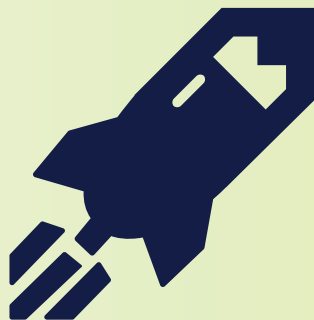


# WHAT'S INCLUDED



First **Author**<sup>™</sup>  
Curriculum

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**



# FIRST AUTHOR® WRITING CURRICULUM SAMPLER



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!"



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



*"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.

- ✓ 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.
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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.

Grade Range	Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Skill Level	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Grade Level	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■



## 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](http://donjohnston.com/firstauthorcurriculum)

# CURRICULUM GUIDE



First Author™  
Curriculum

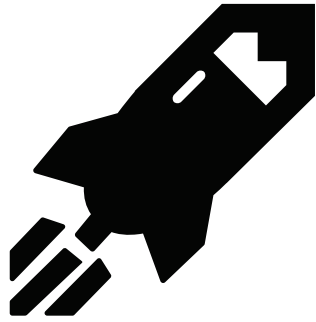


Dr. Janet M. Sturm



SAMPLE

# CURRICULUM GUIDE



## First Author<sup>™</sup> Curriculum

**A comprehensive writing curriculum  
for beginning writers**

Dr. Janet M. Sturm



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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*

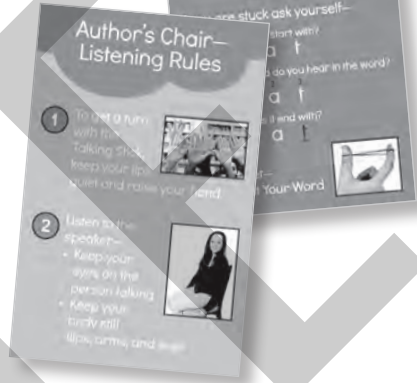


**Curriculum Guide**

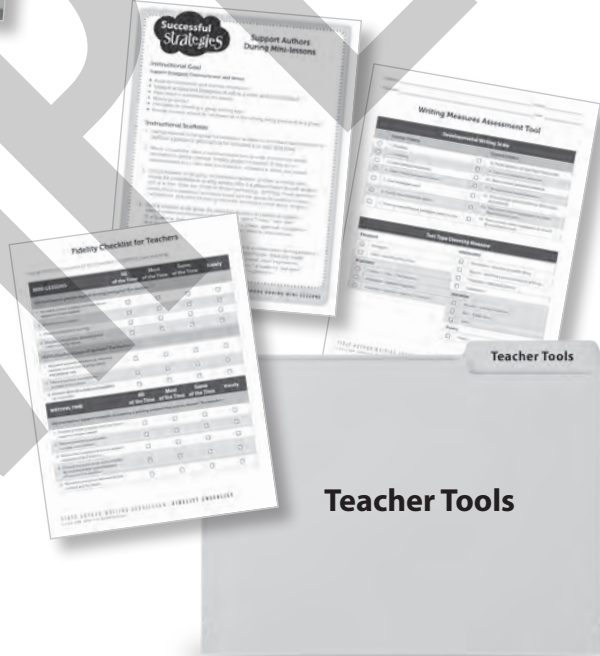


**Writing Measures**

**Posters**



**Mini-lessons and Tip Sheets**

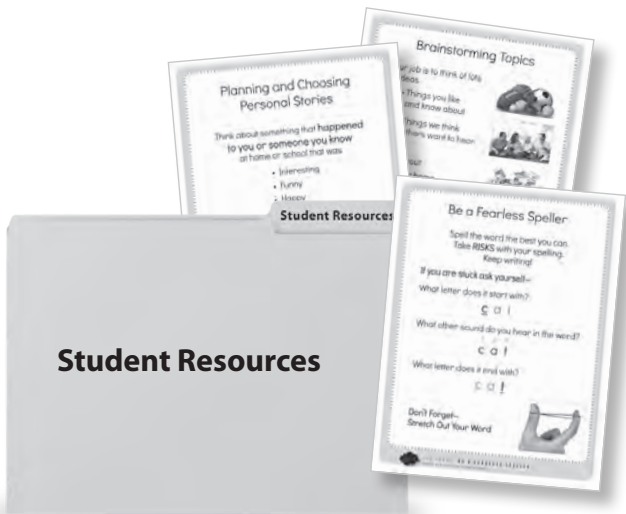


**Teacher Tools**



**Teacher Resource USB**

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



**Student Resources**



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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.



## Research Support

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).

Students 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:

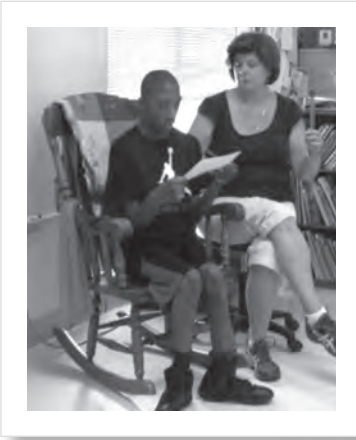
- Using photos of the students (laminated or ironed on special fabric)
- Voting on color choices and spray painting a wooden chair
- Affixing glitter, gems, ribbon, pompoms or other craft materials
- Adding drawings (e.g., on special fabric for a quilt)
- Using stickers representing favorite topics

### **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.



## QUICK Tip



### 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

Old Assumptions	New Perspectives
<p><b>Assumption 1</b> Students should show prerequisite literacy skills such as letter formation, phonemic or phonological awareness, or sound symbol connections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exposure to the alphabet through meaningful writing opportunities facilitates the acquisition of early literacy skills.</li></ul>
<p><b>Assumption 2</b> Reading skills occur before writing skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Through repeated meaningful writing opportunities, writing skills may be observed in students with significant disabilities before reading skills.</li></ul>
<p><b>Assumption 3</b> Conventional writing is not possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research has shown that students with significant disabilities can make positive gains in writing when provided with consistent, strategy-based instruction.</li></ul>
<p><b>Assumption 4</b> Early writing should be conventional.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Typically developing children write hundreds, if not thousands of times before becoming conventional writers.</li><li>• Students with complex instructional needs may require even more meaningful opportunities to write.</li></ul>
<p><b>Assumption 5</b> For students with significant disabilities, writing skills will be acquired if we teach them in simple, isolated tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The cognitive, in-the-head process of learning to read and write is the same for all individuals.</li><li>• 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.</li></ul>
<p><b>Assumption 6</b> Older students cannot acquire writing skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adults with significant disabilities who are introduced to systematic writing instruction are developing conventional writing skills.</li></ul>

## Old Assumptions

## New Perspectives

### Assumption 7

Spoken communication isn't needed during writing.

- Beginning readers frequently read aloud during sustained silent reading because they have not yet developed their inner voice.
- Likewise, typically developing students are often communicating and sharing during independent writing time.
- Students with significant disabilities need accommodations that support them in communicating throughout all components of writing.

### Assumption 8

Symbol writing (pictographic writing systems) leads to conventional writing.

- 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.
- 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.
- Use of symbols adds cognitive load as students must process both the pictographic symbol and the text labels.
- Using a pictographic symbol set may restrict the range of words and topics a student can compose.
- Pictographic writing systems do not provide students with essential, repeated opportunities to use individual letters to inventively spell and learn the sounds of language.

### Assumption 9

Work on fine motor skills leads to conventional writing skills.

- Many students with disabilities have lifelong fine motor constraints that inhibit the ability to produce legible text with ease.
- Work on fine motor skills is not a writing curriculum.
- Fine motor activities (e.g., copying and tracing) do not enable students to learn that writing is a form of communication.
- Accommodations that support students with ease of access to the alphabet are crucial to developing beginning writing skills.

**What attitudes and beliefs do you have about your students that match the old assumptions? What new perspectives are you thinking about?**



**"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.

Student Items	Total Items
One-inch three-ring binders	One binder per student
Tabbed binder dividers—five tabs	One set per student
Zippered pouches for three-ring binder	One per student
Scissors	One pair per student
Glue Sticks	One stick per student
Digital Head Shot Photo Image	One for each student
Classroom Items	Total Items
Talking Stick	One per class
Author's Chair	One per class
Supply Caddy/Bin	One per writing table
Lined Paper	One stack per writing table
Pencils	One pencil per student
Markers	One set per writing table
Dry erase markers and board	One per student
Microphone	One per classroom (used during Author's Chair)
One-inch three-ring binders	2-3 for school photos (e.g., field trips)
Box for storing magazines	One per classroom
Pocket Chart	One per classroom
Blank rectangular laminated cards	One for each student

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:

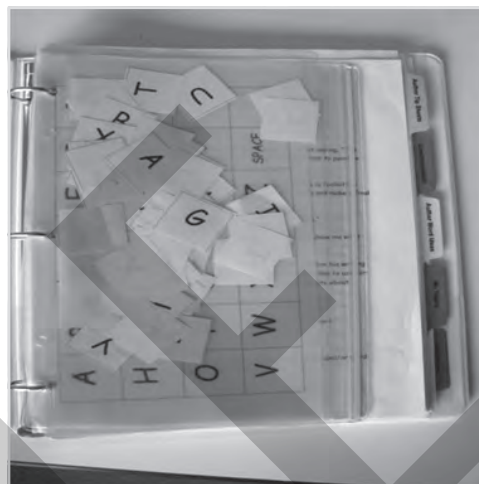
- Prominently display student’s name on the cover
  - Include a “Head Shot” of the Author
  - Later invite students to customize their binder covers with images that represent topics they love!
- For emergent beginning writers, print and laminate **alphabet boards**, three-hole punch them and insert 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).



### Author's Toolkit



### Letter Tiles



### 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.

### Magazine Tub of Writing Topics



### Author's Chair

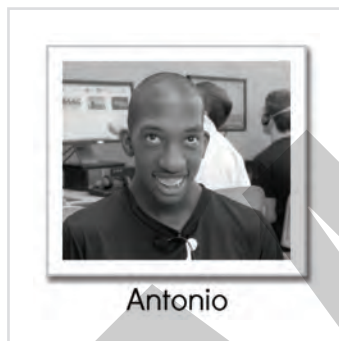


- Prepare materials for your Author's Board (pocket chart)—



**Lesson Card**

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.



**Student Photo Card**

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.



**Lesson Card**

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 first lessons, it is important to gather some baseline writing and profile information about each of your students and to introduce them to—and get them excited about—the First Author Writing Curriculum.

### Baseline Writing Sample

Instructions	
1. Copy	
2. Write	
3. Write a sentence	
4. Write a paragraph	
5. Write a story	
6. Write a letter	
7. Write a poem	
8. Write a report	
9. Write a speech	
10. Write a play	
11. Write a book	
12. Write a newspaper	
13. Write a magazine	
14. Write a website	
15. Write a blog	
16. Write a video	
17. Write a podcast	
18. Write a song	
19. Write a dance	
20. Write a game	
21. Write a program	
22. Write a script	
23. Write a movie	
24. Write a TV show	
25. Write a radio show	
26. Write a podcast	
27. Write a video	
28. Write a blog	
29. Write a website	
30. Write a newspaper	
31. Write a magazine	
32. Write a book	
33. Write a play	
34. Write a speech	
35. Write a report	
36. Write a letter	
37. Write a poem	
38. Write a story	
39. Write a paragraph	
40. Write a sentence	
41. Write	
42. Copy	

To take a baseline writing sample, simply ask your students to write about anything they would like to write about. Remember, this is not an authentic writing sample. Allow students to write for up to 15 minutes. Then, use the First Author Writing Task Sheet to record the student's writing. The goal is to get a sense of your students' current writing level. This will be an important tool during your lessons and will be used to measure the improvement of your students' writing skills over time.

