

Every Child a Reader & Writer
Writing Workshop Implementation Scale: LITERATE ENVIRONMENT

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| Description | <p><i>The creation of a literate environment is the foundation upon which successful writing workshops rest. Four aspects of the environment are of particular importance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom community: Teachers and students work collaboratively in an atmosphere of mutual respect; students are motivated to do their best work and feel safe to take risks. The group functions as a learning community in which each student’s contributions are respected and each student’s learning is important. Students take responsibility for learning and support others. • Literary models: Students are immersed in good literature in the writing workshop. The literature lifts the level of student language, sparks the imagination and provides models of craft and genre for student study and reflection. Over time students learn to draw on these models to enrich their own writing. • Physical environment: Purposeful arrangement of the physical environment facilitates development of a literate environment. Students have independent access to resources. In addition, the arrangement of the room facilitates collaboration. • Predictable structure: Writing workshop takes place in a daily 60-minute session, half of which is independent work time. In addition to the 60-minute session, students participate in a 30-minute skills block. Maintenance of a daily, predictable structure is essential if students are to become self-managing. |
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| Getting started | Effective | Highly Effective | Creative adaptations | Misconceptions |
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| <p>Classroom community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk is respectful • Learning opportunities may not be equitable • Decisions may be made by the teacher who directs the work of all students <p>Literary models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher is building and using the classroom collection of touchstone books and using them in mini-lessons and conferences • Books and other reading materials have been sorted into general categories and labeled; storage could be more appealing and accessible • Teacher and student models of writing are displayed and used in mini-lessons and closings; the notable features may not be clear to the students | <p>In an effective classroom community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk is respectful and student ideas are valued • The teacher utilizes strategies which engage all students • Students share in decision making about the operation of the classroom and about their work • Students’ behavior demonstrates a feeling of safety • When conflict emerges, teacher models ways to find a mutually agreeable resolution <p>Literary models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-15 touchstone books are routinely used by the teacher as models in mini-lessons and student conferences, and are prominently displayed and accessible to students • Classroom materials include models in all genres, levels and a variety of topics that are engaging to students • Books and other reading material have been categorized and labeled and are accessible and appealing to students • Teacher and student writing are also used as models and displayed in the classroom; the notable features are made clear to the students | <p>Meets all the criteria for Effective and in addition in a highly effective classroom community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student thinking and ideas are valued and they feed the energy of the classroom • Students are provided equitable opportunities to learn • Students’ behavior demonstrates an acceptance of responsibility for their own learning and for helping others. • Teacher and students have moved beyond the assumption that there is only one way to be successful <p>Literary models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The touchstone books are well-known by the teacher and students • students use them routinely without prompting (eg to get a vision of what they are going to make, to understand a variety of craft moves) • Students routinely choose a mentor text of their own to provide a model for a given piece. • Students use examples of student and teacher writing to gain inspiration and improve their own work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Strategies for creating a community of learners are discussed during Induction training and described in the study, <u>Living the Life of a Writer</u>, as well as other professional literature. The teacher is free to adapt and create his/her own strategies for achieving this goal.</i> • <i>Topics, categories and methods of display are determined by the teacher and perhaps the students, based on topics and authors of interest, as well as availability. Over time the teacher looks for opportunities to add to the classroom collection with titles and topics of interest to both the teacher and the students</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creating a community in which students are free to determine the goals they will pursue, and are not accountable to the standards.</i> • <i>Creating a classroom without a sense of community, in which all activity is teacher directed and students are compliant rather than engaged and self-managing.</i> • <i>Books are categorized in a very general way, and students have difficulty finding interesting material on their level.</i> • <i>The materials are not stored in an appealing or organized manner.</i> |

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| <p>Physical environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher and students are experimenting with various classroom configurations that encourage productive talk and work • Teacher has begun the process of reorganizing classroom materials in more appealing and accessible configurations • There is an established place to meet for mini lessons and closings <p>Predictable structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 60-minute daily workshop is provided with a mini lesson, writing block and a closing • There is a daily 30-minute skills block | <p>Physical environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productive talk and work are encouraged through the seating and furniture arrangement • The established place to meet for mini lessons and closings allows all students to participate • Classroom materials are at hand for mini lessons • Classroom materials, charts and rubrics are clean, organized and accessible to students • There are established places in the room for students to confer with one another • Charts posted are relevant to current learning goals <p>Predictable structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 60-minute writing workshop and 30-minute skills block are purposefully and thoughtfully integrated to move skills into writing | <p>Physical environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows students to manage their own movement within the room, making productive use of resources in the environment • Charts posted are both relevant to current learning and are aesthetically pleasing <p>Predictable structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing workshop is no seen as an isolated element, but is integrated through the instructional day | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The specific arrangement of the physical classroom is determined by the teacher, and perhaps the students.</i> • <i>The workshop structure allows the teacher maximum freedom to provide instruction to individuals and small groups.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Student desks are separate from own another, discouraging interaction.</i> • <i>Materials are not accessible to students.</i> • <i>There is no place for students to gather for the mini-lesson.</i> • <i>Writing workshop is not scheduled regularly and does not have a dedicated time in the schedule.</i> |