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 is 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!”

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.

“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.

But with First Author Writing Measures, real progress is seen ... through small progressions from scribbling to paragraph writing. And that progress helps teachers see exactly where each student is as a writer and informs instruction that guides each student to the next level of writing. The curriculum also guides educators to create standards-based IEP goals!

Included in this Sampler
Sections of the Curriculum Guide to help you become familiar with the philosophy behind this curriculum

Two scripted Mini-lessons with student Tip Sheets

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
First Author Writing Curriculum

Program Components


Mini-lessons
Scripted lessons focus on a target concept for the day, strategy modeling, discussion of goals and purposes (5-15 minutes, 4x/week)

Writing Time
Students write on self-selected topics through a UDL framework featuring accommodation strategies (25-30 minutes, 4x/week)

Author’s Chair
Students share their writing with others and learn to value writing as communication (30-35 minutes, 1x/week)

The curriculum was designed for K-12 students with complex needs including:
- Mild to significant disabilities
- Intellectual disabilities
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Physical disabilities

Age Range
3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18+

Skill Level
Age Level

First Author Writing Software

What is First Author Writing Software?
First Author is a writing software platform that helps students with complex instructional needs write independently on self-selected and curriculum-tied topics. It does so by guiding students through a three-step writing process: choosing a topic, selecting a picture prompt, and writing with the support of built-in accommodations. It also guides teachers through the process of assessing student writings and tracking progress over time.

First Author Writing Software helps teachers bring writing to students planning to take the alternate assessment—the 1 to 3 percent of students with complex instructional needs, including autism. First Author will help you make these students, who were never expected to write, into first-time Authors. The software was developed with Dr. Janet Sturm through an NIH research and development grant.
First Author™
Writing Curriculum

A comprehensive writing curriculum for beginning writers

Dr. Janet M. Sturm

DON JOHNSTON
Acknowledgments

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

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

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

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

**Curriculum Guide**

**Writing Measures**

**Mini-lessons and Tip Sheets**

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

**Posters**

**Sample**
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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).

Student are active participants by:

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

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

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

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

Research Support

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

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

Author’s Chair

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Author Conference**

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

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

---

**Creating a Culture of Writers**

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

- During Mini-lessons, educators use strategies to draw every student in as an active participant, including those with complex communication needs.
- During Writing Time, all students are reminded to “Choose a topic that you want to share in your writing” and “Think about what you want to write and share during Author’s Chair.” Talking with your students using this type of language supports understanding of writing as a form of communication, builds their understanding that people write to share their writing with others, and develops knowledge about writing for specific audiences.
- During Author’s Chair, all aspects of a student’s writing product are shared and praised. For example, a more capable student who has a new topic or text type to share should be praised for this accomplishment. Another student may share a writing product that contains a photo, some scribbles with a pencil, and random letters of the alphabet. Peers and educators might praise this student for choosing a new topic, using their pencil to fill the page with scribbles, or choosing lots of letters of the alphabet to share in his or her writing.
In the *First Author Writing Curriculum* both student peers and the adults in the classroom help celebrate individual student accomplishments in writing as well as speaking and listening. One of the most exciting aspects of the *First Author Writing Curriculum* is watching your students learn and grow. Educators in the classroom will begin to notice the sometimes subtle changes in students (e.g., the student was calm and stayed in the Author’s Chair) in addition to occasional greater leaps forward (e.g., the student wrote his or her first simple sentence or cohesive paragraph).

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

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

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

**Quick Tip**

Have fun referring to your students as “Authors” throughout a writing session. For example, if students are interrupting a student writer, jump in using a fun tone of voice saying, “Don’t interrupt the Author! He has more great ideas to get on his paper.”

Referring to students as Authors who have something important to share builds their self-perceptions as writers.
• Made an on-topic comment and told why they liked their peer’s writing
• Initiated turn-taking by spontaneously raising his hand for the first time
• After praising an Author using a speech generating device, spoke aloud the words (e.g., said, “cool”)
• While in the Author’s Chair, eagerly looked up to see who wanted to make a comment and pointed to the peer

Be Joyful and Fearless

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

Challenge Your Students and Keep Them Safe

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

Old Assumptions and New Perspectives

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Assumptions</th>
<th>New Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumption 1</strong></td>
<td>Students should show prerequisite literacy skills such as letter formation, phonemic or phonological awareness, or sound symbol connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exposure to the alphabet through meaningful writing opportunities facilitates the acquisition of early literacy skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumption 2</strong></td>
<td>Reading skills occur before writing skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Through repeated meaningful writing opportunities, writing skills may be observed in students with significant disabilities before reading skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumption 3</strong></td>
<td>Conventional writing is not possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research has shown that students with significant disabilities can make positive gains in writing when provided with consistent, strategy-based instruction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumption 4</strong></td>
<td>Early writing should be conventional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Typically developing children write hundreds, if not thousands of times before becoming conventional writers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students with complex instructional needs may require even more meaningful opportunities to write.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumption 5</strong></td>
<td>For students with significant disabilities, writing skills will be acquired if we teach them in simple, isolated tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The cognitive, in-the-head process of learning to read and write is the same for all individuals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students with significant disabilities need access to frequent, high-quality, explicit instruction that fosters the central goal of writing—to communicate and share with others through text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumption 6</strong></td>
<td>Older students cannot acquire writing skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adults with significant disabilities who are introduced to systematic writing instruction are developing conventional writing skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Assumptions</td>
<td>New Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **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?
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

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

“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
List of Supplies and Materials

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

Order the supplies listed below.

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

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

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

Student Materials

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

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

- **My Life**—pictures of family members, pets, images of hobbies, and favorite foods

- **My World**—monster trucks, cartoon characters, dinosaurs, favorite TV shows and movies

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

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

Personalize each Author’s Toolkit by:

- Prominently display student’s name on the cover

- Include a “Head Shot” of the Author

- Later invite students to customize their binder covers with images that represent topics they love!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is an exciting time! You have your classroom and student materials prepared and are ready to start. Before you begin teaching your first block 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

Developmental Writing Scale

To take a baseline writing sample, simply ask students to write about anything they would like to discuss. Remember, this is to gather student writing samples to inform instruction. Allow students to write in their journal for 10 to 15 minutes. Then, use the Confidentiality Checklist on page 11 to the right. The checklist can be used to evaluate the level of confidence that students may be sharing personal information. The checklist has been adapted with the permission of the author.

Important!