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### Important

Additional writing probes should be taken throughout the year (weekly, monthly, or quarterly) to show growth in writing. Look to the First Author Writing Measures section starting on page 47 for additional measures and tools to help you.

## Student Profile

It is important to take time to think about the specific writing needs of your students prior to the first Minilesson. The prompts **Developing Individual Profiles, Lesson Objectives, and Accommodations** form located in your Teacher Tools folder and on the Teacher Resource CD guide you through considering each student's personal learning profile, including:

- Communication level (beginning or intermediate/advanced)
- Current writing level (beginning or intermediate/advanced)
- Communication profile (articulated vs. cued communication)
- Level on Developmental Writing Scale
- Choosing Student Outcomes or Differentiated Individual Lesson Objectives
- Choosing Accommodations

## Instructional Strategies

The following are strategies to help all your students be active participants during Minilessons, Writing Time, and Student's Choice.

### Minilessons

- Recognize and use students' forms of communication (gestures, vocalizations, writing, pictures, etc.) to help them express their thoughts and feelings.
- Offer a model of what you are doing (e.g., read aloud, phrases and have each student make a choice, Student Outcomes may be verbal, pointing, or an eye gaze).
- Offer a choice of writing with 2-3 choices of writing (e.g., typed, printed, or cued) and a choice of writing (e.g., good, better, or not good) in a writing box located in the Teacher Tools folder and on the Teacher Resource CD.
- Provide a gesture to an eye-gazed for more intermediate/advanced communication and/or hand choice format for beginning communication.



- Use a variety of positive verbal and physical cues to engage all students to contribute to the activity. For example:
- Say, "We have not found out what \_\_\_\_\_'s choice is yet. We need to go the rest!" Place in the choices and recognize any mode of communication used by the students to make the or how that selection.
- After asking "Who in here is an author?" and knowing that all hands are not raised, say with a smile, "Hey, all of you in here are authors. Everyone get their hand up!" Help students support one another with physical gestures if needed.
- Tell students, "How low many people have asked about for our writing. You are ready to write a plan for the choice to do so today."
- To assist with group management, ask the writing—how do you like it and \_\_\_\_\_ or how your writing will be writing the choice that

### Writing Time

- Make sure you are using both verbal and physical communication and writing cues to engage all students to contribute during the time. This is especially important to consider if a student is using a communication device or using a writing system.
- After students of your writing, say, "Author's books, magazines, the way they write and the way they write. How do you like it?" Say to the students, "I would like to see your writing in a new way today. Let's see what you can do."
- Help students during a conference for a sign by saying, "Let's pick a writing cue that you would like to share with everyone in our class today. Let's see what you can do by doing a 'person walk' through a set of writing prompts, a magazine or classroom field trip person." Tell students, "I would like to see what you would like to share today in your writing. I'd like to see what you like."
- Use a variety of positive verbal cues to engage all students in writing time and a writing cue that their writing goals. Some examples include:
  - "Look at your writing today. It looks almost like a real writing."
  - "I like your writing today. Look how many colors you used!"
  - "Look at all of the letters you've chosen to share today. You wrote a lot!"
  - "Wow, you wrote your first word, sentence, paragraph today!"
  - "I am impressed. We did a lesson on a plan and you chose to write a plan today. It is the first plan I've seen you write. Nice job!"

- Write together with your students, modeling the coverage that everyone is an author. Do not make your writing too sophisticated for your group of students. The image below was produced when working with a five-year-old student.



- Encourage students to be flexible speakers and readers for themselves. However, they may occasionally miss their own meaning of a word.
- If you have a computer, use that, provide that you are not specific with the text, but try to make it a student's choice. You can also use them to write the words that you are using.

- When a student is using a word that you see the verbal cue, "Show me the words you want to use in your writing." Record it on the student's list of words for their writing product for the day.
- Give the student a choice of words related to the student's writing. You can also use the student's choice of words for writing.
- Use software and writing software (e.g., First Author software). Use the software to help students and/or improve mapping software to be appropriate for writing and using the words with ease.
- Ask students to provide words (e.g., when a student has clearly indicated a choice for words) to help them. Help them make that selection.

## Author's Chair

- Consider having a communication board with photos of all individuals include another person in the classroom who could be chosen to write as the reader for students who cannot do so for themselves. The board can be named, "Choose a Reader."
- Have a microphone ready to help students share their writing using a "public voice." Some students with disabilities also enjoy using the microphone to vocalize as their writing is read aloud to an adult or peer.
- Help students hold up their work to share with the group.
- If you are chosen as the reader, identify the student's topic and share all sentences written on a student's paper. Say phrases aloud and read the student's writing, errors, corrections, and punctuation. Be sure to read every word on the paper. If they have any words that were not used and you are not sure how to pronounce and read them.
- If a student has a writing problem, ask the student to help and be read to. Take a minute after every 10-15 words to read aloud together with them using Author's Chair.
- Use a variety of strategies to help students read and record. Examples include:
  - "I really like how you said \_\_\_\_\_, when he used his hand to make \_\_\_\_\_."
  - "I like how you said \_\_\_\_\_ to tell the author what you thought \_\_\_\_\_ writing."
  - "I really like how you said \_\_\_\_\_, why you liked his writing."
  - "I really like how you got some back and forth talking about \_\_\_\_\_, but you had to stop. That is something you have in common."
  - "I really like how you said the author exactly what you wanted to say \_\_\_\_\_, but you stopped."
- Help students in recognizing that turn taking by using a talking stick to designate the identified speaker's turn.
- Make sure the talking stick is always present and that there is a balance of turns among all students in the classroom. Many students who are more passive communicators have been seen to become active communicators when the talking stick is present.

- For students who struggle to maintain a topic when making comments to an author, provide verbal cues to keep the student on topic. For example, say "Remember, \_\_\_\_\_, write about \_\_\_\_\_, why? What would you like to ask them?"
- For students who make too many comments to an author, set clear limits. For example, ask the student, "What are the three things you would like to ask \_\_\_\_\_ about their writing today?"





## A Final Checklist for Getting Started

Do You ...	Yes
Have student profiles completed?	0
Have baseline writing samples?	0
Have your first week of data lessons reviewed?	0
Have student log sheets ready for your first week of classes?	0
Have each student's Authors' Toolkit ready with students?	0
Have essential communication tasks ready for students who require them?	0
Have essential writing tasks ready for students who require them?	0
Have a Talking Book?	0
Have an Authors' Kit?	0

### Important

Observe your teachers using regular observation and feedback. Your Author Writing Curriculum provides a Talking Checklist to use every 4 weeks to collect and report your observations. Details located in your Teacher Tool Kit and on the Teacher Resource CD.

- Use the tool to identify areas of growth and new learning.
- Ask a teacher, teacher or colleague to review you and provide feedback.
- Conduct an observation with an administrator and provide the Talking Checklist to guide the observation.
- Set aside time to debrief, review and discuss observations and comments.
- Use the feedback to set measurable, achievable improvement goals.

### Observation Tools

Author	Week	1	2	3	4

# 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. These first 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/normalize 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 "authors"
- Verbally praise students for the speaking and listening skills
- Normalize students as the readers and critics
- Work together to build a community of writers

## First 30 Days of Mini-lessons

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Day 1</b> Author Time	<b>Day 2</b> Author Time Schedule	<b>Day 3</b> Author's Chair #1  Do you have baseline writing samples from ALL your students?	<b>Day 4</b> Author's Chair #2: <i>Decorate to Celebrate</i>	<b>Day 5</b> Author's Chair
<b>Day 6</b> Brainstorming Topics: <i>My Life</i>	<b>Day 7</b> Brainstorming Topics: <i>My School</i>	<b>Day 8</b> Brainstorming Topics: <i>My World</i>	<b>Day 9</b> Places to Get Topics: <i>Internet and Home</i>	<b>Day 10</b> Author's Chair
<b>Day 11</b> Places to Get Topics: <i>Magazines</i>	<b>Day 12</b> Author's Conference	<b>Day 13</b> Author's Toolkit #1: <i>What Is in My Toolkit?</i>	<b>Day 14</b> Author's Toolkit #2: <i>Make It Mine</i>	<b>Day 15</b> Author's Chair
<b>Day 16</b> The Talking Stick	<b>Day 17</b> Author's Chair Rules: <i>Be a Good Listener</i>	<b>Day 18</b> Author's Chair Rules: <i>Be a Good Listener</i>	<b>Day 19</b> Author's Chair Rules: <i>Be a Good Speaker</i>	<b>Day 20</b> Author's Chair
<b>Day 21</b> Author's Chair Rules: <i>Be a Good Speaker</i>	<b>Day 22</b> Giving Feedback: <i>Ways to Praise</i>	<b>Day 23</b> Giving Feedback: <i>Making Comments</i>	<b>Day 24</b> Giving Feedback: <i>Telling Why</i>	<b>Day 25</b> Author's Chair
<b>Day 26</b> Say More	<b>Day 27</b> Fearless Speller #1	<b>Day 28</b> Fearless Speller #2	<b>Day 29</b> How We Write	<b>Day 30</b> Author's Chair

## 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.

**Successful Strategies** Supporting Authors During Mini-lessons

**Instructional Goals**  
for Supporting an Emergent Beginning Communicator and Writer

- Build self-confidence and intrinsic motivation
- Improve attitude and perception of self as a writer and communicator
- Raise hand to contribute to the lesson
- Make eye contact
- Participate in choosing a group writing topic
- Provide content related to the lesson or in the writing being produced as a group

**Instructional Scaffolds**

1. During requests to the group for individual students to contribute (have educational staff use a gesture or physical cue for the < student > to raise < student's > hand
2. When < student > takes a communicative turn provide immediate verbal reminders to use eye contact. Verbally praise (the student) if they do so spontaneously (e.g., "I like how you looked at < student >, when you shared with < student >."
3. During requests to the group for individual students to make a writing topic choice for a collaborative writing activity offer 2-4 phrasal choices in each student's view at a time. Value any mode of choice-making (e.g., pointing, visual attention, verbal, facial expression) and share aloud with the group the teacher's choice. " < Student > just used his eyes to tell us he wants us to write about < topic >."
4. During requests to the group for individual students to provide an opinion—Offer a communication board with emotions. If < student > does not automatically point to a smile, approach < student > and say, "We need to get < student's > opinion. Show us your opinion—Was it good, okay or bad?"
5. Get input from < student > about content to add in a collaborative writing product by asking yes/no questions or offering or 2-3 verbal choices. Value any mode of choice-making (e.g., pointing, visual attention, verbal, facial expression) and share aloud with the group the teacher's choice. " < Student > just used smile to let us know he thinks we should include < content >."

TIP SHEET FOR ADULTS: SUPPORTING AUTHORS DURING MINI-LESSONS  
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## 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!



### QUICK Tip

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, Kiuvara, 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 make comments about the Author's writing topic.
- I will use eye contact when I talk with others.
- I will tell why I like a classmate's writing.

# Successful Strategies Learned from the Field

First Author Writing Curriculum has 40+ lessons for you to choose from to support your unique classroom's instructional goals. After you have completed the first 30 days, review your student data, think about what your class needs, and plan your use of lessons.

