>Internet and Home</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 10</strong> Author's Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 11</strong> Places to Get Topics: <em>Magazines</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 12</strong> Author’s Conference</td>
<td><strong>Day 13</strong> Author’s Toolkit #1: <em>What Is in My Toolkit?</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 14</strong> Author’s Toolkit #2: <em>Make It Mine</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 15</strong> Author’s Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 16</strong> The Talking Stick</td>
<td><strong>Day 17</strong> Author’s Chair Rules: <em>Be a Good Listener</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 18</strong> Author’s Chair Rules: <em>Be a Good Listener</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 19</strong> Author’s Chair Rules: <em>Be a Good Speaker</em></td>
<td><strong>Day 20</strong> Author’s Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 26</strong> Say More</td>
<td><strong>Day 27</strong> Fearless Speller #1</td>
<td><strong>Day 28</strong> Fearless Speller #2</td>
<td><strong>Day 29</strong> How We Write</td>
<td><strong>Day 30</strong> Author’s Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Day 28</strong> How We Write</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Assign Roles to Support Staff

As you add daily writing into your classroom, make the process manageable and fun by drawing in partners who can help students with ease of access to communication and writing. Assign adult roles beforehand so that all components of writing instructional time are provided as a smooth orchestration.

Paraprofessional

Paraprofessionals play a critical role in student engagement and involvement.

Support Classroom Routines

- Manage the distribution of the Talking Stick to students
- Hand out Tip Sheets and add them to their Author’s Toolkit
- Refer to posters
- Provide physical cues (i.e., finger point) to students, showing key content on the Tip Sheet being discussed by the teacher
- Support individual students who need additional assistance or specialized tools
- Work to teach students to become independent users of their technology

Engage Students

- It is critical that every student is actively engaged at all times
- Record tallies for the students’ votes
- Have students share their answers with their neighbors first
- Use a gesture to cue a student to raise his or her hand
- Provide a verbal reminder to use eye contact
Speech-Language Pathologist

Because the *First Author Writing Curriculum* provides students authentic opportunities for language, communication and writing, the speech-language pathologist can be a valuable partner. Here are some examples of ways your SLP can help target speaking, listening, and writing in your classroom—

- Assess student language, communication and writing abilities and identify core areas of need
- Collaborate to identify Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals for speaking, listening, and writing
- Work with the teacher to select Mini-lessons that enhance written language and communication
- Co-teach Mini-lessons
- Assist during instructional time by providing verbal and physical cues that optimize written and spoken communication
- Partner to identify and obtain materials for students (e.g., writing topic photo images)
- Identify students with complex communication needs who need Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools or Speech Generating Devices (SGDs)
- Assist students with physical access to communication and writing tools during instructional time and ensure that ease of communication is maximized
- Assist in collecting data and analyzing and interpreting outcomes for progress monitoring
Occupational Therapist

Make sure every student has a “pencil” and becomes a fluent writer with their “pencil.” This is often referred to as an “alternate pencil” (The Center for Literacy and Disability Studies, University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill”). The important element is that students are able to fluently write and express themselves. Continue to improve writing fluency by either accommodating the student with tools such as pencil grips, alternate keyboards, partner assisted scanning or word prediction, also determine student’s most fluent mode of access.

- Determine the best mode of writing for all students (handwriting, keyboarding, or partner-assisted scanning)
- Train staff and students on their best writing modes
- Ensure that the classroom is set up and ready for the student to use their preferred mode
- Make adjustments to writing software tools and computers for appropriate access
- For students who are non-verbal, support physical access to communication using no-tech or Speech Generating Devices (SGDs)
- For some students, continue to work on handwriting for fluency separately
- This fine motor should not replace writing instructional time or independent Writing Time
- Document and examine data on writing fluency and writing production. Using this data, make changes as needed for individual students

Important!

Successful Strategies for Adults Tip Sheets

To provide consistent instructional scaffolds, target individual learning goals, and help optimize student performance, use the Successful Strategies for Adults Tip Sheets (located in your Teacher Tools folder and on the Teacher Resource CD) for adults working in your classroom. Each Tip Sheet identifies the instructional goals and provides step-by-step tips for helping students achieve those goals.
Set Writing Goals with Students

Create writing goals collaboratively with each student by the end of the first 30 days. Post them prominently in his or her Author’s Toolkit and support the student to self-reflect on the achievement of his or her goals once a week.

If the student is unable to collaborate in goal setting, use student-friendly word choices and post them in their Author’s Toolkit. Provide positive verbal feedback and praise to all students, reinforcing when they have met or exceeded their goals!

Meta-analysis research on best practices of writing instruction found that students make increased gains in writing when they have explicit goals. These gains are even greater when students are part of goal selection (Graham, Kiuhara, McKeown, & Harris, 2012).

In the Writing Lab Approach (Nelson, Bahr, & Van Meter, 2004), the authors describe how educators can use assessment results to help students set goals in their own language, with adult guidance. This collaborative approach fosters student ownership of learning goals.

An educator working with an individual student to help establish writing goals begins the conversation by saying “I’ve been looking at your writing. I’ve got some ideas to help you get better. I think a good goal for you would be to __________.”

The next step involves negotiating and collaborating to help the student put the goal into his or her own language. Write 1-3 simple goals together with the student. Post them prominently (e.g., in the Author’s Toolkit) and remind students about their goals during writing instructional time. Simple goal examples include—

- I will write in sentences.
- I will write about one topic.
- I will write new kinds of writing.
- I will write at least five sentences.
- I will write in paragraphs.
- I will write about new topics.

Expand on this collaborative goal setting by identifying speaking and listening as well as language goals together with the student. For example—

- I will raise my hand to take a turn.
- I will make a comment to an author.
- I will make only three comments to an Author.
- I will use eye contact when I talk with others.
- I will tell why I like a classmate’s writing.
- I will make comments about the Author’s writing topic.
Successful Strategies Learned from the Field

First Author Writing Curriculum has tips and ideas for you to choose to support your unique classroom’s instructional goals. After you have completed the first 30 days, review your student data, think about what your classroom needs and plan your next 30 days.

Important!

Our research has shown that typically developing second graders and second grade students who are supported in writing are better writers. We have seen this happen at all levels of writing development.

- Kindergarten students choose topics that are well defined and understood by the teacher, e.g., “I want to write a story about a car.”
- First grade students choose personal topics, e.g., “I want to write about the beach.”
- Second grade students choose wide-ranging topics, e.g., “I want to write about a pet.”

What is notable is the trend for topics to become more complex as age increases. Typically developing second grade students tend to come up with topics that have more in common and lend themselves to writing reports about a group of things. For example, in motivating students to write about a group of things, children may write about a variety of topics. For example, if a student is interested in writing about pets, a second-grade student might write about a group of animals with similar characteristics.

Some classrooms will continue to emphasize book reading, speaking, and listening and encourage students to read and provide models of the writing process. Most of the First Author Writing Curriculum lessons have features included to encourage imitation with variety. You will select many lessons to continue to build skills.
Other classrooms will be ready to focus on more advanced speaking and listening skills and target lessons that focus on the range of text types and organisational. For example:

- Offer a sequence of instruction that develops planning for and collaborative writing of a range of text types
- Develop skills for using vocabulary specific to the range of text types
- Support students in increasing overall organisation in their writing

When introducing lessons on text types and organisational, remember to choose topics that are interesting to your students. Integrate instruction and practice during these lessons in a way that builds on students’ knowledge of a topic and engages them in the process of being included in a collaborative writing activity. For example, in order to give choices offered to students when working on a driving
Celebrate by Sharing at School and at Home

Build positive student self-perceptions and a strong sense of identity by having children share their work, speak of their own writing, and engage in discussions about their writing. All of your students are capable of producing work that can be shared and enjoyed. This sharing can be done with photos of children's writing, videos, or other forms of expression. By sharing their writing, students can also present a better understanding of who they are and what they have accomplished. This sharing can be done in the classroom, and with a quick use of a projector or tablet, they might be able to access the writings of others. This same activity can be repeated outside of the classroom, perhaps sharing their work with important people in their family, e.g., grandparents, or important people in the community, e.g., librarian, museum, tablets.
Celebrate by Publishing Student Work

Students write for authentic reasons. A key purpose of being an Author is to publish your work—and publishing is a core concept in the more rigorous College and Career Readiness Standards. To address this purpose, create individual books of each student’s work, including an Author Biography. As part of classroom writing instruction, students can also create special decorated covers, using special photo images, for their published work. Back covers for the published document can contain the student’s biography with a photo of the student, or special quotes about writing. For example:

“The secret to becoming a writer is to write, write, and keep on writing.”
Ken MacLeod

“Writers live their lives differently because they write.”
Nancy Atwell

Classroom anthology books, featuring each student’s “best” writing, could also be created. These books can be placed prominently in the classroom, in the school library, or sent home to families. There are multiple ways in which student publishing can be accomplished:

- Compile a set of student compositions
  Staple the documents or, a single hole-punch the upper left corner, and tie with a pretty colored ribbon
- Compile a set of student compositions and include a special cover
  Laminate the cover and a back page and use a binding machine to compile the documents
- Create a class website or blog
- Utilize local businesses or web-based companies that bind student work into a hardcover or e-book
- Utilize web-based sites where students can publish their work
Celebrate by Hosting an “Author’s Wall” Event

A fun way to celebrate writing accomplishments, and highlight students as Authors early in the school year, would be to create an Author’s Wall. The students’ published work is made available for others to see in a school hallway. Typically, the Author’s Wall is created at the end of the fall semester and includes a small celebration with cake and punch. Before the class event, students create an Author Biography and choose their best writing to display on the Author’s Wall. Each Author’s Biography and writing are mounted on a ½ sheet of poster board. During the day of the celebration an Author’s Chair is held and students share their poster during this time. After the Author’s Chair students ceremoniously go with an adult to hang their work on the Author’s Wall. A way to expand on this idea is to add a form where adults or peers in the school can add comments for the authors. On the day of the event, special individuals in the school could also be invited to visit the Author’s Wall.