Additional writing prompts should be taken throughout the year monthly, as opportunities for share growth in writing. Leads to the First Author Writing Measures are found starting on page 22.
Students Profile

It is important to take time to think about the specific writing needs of your students prior to the first lesson. The procedure for Developing Individual Profiles, Lesson Objectives, and Accommodations is detailed in your Teacher Guide and on the Teacher Resource CD. The guide you through considering each student's personal learning profile, including:

- Communication level: beginning or intermediate/advanced
- Students' writing level: beginning or intermediate/advanced
- Communication profile: unaided or aided communication
- Level of Developmental Writing Scale
- Choosing Students Outcomes in Differentiated Instruction Objectives
- Choosing Accommodations

Instructional Strategies

The following are strategies to help all your students to actively participate during the lesson. Writing Time and Ready Writer's Choice are:

- Mini-lessons
  - Recognition and value reading materials, such as poems, stories, novels, magazines, etc.
  - Task analysis:建立 a step-by-step sequence of activities for students to complete
  - Allow the students to be in control of their own learning pace as they want to
  - Differentiation of instruction, e.g., different tasks or how each student learns to write
  - Students' ideas: perhaps the idea of using a personal dictionary or the writing process
  - Mini-lessons are based on classroom observations and research on effective

- Preferences: specific preferences and needs of students
  - Visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners
  - Students' preferences: favorite colors, themes, or styles
  - [Diagram or image of student preferences]

- Ready Writer's Choice
  - Variations: different writing formats, such as narrative, descriptive, or informational
  - Students' choice: choose the format they want to write
  - [Diagram of student choice options]
- Use a variety of positive verbal and physical cues to engage all students in writing.
- Mention what you want them to focus on, and remind them of what you expect them to do.
- Ask, "What have we learned about what _____ is?" Focus on the results and recognize any new insights.
- Ask students what they think they can do next and what they need to practice to improve.
- Offer choices of materials, such as books, magazines, newspapers, or computer programs.
- Help students make inferences for a topic by saying, "Let's pick a topic you're interested in and think about what you want to say about it."
- Encourage students to develop their own ideas by asking questions such as, "What do you think about this?" or "How do you feel about this?"
- Provide feedback on students' ideas by saying, "I like the way you're thinking about this."
- Ask students to share their ideas with the class by saying, "Who would like to share their ideas with the class today?"
- Help students edit and refine their writing by saying, "Look at all the ideas you've chosen to share today. You wrote a lot!"
- "Now, you wrote your first draft. Now, you'll write your final draft.
- "I've seen you write. I've seen you write. You wrote a lot."

**Writing Time**

- Take note of your students' ideas and encourage them to think about their own ideas.
- Ask them to share their ideas with the class by saying, "Who would like to share their ideas with the class today?"
- Help students edit and refine their writing by saying, "Look at all the ideas you've chosen to share today. You wrote a lot!"
Write together with your students, modeling the concept 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 use the sentence starters and ideas together to start writing. Remember you can help them remember ideas about them in relation to a word.

- If you have a classroom, make a portable tool box and use it with word banks, a dictionary, and a thesaurus. You can then expand the words so that if needed.

- When a student is using a line of dialogue to start a writing, read out the sentence and ask them what they think the writer might write.

- On a dry erase board, ask the students to write in the student's writing style, after she has already created an idea of what the student's choices are on the or that writing product of the day.

- Use the students' names in the software e.g., First Author software. Cylindrical writing such as in and under inspiration mapping software such as the student's name in mixed up and using the tools with that

- Ask students to read aloud portions e.g., when a student has clearly indicated a choice of the mouse, the mouse helps them make that selection.
Author's Chair

- Consider having a communication board with photos of all individuals while another person in the classroom who could be chosen to serve 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 work by using a “public voice.” Some students with disabilities may need to use the microphone to exaggerate their writing so they can be heard.
- Help students hold up their writing to share with the group.
- If you are chosen as the reader, share your own writing to the class.
- It’s important to think about things your students have written, such as journals or letters.
- Encourage students to read their own writing, even if only one or two pages are read.
- Use a variety of techniques to help students hear and understand their speaking and writing.
- When reading a poem, it’s helpful to think about when to read and pause.
- Encourage students to think about what they enjoyed the most in the poem.
- Students can recite their work carefully, with pauses and tone changes on the speaker’s turns.
- The talking back 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 listeners when the talking back is present.
• For students who struggle to maintain a topic when making comments to an author provide verbal cues to keep that student on topic. For example, say “Remember __________ write about __________ today. What would you like to tell them?”

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do You ...</th>
<th>Done</th>
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<tr>
<td>Have student profile completed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have baseline writing samples?</td>
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<td>Have your first week of Writer's Workshop outlined?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have student's drafts ready for your first week of Writer's Workshop?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have each student's Author's Toolkit ready with disabled?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have essential communication tools ready for students who require them?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have essential writing tools ready for students who require them?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have an Author's Chat?</td>
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</table>

**Important:**

- It is essential to identify areas of growth and target lessons.
- Teachers and other teachers or colleagues to review feedback.
- Dialogue with an administrator and use the Pre-Post Teaching Checklist to guide the conversation.
- Set aside time to debrief, assess and discuss observations and comments.
- Use the feedback to set reasonable, achievable improvement goals.
Your First 30 Days!

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

Use the first 30 days to:
- Establish routines
- Practically introduce language of writing
- Create a social learning environment
- Clarify all staff roles

Encourage all educational staff to:
- Build students’ perceptions about themselves as writers
- Refer to students as “Authors”
- Verbally praise students for the writing and reading skills
- Require students to be buyers of their work
- Work together to build a community of writing

For additional support, contact First Author or review the First Author Writing Curriculum Guide.
# First 30 Days of Mini-lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Day 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Author Time</td>
<td>Author Time Schedule</td>
<td>Author’s Chair #1</td>
<td>Author’s Chair #2: Decorate to Celebrate</td>
<td>Author’s Chair</td>
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<td>Do you have baseline writing samples from ALL your students?</td>
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<td><strong>Day 6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 8</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 91</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 10</strong></td>
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<td>Brainstorming Topics:</td>
<td>Brainstorming Topics:</td>
<td>Brainstorming Topics:</td>
<td>Places to Get Topics: Internet and Home</td>
<td>Author’s Chair</td>
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<td><em>My Life</em></td>
<td><em>My School</em></td>
<td><em>My World</em></td>
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<td><strong>Day 11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 12</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 14</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Places to Get Topics:</td>
<td>Author’s Conference</td>
<td>Author’s Toolkit #1:</td>
<td>Author’s Toolkit #2: Make It Mine</td>
<td>Author’s Chair</td>
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<td><em>Magazines</em></td>
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<td><em>What Is in My Toolkit?</em></td>
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<td><strong>Day 16</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Day 18</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 19</strong></td>
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<td>The Talking Stick</td>
<td>Author’s Chair Rules:</td>
<td>Author’s Chair Rules:</td>
<td>Author’s Chair Rules: Be a Good Speaker</td>
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<td><em>Be a Good Listener</em></td>
<td><em>Be a Good Listener</em></td>
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<td><strong>Day 21</strong></td>
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<td>Author’s Chair Rules:</td>
<td>Giving Feedback: Ways to Praise</td>
<td>Giving Feedback: Making</td>
<td>Giving Feedback: Telling Why</td>
<td>Author’s Chair</td>
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<td><em>Be a Good Speaker</em></td>
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<td>Comments</td>
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<td><strong>Day 26</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 27</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 28</strong></td>
<td><strong>Day 29</strong></td>
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<td>Say More</td>
<td>Fearless Speller #1</td>
<td>Fearless Speller #2</td>
<td>How We Write</td>
<td>Author’s Chair</td>
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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
Successful Strategies for Adults

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.

Important!

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
Set Writing Goals with Students

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

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

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

In the Writing Lab Approach (Nelson, Bahr, & Van Meter, 2004), the authors describe how educators can use assessment results to help students set goals in their own language, with adult guidance. This collaborative approach fosters student ownership of learning goals. An educator working with an individual student to help establish writing goals begins the conversation by saying “I’ve been looking at your writing. I’ve got some ideas to help you get better. I think a good goal for you would be to __________.”

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

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

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

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

First Author Writing Curriculum has tips in each lesson 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 adapt your next three lessons.

Important!