## Important!

The research has shown that typically developing beginning writers kindergarten and first grade students who are supported in self-directed writing across subjects best learn to write.

- Kindergarten students show like: e.g. "This is my" and "I am" (e.g. "This is my hat")
- First grade students show picture writing: e.g. "My hat and I want to be back" (e.g. "I want to go to school, that's it") and descriptions: e.g. "My hat is pretty. It has brown hair on the top."

What is visible in the field is that students who struggle to write the strongest writers in a first grade classroom. When they do write, it is typically a sentence or two long: e.g. "The little black frog. Another interesting experience from the world." The students begin by writing descriptions about a picture: e.g. "The little black frog." or "The little black frog is a frog."

When implementing the First Author Writing Curriculum, use the research to guide your selection of lessons that will best support the interests and demands of the children in your class and will be most useful to them: e.g. descriptions before reports (e.g. "I want to go to school, that's it") and reports after descriptions (e.g. "My hat is pretty. It has brown hair on the top.")

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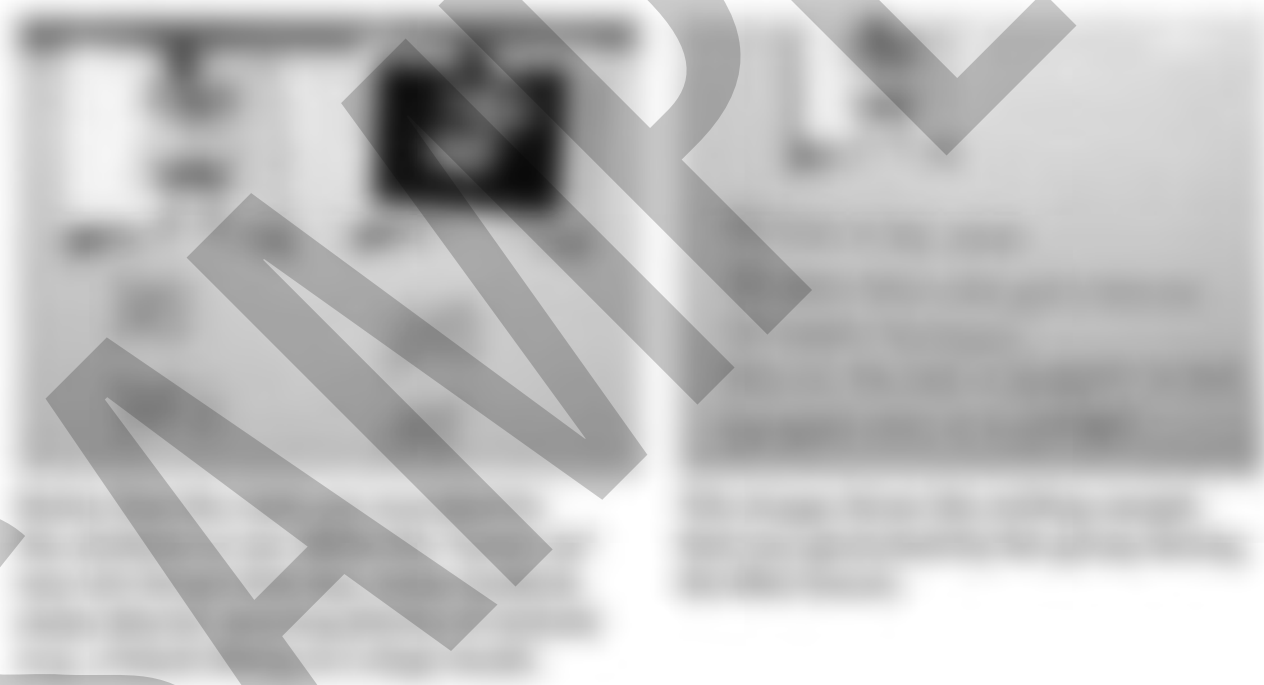
Some classrooms will want to continue to emphasize basic speaking and listening and emerging writing skills and provide extensive modeling of the writing process. Several of the First Author Writing Curriculum lessons have variations included to encourage repetition with variety. You will repeat many lessons to continue to build skills.



Other classrooms will be ready to focus on more advanced speaking and listening skills and write lessons that focus on the range of text types and organization. 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 organization of their writing (introduction and conclusion)

When introducing lessons on text types and organization, consider the choice of text types that are motivating to your students. Some meaningful goals during these lessons are for students to participate in choosing a topic and to ensure content to be included in a collaborative writing activity. Here is an example of text type choices offered to students when writing a persuasive letter.



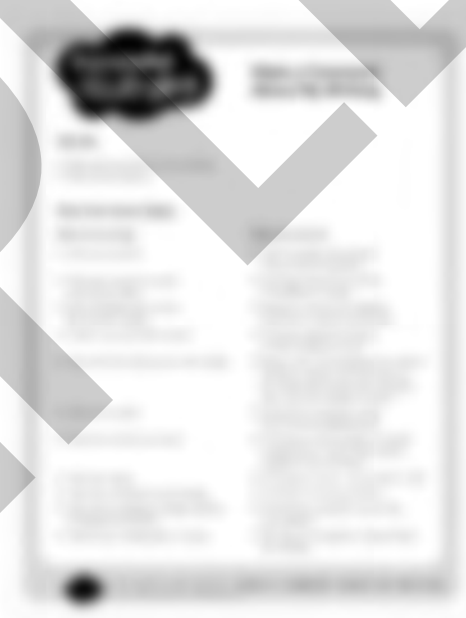
Again, don't hesitate to repeat key lessons throughout the school year. Students learn effective strategies for writing, speaking and listening, and language by participating in exercises, repeated, and guided opportunities to apply these skills over and over throughout a school year. Choose which lessons to repeat by thinking about the writing, speaking and listening, and language needs of your classroom and by reviewing your students' data learned from the First Author Writing Lessons. For example, over time, students may begin to use the classroom rules for participation. In this case, it's a good idea to return to the lessons **Be a Good Listener** and **Be a Good Speaker**.

## Celebrate by Sharing at School and at Home

Build positive student self-perceptions and create a stronger sense of audience by having students share their work outside of the classroom. Students choose their best writing for the week and take it home to share with someone special (e.g., a teacher or paraprofessional, parent, grandparent, principal, or school secretary). A student may bring photos of their audience and a certificate to be created to show appreciation. Students look to the feedback they receive from the adults with a quick list of positive comments they might make to encourage the writer.

This same activity can be repeated outside of school by having students share their work with family members (e.g., a grandparent, aunts, or uncles). For example, a student could write a letter to a family member.

A photo certificate of appreciation for all of important individuals could be created to help students make a habit. After sharing their writing, students can also present a thank-you note to the adult in response to the question, "I liked your writing because..." The teacher could provide the adults with a quick list of positive comments they might make to encourage the writer. This same activity can be repeated outside of the school by having students share with important people in their family (e.g., grandpa or grandma) or community (e.g., librarian, museum, artist).



## 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:

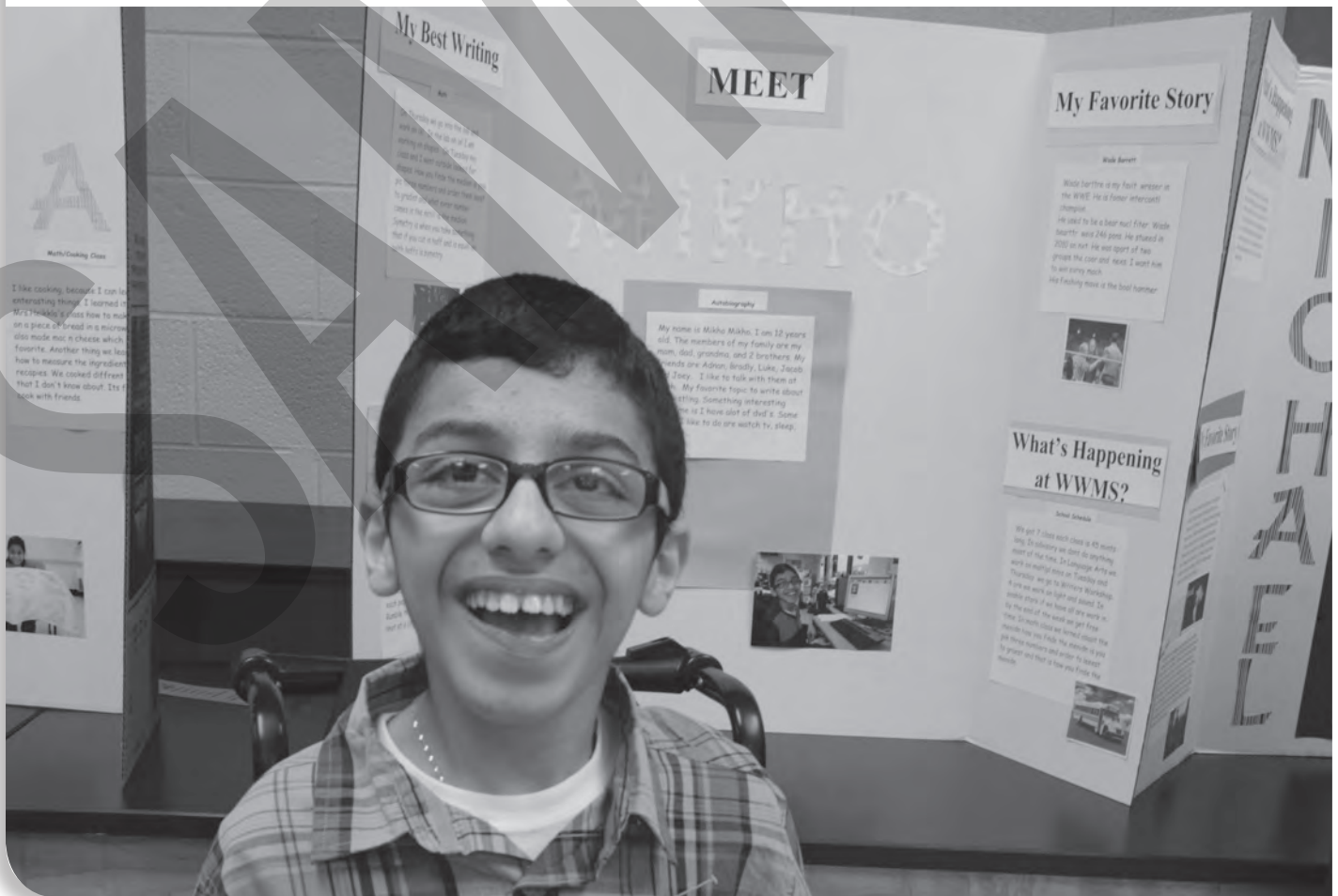
- Create Author Biographies
- Make covers for their published work
- Choose their best writing to share on that day
- Practice sharing their writing during the Author’s Chair
- Work with educational staff to create tri-fold posters that feature Author Biographies, student writing samples, and photos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

## Speaking and Listening

Student Barriers	Possible Solutions
<p><b>Does not initiate</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide consistent, subtle verbal encouragement for the student to take a turn (provide positive input for any forms of initiation).</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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, "&lt;student&gt; just thought your work was really amazing! He told you three times!"</li> </ul>
<p><b>Talks out of turn</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> All educational staff who takes a turn during Author's Chair must also use the Talking Stick to reinforce the concept.</p>
<p><b>Jumps topics when commenting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When handing the Talking Stick to the student:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Point to the Author's photo</li> <li>• Provide a verbal reminder for the Author's Topic</li> <li>• Place the Author's photo and writing directly in front of the student</li> <li>• Provide intermittent verbal cues and physical reminders (e.g., pointing to the Author's photo) as needed, when the student is commenting.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Use the fewest number of cues and remember to take the scaffold down over time.</p>
<p><b>Makes excessive, multiple comments (e.g., 6-8 comments) in a row without allowing a communicative partner to take a turn</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the student is handed the Talking Stick, provide verbal cues limiting the student to 2-3 comments.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

Check pages 47-60 for Universal Design for Learning strategies and assistive technology tools.