Host a “Meet the Author” Celebration

The Meet the Author Celebration is designed to be a culminating end-of-school-year venue for the student authors. This event provides students with authentic opportunities to work on speaking and listening skills and to share their writing in a live experience with a larger audience.

Send special invitations to important individuals in each student’s life (inside and outside of school), administrators, and other educational staff.

Prior to the event, have students:
- Create Author Biographies
- Make covers for their published work
- Choose their best writing to share on that day
- Practice sharing their writing during the Author’s Chair
- Work with educational staff to create tri-fold posters that feature Author Biographies, student writing samples, and photos of the Author’s writing
During the event:

- Display tri-folds on large tables, or desks, around a room
- Provide each student with an outcome booklet that includes:
  - Create an introductory letter from the teacher
  - Display data tables of the First Author Writing Measures
  - Develop a table of Special Moments

Ways to take the Meet the Author Celebration up a notch include:

- Have special t-shirts made for students that say, “I’m an Author!”
- Create a PowerPoint slide show containing candid photos of the students participating in the *First Author Writing Curriculum* throughout the school year and playing it on a large screen for all to see. It is really nice to have music associated with the slide show as it is shared during the poster session and the time for cake and punch.
- Create Author Comment Sheets to be placed in front of the tri-fold posters where adults can write special notes to make comments or congratulate students on their accomplishments.
The Meet the Author Celebration begins by having invitees spend time viewing the tri-fold posters and outcome booklets and hearing stories about the student Authors. Students stand near their posters and introduce attendees to their work.

Immediately following the poster session, everyone is seated; the classroom teacher welcomes everyone to the event and tells the group a little about the program (see the Teacher Resource CD for tools to support this event).

Next, each student takes a turn sharing his or her biography and writing piece in the Author’s Chair.

Each student is then given a special award for gains in writing or speaking and listening. Of course, each is applauded for his or her efforts and cake and punch are served!

The Meet the Author Celebration is a proud day for students and their families!
Help! I Need Some “More” Successful Strategies

You may be thinking ahead about the individual needs of students who present particular instructional and/or behavioral challenges. Or, you may have been using the First Author Writing Curriculum for a while and have encountered some barriers with individual students for whom you would love some additional, helpful strategies. Maybe you are interested in a few more ideas to help you improve your instructional time (e.g., choosing good pictures or using your lesson board). This is where you will find some help!

This section discusses some common barriers, along with strategic solutions that can be used by all educational staff supporting the students. For example, some students (e.g., those with autism spectrum disorders) may write repeatedly about a topic, for a year or more. Your goal—to get the student to write varied topics—might benefit from applying a strategy such as consistently offering him or her a range of new, potentially motivating topics during every writing session, while continuing to allow self-selected topics and topic repetition to continue until the student is ready to change topics (i.e., the student is in the driver’s seat).

Research and classroom observations, have shown that, while a student may write only about a single topic for an extended period of time, we can encourage writing gains in other areas (e.g., Text Type Diversity, Total Intelligible Words, Total Unique Words) as well as gains in communication and behavior. While the Mini-lessons provide students with extensive adult models, “think-alouds,” and collaborative co-construction, additional instructional scaffolds are provided to individual students during Writing Time and Author’s Chair to support speaking and listening, writing and language.

In a middle school special education classroom, one student with autism began her time as an Author by drawing daisies for her topic each day. She appeared to have lots of anxiety about doing so, and would spend time sitting under her desk. As she became more comfortable, this student participated together with her peers as they all shared their work during Author’s Chair. Her peers were writing at a higher level, and the Author’s Chair was a time where she saw what was possible as an Author. Over time she began to write lists about nature, and her peers and the educational staff gave her lots of praise for her gains. By the end of the school year, this student had not only progressed into writing paragraphs about nature and about cartoons, but she had also become an active communicator with her peers during Author’s Chair. She was incredibly proud of her writing and her speaking and listening accomplishments!
## Student Barriers | Possible Solutions

### Does not initiate
- Provide consistent, subtle verbal encouragement for the student to take a turn (provide positive input for any forms of initiation).
- Cue the student by verbally reminding him or her that the Talking Stick is available for turn-taking. When providing the verbal cue, show the Talking Stick.
- Provide extensive praise when the student takes a turn. You can reference the student author who was on the receiving end of the comment. For example, you might say, "<student> just thought your work was really amazing! He told you three times!"

### Talks out of turn
- Provide verbal cues to the student about classroom rules for turn taking. Include a reminder that the only person talking should be the person with the Talking Stick.

**NOTE:** All educational staff who takes a turn during Author's Chair must also use the Talking Stick to reinforce the concept.

### Jumps topics when commenting
- When handing the Talking Stick to the student:
  - Point to the Author's photo
  - Provide a verbal reminder for the Author's Topic
  - Place the Author's photo and writing directly in front of the student
  - Provide intermittent verbal cues and physical reminders (e.g., pointing to the Author's photo) as needed, when the student is commenting.

**NOTE:** Use the fewest number of cues and remember to take the scaffold down over time.

### Makes excessive, multiple comments (e.g., 6-8 comments) in a row without allowing a communicative partner to take a turn
- As the student is handed the Talking Stick, provide verbal cues limiting the student to 2-3 comments.
- Remind the student that the Author can then take a turn, after which he or she will be provided an opportunity to respond with 2-3 additional comments.

---

Check pages 47-60 for Universal Design for Learning strategies and assistive technology tools.
### Student Barriers Possible Solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Barriers</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Uses the exact same comment with each Author                                     | • As the student is handed the Talking Stick, make sure he has the Tip Sheet for making comments (i.e., offering five choices) in front of him.  
• Provide verbal cues, reviewing the five comment choices (e.g., *I liked your topic*, *That was really interesting!* ) before the student takes a turn making a comment.  
• Verbally praise the student for making new comments. |
| Lacks depth and specificity when commenting                                       | • After the student makes an initial comment (e.g., *I liked your topic*) provide a verbal cue asking “Why” (e.g., *Why did you like <student’s> topic?* )  
• Provide additional scaffolds by offering more choices:  
  • Offer 2-4 verbal choices (e.g., *Did you like their topic because: you like horses too? you thought it was interesting? you thought it was funny?* )  
  • Offer a pictographic communication board |

### Writing and Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Barriers</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Uses inventive spelling with no spaces                                          | • Provide verbal cues to the student, reminding him or her that Authors use spaces to separate words.  
• Offer the student models of inventive spelling with spaces using a “think-aloud” as you write (e.g., on a word processor or a laminated alphabet board that contains a “space bar”)  
• Be sure to provide these models and “think-alouds” before or after the student writes. Don’t provide the model on the student’s writing product! |
| Uses inventive spelling with spaces but no words                               | • Provide the student models and think-alouds” showing how you sound out words in your head and spell them using a word processor or alphabet board.  
• In your cues, emphasize the first and last letters of words (developmentally, they are the first to occur).  
• Be sure to provide modeling before or after the student writes. Don’t provide the model on the student’s writing product!  
• Provide the student with extensive verbal praise for writing his or first recognizable words. Celebrate this achievement during writing and during Author’s Chair.  
• Again, if a student lacks confidence with spelling and continually asks if he or she is spelling the word correctly, say, “I can totally tell what word you are writing. Nice job!” |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Barriers</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Writing only in phrases** | • Offer the student models and think-alouds showing how you think of ideas in your head, say them aloud, and then write a sentence.  
• As you model, mention how sentences start with a capital and end with punctuation.  
• Talk about how you use certain words to set up sentences for different text types (e.g., “I like” for opinions, “I want to” for plans)  
• Provide the student with a Tip Sheet showing word combinations used to write a specific text type. |
| **Writes about only one or two topics** | • Obtain information from multiple sources (e.g., parents, paraprofessionals, etc.) about the student’s preferences and favorite topics (e.g., leisure activities like sports, music, or TV shows; community activities; special family activities; community activities)  
• Identify photo images for topics and offer multiple options at the onset of each writing session.  
• If the student does not appear to have alternative topics that he or she prefers, engage in extensive “picture walks” with the student to identify new topics that might be motivating and to develop the student’s preferences for alternative topics. |
| **Writes only one or two text types** | • Just prior to writing time, provide verbal cues about the possible text types the student might choose for a given topic.  
• Offer scaffolds that support the student in attempting a new text type by offering a Tip Sheet with the word combinations appropriate for that text type. |
| **Writes coherent, but not cohesive, text (multiple sentences on one topic that can be reordered)** | • Just prior to writing time, provide verbal cues about the possible text types the student might choose for a given topic.  
• Offer scaffolds that support the student in attempting to be more cohesive by offering the Tip Sheets for using cohesive words (e.g., transition words and conjunctions) for different text types.  
• Provide one-on-one desk side instruction, by offering the student models and think-alouds showing how to use specific words (e.g., transition words and conjunctions) to make sentences sound better next to each other.  
• Model how you would use cohesive words for different text types. |
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The First Author Writing Curriculum is designed to meet principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2011) so that all students have an equal opportunity to learn and maximize their potential. Application of the UDL principles fosters students’ writing and speaking and listening skills through educator instructional scaffolds (verbal, visual, auditory, and physical), student materials (e.g., Tip Sheets), and assistive communication and writing tools. These UDL supports were designed to reduce barriers and support student engagement by flexibly offering students appropriate goals, materials and modalities for expression.

The First Author Writing Curriculum supports teachers in providing effective instruction to all students, including those with complex instructional needs, through methods, materials and assessments designed for beginning writers. The tables below show examples illustrating how the curriculum facilitates use of differentiated teaching methods and meets the needs of a range of learners through the three key principles and the 2.0 Guidelines of UDL.
Provide Multiple Means of Representation
(The “What” of Learning)

Options for Perception
Student perception is enhanced by ensuring that clearly organized, visually accurate content
appears in both visual and auditory languages that support student comprehension of the
content. For example, content shared verbally by the teacher is also presented in multiple forms:
• Flip sheets contain text and a photo/image.