The research has shown that typically developing third-graders, as well as students with special needs, can benefit from instructional strategies that promote the development of their writing abilities. Here are some key findings:

- Third-grade students are more likely to produce personal narratives (e.g., "My best trip")
- Third-grade students are more likely to write about something they know (e.g., "I love my dog")
- Third-grade students are more likely to write about something they have experienced (e.g., "My trip to a theme park")

What is notable in the research is that the benefits are greater when the writers feel their voice is being heard. How do you do this? First, ask students what they think about their writing. Second, model and discuss writing ideas. Third, provide feedback on what you like and what needs improvement. Fourth, celebrate students’ achievements and successes.

When implementing the First Author Writing Curriculum, use the research to guide your support of writing abilities. For first graders, focus on the development of basic writing skills and provide extensive modeling of the writing process. For second graders, focus on the development of more advanced writing skills and provide opportunities for self-editing and peer review. For third graders, focus on the development of advanced writing skills and provide opportunities for students to work independently and collaboratively.

Cathy Chumac 2018

The First Author Writing Curriculum focuses on building reading and writing skills in students. The curriculum is designed to help students develop the ability to think critically, express their ideas clearly, and communicate effectively with others. The lessons are structured to provide a balance of direct instruction and active engagement, allowing students to practice and apply their skills in a variety of contexts. The curriculum is designed to be adaptable to meet the needs of students with diverse backgrounds and abilities.
Other classrooms will be ready to focus on more advanced speaking and listening skills and target lessons that focus on a 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 in the writing (cohesion and coherence)

When introducing lessons on text types and organization, consider using other topic based units that are motivating to real audiences. For your instructional group, the next steps should be:

- We focus on helping students to participate in choosing a topic and to begin writing a draft to be included in a collaborative writing activity. An example of this may involve students choosing a topic related to their classroom activities.
Celebrate by Sharing at School and at Home

Build positive student self-perceptions and create a strong sense of audience by having students share their work outside of the classroom setting. Students can choose their best writing for the week and share it with someone special to them (e.g., a teacher, a principal, or a paraprofessional). They can create a personal poster or handout with photos of themselves and their writing displayed on it. This can be shared with a parent, a family member, a teacher, or a principal. It is also a great way to celebrate student writing accomplishments and share in the school's success. Others can help the student with a pitch for how they can be held accountable by the community. This can be a great way to encourage writing by making it relevant to the students. The same activity can be repeated with both new learning and by reteaching students that their learning has importance to their family and community. They might make a personal poster or handout with important people in their family and community (e.g., Grandpa, Grandma, teacher, coach, neighbor, etc.) and share the poster or handout with a parent, teacher, or principal. This can be a great way to celebrate student writing and share it with others.
Celebrate by Publishing Student Work

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

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

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

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

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

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

Host a “Meet the Author” Celebration

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

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

Prior to the event, have students:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In a middle school special education classroom, one student with autism began her time as an Author by drawing daisies for her topic each day. She appeared to have lots of anxiety about doing so, and would spend time sitting under her desk. As she became more comfortable, this student participated together with her peers as they all shared their work during Author’s Chair. Her peers were writing at a higher level, and the Author’s Chair was a time where she saw what was possible as an Author. Over time she began to write lists about nature, and her peers and the educational staff gave her lots of praise for her gains. By the end of the school year, this student had not only progressed into writing paragraphs about nature and about cartoons, but she had also become an active communicator with her peers during Author’s Chair. She was incredibly proud of her writing and her speaking and listening accomplishments!
### Student Barriers | Possible Solutions
---|---
**Does not initiate**
- Provide consistent, subtle verbal encouragement for the student to take a turn (provide positive input for any forms of initiation).
- Cue the student by verbally reminding him or her that the Talking Stick is available for turn-taking. When providing the verbal cue, show the Talking Stick.
- Provide extensive praise when the student takes a turn. You can reference the student author who was on the receiving end of the comment. For example, you might say, “<student> just thought your work was really amazing! He told you three times!”

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

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

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

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Barriers</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Uses the exact same comment with each Author                                     | • As the student is handed the Talking Stick, make sure he has the Tip Sheet for making comments (i.e., offering five choices) in front of him.  
• Provide verbal cues, reviewing the five comment choices (e.g., *I liked your topic,* 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Barriers</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Uses inventive spelling with no spaces                                          | • Provide verbal cues to the student, reminding him or her that Authors use spaces to separate words.  
• Offer the student models of inventive spelling with spaces using a “think-aloud” as you write (e.g., on a word processor or a laminated alphabet board that contains a “space bar”)  
• Be sure to provide these models and “think-alouds” before or after the student writes. Don’t provide the model on the student’s writing product! |
| Uses inventive spelling with spaces but no words                                | • Provide the student models and think-alouds” showing how you sound out words in your head and spell them using a word processor or alphabet board.  
 • In your cues, emphasize the first and last letters of words (developmentally, they are the first to occur).  
• Be sure to provide modeling before or after the student writes. Don’t provide the model on the student’s writing product!  
• Provide the student with extensive verbal praise for writing his or first recognizable words. Celebrate this achievement during writing and during Author’s Chair.  
• Again, if a student lacks confidence with spelling and continually asks if he or she is spelling the word correctly, say, “I can totally tell what word you are writing. Nice job!” |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Barriers</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing only in phrases</td>
<td>• Offer the student models and think-alouds” showing how you think of ideas in your head, say them aloud, and then write a sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As you model, mention how sentences start with a capital and end with punctuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide the student with a Tip Sheet showing word combinations used to write a specific text type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writes about only one or two topics</td>
<td>• 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).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify photo images for topics and offer multiple options at the onset of each writing session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writes only one or two text types</td>
<td>• Just prior to writing time, provide verbal cues about the possible text types the student might choose for a given topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writes coherent, but not cohesive, text</td>
<td>• Just prior to writing time, provide verbal cues about the possible text types the student might choose for a given topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(multiple sentences on one topic that can be reordered)</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Model how you would use cohesive words for different text types.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 is connected to multiple modes of thinking. This involves a visual and auditory representation of content that supports comprehension. For example, content shown verbally by the teacher is also presented in multiple modalities. For example, (Pie charts contain text and a photo image)

Provide Options for Language, Mathematical Support, and Symbols
Multiple tools for expression are supported through digital assistants such as a computer with speech generating devices, and auditory therapy. To ensure "voice" is heard.

This curriculum explicitly teaches the process of students presenting their work.

If students cannot utilize visual images due to handwriting issues, motivational tools to think objects of auditory choice presented in particular format existing in the support of written logic choices.

Provide Options for Communication
Instruction is enhanced by supportive communication tools and activating verbal knowledge. For example, students can use prompts and students operating on audio-based content in students with communication impairments. Students can connect with other students through the use of the computer or the web to support the understanding of students with communication impairments.

In addition, color coding and data processing are also supported in multiple ways.

- Writing prompts can be used to instruct students to construct and describe text (e.g., with a list of words)
- Guiding students to use writing to construct and describe text as they read
- Writing prompts can be used to teach key concepts (e.g., good listening)
- Writing prompts can be used to teach key concepts (e.g., good writing)

The content of the prompts is modified during Afternoon activities during their writing time.
Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression
(The “How” of Learning)

Physical Action
When supporting communication, methods of responding are used, provide visual and auditory cues, and support multiple modality systems. Plan no models and representations, and provide communication looks across all components of instruction.