## Student Barriers

## Possible Solutions

**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, or 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

### Student Barriers

### Possible Solutions

**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!”

Student Barriers	Possible Solutions
<b>Writing only in phrases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer the student models and think-alouds" showing how you think of ideas in your head, say them aloud, and then write a sentence.</li> <li>• As you model, mention how sentences start with a capital and end with punctuation.</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• Provide the student with a Tip Sheet showing word combinations used to write a specific text type.</li> </ul>
<b>Writes about only one or two topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• Identify photo images for topics and offer multiple options at the onset of each writing session.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Writes only one or two text types</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just prior to writing time, provide verbal cues about the possible text types the student might choose for a given topic.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Writes coherent, but not cohesive, text</b> (multiple sentences on one topic that can be reordered)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just prior to writing time, provide verbal cues about the possible text types the student might choose for a given topic.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Model how you would use cohesive words for different text types.</li> </ul>

# 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 sequenced content and content offers both a visual and auditory component that supports comprehension of key concepts. For example, content shared verbally by the teacher is also presented in multiple writing formats. (The books contain text and a photo image.)

Mini lessons and the books are designed to provide clear and direct and written and to represent information in multiple forms (e.g., spoken and written language) along with print and photo images so that student information processing and understanding is enhanced.

### Provide Options for Language, Mathematical Expressions, and Symbols

Multiple tools for expression are supported (e.g., the use of handwriting, e.g., constructive text, speech generating devices, and assistive writing software (e.g., text-to-speech).

The curriculum explicitly teaches the process of writing and the skills of writing.

If students cannot utilize visual images for content, they are generally indicating with the degree of auditory choice presented in partner and student writing to support all selection of writing topic choice.

### Provide Options for Conceptualization

Instruction is designed to use learning and content and to writing skills and activating background knowledge. Examples of writing tools, devices, and student topics are chosen based on students' needs and interests. The curriculum includes the writing task and the topic content supports students in writing skills, including the use of writing throughout all instructional components.

Writing about books, the story, and background are also supported in multiple ways.

- Mini lessons highlight the use of devices to assist text input and the secondary patterns used to flow text input.
- Mini lessons focus on the use of devices in speaking and listening so that students are able to reflect on and use with enhanced communication skills.
- Examples and models are used to teach key concepts (e.g., good listening).
- During the lessons, connections are made between concepts previously taught and new content and communication skills being taught. Clear curricular connections are also reflected.
- Students generate writing that learned during Mini lessons during their Writing Time and with the assistance of the books to support them build student independence.

## Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression (The "How" of Learning)

### Physical Action

When supporting communication, methods of responding are varied, such as use of words, and support multiple modalities (gestures, picture boards, and communication and alternative communication tools across all components of instruction).

### Expression and Communication

During writing, students are provided multiple tools to express their and convey their thoughts. Standard and alternative writing tools that support multiple means of expression (e.g., standard and modified alphabet boards, dry erase boards, standard and modified keyboards, word processing software, and alternative access hardware). Adults or other students in a group provide alternate writing modalities and support attention.

Individualized tools of support are provided and assessed using the same methods as when they are independent. For example, until they become independent, adults work closely with students using teacher's tools (e.g., holding personal photo cameras).

### Executive Function

Writing and communication goals are identified for each student and, where possible, students help to construct the goals. All students are provided with a visual model of their goals and how they are connected to the goal or action.

All components of instruction are presented and organized in user-friendly formats. At a minimum, students are provided with the following information and resources (e.g., immediately following the lesson, at the end of the day, or during free periods) as given from Author's Toolkit:  
The steps and sequence of the lesson; writing curriculum lesson arrangements and participation (e.g., A); students' own goals and strategies for understanding.

Students' ability to understand and use the content through verbal cues (e.g., during writing time and Author's Toolkit) and other devices (e.g., picture boards).

## Provide Multiple Means of Engagement (The "Why" of Learning)

### Provide Opportunity for Recruiting Interest

All students have opportunities to make both group and self-selected topic choices throughout all components of instruction.

Motivation for each student is fostered by having personally motivating, individualized writing topics available.

Students choose the appropriate and alternative communication modes. Students are encouraged to interact to typical classroom exchanges during writing instruction and to be motivating for students to write (e.g., posing an author by using "because").

### Sustain Effort and Persistence

All students are referred to as "authors" to ensure they know they will be in the classroom writing continuously and to promote both their and others' motivation.

Student motivation is fostered by having multiple, personally motivating, and diverse writing in multiple ways (e.g., Authors' Day, Author's Chair, Author's Walk).

Students sustain attention during all components of instruction by having multiple activities and tasks that support them. During all instructional components, students are engaged in writing activities and in writing. Students have repeated opportunities to interact in "because" and "because" during their lessons. Writing Time and Author's Day.

Initial and ongoing, varied and diverse feedback is provided to students to increase reading-related feedback.

### Self-reflection

Students are able to self-reflect on their performance during the day through and by making students aware of their personal goals (e.g., "I will write my opinion" or "I will tell why" about an author's writing). Instructional activities (e.g., writing questions) all support self-monitoring all lessons and writing. Writing Time and Author's Day. Students are able to reflect upon and self-assess their performance. Writing Time and Author's Day.

# Accommodations for Independence

## Identify How Each Student Will Write

Every student, especially those who are beginning writing, needs ease of access to drawing and writing. Some students will be able to easily use paper and pencil, while many others will have motor or sensory needs that require the accommodations system for use. The instructional emphasis is on writing using orthography (the phonographic symbols and meaning) as well as the Developmental Writing Scale described on pages 43-45. When using the First Author Writing Curriculum, do not spend a lot of time accommodating for drawing skills. Have students create a photograph for their sign and use writing. Think about how each student will draw and write and ask yourself, "Can an accommodation be added within the program where would you clearly see the student's work?"

- **Beginning** – students with limited or no motor access who struggle
- **Intermediate** – students with a solid, steady and consistently graceful written work

Students who need additional support for writing will typically be classified as beginning or intermediate. Some beginning students who are at the intermediate advanced level continue to benefit from pencil supports for their drawing.

Use the First Author Writing Curriculum using these four questions to guide your work:

- Is your student able to hold a pencil/drawing device?
- Is your student able to use a pencil to easily and lightly compose work?
- Does your student need alternative access to the alphabet for spelling?
- Can your student easily use a traditional keyboard and mouse?

If you answered "no" to any of the first three questions and "yes" to the final question for any of your students, they will benefit from manual and specialized CUE accommodations.

**Special accommodations provide ease of access** to drawing, orthography, and organizing work for students who do not have significant motor or sensory needs.

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

Students	Essential Accommodations	Examples of No-Tech Options	Examples of Assistive Software
Scrubblers— Paragraph Writers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Drawing/Photo</li> <li>– Keyboard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Multiple-choice tests, fill-in-the-blank, matching, writing</li> <li>– Computer-aided instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Free Author Writing Software</li> <li>– Grammarly</li> <li>– Grammarly</li> </ul>
Single Word Writers—Sentence Writers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Word Banks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Multiple-choice tests, fill-in-the-blank, matching, writing</li> <li>– Computer-aided instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Free Author Writing Software</li> </ul>
Sentence Writers— Paragraph Writers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Word Banks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Multiple-choice tests, fill-in-the-blank, matching, writing</li> <li>– Computer-aided instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Grammarly</li> </ul>
Multiple Sentence Writers—Paragraph Writers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Grammar/Spelling Software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Multiple-choice tests, fill-in-the-blank, matching, writing</li> <li>– Computer-aided instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Grammarly</li> </ul>





## Identify Each Student's "Writing" Tool

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



An additional tool that may be used with students who are emergent beginning writers is a dry erase board. When using the dry erase board, an adult scaffolds by writing 2-4 single word choice labels or descriptive words on a dry erase board, erases them verbally, and asks whether the students would like to share any of the words in his or her writing with the goal of getting the student to indicate 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 image, pens, pencils, and alphabet boards. The text written on the writing sample is considered a communicative choice (the student did not write it) made by the student. While this content is shared and valued, it is not measurable on the Developmental Writing Scale (found on pages 43-45).

A final creative option to consider is to have the student use letter tiles as one way of using the alphabet to intentionally spell out. The first image below shows the first day a beginning emergent writer was presented with letter tiles. He independently chose and glued his letter onto the page.



In a later writing session (second image above), the student chose a photo, used a traditional pencil, and was given letter tiles. He was also offered the dry erase board, but did not want to choose any words that day. Again, he independently chose and glued each letter on the page.

Notice the change in overall quantity of letters to be written to share! During Author's Chair his intensive spelling was celebrated. Every letter was read aloud, and verbal praise was given for writing lots of letters to share that day.

Students who are beginning conventional writers also benefit from phonics supports. These are motivating, personal, and consistently used activities in generating ideas. An essential tool for some students with moderate cognitive impairments is word production software such as Co:Writer. As these students are able to compose longer, more coherent texts, it can support the instructor focused work to help the writer to use and their spelling ability. The introduction of word production can build confidence and independence as a writer.



### Special Accommodations

Students with auditory or motor needs require more sophisticated tools and accommodations to support text 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 getting access to writing.

## Examples of Specialized Writing Accommodations

Specialized Writing Accommodations
Head set
Enlarged keyboard
Alternate keyboard
Mouse
On screen keyboard
Alternate mouse
Head pointer or foot pointer
Large print editor
Text-to-speech
Color-coded on page
Speech-to-text
Both speech-to-text
Both reading

NOTE: The list of accommodations is not exhaustive. Contact the Center for Learning and Disability Services for more information on accommodations.

## Identify How Each Student Will Communicate

The development of students' speaking and listening skills is facilitated through the use of various interactive activities, understanding the curriculum. Every student needs access to communication tools that support them in accomplishing multiple communication tasks. There are a range of various types. Some students will be able to express their thoughts with relative ease and others come with a range of communication profiles. However, even relatively more sophisticated students with disabilities face challenges that require additional writer support (L2), supports to foster development. For example, a student with high functioning autism may struggle to discuss current events of his or her knowledge area or to provide anything beyond the most superficial comments to each author (e.g., "Student says to Author One: 'I liked your topic about cars.' The same student says to Author Two: 'I liked your topic about horses.'").

The goal for these students is to maximize their language skills by providing cues and models that allow them to communicate with peers in more sophisticated ways. A Tip Sheet concerning cue and paragraph image centers that helps the student ask "why" they think their peer's writing can be used as an accommodation in their writing. After the student makes his or her initial comment ("I think your topic about horses is what says, "Why did you like to write about horses?" and points to the Tip Sheet as a reminder to share what you have in common with the Author. One adult student with high functioning autism became so accustomed to the "why" cue that he would make his initial comment, look at the cue sheet, and then ask the Author why he liked the writing.