Provide Options for Language, Mathematical Expression, and Symbols
Multiple modes for expression are supported through a range of methods, including
speech/generating devices, and auditory/textually generated content, and so forth.
This curriculum explicitly teaches the process language, from writing to talking.

Provide Options for Engagement
Instructional activities that students enjoy and that are related to the student's personal
interests help build motivation and student engagement. Involvement in learning and
student expertise are crucial. Thus, the teacher needs to find ways to support students
with diverse learning needs across all content areas. Students with diverse learning
needs benefit from learning environments that support various instructional strategies,
metacognition, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Students who need assistance
are supported in multiple ways.

Welcoming students' ideas into the classroom is important in speaking and listening so that
students feel safe to express themselves and develop essential communication skills.
• Creativity and fun exercises can be used to teach key concepts (e.g., good listening).
• During class discussions, teachers are making connections previously taught
and developing student's communication skills. Teachers are every student's
favorite.

Students' unique contributions are appreciated during class discussions. During their writing tasks
and with the assistance of Flip sheets, students engage in discussions on independent

F I R S T  A U T H O R  W R I T I N G  C U R R I C U L U M  G U I D E
Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression
(The “How” of Learning)

Physical Action

When students are provided multiple means of physical action, they can use and apply information and ideas in new contexts. For example, students may choose to read a story aloud, use a variety of writing tools to express their ideas, or create a physical model to demonstrate their understanding.

Expression and Communication

Teaching writing students are provided multiple opportunities to use different communication methods. For example, students may choose to use a variety of writing tools, such as a computer, a whiteboard, or a notepad, to express their ideas. This approach encourages students to engage in a variety of learning experiences and caters to different learning styles.

Executive Functions

Writing and reading students are provided multiple opportunities to use executive functions. For example, students may choose to manage their time, organize their thoughts, and prioritize their tasks. This approach encourages students to engage in a variety of learning experiences and caters to different learning styles.

SAMPLE
Provide Multiple Means of Engagement
(The “Why” of Learning)

Provide Opportunity for Recapturing Interest
All students have opportunities to work both group and self-directed projects throughout all components of instruction. Instruction for each student is facilitated by having personally motivating activities and setting goals for learning.

Sustained Effort and Persistence
All students are allowed to develop their idea(s) through the community of their writing. This writing community and its environment provide a positive support network and an environment for students to work on multiple writing tasks. Students are allowed to work on multiple writing tasks.

Authentic Regulation
Authentic regulation helps students develop the ability to reflect upon and adjust their work through the use of the library and the writing in their own work. This process is not only an individual activity but also a social one. Students are able to reflect upon and adjust their performances through social interaction.
Accommodations for Independence

Identify How Each Student Will Write

Every student, especially those who are beginning writers, needs access to drawing and writing tools. Some students will be able to use the tools most of the time, while many others will have fewer or none at all. The accommodations for each student will be determined by the student’s needs and the type of writing the student will be doing. The accommodations may be as simple as providing a pen and paper, or as complex as a specialized computer program.

- **Beginning**
- **Intermediate/Advanced**

Students who need additional support for writing should be classified as beginning, intermediate, or advanced. This classification will help in determining the accommodations for each student. For example, a student who is just beginning writing might need help with basic grammar, while an intermediate writer might need help with more complex sentence structure.

When you have identified the accommodations for each student, you can start to think about how you will provide them. For example, you might provide a graph for their topic and ask them to write a summary. You might also provide a list of places to visit and ask them to write about their experiences. You can try to make sure that the accommodations you provide are realistic and appropriate for each student.

Where would you classify each of these students?

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### Examples of No-Tech or Assistive Technology Essential Accommodations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Essential Accommodations</th>
<th>Examples of No-Tech Options</th>
<th>Examples of Assistive Software</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Writers — Paragraph Writers</td>
<td>- Drawings/Photos</td>
<td>- Multi-language</td>
<td>- Text-to-Speech software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Alphabet</td>
<td>- Multi-language</td>
<td>- Voice-Over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Speech-to-text</td>
<td>- Large Print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Word Writers — Sentence Writers</td>
<td>- Word Bank</td>
<td>- Classroom Word Bank</td>
<td>- Special Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Portable Word Bank</td>
<td>- My Way Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Writers — Paragraph Writers</td>
<td>- Word Processor</td>
<td>- Text-specific word lists</td>
<td>- Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Paragraph Writers — Paragraph Writers</td>
<td>- Concept Mapping Software</td>
<td>- Test specific</td>
<td>- Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Test specific</td>
<td>- Inspiration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**52**  
FIRST AUTHOR WRITING CURRICULUM GUIDE
Identify Each Student's "Writing" Tool

When identifying how each student will write, multiple tools are often chosen to allow the students several ways to represent what they want to share in their book or their drawings at any. Each modality is valued and shared with the classroom community. The figure below illustrates how a student may choose among multiple modalities within a single writing session.

For additional support that can be used with students who are emergent beginning writers, use a dry erase board. When using the dry erase board, an adult will often write 5-6 single word choices (labels or descriptive words) on a dry erase board, remove them one-by-one, and ask whether the student would like to share any of the words in his or her writing with the goal of giving the student an indicator of a choice in some way. The adult then writes the choice on the student's writing for the day.
When a dry erase board is used, it is implemented together with a photo. An image, pencil, and eraser board. The page marked on the writing sample is considered a communicative choice. The student did not write it made by the student, while the context is planned and valued. It is not measurable on the Developmental Writing Scale (located on pages 83-102).

A final creative option to consider is to have the students use letters in an image way of using the alphabet to inventively spell new. The first image shows a young child who today is helping his younger sister wear her own glasses. He independently chose and glued the letters onto the page.

In a later writing session, the second image shows the student chose a photo, used a traditional pencil, and was given letter tiles. He was then offered the dry erase board, but did not want to choose any words that day. Again, he independently chose and glued each letter onto the page.
Notice the change in overall quantity of items he started to share! During Author’s Chair his intense spitting was celebrated. Every story was read aloud, and verbal praise was given for sharing items of interest to share that day.

Students who are beginning conventional writers also benefit from phone prompts. Phones are engaging, personal, and combine written and auditory messages to generate ideas. Audio stories are often used by some students with moderate to severe disabilities. These students can use word prediction software such as CoWriter IV. As these students learn to use the phone, they can support the immediate access of words. If the phone is set up for the student, it can add their spelling ability. The introduction of word processing is a strong move to build confidence and independence as a writer.

Specialized accommodations

Students with severe to severe needs require more sophisticated tools and accommodations to support independent production. These students will need not only essential tools that support drawing and writing, but also specialized accommodations that enable ease of access to writing. The following table provides examples of specialized accommodations that can support students with physical or sensory needs in gaining access to writing.
### Specialized Writing Accommodations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handwriting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille keyboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille output</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-screen keyboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative mouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head position in lower position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large print keyboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text enlarger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color encoded cap pen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabetic fly chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille alphabetical fly chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille notetaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The list above is not exhaustive. Bucks are available through the Center for Literacy and Communication Services. [https://www.bucks.edu/cls](https://www.bucks.edu/cls)*

## Identify How Each Student Will Communicate

To support students in improving reading and listening skills, it is essential to analyze the unique needs of each student by assessing their strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. Understanding the preferred modes of communication can significantly impact the educational process. Identifying how each student communicates helps in tailoring instruction and support to meet their specific needs.

### Example 1: Student with High Functioning Autism

A student with high functioning autism may struggle to express their complete understanding of an idea or their knowledge due to difficulties in providing a comprehensive response. In this scenario, the student might say, "I liked your topic about humans." Without further clarification or elaboration, this response might not convey a comprehensive understanding. Providing additional support, such as prompting the student to explain more about what they liked about the topic, can help in gaining a deeper understanding of their thoughts and preferences.

### Example 2: Student with Low Vision

A student with low vision might rely on other senses and cognitive strategies to navigate and engage in classroom activities. For example, a student might say, "I wanted to talk about plants." This response indicates an interest in the topic but lacks detail or elaboration. By asking the student to provide more information, such as what specific aspect of plants they are interested in, teachers can facilitate a more focused and enriching discussion.

### Example 3: Student with ADHD

A student with ADHD might have difficulty maintaining attention and focusing on tasks for an extended period. For instance, a student might say, "I like plants." This response suggests a general interest in the topic but lacks specificity. Encouraging the student to explain what aspects of plants they find interesting or what particular plants they would like to learn more about can help in addressing their engagement and understanding of the subject.
The goal for these students is to maximize their language skills by providing cues and models for them to use. It also helps them to become better at using language in their academic work. By providing these strategies, they are able to improve their language skills and become more proficient in their work.

Other students may have difficulty understanding basic concepts. They may also struggle with reading comprehension. To help these students, it is important to provide support in areas where they need it. This includes providing additional reading materials, helping them to understand the text, and encouraging them to share their ideas and thoughts. By doing so, they are able to improve their language skills and become more proficient in their work.

These students benefit from the additional support provided in their academic work. By providing strategies to help them understand the text, they are able to improve their language skills and become more proficient in their work.
New think further about your students using these four questions:

- Is your student able to use words spontaneously to communicate like other peers during classroom activities? Is your student's speech communication reliable and consistent?
- Does your student use gestures or other forms of communication in a reliable and consistent manner?
- Does your student need alternative access to use words to communicate through communication boards or a Speech Generating Device?
- Does your student currently have a Speech Generating Device?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions or if you think any of these strategies will be helpful, it may be helpful to consider alternative or additional forms of communication. This section provides some of these options and offers a range of communicative functions that are often taught in augmentative and alternative communication tools.