Expression and Communication
During writing, students are provided multiple tools for constructing and composing through visual, auditory, and written materials. Students are supported in their self-exploration to share, express, and communicate their ideas. It is important to understand and encourage students to share their ideas, thoughts, and feelings with others. It is also important to support students in the development of their writing levels and support, and often writing is not shared with others.

Executive Function
Writing and communicating zur are important skills for all students. When students are provided with the right tools and guidance, they can grow and develop their executive function. When goals are met, they are more likely to be successful in their future careers.

Support components of executive function can be provided through situational cues. For example, during writing time, students may be given time to organize their ideas before they begin writing. This allows students to break down the task into smaller, more manageable parts. Students may also be given time to practice writing their ideas before they begin writing. This allows students to practice their skills in a controlled environment.

SAMPLE
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.

Relevance for each student is fostered by having personally motivating and interesting topics available.

Word choice for augmentation and alternative communication (e.g., sign language) is chosen to be used by students for their classroom exchanges during writing instruction and to be writing for students in real life (e.g., providing an outline by saying “necessary”)

Sustain Effort and Persistence
All students are shown to an audience to ensure that they can write in a diverse writing community and to promote their efforts.

Student motivation is fostered by having them write for a purpose and share their writing in multiple ways (e.g., author’s chair, author’s notes, and feedback from peers).

Student interest is fostered by having them write in a variety of ways (e.g., narrative, descriptive, persuasive, informational) and hand them in multiple drafts and looks that report their efforts of mastering language and idea writing during the teaching process.

Students have opportunities to respond to various ways of students’ writing (e.g., during their classes, during their classes, during their classes).

Sustained effort and persistence require teachers and students to increase students’ sustained effort.

Self-regulation
In order to assist students in regulating their own thinking and writing, teachers should emphasize to students how to use the feedback and to establish students’ awareness of their personal thought processes. Teachers should use self-monitoring and success and students to establish students’ ability to use feedback and to establish students’ ability to use feedback and self-assessment as learning tools to support self-monitoring and success and students to establish students’ ability to use feedback and self-assessment as learning tools to support self-monitoring and success and establish students’ ability to use feedback and self-assessment as learning tools to support self-monitoring and success.
Accommodations for Independence

Identify How Each Student Will Write

Every student, especially those who are beginning writers, needs some form of access to drawing and writing. Some students will be able to sketch or draw their ideas to help them understand the text, while many others will have text or primary source that are important to read along with the story. It is important to have a plan for how to use these accommodations. The lesson emphasis can be set using five different accommodation technologies.

1. **Beginning Writer**
   - Students who need additional support in writing, especially those who are in the beginning stage.

2. **Intermediate/Advanced Writer**
   - Students who need additional support in writing, especially those who are in the intermediate or advanced stage.

Students who need additional support to write, are typically classified as beginning writers. This includes students who are in the intermediate or advanced level. These students benefit from the use of accommodations for their writing.

Here are a few questions to guide your thinking:

- Can students write a recognizable drawing?
- Can students write a basic sentence and spell correctly?
- Can students read out loud?
- Can students use a traditional keyboard and mouse?

If you answered “yes” to any of the first three questions and “no” to the final question, they will benefit from additional support.

Extra accommodations provide ease of access to writing, orthography, and using tools for students who do not have significant motor or sensory needs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Essential Accommodations</th>
<th>Examples of No-Tech Options</th>
<th>Examples of Assistive Software</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOLdiders – Paragraph Writers</td>
<td>Drawing Photos</td>
<td>Multiple images from home, online, internet, photographs on digital</td>
<td>VoiceWriter, Read &amp; Write, Mathematics software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alphabet</td>
<td>Language for dyslexics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Word Writers – Sentence</td>
<td>Word Banks</td>
<td>Spellchecker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced word editing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Writers – Paragraph</td>
<td>Word Processor</td>
<td>Creative writing software</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Easy Reader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Sentence Writers –</td>
<td>LCD Writing software</td>
<td>Test specific pens for graphic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph Writers</td>
<td></td>
<td>organization</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify Each Student’s “Writing” Tool

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

For a picture card that may be used with students who are emerging beginning writers
(See Davis and Smith, 2013). Using the picture card board; an adult introduces the writing
through word choice (labels) to descriptive words on a dry erase board. Adult reads
these words and asks students if they would like to draw the word. 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, form, puzzle, and alphabet boards. The data worked on the writing sample is considered a communicative choice the student did not write is made by the student, while the letter is shaped and colored, it is not measurable on the Developmental Writing Scale located on pages 83-102.

A final creative option is to consider is to have the student use lower than an elementary level using the alphabet to inventively spell out. The first figure defines the option for the student a beginning overarching artist was presented with letter ideas. In this activity, students choose and glue the letters onto the page.

In a later activity, we see a second image shown, the student chose a photo, used a recording device, and was given letter ideas. He was also offered the dry erase board, but did not seem to choose any words that day. Again, he independently chose and glued each letter on the page.
Notice the change in overall quantity of lessons he wanted to share? During Author’s Chat his interactive speaking was celebrated. Every story was read aloud, and verbal praise was given for writing less of lessons to share that day.

Students who are beginning conversational writers also benefit from graphic supports. Phonics are increasingly personal and continuously increase toward proficiency. Graphic organizers are needed and for some students with moderate cognitive issues it is extremely helpful to use word prediction software such as CoWriter. As these students are beginning to learn how to read more complex words, it can support the development of students and their writing, and in turn that writing ability. The introduction of word prediction can significantly increase confidence and independence as a writer.


disabilities accommodations

Students who have a disability or whose needs require more specialized tools and accommodations can benefit from graphic organizers. These students will need not only specialized tools to support their writing but also specialized accommodations that allow for access to writing. The following table provides examples of specialized accommodations that can support students with physical or sensory needs in gaining access to writing.
### Specialized Writing Accommodations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hand scripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized keyboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-screen keyboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative mouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head position in seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large print editions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text enlargement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color encoded rcaq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet by chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille dictation by chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille controller</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NOTE: The final four items in the above list are available through the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies - Umpqua Community College.

### Identify How Each Student Will Communicate

The development of self-advocacy and learning skills is embedded throughout the writing curriculum. Every student needs to be able to advocate for themselves and communicate any specific accommodations that support their learning. Students will attend multiple sessions to familiarize themselves with a range of communication tools and devices. Each student will select the one that best supports their learning style. Students with visual impairments, for example, may choose to use a Braille display. Students with hearing impairments may use sign language or cochlear implants. Students with learning disabilities may benefit from the use of a Scribe. The use of these accommodations should be supported by the writing teacher. For example, a student with high functioning autism may benefit from the use of a computer with software that provides prompts and feedback. The teacher should ensure that the student understands how to use the software and provide any necessary support. The teacher should also ensure that the student understands the software is not meant to be a substitute for the teacher's guidance. The teacher should also ensure that the student understands the software is not meant to be a substitute for the teacher's guidance. The teacher should also ensure that the student understands the software is not meant to be a substitute for the teacher's guidance. The teacher should also ensure that the student understands the software is not meant to be a substitute for the teacher's guidance. The teacher should also ensure that the student understands the software is not meant to be a substitute for the teacher's guidance.
The goal for these students is to maximize their language skills by providing cues and models for them to learn the language and to promote their social development. Students may benefit from providing various scaffolding strategies that help them acquire knowledge and information. This approach can be used as a motivating environment to foster engagement and improve students’ confidence. By providing the students with the necessary support and guidance, they can gradually develop their language and communication skills.