Other students may have difficulty using words to communicate their responses to peers, essays or other texts. The instructional approach here is to model the use of an orally communicated exchange with the Author. Writing tasks in the Author's Chair. Through repeated modeling and practice, students in First Author Writing Curriculum students with more significant communication needs may benefit from oral and nonverbal when communicating with peers and peers. During the year using the First Author Writing Curriculum in a special education classroom, the student with more significant communication needs consistently used the Author's Chair, writing to his peers and demonstrating reading.

Recently, the student with more significant communication needs held up the writing sample to his peers to read, asked to read it to them, and then looked back at the cue sheet and pointed to the cue sheet. He then looked up to see who had been handed the cue sheet and pointed to the first peer who did so.

Other students with more significant and more needs will require accommodations and direct instruction to support them. It is critical that these students be supported to use the same communicative functions as their peers.

Think about how each of your students communicates and ask yourself if there are any barriers to using the process. Where would you clearly teach each of your students?

- **Beginning** - student needs support to communicate their spoken message
- **Intermediate level** - student is able to generate words spontaneously

Students who need additional support to communicate their spoken message will typically be classified as beginning communicators. Many intermediate-level communicators continue to benefit from instructional scaffolds and Tip Sheets that focus speaking and listening skill development.

Now think further about your students using these four questions:

- Is your student able to use words spontaneously to communicate the teacher prompts during classroom activities? Is your student's spoken communication reliable and consistent?
- Does your student use gestures or other forms of communication? Is it reliable and consistent?
- Does your student need alternative access to use words to communicate through communication boards or a Speech Generating Device (SGD)?
- Does your student currently have a Speech Generating Device (SGD)?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions for your students, they will benefit from minimal and specialized accommodations. Functional accommodations provide ease of access to a range of communication services through augmentative and alternative communication tools.

The following table can be used as a tool to think about which of your students might need minimal accommodations, such as printed, digital, technical applications, to help students able to be successful with their learning which accommodations should be used to ensure success?

Communication Function	Minimal Access	Alternative Access as Symbol Displays	Speech Generating Devices
Initial			
Comprehend text			
Write a story			
Write writing			
Control			
Ask questions			
Write answers			

Multiple touch and high-touch work, 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 student to raise their hand or make eye contact. Single digitized switches can be used multiple ways. For example, a single digitized switch might be consistently used to support students to write. Any questions or comments" immediately after their writing is shared. Single switches could also be used to help a student introduce his or her topic or to help a student taking a turn. Speech Generating Devices (SD) allow students to communicate in a more broader range of functions and contexts.

### Uses for Additional Communication Boards

- **Things We All Know About** – a communication phrase display board representing topics students may all be familiar with (e.g., holidays)
- **My Culture Topics** – a communication phrase display board representing the culture topics for each of the students
- **Place in Our Topics** – a communication phrase display board representing topics where students can give input on a particular topic, including projects, interests, things, experiences
- **Class's Choice** – a communication phrase board of all adults or peers who might be available to read or provide for a student author

The Things We All Know About and My Culture Topics boards are used to support students sharing any information they know about representing topics. When using these boards, students are able to give input on the topics, contributing ideas for the group. The Place in Our Topics board is used to give students a chance to give input on topics to help remind students of their own interests for group projects and encourage topic diversity. These communication boards are found on the Teacher Resource CD.

The Class's Choice board is used to give students a chance to support students in choosing what they would like to read for them that day.

Students with physical or sensory needs may not be able to access multiple choices in order to make a choice using sight or touch vocabulary items that are all good choices to consider. Using an author is typically more effective, reducing to one item a day, when there are physical or sensory needs that require doing so. The following figure shows the same vocabulary with two items displayed for pointing or touching.



Students with sensory or motor needs require more sophisticated tools and accommodations to communicate. These students will benefit not only from the tools provided above, but also from the accommodations that make using all tools in communication possible.

### Identify Instructional Supports for Each Student

As you identify supports, it is important to identify the type of support needed to allow a student to be successful. Consider all learning accommodations that may lead to the success of increased independence. It is the intention that all educational staff is aware of each student's appropriate tools, supports, and tools so that students receive consistent input and support. For each of the components, think about the instructional supports listed below that are most appropriate for each use during each component of the writing curriculum.

#### Accommodations for the Student in Writing Process

As you prepare for implementation, be sure to plan for the student in the process. Consider students requiring tools such as large or bold print or study aids to use. Be sure to identify the barriers to learning with each student and plan for each student. For students with sensory needs, students in the classroom set up each writing station with the appropriate tools. They will join the Author's Chair and taking back in place.

As you implement the First Author Writing Curriculum, make sure to observe your students communicating and writing. Identify successes as well as the ongoing barriers. And be sure to engage in ongoing evaluation to ensure that each student's accommodations result in optimal performance. Identify successes as well as the ongoing barriers. And be sure 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:

<b>Mini-lesson</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build self-confidence and intrinsic motivation</li><li>• Learn and use concepts about how to be a better writer and communicator</li><li>• Contribute during the Mini-lesson</li></ul>
<b>Writing Time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider multiple topics and make a clear topic choice</li><li>• Write independently</li><li>• Communicate ideas in writing</li><li>• Engage in peer and teacher conferences</li></ul>
<b>Author's Chair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Share writing with others</li><li>• Comment or ask a question about another student's writing</li></ul>

## 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

Five Components of a Goal	Definition	Description
<b>Who</b>	The student involved	The student's name
<b>Do Statement</b>	What the child will do	Observable and measurable behavior
<b>Conditions Statement</b>	Context in which the desired behavior will be demonstrated	Conditions described for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linguistic Contexts</li> <li>• Social Contexts</li> <li>• Instructional Scaffolds</li> <li>• Technical Scaffolds</li> </ul>
<b>Criterion Statement</b>	How well a child will perform a particular skills, demonstrate knowledge, or use a strategy	Stated in percentages, ratios, frequencies, duration
<b>Timeframe</b>	In what length of time will the goal be achieved	Time descriptors (e.g., end of the school year, number of writing sessions)

Based on Nelson, N.W. (2010) and Erickson, K. (2014)

## 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).

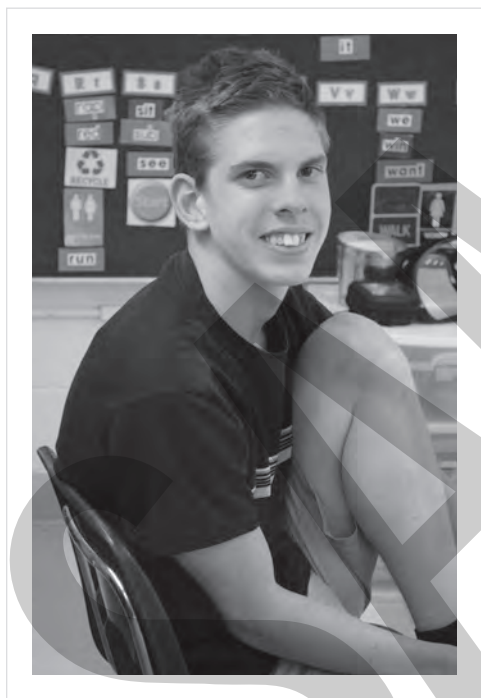
Facilitating overall writing fluency in beginning writers necessitates self-selection using topics that are motivating. Over time, together with his Speech-Language Pathologist, this student planned for his writing by choosing a topic of interest to him. The SLP then read expository text related to the 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.

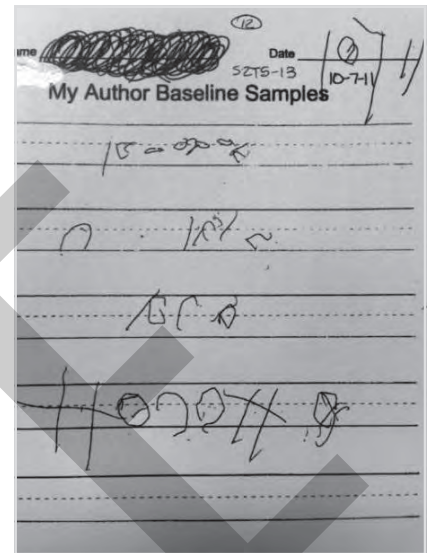
Again, write the goals collaboratively with the student, post them prominently, and support the student's self-reflecting on the achievement of his or her goals. If the student is unable to collaborate in goal setting, use student-friendly word choices to write 1-3 goals and post them in his or her Author's 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.

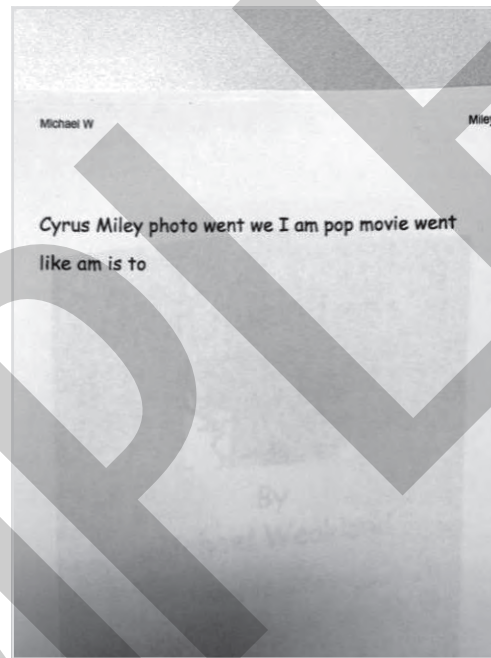
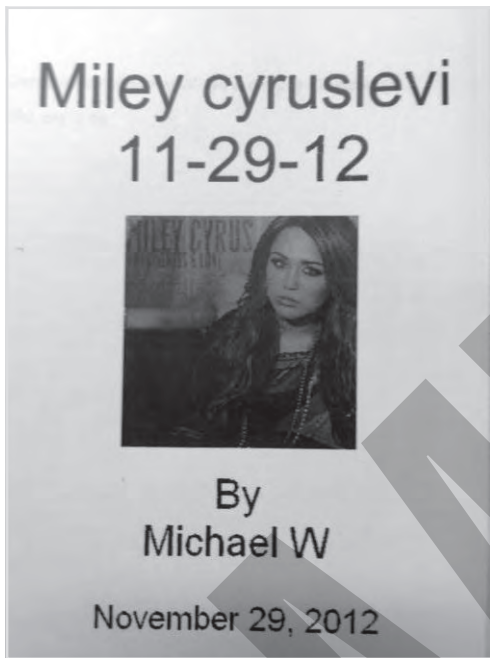
This baseline sample was produced by Michael in one of the first writing sessions before the *First Author Writing Curriculum* and the First Author Software were used together. Notice his difficulty with mechanics and letter formations—he was unable to produce text that is legible to a reader.



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

Writing Quantity and Quality Measure	Outcome Data
Developmental Writing Scale	Level 3
Total Intelligible Words	0
Total Unique Words	0
Topic Diversity	Unclear
Text Type Diversity	Emergent

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.