The following table can be used as a tool to help you determine the needs of your student. It highlights the most commonly used functions during classroom activities and in the academic setting. Each row in the table lists a type of function or skill that is needed to be successfully communicated. The columns provide options for alternative or augmentative forms of communication. These options should be used to ensure that the student can effectively communicate their needs. Each row in the table represents a different function or skill, and the columns represent the different forms of communication that can be used to support the student in their academic and social interactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Augmentative</th>
<th>Pictographic Symbols or Symbol Displays</th>
<th>Speech Generating Devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a Choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State an Opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multiple research and high-tech tools, as well as adult cues, can be used to help students successfully participate in these communication functions. Adults can provide physical or verbal cues to remind the students to use their hand or make eye contact. High-tech tools can be used to minimize these actions for adults. In high-tech tools, which might be commonly used to support students, the teacher or adult can also be used to help a student introduce his or her topic or answer a question. Using a Speech Generating Device (SGD) allows students to communicate with a wide range of functions and content.

Idea for Additional Communication Board:

- Things We All Know Best
  - Representing topics students know and can express

- Pop Culture Topics
  - Celebrities, movies, sports, music
  - Movies, books students can name

- Places to Get Topics
  - Local restaurants, shops, parks

- Choose a Person
  - Students can choose the adult or peers who might be more meaningful for each student to meet at a time.

The Communication Board is a large poster board that can be used to support students who have difficulty expressing themselves. It can be used to support students who need to communicate their needs or thoughts. The Communication Board can also be used to support students who need to share their experiences or express their feelings. The Communication Board can be used to support students who need to express their needs or thoughts. The Communication Board can also be used to support students who need to share their experiences or express their feelings.
Identify Instructional Supports for Each Student

As you identify supports, it is important to consider the specific amount of support needed to allow a student to be successful. Students may need different amounts of support at different times, and this can impact the success of increased instruction. It is necessary for educators and support staff to ensure that students receive equitable support. It is important to consider the instructional and non-instructional supports needed to ensure that students receive equitable support.

Accommodations that the Students Achieve Success

As you prepare for at-risk students, it is important to identify the specific supports needed to ensure that students achieve success. For students with learning disabilities, it is crucial to implement strategies that they can readily understand and use. The key is to ensure that the instructional and non-instructional supports are implemented consistently. It is important to ensure that students receive equitable support. It is necessary for educators and support staff to ensure that students receive equitable support.

As you implement the First Author Writing Curriculum, it is essential to identify your student's communication and learning. Identify students' successes as well as the ongoing barriers. Find the task to engage in ongoing evaluation to ensure that each student's accommodations result in optimal performance. Identify successes as well as the ongoing barriers. Find the task to engage in ongoing evaluation to ensure that each student's accommodations result in optimal performance.
Identifying Standards-Based Learning Objectives for Your Classroom

When identifying learning objectives, make sure you consider your overall group of students and their individual needs and abilities. Think broadly about what you hope to accomplish in your classroom across each component of the *First Author Writing Curriculum*. Some examples include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mini-lesson</th>
<th>Writing Time</th>
<th>Author’s Chair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Build self-confidence and intrinsic motivation</td>
<td>• Consider multiple topics and make a clear topic choice</td>
<td>• Share writing with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn and use concepts about how to be a better writer and communicator</td>
<td>• Write independently</td>
<td>• Comment or ask a question about another student’s writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contribute during the Mini-lesson</td>
<td>• Communicate ideas in writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Engage in peer and teacher conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standards-Based IEP Goals

Increasingly, teachers are asked to not only develop standards-based IEP goals for students, but also to identify how each aspect of the curriculum links to national standards. Each Mini-lesson provides information at the top of the lesson about the national standards that are addressed for that day.

To enable measurement accuracy, and support educational staff in attaining optimal student performance, standards-based IEP goals must contain five components:

- Identify the student
- Pinpoint the targeted student skill
- Describe the learning context (including adult scaffolds and other supports)
- Report how it will be measured
- Describe the timeframe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five Components of a Goal</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td>The student involved</td>
<td>The student’s name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Statement</td>
<td>What the child will do</td>
<td>Observable and measurable behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Conditions Statement     | Context in which the desired behavior will be demonstrated | Conditions described for:
  - Linguistic Contexts
  - Social Contexts
  - Instructional Scaffolds
  - Technical Scaffolds |
| Criterion Statement      | How well a child will perform a particular skills, demonstrate knowledge, or use a strategy | Stated in percentages, ratios, frequencies, duration |
| Timeframe                | In what length of time will the goal be achieved | Time descriptors (e.g., end of the school year, number of writing sessions) |

Identifying Meaningful Standards-Based IEP Goals
Across Writing, Language, Speaking and Behavior

When identifying writing goals based on individual student needs, use the Developmental Writing Scale (starting on page 83) as an anchor measure for both emergent and conventional beginning writers in order to understand the student’s written linguistic ability. For all levels of writers, the Developmental Writing Scale is a measure that focuses on higher processes of writing (e.g., fluency and organization) rather than lower-level processes of writing (e.g., mechanics and conventions). The additional First Author Writing Measures provide insights into Text Type Diversity and writing quantity (e.g., Total Intelligible Words and Total Unique Words). These writing quantity and quality measures are product-based, targeting specific aspects of writing and supporting progress monitoring of student outcomes by assessing writing artifacts produced by students over time.

As goals are identified to meet individual student needs, it is also important to include targets that show positive change in the students writing process. Positive changes in the student’s writing process (e.g., independent, strategic application of skills) may occur before you see progress in the First Author Writing Measures. For example, some students’ writing outcome data may appear stable; however, a student may have become much more independent when engaged in all aspects of the writing process (e.g., planning and composing). Standards-based goals should be written to achieve student skill benchmarks that result in decreases in instructional scaffolds and increases in overall writing skills.

As you identify standards-based IEP goals for each student, observe the student in the writing process (e.g., planning and composing). Think about his or her behaviors and strategies. Be sure to note the levels of instructional support typically needed for him or her to write. Reflecting at this level will provide information to guide you in writing the goals that support changes in the writing process. Using both writing process information (e.g., student strategies and instructional scaffolds) and writing product information (e.g., writing quantity and quality measures) assists in selecting the individualized observable and measurable behaviors and the ideal contexts and conditions necessary to achieve each standards-based IEP goal for an identified student.

Important!

To be successful writing goals, you will need to become knowledgeable of the First Author Writing Measures (located in the Assessment section, starting on page 81).
An IEP Goal Non-Example

Students who struggle with writing are at risk for having IEP goals that focus on surface aspects of writing (e.g., spelling and mechanics). The goals below were the writing goals for an eight-year-old boy with severe speech and physical impairments who used a speech generating device as his primary form of communication and used a word processor to compose text.

He also had access to Co:Writer word prediction to ease his text production, however, his resource room teacher was hesitant to allow him to use it because she viewed this assistive software as a crutch. His actual IEP goals were as follows:

Given a list of ten words at the 1st and 2nd grade level, <student> will be able to spell the words on his computer with at least 80% accuracy.

<Student> will be able to learn and use the following rules of capitalization with at least 80% accuracy (people’s names, days, months, holidays, streets, cities, and states).

<Student> will learn and be able to use the following rules of punctuation with at least 70% accuracy (periods, question marks, exclamation marks).

Now take a look at a writing sample composed independently by this student—

Kraz Anems

I like kraz anems. My favoert anem is a meke.
I like to wach thm sweg.

When considering the writing goals and text produced by this student, think about the skills of a typically developing second grade writer. Many students at this grade level can generate multiple cohesive and coherent paragraphs on a single topic.
An IEP Goal Example

To foster development, and align with state core curriculum standards, appropriate IEP goals for this student should target higher level writing skills (fluency, vocabulary, text types, and organization) rather than surface level writing skills (spelling, mechanics, and conventions). **Ideal goals for this student would be to increase fluency, vocabulary, and, as text length increases, to target organization.**

One last lesson from this student case links to ways in which we assist students with improving fluency and organization, and moving them up the Developmental Writing Scale. Initially, in his writing program, this student was required to write from a picture prompt. One day in March, he was provided a picture of a pink bunny and asked to write. He became extremely frustrated with this topic, cried, and refused to write. This is an excellent example of the “Dead End” instructional approach described by Cunningham, Cunningham, Hall, and Moore (2005).

Facilitating overall writing fluency in beginning writers necessitates self-selection using topics that are motivating. Over time, together with his Speech-Language Pathologist, this student planned for his writing by choosing a topic of interest to him. The SLP then read expository text related to the topic aloud, and the student signaled for important content to be recorded by the SLP, who then made this core vocabulary available on an alternate keyboard. Using this improved process, the student began to write multiple paragraphs on favorite topics like the solar system **with minimal adult cueing.**
Initial baseline information regarding students’ abilities and needs can be identified using the Student Accomplishments for Communication and Classroom Behavior tool (located in the Teacher Tools folder and on the Teacher Resource CD). Once student skills are profiled, review the communication skills and behaviors, identify potential benchmark skills over time, and generate future standards-based goals for the student.

Again, write the goals collaboratively with the student, post them prominently, and support the student’s self-reflecting on the achievement of his or her goals. If the student is unable to collaborate in goal setting, use student-friendly word choices to write 1-3 goals and post them in his or her Author’s Toolkit. Provide positive verbal feedback and praise to all students, reinforcing when they have met or exceeded their goals!

A Case Example—
Monitor Student Progress, Set Goals, and Show Student Outcomes

Meet Michael, a talkative engaging 14-year-old student who is placed in a self-contained high-school classroom for students with moderate cognitive impairments. While Michael enjoys verbally communicating with others, there is a significant mismatch between his oral and written language skills. Michael’s teacher said that the writing curriculum for students in her classroom, including Michael, had focused on basic functional writing skills (e.g., copying and tracing, writing first and last name). Throughout their school years Michael and his peers had not received systematic explicit writing instruction, nor had they had frequent meaningful opportunities to write and share text.
This baseline sample was produced by Michael in one of the first writing sessions before the *First Author Writing Curriculum* and the First Author Software were used together. Notice his difficulty with mechanics and letter formations—he was unable to produce text that is legible to a reader.