Other students may have difficulty using words appropriately due to various reasons. The curriculum includes activities that encourage students to use visual aids and to engage in concrete experiences. The activities that are undertaken include functional listening, speaking, and writing tasks. The students are encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas. The activities are designed to help students understand and use language in different contexts.

Recently, the students have found it beneficial to use the writing samples that were provided to them. They have found that it helps them to think back and reflect on their writing. They have also found that it helps them to focus on their writing. The students have found that it helps them to think about their writing. They have found that it helps them to think about their writing. They have found that it helps them to think about their writing. They have found that it helps them to think about their writing.

Other students may need additional support in communication. Students who are classified as beginning communicators may need additional support to communicate. They may need to be provided with additional support to communicate. They may need to be provided with additional support to communicate. They may need to be provided with additional support to communicate. They may need to be provided with additional support to communicate.
Now think further about your students using these four questions:

- Is your student able to use words spontaneously to communicate like other peers during classroom discussions? Is your student’s speech 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 student(s), they will benefit from essential and specialized accommodations. Essential accommodations provide ease of access to a range of communication options allowing easier access and alternative communication tools.

The following table can be used as a tool to track how well your student(s) might need essential accommodations. Help students explore and experience interactions in ways that they are able to be successful with. The “essential” accommodations should be used to ensure success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Functions</th>
<th>Adult Communication</th>
<th>Pictographic Symbols or Symbol Displays</th>
<th>Speech Generating Devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a Choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give Thanks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologize</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multiple research and high-risk tasks, as well as adult roles, can be used to help students successfully participate in these communication functions. Adults can provide physical or verbal clues to remind the students to stay their hands or make eye contact. High-interest activities can be used multiple ways for example, as high interest, which might be commonly used to support students in asking for help or to introduce a concept. Students can also be used to help share ideas or lead conversations and discussions. Communication sections that allow students to communicate and interact with others is also important.

Idea for Additional Communication Boards

Things We All Know About

Representing topics students may all know about (e.g., history, science, etc.)

Pop Culture Topics

Representing topics students may all be interested in (e.g., pop culture)

Places to Get Info

Representing topics students may be interested in (e.g., places, images, magazines)

Choose a Reader

Representing topics students may be interested in (e.g., reading)

The Things We All Know About: Communication Boards are used to support students during periods of learning and providing accurate information. When using these boards, all students can contribute to the group's progress, contributing ideas for the group.

The Places to Get Info: Communication Boards are used to support students during periods of learning and providing accurate information. This board is based on the teacher's knowledge of the students and the topics they are interested in.

The Choose a Reader: Communication Boards are used to support students during periods of learning and providing accurate information. This board is based on the teacher's knowledge of the students and the topics they are interested in.

First Author Writing Curriculum Guide
Identify Instructional Supports for Each Student

As you identify supports, it is important to determine the type and amount of support needed to allow a student to be successful. Students with memory or more needs may require more sophisticated tools and accommodations to communicate. It is essential that students not only understand tasks but also have the ability to set goals and self-monitor. Teachers need to communicate the potential role of each student, the responsibilities of the teacher, and the specific accommodations that may be needed to ensure students are on the road to success.

Accommodations - Involve Students in Decision-Making

As you prepare for accommodations, remember that students are often the best source of information about their needs. By engaging them in the planning process, they can help you identify the most effective strategies. It is crucial to involve students in the decision-making process so that they feel empowered and invested in their learning. This can enhance their motivation and increase their ability to succeed.

As you implement the First Author Writing Curriculum, make sure that your students are given the opportunity to communicate and express their ideas effectively. This will help them overcome any ongoing barriers. Additionally, the curriculum is designed to engage students 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:

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

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*First Author Writing Curriculum Guide*
Standards-Based IEP Goals

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

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

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

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

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 knowledgable of the First Author Writing Measures (located in the Assessment section, starting on page 81).
An IEP Goal Non-Example

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kraz Anems

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Quantity and Quality Measure</th>
<th>Outcome Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Writing Scale</td>
<td>Level 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Intelligible Words</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Unique Words</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Diversity</td>
<td>Acting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Type Diversity</td>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By Michael W
May 16, 2013

I become famous

million fans

I want be famous actor. I will act
Michael continues to express himself using different topics and text types. While this sample is not as long as the previous one, the Text Type Diversity classification would be persuasion because of his complex sentence including his reason why he likes Gravedigger.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EE.W.9-10.2.c</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE.W.9-10.1</td>
<td>By the end of the school year, Michael will compose persuasive text during writing time, examined using the Text Type Diversity measure, on ten occasions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Examples of Goals for Writing and Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Quantity and Quality Measures</th>
<th>Common Core State Standard (CCSS)</th>
<th>Alternate Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developmental Writing Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will improve their writing based on a range of measures that can be included in writing folders and provide evidence that a range of skills have been mastered. A specific grade-level standard that is assessable in writing to a range of choices as measured by document writing metrics.</td>
<td><strong>RI 5.3</strong> Write informative/explanatory text to examine and convey ways of thinking, values, and information through description, narrative, and other modes of writing.</td>
<td><strong>IA-5-3</strong> Write informative/explanatory text to examine and convey ways of thinking, values, and information through description, narrative, and other modes of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RI 5.4</strong> Produce clear and coherent writing, in which the development, organization, and information are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td><strong>IA-5-4</strong> Produce writing that is appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RI 5.5</strong> Cite specific evidence when writing to support conclusions, generalizations, or arguments.</td>
<td><strong>IA-5-5</strong> Cite specific evidence when writing to support conclusions, generalizations, or arguments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RI 5.6</strong> Use varied句式 and sentence structures to develop the content of writing.</td>
<td><strong>IA-5-6</strong> Use varied sentence structures to develop the content of writing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RI 5.7</strong> Conclude writing with a final thought that follows from or supports the narrative, explanation, or argument.</td>
<td><strong>IA-5-7</strong> Conclude writing with a final thought that follows from or supports the narrative, explanation, or argument.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RI 5.8</strong> Use transitions effectively to link thoughts in a logical sequence.</td>
<td><strong>IA-5-8</strong> Use transitions effectively to link thoughts in a logical sequence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **RI 5.9** Use师傅式measures to add anKevinD.12