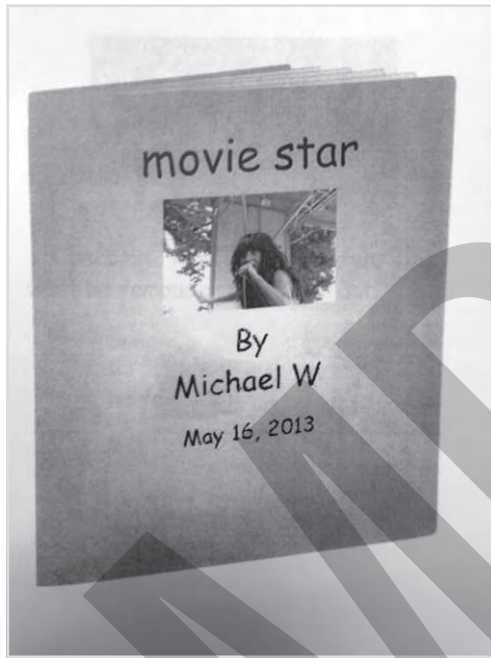


The table below shows measurement of Michael’s writing in this first sample using the First Author software:

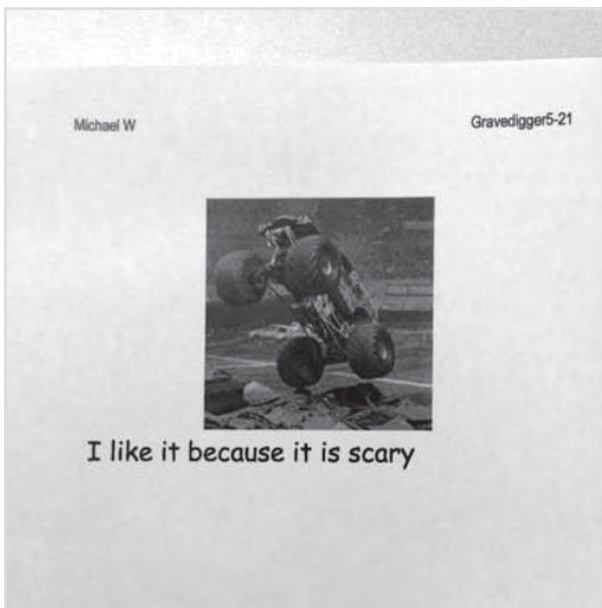
Writing Quantity and Quality Measure	Outcome Data
Developmental Writing Scale	Level 8
Total Intelligible Words	14
Total Unique Words	12
Topic Diversity	Miley Cyrus
Text Type Diversity	Label



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.



Writing Quantity and Quality Measure	Outcome Data
Developmental Writing Scale	Level 11
Total Intelligible Words	13
Total Unique Words	10
Topic Diversity	Acting
Text Type Diversity	Plan



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:

<p><b>EE.W.9-10.2.c</b> Use complete simple sentences as appropriate.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>EE.W.9-10.1</b> Write claims about topics or texts.</p>	<p>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.</p>

## Examples of Goals for Writing and Language

Writing Quantity and Quality Measures— Example WP Goals	Common Core State Standard (CCSS)	Alternate Standard
<p><b>Developmental Writing Scale</b></p> <p>By the end of the school year, students will improve their writing from at least sentence fragments to at least paragraphs that can be considered to writing that is more coherent sentences that cannot be considered either given the opportunity to write or a range of ideas as measured by structured writing assessments.</p>	<p><b>W.1-12.3</b> Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information that the audience knows or builds on. Organize ideas through logical paragraphs, sections, and sections of text.</p>	<p><b>W.1-12.3</b> Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information that the audience knows or builds on. Organize ideas through logical paragraphs, sections, and sections of text.</p>
	<p><b>W.1-12.4</b> Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, list relevant facts, and analyze how they relate to one another to build a strong and well-supported argument or position.</p>	<p><b>W.1-12.4</b> Produce writing that is appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.</p>

Writing Quantity and Quality Measures— Example EF Goals	Common Core State Standard (CCSS)	Alternate Standard
<p><b>Text Type Diversity</b></p> <p>By the end of the school year, students will compose at least _____ different text types (e.g., opinion, personal or fictional narratives, descriptions) in _____ minutes for each text type.</p>	<p><b>W.1.1</b> Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.</p> <p><b>W.1.2</b> Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, events, and issues using established conventions for the genre, and use relevant media, graphics, and other visual displays to aid in their explanations.</p> <p><b>W.1.3</b> Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences and events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and a clear point of view.</p>	<p><b>EW.1</b> Write claims about topics or texts.</p> <p><b>EW.1.2</b> Write to give information supporting a claim.</p> <p><b>EW.1.3</b> Write about events in personal experiences.</p>
<p><b>Text Length/Quality Words</b></p> <p>By the end of the school year, students will increase the total number of words in a writing product from an average of _____ words to an average of _____ words.</p>	<p><b>L.1.4</b> Extend and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge; when considering a word in a new context, use general and domain-specific strategies, such as consulting general and domain-specific glossaries, print and digital dictionaries, and general and domain-specific resources, to increase the range of their word and phrase acquisition.</p>	<p><b>EL.1.4</b> Demonstrate understanding of conventions of standard English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use root words, affixes, and knowledge of word structure in spelling longer words.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Total Unique Words</b></p> <p>By the end of the school year, students will increase the total unique words in a writing product from an average of _____ words to an average of _____ words.</p>	<p><b>L.1.4</b> Extend and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level.</p>	<p><b>EL.1.4</b> Use general academic and domain-specific words and phrases across contexts.</p>

Additional Measures	Measurable Goals
Total Number of Letters	By the end of the school year, students will increase the total number of letters in a writing product from an average of _____ letters to an average of _____ letters.
Total Number of Unique Letters	By the end of the school year, students will increase the total number of unique letters in a writing product from an average of _____ letters to an average of _____ letters.
Beginning Writer Survey of Writing Attitude and Self-Efficacy	By the end of the school year, students will score from a negative attitude toward writing to a positive attitude as measured by a validated assessment scale.

### Examples of Goals for Speaking and Listening

Speaking and Listening Example 17 Goals	Common Core State Standard (CCSS)	Alternate Standard
<b>Initiating and Collaborating</b>		
<p>By the end of the school year, students will generate and contribute to a list, drawing on their own experiences to be able to bring to the discussion. For each of the following, students will:</p> <p>By the end of the school year, students will generate and contribute to a list of possible questions or topics to bring to the end of the school year.</p> <p>By the end of the school year, students will support the contributions and thoughts of the discussion, offer a counterclaim, by writing out the other author's writing being addressed at the end of the week.</p>	<p><b>SL.1.1</b> Engage and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, teacher-led with diverse partners) on grade 1 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and coherently.</p>	<p><b>MSL.1.1</b> Engage in collaborative discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share the topic of discussion to broader themes or ideas.</li> <li>- Include agreement or disagreement with others during discussions.</li> </ul>

Speaking and Listening— Example SP Goals	Common Core State Standard (CCSS)	Alternate Standard
<b>Initiating and Commenting</b>		
<p>By the end of the school year, students will spontaneously produce free different questions or comments about unfamiliar topics, on their own or in response during functional writing activities. Students will be measured in three domains: Writing Time, and Author's Chair from a sampling of free different questions or comments.</p>	<p><b>SL.9-10.1</b> Engage in a variety of media and formats, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</p>	<p><b>SL.9-10.1a</b> Engage in a variety of media and formats, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</p>
<b>Eye Contact</b>		
<p>By the end of the school year, students will use consistent eye contact with a communication partner when reading aloud by the classroom during functional communication exchanges on their own or in response.</p> <p><b>Level of Performance</b>            1 = use eye contact            2 = use eye contact when prompted            3 = consistent eye contact</p>	<p><b>SL.9-10.1</b> Engage in a variety of media and formats, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</p>	<p><b>SL.9-10.1a</b> Engage in a variety of media and formats, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meet with adults and peers to set goals for themselves.</li> </ul>
<p>By the end of the school year, students will use consistent eye contact with a communication partner when reading aloud by the classroom during functional communication exchanges on their own or in response.</p>		

# Appendix

## Table 1

### Recommendations from *Teaching Elementary School Students to Become Effective Writers* and *The Connections to the First Author Writing Curriculum*

Graham, Bollinger, Booth Olson, D'Aoust, MacArthur, McCutchen, & Ollinghouse, 2012

Recommendations	First Author Writing Curriculum
<b>Recommendation 1</b> 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.
<b>Recommendation 2</b> Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teaches students strategies for planning, composing, revising, and sharing.</li><li>• Uses principles of strategy instruction to teach students explicit skills used by skilled writers and systematically guide students toward independence over time.</li><li>• Provides explicit instruction in a range of text types used across curricular areas through teacher models and collaborative writing.</li><li>• Provides students with instructional scaffolds that support them in composing a variety of genres.</li></ul>
<b>Recommendation 3</b> Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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</li><li>• Includes Mini-lessons that provide models and strategies for spelling and writing in sentences.</li></ul>
<b>Recommendation 4</b> Create an engaged community of writers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasizes a process-based approach where everyone is viewed as an author and a writing community is created in every classroom.</li><li>• 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.</li><li>• Fosters engaging and authentic purpose for writing and sharing</li></ul>

## College and Career Readiness Standards

<b>CCSS for Writing</b>	<b>Examples of Application in the <i>First Author Writing Curriculum</i></b>
<b>Text Types and Purposes</b>	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use more sophisticated text structures and content</li> <li>• List reasons</li> <li>• Use linking words and phrases</li> <li>• Include facts and details</li> </ul>
<b>Production and Distribution of Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers research and writing projects to engage in procedural, “how-to” writing.</li> <li>• Provides lessons that offer students models and strategies for producing clear and cohesive writing.</li> <li>• Affords the opportunity for students to create text via technology (e.g., First Author Writing Software mirrors a process-based writing environment).</li> </ul>
<b>Research to Build and Present Knowledge</b>	<p>Build knowledge of a topic through research projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw information from students’ personal experiences</li> <li>• Collect information from multiple sources (print and media)</li> <li>• Draw evidence from literary and expository text.</li> </ul>
<b>Range of Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write daily for both short and extended time periods.</li> <li>• Write across disciplines and for a range of audiences.</li> </ul>



## CCSS for Speaking and Listening

## Examples of Application in the *First Author Writing Curriculum*

### 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.

## CCSS for Language

## Examples of Application in the *First Author Writing Curriculum*

### 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



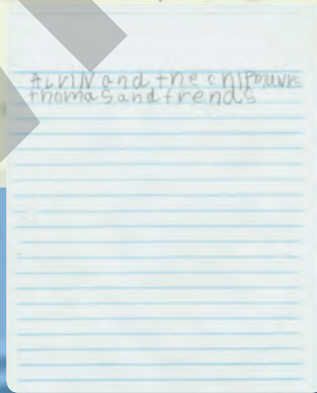
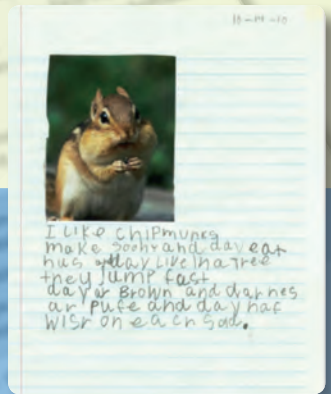
# WRITING MEASURES ASSESSMENT



First Author™  
Curriculum

EXAMPLE

Examples of No-Tech or Assistive Technology Examples of Assistive Software  
Examples of No-Tech Options Examples of Assistive Software



FIRST AUTHOR WRITING CURRICULUM

SAMPLE

# 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.

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

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 and assess the fine-grained linguistic and communicative changes observed in the writing samples of beginning writers (Pearson, Coll, Nelson, Goodreads, 2012). The DWS serves as the anchor measure that aids in identifying which additional First Author Writing Measures can be used in the assessment process. The DWS was designed to be used with a beginning writer of any age and can be used to measure progress across multiple writing tasks.