The table below shows measurement of Michael’s baseline writing sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Quantity and Quality Measure</th>
<th>Outcome Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Writing Scale</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Intelligible Words</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Unique Words</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Diversity</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Type Diversity</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During Michael’s first day using the First Author software he independently chose the topic below and said, as he was writing, that he wanted to be a famous actor someday like Miley Cyrus. When he finished the writing sample he excitedly told his teacher, “Hey Mrs. K! I just wrote a short story about Miley Cyrus!” Notice that the first three words in this sample are labeling the photo chosen for his writing. The remaining words demonstrate some of Michael’s exploration of word bank words on his first day.

The table below shows measurement of Michael’s writing in this first sample using the First Author software:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Quantity and Quality Measure</th>
<th>Outcome Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Writing Scale</td>
<td>Level 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Intelligible Words</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Unique Words</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Diversity</td>
<td>Miley Cyrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Type Diversity</td>
<td>Label</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final sample shown below shows the progress Michael made when using the First Author software during a second school year. He is making significant strides in closing the gap between what he can say verbally and translating that content in his writing product. This sample not only shows his gains on the Developmental Writing Scale it also shows Michael’s Text Type Diversity as he writes a plan for the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Quantity and Quality Measure</th>
<th>Outcome Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Writing Scale</td>
<td>Level 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Intelligible Words</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Unique Words</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Diversity</td>
<td>Acting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Type Diversity</td>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Michael continues to express himself using different topics and text types. While this sample is not as long as the previous one, the Text Type Diversity classification would be persuasion because of his complex sentence including his reason why he likes Gravedigger.

Two examples of alternate standards and corresponding IEP Goals for Michael are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE.W.9-10.2.c</td>
<td>By the end of the school year, Michael will move to Level 12 on the Developmental Writing Scale during four out of five writing probes obtained during writing time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE.W.9-10.1</td>
<td>By the end of the school year, Michael will compose persuasive text during writing time, examined using the Text Type Diversity measure, on ten occasions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Examples of Goals for Writing and Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Quantity and Quality Measures</th>
<th>Example IEP Goals</th>
<th>Common Core State Standard (CCSS)</th>
<th>Alternate Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developmental Writing Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the school year, student will improve their writing from a 3 to a 5.</td>
<td>Improve ability to read, write, and communicate effectively.</td>
<td><strong>RI.9-10.5</strong> Write arguments to support claims, acknowledging and responding to counterclaims.</td>
<td><strong>RI.9-10.5</strong> Write arguments to support claims, acknowledging and responding to counterclaims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RI.9-10.2</strong> Read and comprehend <strong>RI.9-10.2</strong> Read and comprehend complex texts in a discipline and critically evaluate the nature of arguments for and against a point of view.</td>
<td><strong>RI.9-10.2</strong> Read and comprehend complex texts in a discipline and critically evaluate the nature of arguments for and against a point of view.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RI.9-10.3</strong> Produce writing that is appropriate to the task, purpose and audience.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SAMPLE**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type Diversity</th>
<th>Common Core State Standard (CCSS)</th>
<th>Alternate Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>M.S. 10.1</strong> Write arguments in support of an issue, with reasons and relevant evidence.</td>
<td><strong>M.S. 10.1</strong> Use information gathered from multiple sources to support an issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>M.S. 10.2</strong> Write informative/ Explanatory text to convey ideas, information, and strategies for solving a present or possible problem.</td>
<td><strong>M.S. 10.2</strong> Write to persuade others about an issue supported by evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>M.S. 10.3</strong> Write persuasive/ Explanatory text to convey ideas, information, and strategies for solving a present or possible problem.</td>
<td><strong>M.S. 10.3</strong> Write to persuade others about an issue supported by evidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Sentence Quality**
- **M.S. 10.4** Effective use of vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar in writing. The text is well-organized and free of errors. **M.S. 10.3** Effective use of vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar in writing. The text is well-organized and free of errors. **M.S. 10.2** Effective use of vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar in writing. The text is well-organized and free of errors. **M.S. 10.1** Effective use of vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar in writing. The text is well-organized and free of errors.

**Total Unique Words**
- **M.S. 10.5** Ability to use complex vocabulary in writing. The text contains a variety of unique words. **M.S. 10.4** Ability to use complex vocabulary in writing. The text contains a variety of unique words. **M.S. 10.3** Ability to use complex vocabulary in writing. The text contains a variety of unique words. **M.S. 10.2** Ability to use complex vocabulary in writing. The text contains a variety of unique words. **M.S. 10.1** Ability to use complex vocabulary in writing. The text contains a variety of unique words.

**UWWR**
- **M.S. 10.6** The text is engaging and accessible. The author uses specific and relevant vocabulary, and displays clear and effective writing. **M.S. 10.5** The text is engaging and accessible. The author uses specific and relevant vocabulary, and displays clear and effective writing. **M.S. 10.4** The text is engaging and accessible. The author uses specific and relevant vocabulary, and displays clear and effective writing. **M.S. 10.3** The text is engaging and accessible. The author uses specific and relevant vocabulary, and displays clear and effective writing. **M.S. 10.2** The text is engaging and accessible. The author uses specific and relevant vocabulary, and displays clear and effective writing. **M.S. 10.1** The text is engaging and accessible. The author uses specific and relevant vocabulary, and displays clear and effective writing.
### Additional Measures vs. Measurable Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Measures</th>
<th>Measurable Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Letters</td>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will increase the total number of letters in a sample of ______ letters to an average of ______ letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Unique Letters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Writer Survey of Writing Attitudes and Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will increase the total number of unique letters in a sample of ______ letters to an average of ______ letters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Examples of Goals for Speaking and Listening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking and Listening—Example IEP Goals</th>
<th>Common Core State Standard</th>
<th>Alternate Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiation and Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will participate in a range of oral and written interactions in various settings, such as small group discussions and presentations, engaging with diverse perspectives and taking an active role in leading discussions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>By the end of the school year, students will participate in a range of oral and written interactions in various settings, such as small group discussions and presentations, engaging with diverse perspectives and taking an active role in leading discussions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship and Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.R.1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in collaborative discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Brainstorm the topic of a discussion to stimulate interest or ideas.</td>
<td>6.R.1.1 Engage in collaborative discussions</td>
<td>6.R.1.1 Engage in collaborative discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Facilitate group discussion with diverse perspectives and take an active role in leading and explaining ideas clearly and persuasively.</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating and Commenting</td>
<td>Common Core State Standard (CCSS)</td>
<td>Alternate Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will demonstrate the ability to initiate and respond to conversations with relevant and sufficient information and ideas focused on the topic and layered with supporting evidence.</td>
<td><strong>SL.5.9</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Commenting</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate the ability to comment on the ideas, reasoning, and evidence presented in other students' conversations, and effectively engage in the discussion with relevant and sufficient information and ideas focused on the topic and layered with supporting evidence.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will demonstrate the ability to establish and maintain productive exchanges with others asynchronously in a variety of formats, including text, audio, and video.</td>
<td><strong>SL.5.2a</strong></td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Participation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level of Participation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level of Participation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate the ability to participate actively and effectively in a variety of collaborative settings.</td>
<td><strong>SL.5.2b</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Participation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level of Participation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level of Participation</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1
Provide daily time for students to write.

- Is designed for daily instruction that provides repetition with variety, fosters student independence and supports gains in writing, as well as speaking and listening.

### Recommendation 2
Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.

- Teaches students strategies for planning, composing, revising, and sharing.
- Uses principles of strategy instruction to teach students explicit skills used by skilled writers and systematically guide students toward independence over time.
- Provides explicit instruction in a range of text types used across curricular areas through teacher models and collaborative writing.
- Provides students with instructional scaffolds that support them in composing a variety of genres.

### Recommendation 3
Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.

- Supports students in fluent construction of text by offering them multiple modalities (e.g., traditional tools such as pencils and pens, alphabet boards, standard keyboards, alternative keyboards) to communicate in writing with ease.
- Includes Mini-lessons that provide models and strategies for spelling and writing in sentences.

### Recommendation 4
Create an engaged community of writers.

- Emphasizes a process-based approach where everyone is viewed as an author and a writing community is created in every classroom.
- Facilitates intrinsic motivation to write through student choice (e.g., self-selected topics) and by creating an environment where students write for authentic purposes, collaborate and share that writing with others, and publish their written work.
- Fosters engaging and authentic purpose for writing and sharing.

## Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>First Author Writing Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation 1: Provide daily time for students to write.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fosters engaging and authentic purpose for writing and sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS for Writing</td>
<td>Examples of Application in the <em>First Author Writing Curriculum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Text Types and Purposes** | Provides beginning writers with opportunities to write opinion texts (e.g., reader response and topic response), informative/explanatory texts, and narrative texts (real and imagined) of increasing sophistication. For example, students are taught to:  
  • Use more sophisticated text structures and content  
  • List reasons  
  • Use linking words and phrases  
  • Include facts and details |
| **Production and Distribution of Writing** | • Offers research and writing projects to engage in procedural, “how-to” writing.  
  • Provides lessons that offer students models and strategies for producing clear and cohesive writing.  
  • Affords the opportunity for students to create text via technology (e.g., First Author Writing Software mirrors a process-based writing environment). |
| **Research to Build and Present Knowledge** | Build knowledge of a topic through research projects:  
  • Draw information from students’ personal experiences  
  • Collect information from multiple sources (print and media)  
  • Draw evidence from literary and expository text. |
| **Range of Writing** | • Write daily for both short and extended time periods.  
  • Write across disciplines and for a range of audiences. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCSS for Speaking and Listening</th>
<th>Examples of Application in the <em>First Author Writing Curriculum</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Comprehension and Collaboration** | - Mini-lessons provide repeated opportunities to participate in collaborative discussions with a range of partners (e.g., peers, educational staff, and family and community members).  
- Author’s Chair and Mini-lessons facilitate development of agreed-upon rules for discussions through lessons that explicitly target communication skills.  
- Targets development of a range of communicative functions (initiating, asking and answering questions, making statements and comments).  
- Affords students authentic experiences to communicate about specific topics (e.g., the author’s writing topic), link comments to the previous speaker’s remarks, and maintain that topic across multiple exchanges using appropriate elaboration and detail. |
| **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas** | - All components of the curriculum (Mini-lessons, Writing Time, and Author’s Chair) support students in reporting on topics or text, telling stories, and/or recounting experiences.  
- During classroom interactions, students have repeated opportunities to speak in sentences specific to the task and use formal and informal forms of discourse.  
- Offers students accommodations that add an auditory component (i.e., text reader) and visual displays (i.e., photo images) that enhance the student’s writing topic. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCSS for Language</th>
<th>Examples of Application in the <em>First Author Writing Curriculum</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Conventions of Standard English** | - Provides repeated opportunities for students to demonstrate knowledge of the conventions of grammar across writing and speaking.  
- Explicit instruction provides students authentic experiences to demonstrate knowledge of the conventions of standard English (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling) when writing. |
| **Knowledge of Language** | Offers students opportunities to use basic knowledge of language and its conventions across modalities (speaking, listening, reading or writing). |
| **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use** | - Affords students the ability to gain an understanding of different word meanings and relationships.  
- Provides opportunities for students during explicit instruction to use academic and domain specific words across different contexts. |
Dear Educators,