**First Author Writing Curriculum Guide**

71
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Quantity and Quality Measures — Example IEP Goals</th>
<th>Common Core State Standard (CCSS)</th>
<th>Alternate Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test Type Diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will compose at least three essays and types of work, in each of the following categories:</td>
<td>M3.10.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M3.10.2 Write informative explanatory texts to convey and explain complex ideas, concepts, and information, and effectively use the elements of conventions, organization, and clearly express ideas and information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M3.10.3 Write reflection in a journal or other medium to consider the ideas and evidence presented in texts and to develop ideas and questions for research or further reading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S7.E.2 Write in diverse contexts, supported by details.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S5.E.4.5 Write about events, in personal experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Intelligible Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will have written at least three essays and types of work, in each of the following categories:</td>
<td>S7.E.1 Demonstrate understanding of conventions of standard English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S7.E.2 Cite evidence, model, and discuss complex ideas, concepts, and information, and effectively use the elements of conventions, organization, and clearly express ideas and information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S7.E.3 Toward the end of the school year, students write and discuss complex ideas, concepts, and information, and effectively use the elements of conventions, organization, and clearly express ideas and information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S7.E.4.5 Toward the end of the school year, students write and discuss complex ideas, concepts, and information, and effectively use the elements of conventions, organization, and clearly express ideas and information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Additional Measures vs. Measurable Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Measures</th>
<th>Measurable Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Letters</td>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will increase the total number of letters in a writing sample. A goal might be, “Students will increase the total number of letters by an average of _______.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Unique Letters</td>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will increase the total number of unique letters in a writing sample. A goal might be, “Students will increase the total number of unique letters by an average of _______.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Writer Survey of Writing Attitudes and Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will increase a measure of writing attitudes and self-efficacy. A goal might be, “Students will increase writing attitudes and self-efficacy by an average of _______.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Examples of Goals for Speaking and Listening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking and Listening Example IEP Goals</th>
<th>Common Core State Standard (CCSS)</th>
<th>Alternate Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating and Contributing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will participate in collaborative discussions to develop and convey their ideas and concerns through speaking and listening. A goal might be, “Students will participate in collaborative discussions to develop and convey their ideas and concerns through speaking and listening by an average of _______.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**SAMPLE**
### Speaking and Listening—Example IEP Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiating and Commenting</th>
<th>Common Core State Standard (CCSS)</th>
<th>Alternate Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating and Commenting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the school year, students will be able to produce four different questions or comments about different topics or events throughout the school day. This will be measured in their accounts, writing, and listening.</td>
<td><strong>SL.8.9-10.W.1</strong> Engage in collaborative discussions, raising and SEL then self-select a role for discussion.</td>
<td><strong>NL.8.9-10.W.1</strong> Engage in collaborative discussions, raising and SEL then self-select a role for discussion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level of Performance

1. No eye contact
2. Can make eye contact
3. Can maintain eye contact

By the end of the school year, students will be able to maintain eye contact with each other and the teacher during collaborative activities and group discussions. This will be measured in their accounts, writing, and listening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Level of Performance</strong></th>
<th><strong>Common Core State Standard (CCSS)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Alternate Standard</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No eye contact</td>
<td><strong>SL.8.9-10.W.1</strong> Engage in collaborative discussions, raising and SEL then self-select a role for discussion.</td>
<td><strong>NL.8.9-10.W.1</strong> Engage in collaborative discussions, raising and SEL then self-select a role for discussion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>First Author Writing Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Recommendation 1 | Provide daily time for students to write.  
| Is designed for daily instruction that provides repetition with variety, fosters student independence and supports gains in writing, as well as speaking and listening. |
| Recommendation 2 | Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.  
| • Teaches students strategies for planning, composing, revising, and sharing.  
| • Uses principles of strategy instruction to teach students explicit skills used by skilled writers and systematically guide students toward independence over time.  
| • Provides explicit instruction in a range of text types used across curricular areas through teacher models and collaborative writing.  
| • Provides students with instructional scaffolds that support them in composing a variety of genres. |
| Recommendation 3 | Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.  
| • Supports students in fluent construction of text by offering them multiple modalities (e.g., traditional tools such as pencils and pens, alphabet boards, standard keyboards, alternative keyboards) to communicate in writing with ease  
| • Includes Mini-lessons that provide models and strategies for spelling and writing in sentences. |
| Recommendation 4 | Create an engaged community of writers.  
| • Emphasizes a process-based approach where everyone is viewed as an author and a writing community is created in every classroom.  
| • Facilitates intrinsic motivation to write through student choice (e.g., self-selected topics) and by creating an environment where students write for authentic purposes, collaborate and share that writing with others, and publish their written work.  
| • Fosters engaging and authentic purpose for writing and sharing
### Text Types and Purposes

Provides beginning writers with opportunities to write opinion texts (e.g., reader response and topic response), informative/explanatory texts, and narrative texts (real and imagined) of increasing sophistication. For example, students are taught to:
- Use more sophisticated text structures and content
- List reasons
- Use linking words and phrases
- Include facts and details

### Production and Distribution of Writing

- Offers research and writing projects to engage in procedural, “how-to” writing.
- Provides lessons that offer students models and strategies for producing clear and cohesive writing.
- Affords the opportunity for students to create text via technology (e.g., First Author Writing Software mirrors a process-based writing environment).

### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Build knowledge of a topic through research projects:
- Draw information from students’ personal experiences
- Collect information from multiple sources (print and media)
- Draw evidence from literary and expository text.

### Range of Writing

- Write daily for both short and extended time periods.
- Write across disciplines and for a range of audiences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCSS for Speaking and Listening</th>
<th>Examples of Application in the First Author Writing Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Comprehension and Collaboration** | • Mini-lessons provide repeated opportunities to participate in collaborative discussions with a range of partners (e.g., peers, educational staff, and family and community members).  
  • Author’s Chair and Mini-lessons facilitate development of agreed-upon rules for discussions through lessons that explicitly target communication skills.  
  • Targets development of a range of communicative functions (initiating, asking and answering questions, making statements and comments)  
  • Affords students authentic experiences to communicate about specific topics (e.g., the author’s writing topic), link comments to the previous speaker’s remarks, and maintain that topic across multiple exchanges using appropriate elaboration and detail. |

| **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas** | • All components of the curriculum (Mini-lessons, Writing Time, and Author’s Chair) support students in reporting on topics or text, telling stories, and/or recounting experiences.  
  • During classroom interactions, students have repeated opportunities to speak in sentences specific to the task and use formal and informal forms of discourse.  
  • Offers students accommodations that add an auditory component (i.e., text reader) and visual displays (i.e., photo images) that enhance the student’s writing topic. |

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

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

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

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

Best Regards,
Janet
Assessing Student Skills

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

**Research Support**

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

Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012

**First Author Writing Measures**

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

The First Author Writing Measures were designed to assess both writing quantity and quality. They are created to improve upon existing assessment tools through comprehensive, sensitive measurement using clearly-defined constructs.

The First Author Writing Measures were developed to accomplish five key purposes. These purposes were originally proposed for the Developmental Writing Scale (Sturm, Cali, Nelson, & Staskowski, 2012) but were expanded upon to show how each of the purposes applies to the First Author Writing Measures.