Developmental Writing Scale		
Level	Scoring Criteria	Description
1	Drawing	Lines and circles that appear to represent letters
2	Scrabbling	Continuous writing, scribbles, or lines that are not clearly letters. Lines that may include what the forms look like for a number of letters but are not recognizable letters.
3	Letter strings (no groups)	Two or three or four strings of letters, but not grouped into words. Example: m sp p p
4	Letter strings (grouped in words)	Strings of letters grouped into "words" but with spaces between or just two groups of letters but with no indelible word. Example: m/na    s/nc    p/nc mna    sna
5	One indelible word	Strings of letters grouped into "words" with one or more indelible word. Ex. Two or more letters in length all glued together (usually 3-5). Any string that is embedded in a string of letters. Example: snc/nc/nc I am playing outside at the moment

## Developmental Writing Scale

Level	Scoring Criteria	Description
6	Two to three intelligible words	Two to three different intelligible words embedded in writing, as indicated by space or a colon. Single letter words such as "I" and "a" are not considered by space to count as an intelligible word. Example: <b>STACONNOR</b> I like to write with the pen.
7	Three or more different intelligible words in a list	Three or more words with spaces. <b>egg tomato turkey</b>
8	Partial sentences of more than three words	Two to three different intelligible words, with at least two of them intelligibly formed (e.g., "go" or "the") and one with a space. Example: <b>STACONNOR STACONNOR</b> I like to write with the pen.
9	Two to four complete sentences	Two to four complete phrases with a verb phrase. Each phrase has a subject and a verb. Example: I can type faster than I can. I can the faster thing. I can type faster than I can. I can the faster thing.
10	Five or more unrelated sentences	Sentences have no related topic. Six sentences are not related. Example: I give a game. I want to my first house. I want to get a egg to eat. I want to change on both day. I like my mother run day. I can with my dog. I eat in my house. I want to the string to my.



## Developmental Writing Scale

Level	Scoring Criteria	Description
11	Three or more related sentences	Organized writing with three or more sentences. Sentences are related but with limited coherence. Sentences are related (e.g., sentences are connected without changing their meaning). Example on page 81.
12	Three or more related sentences that contribute meaning	Organized writing with three or more sentences. Sentences are related and contribute to the meaning of the paragraph (e.g., sentences are connected and contribute to the meaning of the paragraph). Sentences are related and contribute to the meaning of the paragraph (e.g., sentences are connected and contribute to the meaning of the paragraph). Example on page 82.
13	Two or more related paragraphs of at least three sentences each	Organized writing with a coherent topic topic and coherent subtopics (sub-topics) at this level with at least two sentences elaborating the meaning of each. Example on page 83.
14	Three or more related paragraphs of at least three sentences each	Organized writing with a coherent topic topic and at least three coherent subtopics (sub-topics) at this level with at least two sentences elaborating the meaning of each. Example on page 84.

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## Definitions of Key Terms and Constructs

Construct	Definition
<b>Drawing</b>	A line drawing or photo representing an event, object, person, or place.
<b>Sketches</b>	A rough drawing or outline for the map or map set. Does not include labels.
<b>Letter-like forms</b>	One or more forms representing a meaningful graphic symbol or abstract shape.
<b>Words</b>	One or more letters or a sequence of letters or symbols that together work to represent a single or multiple words or phrases.
<b>Partially formed sentence</b>	A word or words that are grammatically correct but not yet fully formed into a complete sentence.
<b>Complete sentence</b>	A word or words expressed grammatically with a subject and verb, punctuation not required.
<b>Organized</b>	Organized refers to the logical sequence, causal, categorical, or other type of relationships that are consistent with the writer's apparent purpose in conveying information, resulting in story, listing, a persuasive argument or some other emergent discourse form.
<b>Cohesion</b>	Refers to sentence language connections made by using cohesive devices (e.g., pronouns, connectives, logical connectors, conjunctions) that allow to give coherence to text. Cohesion is that sentences cannot be modified without changing the meaning.
<b>Coherence</b>	A central topic theme or topic maintained across multiple sentences.

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NOTE: Sources for definitions include Halliday and Hasan (1976), Freedson (1987), Horn and Bruner (1978), and Halliday, Burnham, and Hasbourne (1986).

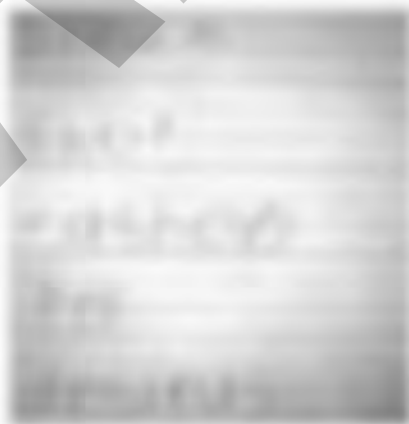
## Developmental Writing Scale: Rules and Samples

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

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

Level	Typically Developing Writers	Writers with Disabilities
<p><b>1. Drawing Only</b></p> <p>Lines and curves that appear to represent objects. Do not spend a lot of time experimenting for drawing. Have students choose a photograph for their topic and start writing.</p>		
<p><b>2. Scribble Writing</b></p> <p>Continuous marks that appear to represent letters or words. The marks are not clearly defined and do not resemble any specific letters or words. Some marks may be recognizable as letters or words.</p>		
<p><b>3. Letter-like Marks</b></p> <p>Lines and curves that appear to represent letters or words. The marks are clearly defined and resemble specific letters or words. Some marks may be recognizable as letters or words.</p>		

## Examples of Writing Samples Meeting Criteria for Each Level

Level	Typically Developing Writers	Writers with Disabilities
<b>4. Strings of Letters Grouped into "Phonemes"</b> Some letters or two letter groups of letters, but with no multiple words.	ECR66 LEVVC CPE28 WRE6 BRE6	HFF L kiro s pDVO
<b>5. Strings of Letters Grouped into "Words"</b> Only one possible real word, but a few letters or groups of letters may be written separately (e.g., the, dog, dog) or embedded in a string of letters.	MPPCOTAC	Myhunjwhts omuqjvnt Mywllatwvnt
<b>6. Two to Three Different Multiple Words</b> Words written in a string, separated by spaces or other marks, but with no punctuation. Words such as "the" may be separated from the rest of the words by a space or other mark.	A DADON	Lunch Time work
<b>7. More than Three Different Multiple Words in a List Format</b>		Lions Football Dadon Lions The

## Examples of Writing Samples Meeting Criteria for Each Level

Level	Typically Developing Writers	Writers with Disabilities
<p><b>6. More than Three Different Single-Syllable Words</b></p> <p>With at least two of them in a partially formed sentence (i.e., grammatically related parts of a phrase, clause, or sentence).</p>	<p>Ma of HEHA On BRIDGE APRIL 25</p>	<p>Tom car cars red hot. Foster fun cars Mum mum. Cars, blue, yellow blue orange The End</p>
<p><b>8. One to Two Complete Sentences</b></p> <p>With a subject phrase and a verb phrase.</p>	<p>We go going in the big ship to learn A FAO underwater Ma And My Daddy &amp; Play with Maurice</p>	<p>Alan and the Chimpunks They sing and dance</p>
<p><b>10. More than Two Sentences, but with No Cohesive Form</b></p> <p>No cohesive form (i.e., sentences are written, but they are not clearly related).</p>	<p>I play a game. I want to my friend house. I want to get a egg to eat. I want to chunch on Sun day. I kiss my mumer sun day. I can walk my dog. I sat in my house. I want to the sing in ring</p>	<p>Happy Birthday Matthew. I like chocolate please Mum. I have a new school. Am 14. A new pet is a puppies and a dog and a cat and a shirt and a new baby.</p>

## Examples of Writing Samples Meeting Criteria for Each Level

Level	Typically Developing Writers	Writers with Disabilities
<p><b>11. Organized Writing with Three or More Sentences on a Cohesive Topic</b></p> <p>Content criteria between sentences (i.e., sentences can be read without changing meaning)</p>	<p>Frogs are eggs. Frog are cool. I no how a frog grows egg then grow mary. frog eat lot of things but we don't eat the frog. I want a frog to play with. I like frog are numous because they swim.</p>	<p>I love to watch the garbageman to pick up our trash can to. I don't watch the garbage out to my window to. I love to watch the recycling person to get my recycling from my house to.</p>
<p><b>12. Organized Writing with a Cohesive Topic, with Coherent Sentences and Three Sentences or More Sentences on the Topic</b></p> <p>Content criteria between sentences (i.e., sentences can be read without changing the meaning)</p>	<p>On Monday my friend came over my house. We played and we had fun. He said the what house I can up my may.</p>	<p>I Love the movie cars because is my fave movie because Lightning McQueen is on the movie Lightning McQueen get stuck in the dirt, and Lightning McQueen has friends wally and Lightning McQueen goes fast and helps find water.</p>

## Examples of Writing Samples Meeting Criteria for Each Level

Level	Typically Developing Writers	Writers with Disabilities
<p><b>12. Organized Writing with a Cohesive Main Topic and Two Cohesive Subtopics</b>  <b>Subtopics or Story Parts with at Least Two Sentences</b>  <b>Elaborating the Meaning of Each</b></p>	<p>The grill at my house opened up it was outside the pig grill and we were eating that and it was very very very fun to eat. My father when took me to the store of a grill so when we got the grill some words took a while with some the words it was very very very good because we eat food and that was good. I eat my food then I had the order and it was very very very good so I had and the top step of the grill. My friends are and dance was there and I had that a little bit and then I rode my bike bike home and I want to bed and I want to sleep!</p>	<p>My dad got the new iPad it's like a iPod but it's more on big it's really for work but you can work movies and they games I like how it feels it's almost be like you can also work you can also work you can also work you can also work the screen size it's medium size it's also fun to play be cool my dad but it cost 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 hard iPad but if you want to use it's size you can turn the pages around</p>





## Topic Diversity

The Topic Diversity measure is used to quantify the variations in self-selected topics chosen by beginning writers. Because an author's topics (i.e., use of vocabulary or varied topics) can be identified, the ability to identify a student's topic with an accuracy of 80% or higher is a strong indicator of the student's ability to know whether their writing is conveying meaning to the reader and shows use of diverse content chosen over time.

### Purpose of the Measure

- To quantify the variations in self-selected topics chosen by student writers
- To assign each writing sample a topic diversity score
- To measure different types of topics compared across multiple writing samples

### How to Use the Topic Diversity Measurement

1. Review the procedure manual with each user of the measure to determine writing sample
2. What is the main topic or purpose of the writing sample?
3. Label the topic by choosing a key word or phrase that represents the overall goal.
4. If the writer and user do not agree, use the user as your primary source for labeling the topic.
5. If the writer's topic is unrecognizable, label the topic as unclear.
6. If the writer's writing is not for a self-selected topic—such as an unconnected list

## Text Type Diversity

The Text Type Diversity (TTD) of All & Some, 2016 measure quantifies the type and range of texts used by beginning writers. When using this measure to evaluate student writing samples the goal is to identify better writers. For example, if a student writes one in the past tense, it is either a measure general writing or story fiction. The Text Type Diversity measure was designed to capture the 100 text types used by beginning writers. This measure also aids in identifying text types used by students that are in alignment with College and Career Readiness benchmarks.

Each writing sample will be assigned a text type. If there is more than one text type in a writing sample:

- If one text type has more than 50% of the sentences, score as that text type
- If both text types are represented equally, score as the more text type in the sample.

The number of different types of text represented across multiple writing samples will be measured.

### Measurement of the Text Type Diversity

- Each writing sample will be assigned a text type.
- The genre assigned will be the predominant genre used in the sample (greater than 50%).
- The number of different types of text represented across multiple writing samples will be measured.