As you embark on this journey with the First Author Writing Curriculum, I assure you of challenging days when your students will be a little “spicy”. We just had one of those days yesterday—it was, after all, the day before Halloween! Persevere and stick with it! What we took away from yesterday’s writing instructional time was that the joys and student accomplishments, both big and small, far outweighed our challenges as the students repeatedly showed us new writing skills and more sophisticated ways of engaging with us and with each other. I look forward to hearing your stories about individual students and classroom milestones. My final thoughts—

- **Defy old assumptions and embrace new perspectives**
- **Challenge students and keep them safe**
- **Be fearless and create students who are fearless**
- **AND, most importantly, be joyful!**

This curriculum represents 25 years of thinking about how educators can integrate speaking, listening, reading and writing and optimize performance in these students who present with such a broad range of abilities and challenges. I dream now of a time when all students, especially those with the most significant disabilities, receive high-quality, explicit instruction every day, from the first day they enter school.

Best Regards,

Janet
Assessing Student Skills

When using the *First Author Writing Curriculum*, educators need multiple formative and summative measures that guide instruction, support progress monitoring that is in alignment with national writing standards, and allow for documentation of teacher efficacy.

**Research Support**

In writing, you'll need assessments that will let you see the visible progress students are making as writers along the way, so that you be able to track the success of your teaching.

Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012

**First Author Writing Measures**

These measures were based on early writing development of both typically developing students and those with disabilities; therefore, the measures are beneficial with both populations.

The First Author Writing Measures were designed to assess both writing quantity and quality. They are created to improve upon existing assessment tools through comprehensive, sensitive measurement using clearly-defined constructs. The First Author Writing Measures were developed to accomplish five key purposes. These purposes were originally proposed for the Developmental Writing Scale (Sturm, Cali, Nelson, & Staskowski, 2012) but were expanded upon to show how each of the purposes applies to the First Author Writing Measures.

- Identify small differences in beginning writing skills
- Be easy for educators to learn and use reliably
- Offer instructionally relevant information about what to target next
- Serve as a functional outcome measure for periodic assessment probes and classroom-produced writing artifacts
- Quantify evidence of small but significant changes so that educators can celebrate growth with students and their parents
About the First Author Writing Measures

The First Author Writing Measures support examination of multiple features of writing for beginning writers who demonstrate very emergent writing skills as well as those who have more sophisticated conventional writing abilities. The measures target writing quality (Developmental Writing Scale), Text Type Diversity, Topic Diversity, Total Intelligible Words, Total Unique Words, Total Number of Letters, and Total Unique Letters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Measure</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Writing Scale</td>
<td>To identify the overall developmental writing level of the beginning writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Type Diversity</td>
<td>To quantify the types of texts used by beginning writers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Diversity</td>
<td>To quantify the variations in self-selected topics chosen by beginning writers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Intelligible Words</td>
<td>To quantify the number of intelligible words produced by a beginning writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Unique Words</td>
<td>To quantify number of unique words produced by a beginning writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Letters</td>
<td>To quantify the number of letters written or selected (on an alphabet board, choosing letter tiles, or on a keyboard) by a student writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Unique Letters</td>
<td>To quantify the number of unique letters written or selected (on an alphabet board, choosing letter tiles, or on a keyboard) by a student writer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The First Author Writing Measures are not text type specific (except for the Text Type Diversity Measure) and can be used to examine any type of text written by the student. They are not designed to use with worksheets or spelling tests and time limits for obtaining the writing samples are not set. Ideally, a writing sample showing maximal student performance will be obtained when the student is allowed to choose:

- A personally motivating, self-selected topic
- The text type
- The length of time writing
### Developmental Writing Scale

The Developmental Writing Scale (DWS) is a writing quality measure that helps assess a student's conceptual understanding of written language. It measures the fine motor, linguistic, and communicative strengths observed in the writing samples of beginning writers. The DWS is an individualized assessment tool that helps identify which additional instructional strategies need to be used in the learning process. The DWS was designed to be used in a developmental manner for writers of any age and can be used to measure programmatic outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>Handwritten or typed strings of letters that are not recognizable as words. Example: _____ _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Scribbling</td>
<td>String of letters grouped into “words” (e.g., with space between at least two groups of letters) but not recognizable as words. Example: _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Letter Storage (not grouped)</td>
<td>String of letters grouped into “words” with at least two recognized words but not in intelligible words. Example: _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Letter Storage (grouped in words)</td>
<td>String of letters grouped into “words” with an intelligible word. Example: _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Unintelligible word</td>
<td>String of letters grouped into “words” with an intelligible word. Example: _____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example**: I am playing outside on the swing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Two to three intelligible words</td>
<td>There is evidence of intelligible words, possibly accompanied byObject(s) and Place(s). The child is beginning to use simple objects and actions to convey meaning. An example might be: &quot;I eat a banana.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Three or more different intelligible words in a list</td>
<td>There is evidence of more complex works. Examples: &quot;I eat a banana.&quot; and &quot;The cat is sleeping.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Partial sentence of more than three words</td>
<td>There is evidence of longer and more complex works. Examples: &quot;I eat a banana, and then I go to sleep.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Near complete sentence</td>
<td>There is evidence of near complete sentences. Examples: &quot;I eat a banana and then I go to sleep.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Three or more complete sentences</td>
<td>There is evidence of complete sentences. Examples: &quot;I eat a banana, and then I go to sleep.&quot; and &quot;It's time for bed.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Describing Criteria</td>
<td>Descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Three or more related sentences.</td>
<td>Organized writing with a coherent main idea and cohesive structure; ideas are developed in a logical sequence. Sentence structure is generally appropriate for the text. Transitions between ideas are evident. Spelling and capitalization are mostly correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Three or more related sentences that cannot be read.</td>
<td>Organized writing with a coherent main idea and cohesive structure; ideas are developed in a logical sequence. Sentence structure is generally appropriate for the text. Transitions between ideas are evident. Spelling and capitalization are mostly correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Three or more related paragraphs of at least five sentences each.</td>
<td>Organized writing with a coherent main idea and cohesive structure; ideas are developed in a logical sequence. Sentence structure is generally appropriate for the text. Transitions between ideas are evident. Spelling and capitalization are mostly correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Three or more related paragraphs of at least five sentences each.</td>
<td>Organized writing with a coherent main idea and cohesive structure; ideas are developed in a logical sequence. Sentence structure is generally appropriate for the text. Transitions between ideas are evident. Spelling and capitalization are mostly correct.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Developmental Writing Scale: Rules and Samples

Use the descriptions below to assign a single level to each writing sample. If you are debating between two levels, assign the lower level.

### Examples of Writing Samples Meeting Criteria for Each Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Typically Developing Writers</th>
<th>Written with Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Drawing Only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Ideas and words that appear to represent objects.
- Do not appear to be a story or drawing accompaniment.
- Students use a photograph of their topic and start writing.

| 2. Scribble Writing |
- Contains little or no similarity to recognizable words or letters.
- Many words are recognizable, and many words are not recognizable.
- Students are not capable of dragging non-recognizable words.