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

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

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

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

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

The Developmental Writing Scale (DWS) is a writing quality measure that helps assess a student's conceptual understanding of written language and determine their gross linguistic and communication strengths observed in the written language of young learners. The DWS assists educators in identifying additional needs and helps in designing effective strategies to address these needs. The Scale is designed to be used at the preschool through the third grade levels of any age and can be used to monitor progress across these levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>Shows the child's ability to represent a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Scribbling</td>
<td>Shows written or typed strings of letters, but not grouped into words, e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Letter Strings</td>
<td>Shows strings of letters grouped into &quot;words&quot;, e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Letter Strings (grouped in words)</td>
<td>Shows strings of letters grouped into &quot;words&quot;, e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No intelligible word</td>
<td>Shows strings of letters grouped into &quot;words&quot;, e.g.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Developmental Writing Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Two to three intelligible words</td>
<td>This is the lowest attainable level in writing. It is a very simple sentence that does not make sense. It usually contains the same word more than once. Example: I am a boy. I want to play. I go to school. I like to eat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Three or more different intelligible words in a list</td>
<td>Sentences become a little longer and can be more complex. Example: I have a friend. I go to school. I like to eat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Partial sentence of more than three words</td>
<td>Sentences are still not complete and do not make sense. Example: I go to school today. I am happy. I want to play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>One to two complete sentences</td>
<td>Sentences are longer and more complex. Example: I go to school today. I like to play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Three or more complete sentences</td>
<td>Sentences are longer and more complex. Example: I go to school today. I like to play. I go to the park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Three or more unrelated sentences</td>
<td>Sentences are even longer and more complex. Example: I go to school today. I like to play. I go to the park. I go to the beach.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Developmental Writing Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Three or more related sentences</td>
<td>Organized writing with a coherent topic sentence. The writer effectively develops a clear and focused point. The writing is well-organized, with a logical flow of ideas. Paragraphs are coherent and transitions are used effectively to connect ideas. The writer shows the ability to plan and organize writing. Example on page 52.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Three or more related sentences that cannot be renumbered</td>
<td>Organized writing, with a coherent topic sentence. The writer effectively develops a clear and focused point. The writing is well-organized, with a logical flow of ideas. Paragraphs are coherent and transitions are used effectively to connect ideas. The writer shows the ability to plan and organize writing. Example on page 52.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Two or more related paragraphs of at least three sentences each</td>
<td>Organized writing with a coherent topic sentence. The writer effectively develops a clear and focused point. The writing is well-organized, with a logical flow of ideas. Paragraphs are coherent and transitions are used effectively to connect ideas. The writer shows the ability to plan and organize writing. Example on page 52.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Two or more related paragraphs of at least three sentences each</td>
<td>Organized writing with a coherent topic sentence. The writer effectively develops a clear and focused point. The writing is well-organized, with a logical flow of ideas. Paragraphs are coherent and transitions are used effectively to connect ideas. The writer shows the ability to plan and organize writing. Example on page 52.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawings</td>
<td>A line drawing or graphic representation of an object, person, or place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scribbles</td>
<td>A series of circles or continuous lines drawing on a surface directionless.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter-like forms</td>
<td>One or more forms representing a word, name, product, a certain substance, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>A unit of language, capable of standing alone, or joining others to form sentences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially formal sentence</td>
<td>An arrangement of words that appears to stand by itself grammatically as a part of a sentence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete sentence</td>
<td>A unit of meaning expressed grammatically with a noun or verb and the necessary punctuation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Sentences are organized and sequenced according to the importance of the ideas that are contained.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>Sentence to sentence language connections made by using cohesive devices such as pronouns, topic shifters, topic clitics, and transitional elements that relate to give context. A test of cohesion is that sentence cannot be understood without changing the meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>A central idea remains or logic maintained across multiple sentences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Typically Developing Writers</th>
<th>Criteria for Writing Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Drawing Only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Scribble Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Letter-like Symbols</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Drawing Only**
   - Lines and circles that appear to represent objects.
   - No regard or use of lines accommodating for drawing.
   - Some students choose a photograph for their topic and start writing.

2. **Scribble Writing**
   - Continuous scribbling with no regard for spacing between words or for keeping ideas in the lines.
   - May include words.
   - Some students may write a line or two, but the majority of it is not readable at all.

3. **Letter-like Symbols**
   - Letters that are not recognizable for writing.
   - Writing that appears to be a decorative design but not a word.
   - Some students represent a word or sentence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Typically Developing Writers</th>
<th>Writers with Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Strings of Letters Grouped into &quot;Phonograms&quot;</td>
<td>EOCRiko EIVRC CPRLG WITE BITEko</td>
<td>Hya L JIKI s p010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Strings of Letters Grouped into &quot;Words&quot;</td>
<td>BPICOTHEC</td>
<td>Myvocicoewos openings myvocicoewos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Two to Three Different Intelligible Words</td>
<td>A DRAGH</td>
<td>Lunch Time work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. More Than Three Intelligible Words or a List of Words</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ulons Foolibit Oliver Ulons This</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Examples of Writing Samples Meeting Criteria for Each Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Typically Developing Writers</th>
<th>Writers with Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6. More than Three Different Intelligible Words                      | Me at Hilton On Mar 1st, April 1925 | Tom or Can red  
Red or Can, first one  
Can, blue, yellow  
blue orange by end |
| 9. Give Two Complete Sentences                                       | We'll go to the big store  
To home A ball  
out with the troop  
And my Daddy &  
Play with Mounka. | Alive and the Chimpys  
They sing and dance |
| 10. Minimum of Three Sentences Each                                  | I play a game  
I went to my friend  
House. I went to  
got a egg to eat  
I went to church  
on Sun day. I kiss  
my mother Sun  
day. I can walk  
my dog. I sat in  
my house. I went  
to the saing in ring | Happy Birthday  
Matthew. I like  
chocolate please  
Mom. I have a new  
A new pet is a  
puppies and a dog  
and a cat and  
a shirt and a new  
baby. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Typically Developing Writers</th>
<th>Writers with Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Organized Writing with Three or More Sentences on a Cohesive Topic</td>
<td>Frogs are eggs. Frog are cool. I no how a frog grown egg then grow more. Frog eat lot of things that we don't eat. I like bugs. We want a frog to play with. I like frogs tax music. Because they swim.</td>
<td>I love to watch the garbage man to pick up our trash can to. I don't watch the person put to my window. I love to watch the recycling person to get my recycling from my house to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Organized Writing with a Cohesive Topic with Use of Cohesive Devices Across Three or More Sentences so that Coherence Cannot Be Maligned without Changing Meaning</td>
<td>On Sunday my friend came over my house and we played and we had fun. She was she what frog? I clin up my money.</td>
<td>I love the move cars because is my far's move because Lighting Mcqueen is on the move Lightingmcqueen gas stuck in the oil and lightingmcqueen has friends shot and lightingmcqueen goes fast and he have friend Mater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Typically Developing Writers</td>
<td>Writers with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Organized Writing with a Cohesive Main Topic and Two Cohesive Subtopics (Subheadings or Story Parts) with at Least Two Sentences Elaborating the Meaning of Each.</td>
<td>The pool at my house opened up. It was 100 degrees and we went swimming there and it was very very fun to be at the pool. I got a rope and some water and my dad put some food on the grill. We all had a big bowl of food then. I left the water and was very very hot so I stood on the top step of the pool. My friends cris and dinam were there and I shot their trampoline and then I rode my bike bike home and I went to bed and I went to sleep.</td>
<td>My dad got the New York Times and it's like a book, but it's not as big. It's usually the work of the people who write it. I don't think it's as cool as the games like how is the album because you can also write you own. I like how the screen side it's medium side it's also fun to pass the cool my dad but it's cool for it and it can hold it up or if you are working you can get it done but the only thing I don't like is the write it's a pretty heavy book. But if you want to see it's size you can turn the pages onward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Typically Developing Writers</td>
<td>Writers with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A. Organized Writing with a Coherent Main Topic and at Least Three Coherent Subtopics</td>
<td>One morning my mom told me where herding tomorrow. I was scared. That night I dreamt that a dragon swept down and ate the cow. The next day my mom giolet to the market and I was watching my wagon. I was angry. But time I would alone school and we would have a snack. When I got home the teacher gave us cookies. I swallowed the meal and the teacher in all the band she was the second teacher in the hole into world. The End.</td>
<td>We not the people going to the market tomorrow. For we is more tired for the work. When the people go to market we are tired and we not find no good. But if the people go to market we find the good. We go to market and we are happy. We not the people going to the market tomorrow. For we is more tired for the work. When the people go to market we are tired and we not find no good. But if the people go to market we find the good. We go to market and we are happy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Topic Diversity

The Topic Diversity measure is used to quantify the variations in self-selected topics chosen by beginning writers. Review is an essential topic selection process. By identifying and assigning topics, writers can begin to develop knowledge about their writing process. The ability to identify a student's writing style is crucial in knowing whether their writing is conveying meaning in the intended way. As a result, use of diverse content chosen over time.