## Text Type Diversity Measure

Text Type	Form	Function
Expository	Expository	Graphic organizer using a variety of visual models, outlines, writing of letters, or other text forms.
	Letter	Describe elements of a letter.
Argument	Opinion	Express an opinion about a topic or issue.
	Proposal	Explain reasons for an opinion.
	Argument	Use facts to support reasons for an opinion.
Narrative	Dialogue	Describe a single scene or event.
	Plot	Describe a sequence of events or story.
	Procedure	Explain how an event happens.
	Character	Describe the character, appearance or features.
Text	Text	Describe a text.
	Text	Describe a text.
	Text	Describe a text.
Text	Text	Describe a text.

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## Decision Rules for Classifying Text Type

Is it a graphic expression using drawings, pencil marks, scribbles, a string of letters, or letter-like forms?

If yes, it's a drawing.

Are the words focused on the drawing?

If yes, it's a label (e.g., "We are here at the store").

Is the verb in the past tense?

If yes, it's:

- factual writing (e.g., "The dog (barks) went to the store")
- factual account (e.g., "Yesterday (went) to the store")

Is the verb in the future tense?

If yes, it's a plan (e.g., "We (will) go to the store").

Is it about a factual thing written in the present tense?

If yes, it's:

- Describe the attributes of an object, animal, or a character (e.g., "The dog is black and white")
- A description with "being" verb (e.g., "The dog is black")
- Describe a general quality or characteristic of an object, animal, or character (e.g., "Dogs are carnivores")
- Describe an event or action that is occurring (e.g., "The dog is barking")
- Describe an action that is going to occur (e.g., "The dog will bark")
- Express a point of view or a feeling about a thing or event (e.g., "I love my dog")
- Express an opinion about a thing or event (e.g., "I think my dog is smart")
- Explain a cause for an event (e.g., "The dog barks because she is mad")
- The evidence is used to support a claim (e.g., "The dog barks because she is mad")
- Express an argument (e.g., "The dog barks because she is mad, the owner should punish the dog")

Is it about a factual thing written in the past or present?

If yes, it's:

- Explain why an event happened or happened - It's an explanation (e.g., "The dog barked because she is mad")
- A statement about a claim - "I went to the store because I was hungry" OR "I love dogs. They are fun to have."

Is it using carefully chosen words to create meaning or share emotion (may employ word order, connotation, imagery, figures of speech, sound, or rhythm)?

If yes, it's a poem (e.g., "The fish, the fish, the fish, the fish, the fish")

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## Total Intelligent Words and Total Unique Words

Total Intelligent Words—measures two features of writing:

- Overall intelligibility of the student's words
- Writing fluency

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

### Purpose of the Total Intelligent Words Measure

To quantify the number of intelligible words produced by a beginning student writer. This measure shows increases spelling ability, as well as ease of word production, over time.

Use the measurements to tally the total number of correctly written, phonetically spelled words in a writing sample. Intelligible words are defined as words of at least two letters that can be identified as one unique word form.

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

### How to Use the Total Intelligent Words Measurement

This measure is suitable for use by teachers. No special qualifications are required.

Students use the measure on a writing sample—while reading.

Teachers use the measure to report any words you can identify.

Instructions for use are as follows:

1. Read the text. Count the total words as follows: One.
2. Tally total intelligible words based on the intelligible words identified in the paragraphs and text.
3. Average the number of intelligible words across multiple writing samples.

### Research Support

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

—Excerpt from the ICD Model for 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 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 multiple words identified by Reviewers One and Two.
2. Using the list of total multiple words in a student sample, count the number of unique different words within that 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 when a student is using conventional spelling for just all of his or her writing. These measures can be used separately for each mode (print and paper, digital text, keyboard) over during a writing session and summed for an overall total.

### Purpose of the Letter Measures

- Total number of letters to quantify number of letters written or selected
- Total unique letters to quantify number of unique letters written or selected

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

1. Count the number of letters written or selected during a single writing session for each mode across the number of letters used across multiple writing sessions.
2. Average number of letters across multiple writing samples will be quantified.
3. Unique letters or selected across multiple writing samples to identify potential meaningful patterns linked to the student's knowledge.

### Important!

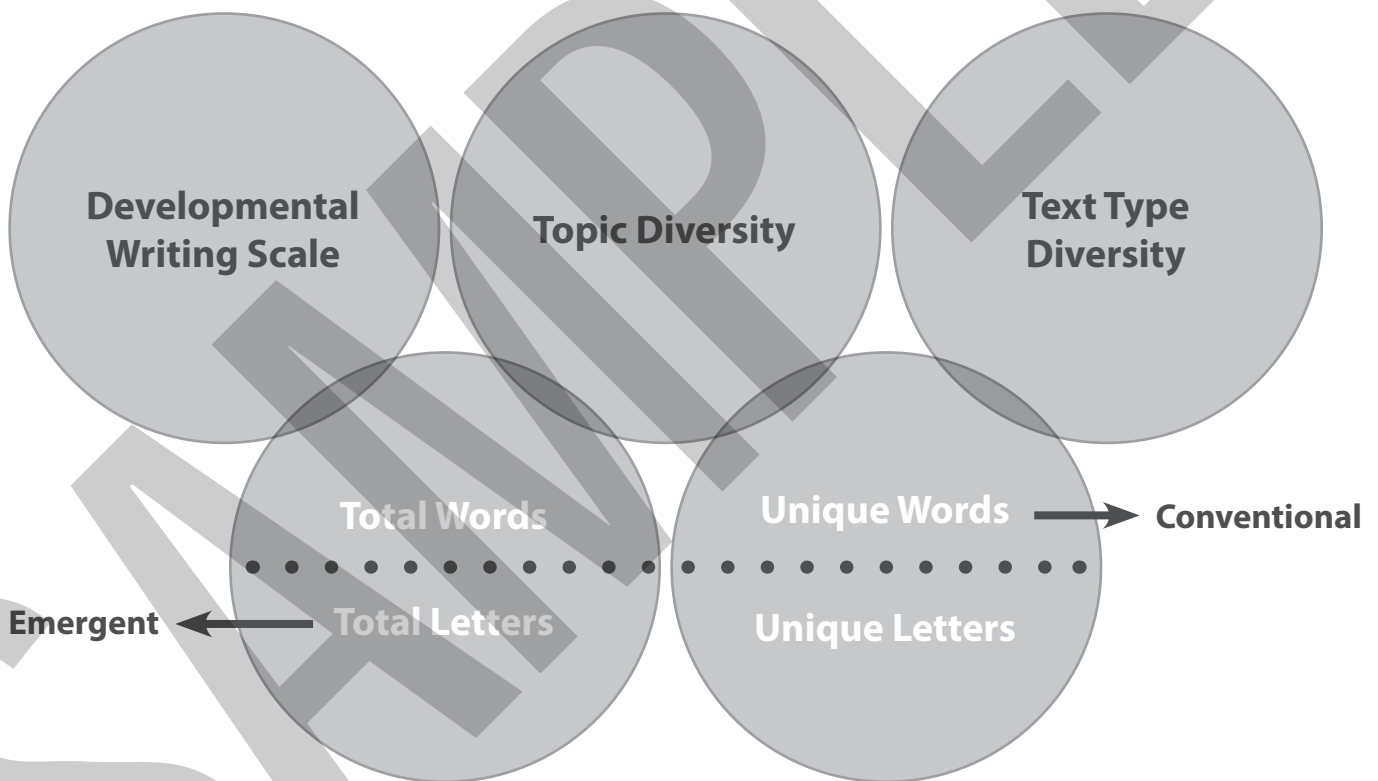
Begin to look for a pattern (i.e., beginning sounds, favorite letters, etc.) Remember children write for a long time.

## 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**.

**Figure 2: Measures for Beginning Writers**



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.

### Important!

First Author Software automates scoring and graphing to save 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.

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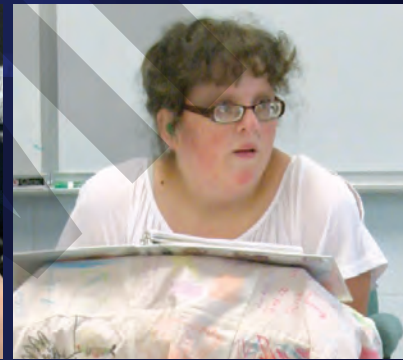
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# MINI-LESSONS



First Author™  
Curriculum



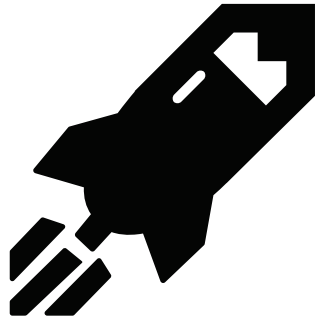
Dr. Janet M. Sturm



SAMPLE



# MINI-LESSONS



## First Author<sup>™</sup> Curriculum

**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



**Say  
First**

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:

**Say**

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!

**Do**

**Hand out** the Say More Tip Sheet.

## Modeling and Guided Practice:

**Say**

Remember, when an Author doesn't write very much we wish that Author would "say more."

➤ 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.

**Show** students the Say More Tip Sheet and **review** the content with students.

**Point to** the "Say More" title on the Tip Sheet.

**Show** each student two photo choices with a single word "label" written below the photos and ask each student to tell you or point to his or her favorite. Be sure to read aloud what you have written so far.

**Keep** a tally, **review** the results, and **share** the winning topic with the group.

**Post** the chosen photo and writing on the board.

➤ 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.

**Share** and **write** all ideas generated on the board.

As you **write**, “think aloud” about what you are doing.

➤ 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.

**Read aloud** the entire product and verbally **praise** students for helping you “say more.”

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

Have students **count aloud** the sentences that were added and **praise** them for the final product.

➤ 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.

**1**

**2**

**3**



# Mini-lesson: Writing Opinions

## Writing Standard:

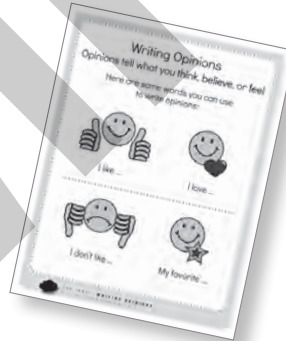
Production and Distribution—Planning and Composition

## 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

**Say  
First**

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.

**Say**

## Modeling and Guided Practice:

**Say**

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?

**Do**

**Hand out** the Writing Opinions Tip Sheet.

**Point to** the words as you say them aloud.

**Show** students the Writing Opinions Tip Sheet and **review** the content with students.

**Encourage** students to contribute verbally or by pointing.

**Write** their ideas on the board.

**Take a poll, record** the votes, and **share** the results aloud with students.

**Point to** the "My favorite" item on the Tip Sheet.

**Write** "vanilla" and "chocolate" on the board and **take a poll**.

**Record** results and **share aloud**.

➤ 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!

**Show** each student two photo choices and **ask** each student to tell you or point to his or her favorite.

**Keep a tally** on the board, **review** the results, and **share** the winning topic with the group.

**Post** the chosen photo and writing on the board.

**Encourage** students to contribute verbally or by pointing to the Tip Sheet.

As you **write**, “think aloud” about what you are doing.

**Encourage** students to contribute verbally or by pointing to the Tip Sheet.

**Share** and **write** all ideas generated on the board. As you **write**, “think aloud” about what you are doing.

When all ideas have been added, **read aloud** the group writing.

# 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 ...





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