| 3. Letter-like Forms |
- Contains little or no similarity to recognizable words or letters.
- Some words are recognizable, and many words are not recognizable.
- Students are not capable of dragging non-recognizable words. |
### Examples of Writing Samples Meeting Criteria for Each Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Typically Developing Writers</th>
<th>Writers With Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Strings of Letters Grouped into &quot;Phonems&quot;</td>
<td>ECHKko UIYVC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Provide more information]</td>
<td>M吕iKO EKio a g Ornlo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Strings of Letters Grouped into &quot;Words&quot;</td>
<td>[Provide more information]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Two to Three Different Intelligible Words</td>
<td>A DRAMN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Provide more information]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>More Than Three Different Intelligible Words</td>
<td>[Provide more information]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Typically Developing Writers</td>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. One to Two Complete Sentences</td>
<td>We Robot, went to The Big Blue To listen A kid wanted to play me. And my Daddy it. Play with Mounkos.</td>
<td>Aiin and the Chimpms. They sing and dance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Examples of Writing Samples Meeting Criteria for Each Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Typically Developing Writers</th>
<th>Writers with Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Organized Writing with Three or More Sentences on a Coherent Topic</td>
<td>Frogs are eggs. Frog are cool. I need how a frog grow an egg than grow a frog in your yard.</td>
<td>I love to watch the geese man to pick up our trash can. So I don’t watch the trash can. To my wonder. I love to watch the person to get my recycling from my house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Organized Writing with a Coherent Topic and What Sentences Teach About Human Emotions</td>
<td>On Monday my friends came over my house. We are played and was very fun. I see the other kids what brought in my hand. I clin up my story.</td>
<td>I love the movie cars because is my fave move because Lighting McQueen is on the move. Lightingmcqueen gas stuck in the air and lightingmcqueen has friends silly and lightingmcqueen goes fast and has his friend Mater.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sample text for writing samples.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Typically Developing Writers</th>
<th>Students with Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>The post at my house opened up it was outside the pin cin and we were playing there and we are very very fun to me and my sister to move the house I got in and had a quick bite outside and go back inside it made me happy because I had a good day food and food and the food was good then I was very happy and it was very cool so I shot and the top step of the post my friend cry and dance were there and I shot their a little bit and then I rode my bike back home and I went to bed and I went to sleep</td>
<td>My dad put in the new iPad it's like a little tablet it's so big it matters for work But you can write moves on it because I can use it to open it's from bed you can also write on it I like how the screen side it's medium size it's also fun to post because my dad bought a cool for it and it can hold it up or if you are working you can put it down but the only thing I don't like is the write it's a pretty have iPad But if you want to use it's size you can turn the pages around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One morning my mom told me where honeycomb I was scared that morning I dreamed that a dragon was going down and that he was the one who left I was very sad and angry. I was sorry for what I did and I said goodbye. I was very tired and I had to go to bed next. I had to get up and go to school. When I got there the teacher was in the middle of cooking. She told me that I was the only student there in the middle of the world. The End.</td>
<td>One morning my mom told me where honeycomb I was scared. That morning I dreamed that a dragon was going down and that he was the one who left. I was very sad and angry. I was sorry for what I did and I said goodbye. I was very tired and I had to go to bed next. I had to get up and go to school. When I got there the teacher was in the middle of cooking. She told me that I was the only student there in the middle of the world. The End.</td>
<td>One morning my mom told me where honeycomb I was scared. That morning I dreamed that a dragon was going down and that he was the one who left. I was very sad and angry. I was sorry for what I did and I said goodbye. I was very tired and I had to go to bed next. I had to get up and go to school. When I got there the teacher was in the middle of cooking. She told me that I was the only student there in the middle of the world. The End.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Topic Diversity

The Topic Diversity measure is used to quantify the variations in well-structured topics chosen by beginning writers. Reading in modern topics is a skill that can be improved, and varied topics can be identified. The ability to identify and develop a range of topics is one way to know whether their writing is conveying information in a reader and diverse way of diverse content chosen over time.

Purpose of the Measure

- To quantify the variations in well-structured topics chosen by beginning writers
- To assign each writing sample to a specific group
- To measure different types of topics within the same writing samples

How to Use the Topic Diversity Measure

1. Review the piece of writing. List the topics of the writing samples.
2. What is the main topic of the writing samples? What are the subtopics?
3. Label the topics by choosing a topic that represents the main topic of the writing samples.
4. If the topics are not clearly defined, list the topics on your primary source.
5. If the source does not specify a topic, use any topic as an anchor.
6. If the topic is not clearly defined, choose any topic as an anchor.
Text Type Diversity

The Text Type Diversity (TTDM) of Call & Stice, 2014 measure quantifies the type and range of text used by beginning writers. When using this measure, instructors can examine the writing samples of students, identifying the types of writing they use. The measure is designed to capture the number of text types used by beginning writers. The measure also aids in identifying which text types are encouraged by students that are in alignment with College and Career Readiness standards.

Each writing sample will be assigned a text type. Even if a text type occurs more than once in a writing sample:

- If any text type has more than 20% of the words in the sample, it will be scored as that text type.
- If any text types are represented by less than 10% of the words, the type will be scored as “other.”

The number of different types of text types used by students in multiple writing samples will be measured.

Measurement of the Text Type Diversity

- Each writing sample is assigned a list of genres.
- The genre list includes both the genre used in the sample and the genre from other samples.
- The number of different sets of genres composed across multiple writing samples will be measured.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Type</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergent</td>
<td>Graphic</td>
<td>Express ideas using visual images or symbols, a story of design, or other graphic elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent</td>
<td>Label</td>
<td>Describe elements of a design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>Express an opinion about a thing or event.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
<td>Express an opinion or position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Expository</td>
<td>Expository to explain or inform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Describe a specific thing or activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Report a process or event.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Explain how to do something.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Explain how something works.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Personal point of view.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narration</td>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Plan a sequence of events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>Imaginary events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Imaginary events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From and from, 7th ed. by permission of the author*
### Decision Rules for Classifying Text Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is it a graphic expression using drawings, pencil marks, scribbles, or letters? or letter-like forms?</td>
<td>No, it’s a map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the words focused on the drawing?</td>
<td>Yes, it’s a label.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the verb in the past tense?</td>
<td>Yes, it’s a past tense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the verb in the future tense?</td>
<td>No, it’s a present tense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it about a factual thing written in the present tense?</td>
<td>Yes, it’s a description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it a factual thing written in the past or present?</td>
<td>Yes, it’s a past tense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it using carefully chosen words to create meaning or share emotion?</td>
<td>No, it’s a poem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Permission of the author)
Total Intelligible Words and Total Unique Words

Total Intelligible Words—measures two features of writing:
- Overall intelligibility of the student’s words
- Written fluency

Total Unique Words—measures overall vocabulary diversity by counting the increases in the range of words used over time.

Purpose of the Total Intelligible Words Measure

To quantify the number of intelligible words produced by a beginning student writer. This measure shows increases in the number of words used over time.

The average number of total unique words across multiple writing samples could be calculated.

How to Calculate the Intelligible Words Measure

1. Read each word in the student’s writing sample while counting.
2. Count only those words that are correctly spelled words in a sentence.
3. Count the number of intelligible words identified by a beginning student writer.
4. Count the number of intelligible words across multiple writing samples.

Research Support

Collaborations must be based on multiple reliable measures and indicators that support valid measurement of special education teacher effectiveness.

- From the U.S. Federal on Teacher Evaluation Council for Exceptional Children 2012
Purpose of the Total Unique Words Measure

To quantify the number of unique words produced by a beginning student writer to indicate growth in vocabulary and language.

Use the measurement to tally the total number of different words in a student's writing sample that follows conventional or phonetic spelling.

The average number of unique words across multiple writing samples should be measured.

How to Use the Total Unique Words Measurement

1. The number of different words is based on the number of unique words identified by the teacher or other reader.
2. Using the total number of total unique words across writing samples, count the number of unique words in each writing sample.
3. Average the number of unique words across multiple writing samples.

Total Number of Letters and Total Unique Letters

These measures are used to determine a student's writing skills and for part of all of the following writing. They are important for recognizing both the spelling and size of each word. Spelling and paper style are critical for beginning and building writing samples as well as for future reading.

Purpose of the Unique Letters

- Number of letters written - the number of letters written or selected
- Unique Letters - the number of unique letters written or selected

How to Use the Total Number of Letters and Total Unique Letters

1. Count the total number of letters written or selected during a single writing sample.
2. Sum the total number of unique letters across multiple writing samples.
3. Average number of unique letters across multiple writing samples will be quantified.
4. Unique letters can be used across multiple writing samples to identify possible writing errors or patterns linked to the student's knowledge.

Important!

Typing too fast for a purpose, i.e., beginning sounds, missing letters, etc. Remember children can type for a long time.
Deciding Which Measures to Use for Your Students

Use the Developmental Writing Scale as a baseline measure (prior to the onset of new instruction and/or at the beginning of a school year) to identify a student’s overall writing level.

Take additional writing probes intermittently throughout the year (weekly, monthly, or quarterly) to show growth in writing quality. The DWS can also be used to choose additional measures. For example, a student who scores between 1-4 on the DWS is classified as an emergent beginning writer.

The conventional beginning writer ranges from levels 5-14. For example, a student who chooses a photo of a puppy and writes “popey,” has progressed to a level 5 on the DWS by writing his/her first intelligible word. Because this student achieved a DWS level 5 using a specific, identifiable content word clearly linked to his/her photo the Text Type Diversity measure is possible and his/her writing sample is classified as a “label.” The intelligible word “popey” also allows for the Total Intelligible Words and Total Unique Words measures to be used for the first time.
Interpreting Student Data
Using the First Author Writing Measures

When interpreting the student data, the Developmental Writing Scale serves as the anchor measure that informs instruction and student progress. From a formative perspective, a student’s score on the DWS aids in identifying the explicit instruction needed to move the student to the next level. For example, a student who is a level 8 on the DWS (partial sentence of more than three words) would benefit from intensive instruction that provides extensive models and collaborative writing opportunities to write using one to two sentences (DWS level 9). From a summative perspective, a student’s progress on the DWS can be measured across a school year or even across multiple years.

The DWS can also be used to identify essential and specialized writing accommodations and instructional supports. This information is located in this guide in the section on Universal Design for Learning (pages 47-50).

Text Type Diversity measure may reveal patterns in each of your students, such as:

- One student may be writing a broad range of text types across multiple writing samples.
- Another student may be writing only 1-2 text types across the same number of samples.
- Some students with autism have been observed to prefer informational text types and avoid narrative text types.
- Some students with severe speech and physical impairments may prefer fictional narratives with themselves as the central character.
- Some students’ writing products are not yet measurable (levels 1-4) on the DWS—score as emergent or label using the Text Type Diversity measure.

**Important!**

For students with unmeasurable text types (levels 1-4 on the DWS), focus instruction on exposing them to a range of text types through modeling and collaborative writing.
When interpreting the Topic Diversity measure, a student’s data may reveal strengths in topic diversity, choosing a wide range of topics over a period of time. Alternatively, some students may want to write about only 1-2 topics throughout a school year. **Use this strength to focus on progress in the DWS.** Instruction for this student focuses on exposing the student to a range of personally-motivating topics each week, modeling how Author’s choose different topics, providing positive encouragement to choose new topics, and celebrate verbally when he/she does so.

Interpretation of Total Intelligible Words involves review of multiple writing samples over time to identify increases in total words that are recognizable to more than one reader. If the student is not yet writing intelligible words, instructional models and collaborative writing should be targeted.