Purpose of the Measure

- To quantify the variations in self-selected topics chosen by beginning writers
- To assign each writing sample a topic category
- To measure different types of topics covered across multiple writing samples

How to Use the Topic Diversity Measure:

1. Review the written material and identify the topic or subject of the writing sample.
2. What is the main topic of the writing sample?
3. Label the topic by identifying its key keyword or phrase that represents the overall idea.
4. If the topic is not clear, review the text. Use one of your primary sources for writing the topic.
5. If the topic is not clear, discuss the topic with the writer as an anchor.
6. If the student has trouble selecting a topic, refer to a list of key topics—write as an anchor.
Text Type Diversity

The Text Type Diversity (TTD) measure quantifies the type and range of text used by beginning writers. When using this measure to examine student writing samples, the goal is to identify higher order. For example, if a student writes two in the past tense, it’s either a historical (personal story) or main event. The Text Type Diversity measure was designed to capture the text types used by beginning writers. The measure also aids in identifying those that are not used by students that are in alignment with College and Career Readiness Standards.

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

- If any text type has more than 50% of the sentence texts, it is set as that text type.
- If both text types are represented equally (i.e., each has more than 50% of the sentence texts), it is set as the text type for the sample.

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

Measurement of the Text Type Diversity

- Each writing sample will be assigned a score of 1 or 2.
- The score assigned will be the most frequent score used in the sample (greater than 50% of the sentence texts).
- The number of different types of text types represented across multiple writing samples will be measured.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Type</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergent</td>
<td>Graphic, expression using drawings, paints, models, a string of letters, or other visual forms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label</td>
<td>Describe elements of a drawing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>Express an opinion about something.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Explain reasons for an action.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasive</td>
<td>Use evidence to support reasons for an action.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Describe a particular view of things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Convey important or summary of facts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Exemplify how to complete a task or happen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Explain why or how an event happened or happens.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Retelling events in an imaginative way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot</td>
<td>Storyline of events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>Explores or evokes emotions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Uses carefully chosen words to evoke images or ideas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All and these. All is shared by permission of the author.*
# Decision Rules for Classifying Text Type

Is it a graphic representation using drawings, pencil marks, scribbles, a string of letters, or letter-like forms?  
If yes, it is emergent

Are the words focused on the drawing?  
If yes, it is labeled (e.g., ‘We saw ants in the drawer’)

Is the text in the past tense?  
If yes, it is:  
- Fictional story (e.g., ‘One day Charlie went to the store’)  
- Factually correct (e.g., ‘Yesterday I went to the store’)

Is the text in the future tense?  
If yes, it is:  
- Fictional story (e.g., ‘When school is over we go home’)  
- Factually correct (e.g., ‘I go to the store every day after school’)  
- Narrative prediction (e.g., ‘After school we go to the playground and we play kick, kick’)  
- Opinion or guess (e.g., ‘I think it is going to rain because it is dark and cloudy’)  
- Report or description of a real experience (e.g., ‘My dog is black and white’)  
- Description of a ‘being’ with a name (e.g., ‘Mr. Dog’)

Is it about a factual thing written in the present tense?  
If yes, does it:  
- Describe the attribute of a specific thing (e.g., ‘My dog is black and white’)  
- Describe a general group of things (e.g., ‘Dogs are carnivorous’)  
- Tell the user what to do (e.g., ‘Jump over the fence!’)  
- Tell the user what to avoid (e.g., ‘Don’t forget your lunch!’)

Is it a factual thing written in the past or present?  
If yes, does it:  
- Reflect on the past (e.g., ‘I have a favorite book’)  
- Reflect on the future (e.g., ‘I am planning to go to the park tomorrow’)  
- Reflect on the present (e.g., ‘I am happy today’)

Is it using grammatical rules to create meaning or share information (e.g., using word order, context, imagery, figures of speech, sound, or rhythm)?  
If yes, it is:  
- Poem (e.g., ‘Three Fish, two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish’)
Total Intelligible Words and Total Unique Words

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

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

Purpose of the Total Intelligible Words Measure
To quantify the number of intelligible words produced by a beginning writer.
This measure shows increases over time.

How to Use the Total Intelligible Words Measure
Examine the written sample to identify any words that are misspelled or incorrectly spelled.

1. Review the first sentence of the written sample, while reading it aloud. Identify any intelligible words you can identify as intelligible, and write them down.
2. Repeat the same steps as Review One.
3. For the second sentence, follow the same procedure as Review Two.
4. Repeat the procedure for intelligible words across multiple writing samples.

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

Exception from the U.S. Position on Teacher Evaluation Council for Exceptional Children 2012
Purpose of the Total Unique Words Measure
To quantify the number of unique words produced by a beginning student writer to indicate growth in vocabulary and language.

Use the measurement to tally the total number of different words in a student writing sample that follow 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 intelligible words identified by Rubrics One and Two.
2. Using the list of total intelligible words as a dictionary to count the number of unique different words that appear in every 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 typing using a text-based spelling for parts of all of the or her writing. These measures are also used to account for each word typed and paper alphabet board, keyboards used during a testing session and summed for an overall total.

Purpose of the Letter Measures
- Total Number of Letters: the actual number of letters written or selected
- Total Unique Letters: the actual number of unique letters written or selected

How to Use the Total Number of Letters and Total Unique Measures
1. Count the number of letters typed or selected during a single writing session to determine the total number of letters used across multiple writing samples.
2. Average number of letters across multiple writing samples will be qualified.
3. The use of letters across multiple writing samples as an indicator of a right pattern linked to the student’s knowledge.

Important!

Begin to look for a purpose i.e., beginning sounds, number letters, etc. Remember children’s ability for a long time.
Deciding Which Measures to Use for Your Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Important!**

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

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

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

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

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

### Assessing Attitude and Self-Efficacy in Writing

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

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

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

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

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

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


Give your students First Author Writing Software—help make the students who were never expected to write into first-time Authors!
First Author™
Writing 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

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.

Cue students verbally and physically to ALL raise their hands.
Setting the Purpose:

The purpose of today’s lesson is to talk again about “saying more” in our writing. When we say more it means that we are writing more letters, words and sentences in our writing. We are making our writing longer when we say more!

Modeling and Guided Practice:

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.

MINI-LESSON: SAY MORE
Let’s look at our Tip Sheet again—it says, “What else can I say about my topic?” I’m going to write our ideas on the board.

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

Let’s read aloud everything we have added.

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

Excellent writing today—we definitely said more!

We are now done with our Mini-lesson!

**It’s Time to Write!**
Say More

1. What else can I say about my topic?

2. What else would others want to hear?

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

Writing Standard:
Production and Distribution—Planning and Composition

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

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

Time: 10 Minutes

Who in here is an Author?

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

Modeling and Guided Practice:

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

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

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

Yes, **student name**, “I like.” We could say “I like my friends.”

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

Who in our classroom loves ice cream?

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

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

What are the last words that it tells us?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We are now done with our Mini-lesson!

It’s Time to Write!
Writing Opinions

Opinions tell what you think, believe, or feel

Here are some words you can use to write opinions:

I like ...

I love ...

I don’t like ...

My favorite ...