When examining Total Intelligible Words, changes in overall length of text (fluency) is also interpreted. For example, some students will increase overall text length following specific lessons (e.g., Say More) and this increase can be celebrated with the group. Closer review of a student’s writing samples may show not only increases in Total Intelligible Words but also improvements in length using one topic or text type. Some students increase length on one topic (level 11 on the DWS) but struggle to add cohesion between the sentences (level 12 on the DWS). Instructionally, focus target teaching the student to not only expand on length but also use a range of cohesive devices to improve overall quality.

The Total Unique Words measure utilizes the Total Intelligible Words to identify the number of different words written by the student. The Total Unique Words measure is an indicator of overall vocabulary diversity and can show increases in the range of words used over time. Examine individual writing samples to identify sophisticated word choices (e.g., rich nouns, verbs, adverbs, or adjectives) used by a student writer and aid in interpreting and sharing with parents and caregivers the Total Unique Words used by the student. Instructional use of rich, diverse word choices should be modeled and used during collaborative writing.

Interpreting Total Number of Letters involves examination of a student’s letter production across multiple writing samples (and possibly multiple modes) to observe changes in the student’s intent to use letters to communicate with others. For example, when initially introduced to alphabet boards or letter tiles to write, a student may choose one to two letters on the first day. Over time, after the student has shared his/her writing in Author’s Chair, and has received verbal praise for using many letters when writing, he/she may begin to use more letters in their writing.
Examination of Total Unique Letters will show the types of letters used by the student and may reveal meaningful patterns in letter use. For example, one five-year-old student with severe speech and physical impairments increased his total letters over time and began filling his word processing screen. One day he chose eight letters and indicated that he was done. He indicated that the first letter was the first initial in his name and the other seven letters were the first initials of the names of other individuals in the classroom. Another student, a ten-year-old with autism, uses multiple letter “t”s when writing. This is the first initial in his name. One day, this student chose multiple letter “h”s. The student’s paraprofessional wondered if he was attempting to represent a character he likes a lot called “hungry horse.”

Assessing Attitude and Self-Efficacy in Writing

Poor attitudes and beliefs about writing can be a significant challenge for students with disabilities. It is important that educators understand whether attitudes and beliefs are inhibiting the writing process, and to identify whether instruction and the classroom learning environment, is changing those beliefs in a positive way. The Beginning Writer Survey of Writing Attitude and Self-Efficacy is a seven-item survey (located in the Teacher Tools folder and the Teacher Resource CD) that examines students’ perceptions about themselves as writers. Students are administered this survey at the onset of new instruction or at the beginning of each school year. This measure can be repeated monthly, quarterly, or yearly to show potential changes in overall attitude and self-efficacy. When using this tool, educators should interpret overall student understanding of the questions. If a student is unable to respond reliably to the seven questions in the survey, the educator can modify the task, asking students one question (Do you like to write?) and using two emoticons (like and don’t like) to obtain a response. Data from this single question could be analyzed over time.
Assessing Accomplishments for Communication and Classroom Behavior

The First Author Writing Curriculum provides students with an authentic social-interactive environment for using speaking and listening skills with a range of communication partners. The structured routines and rules for participating in this curriculum offer students an ideal environment to make gains in behavior (e.g., behavior state). For some students you may notice multiple positive changes in speaking, listening, and behavior before you see significant gains in writing.

The Student Accomplishments for Communication and Classroom Behavior tool was developed to assess a range of students, including very beginning and more sophisticated communicators (located in the Teacher Tools folder and on the Teacher Resource CD.) The purposes derived from the Developmental Writing Scale (Sturm, Cali, Nelson, & Staskowski, 2012) served as a base to create a measure that was easy and useful for educational staff to use and captured relevant information in students’ speaking and listening skills and behaviors. The goals of this tool were to create a standards-based criterion-referenced measure that would:

1. Identify small differences in speaking, listening, and behavior
2. Be easy for educators to learn and use reliably
3. Offer instructionally relevant information about what to target next
4. Serve as a functional outcome measure for periodic assessment probes across components of the curriculum
5. Quantify evidence of small but significant changes so that educators can celebrate growth with students and their parents.

The tool is comprised of three separate checklists, one for each component of the curriculum (Mini-lessons, Writing Time, and Author’s Chair). The purpose for this tool is to use it to take periodic assessment probes and focus on one component during data collection. Ideally, this tool would be used prior to introduction to the First Author Writing Curriculum or in the first two weeks of curriculum introduction to obtain baseline data on students. When using this tool, the educational staff member (e.g., speech-language pathologist) would identify a single student and decide which component (e.g., Mini-lessons) to observe on a given day. During the Mini-lesson, watch the student’s speaking and listening behavior skills—on the tool checklist note any new behaviors that occurred. Another useful way to use this tool is during educational staff team meetings where students’ “special moments” are being discussed and identified. The tool can be used as a point of reference to think together as a group about student accomplishments across speaking, listening, and behavior.

This tool can be used by educational teams to develop relevant IEP goals that are linked to national standards. The measure will assist in showing incremental, refined changes in students’ communication and behavior over time.
References


Give your students **First Author**—help make the students who were never expected to write into first-time Authors!
SAMPLE
A comprehensive writing curriculum for beginning writers

Dr. Janet M. Sturm
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Mini-lesson: Say More

Writing Standard:
Production and Distribution—Planning and Composition

Speaking and Listening Standard:
Comprehension and Collaboration—Participate in Collaborative Conversations

Materials Needed:
Say More Tip Sheet

Time: 10 Minutes

Who in here is an Author?

Teacher Tips

Tip: If students need help thinking of ideas during collaborative writing, model idea generation by doing a “think aloud.” Have students help choose which of your ideas could be added to the writing.

Do

Cue students verbally and physically to ALL raise their hands.
Setting the Purpose:
The purpose of today’s lesson is to talk again about “saying more” in our writing. When we say more it means that we are writing more letters, words and sentences in our writing. We are making our writing longer when we say more!

Modeling and Guided Practice:

Let’s look at our new Tip Sheet to get some ideas about how we can “say more” in our writing.

We are going to practice saying more by writing together so I’m going to need your help. I have two pieces of writing and I want you to vote on which one we should use today for our writing—let me show you the two topics and I want each of you to tell me your favorite! NOTE: Choose two pictures the students can describe (e.g., a cute funny animal and a favorite pop culture person) OR choose two pictures students can use to write a personal narrative (e.g., two different class field trip pictures).

Now that we’ve picked our topic, we need to look and see if I’ve written enough. I wrote ONE word! Should we say more?

We definitely need to say more! I need all of you to help me write.
Let’s look at our Tip Sheet again—it says, “What else can I say about my topic?” I’m going to write our ideas on the board.

Our Tip Sheet also has us ask what others would want to hear—I bet they want to hear more ideas that tell about our picture. **NOTE:** If a descriptive photo was chosen, encourage descriptive words. If a narrative photo was chosen, encourage students to tell more about what happened.

Let’s read aloud everything we have added.

It says on our Tip Sheet to add two to three more ideas. Let’s see if we did that.

Excellent writing today—we definitely said more!

We are now done with our Mini-lesson!

**It’s Time to Write!**
Say More

1. What else can I say about my topic?

2. What else would others want to hear?

3. Think of 2-3 more ideas and add them to your writing.
Mini-lesson: Writing Opinions

Writing Standard:
Production and Distribution—Planning and Composition

Speaking and Listening Standard:
Comprehension and Collaboration—Participate in Collaborative Conversations

Materials Needed:
Writing Opinions Tip Sheet
Photos to use to choose a topic

Time: 10 Minutes

Who in here is an Author?

Teacher Tips
Tip: Provide verbal scaffolds to ensure that everyone participates in “Take a Poll” votes—voter participation can be facilitated subtly with a whispered reminder to individual students or by calling on the student or students in a positive way with “Hey, we don’t have all of our votes in yet we need one from <student name>.”

Do
Cue students verbally and physically to ALL raise their hands.
Setting the Purpose:
The purpose of today’s lesson is to talk about writing opinions.

Modeling and Guided Practice:
When we brainstorm about writing opinions, we think about things that we like or don’t like.

› Remember, that’s called your opinion—an opinion is something you think, believe, or feel.

› Today, we are going to learn about words we can use to write opinions.

› Who can tell us some words on our Tip Sheet that we can use to write opinions?

› Yes, <student name>, "I like." We could say “I like my friends.”

› It also says “I love”—we save that word for special things like “I love my Mom” or “I love ice cream.”

› Who in our classroom loves ice cream?

› Is there anyone in our classroom that does NOT like ice cream?

› If anyone did not like ice cream we can see that those are opinion words on our Tip Sheet. NOTE: If no one responds ask a student to point to the first item on the Tip Sheet.

› What are the last words that it tells us?

› Yes, <student name>, it says, “My favorite.” Whose favorite ice cream is chocolate?

› Whose favorite ice cream is vanilla?
Now that we’ve talked about some words we can use to write opinions, we are going to practice writing one together so I’m going to need your help.

First, we need to pick a picture. I have pictures and I want you to vote on which one we should use today for our writing—let me show you the two topics and I want each of you to tell me your favorite!

Hey, I just used the word “favorite”! That is one of our opinion words!

Now that we’ve picked our topic, I need all of you to help me write—we are a group of Authors. What could we say about our topic? I’m going to write our ideas on the board.

We can use our opinion words from our Tip Sheet to help us.

We need to write our first sentence. What should we write about our favorite topic of <name the topic>? You can use your Tip Sheet to get ideas.

Yes, <student name> we can say, “We like <name the topic>”.

Let’s add one more sentence—what else could we say?

If needed, provide assistance by saying—we could say “It is...” and tell an opinion word like “cool” or “awesome.”

OR—we could say, “Our favorite is <name a choice>” (offer verbal choices).

We are now done with our Mini-lesson!

It’s Time to Write!
Writing Opinions

Opinions tell what you think, believe, or feel

Here are some words you can use to write opinions:

I like ...
I love ...
I don’t like ...
My favorite ...

TIP SHEET: WRITING OPINIONS
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