

# Independent Writing

## Writing Routine 4

**Purpose:** Provide support to help students achieve success as independent writers.

**Research:** Most elementary students need continued support as they become independent writers. They are most successful when the teacher provides effective prompts, a collaborative context, and effective coaching (Fisher & Frey 2007).

- 1. Provide appropriate writing prompts.** Make sure that writing prompts are motivating and appropriate. Prompts should:
  - Encourage a variety of responses
  - Allow for a range of writing abilities
  - Be appropriate for the writers' experiences
  - Include topics that interest students
- 2. Use RAFTs.** Have students use the RAFT structure to make sure writing assignments have a clear purpose and authenticity. Students should understand their Role, Audience, Form, and Topic before they begin to write. Here is a sample RAFT:

**Role:** A student who wants to clean up a vacant lot.  
**Audience:** Neighbors who could help clean up the lot.  
**Form:** An email message  
**Topic:** Please come on Saturday to help clean up the lot.
- 3. Support peer response.** Teach students how to be effective peer reviewers of each other's writing. Strategies may include:
  - Use the language frames to scaffold conversation.
  - Encourage writers to invite responses from peers, but don't compel them.
  - Encourage students to talk with each other as readers, not as critics. If something makes them laugh, or feel sad, or catches their interest, they should tell the writer so. If something isn't clear, they should tell that, too. However, details of word choice, organization, sentence structure, etc. are best dealt with in teacher-student conferences.
- 4. Conference.** Confer with students about their writing. Conferences should be short and focused. Include the following steps:
  - **Inquiry:** Ask about the topic, how the work is coming, and areas of difficulty.
  - **Decision:** Based on student responses, decide on the focus for the conference.
  - **Instruction:** Choose a point for teaching. This may be any of the writing traits, writer's craft, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation. Refer to records of student performance on grammar, revising and editing, and spelling lessons and assessments. Writing traits rubrics and other resources for conferences are provided in the **Assessment Handbook**.
  - **Recording:** Record anecdotal notes of the conference for follow-up. Include next steps for the writer.

## Student Journals

Journaling is a good way to help students move from note taking and assigned writing to writing independently. Lessons in *National Geographic Reach* include many opportunities for students to make notes about vocabulary, language, and grammar, and to write in response to their reading or their thoughts about Big Questions. Journals help students remember what they have learned and see their progress over time.

- **Set up journals.** Journals can take many forms. You may wish to have students keep a journal with separate sections for vocabulary, language, grammar, and writing. Or students can just add cumulatively to their journals as they learn. In either case, encourage students to decorate their journals and maintain them with care.
- **Coach.** Observe students as they write and look for opportunities to coach them with spelling, word skills, strategies, and their thinking about topics and Big Questions.
- **Review journals.** Have students review their journals with you at conference time. Reviewing their work over time helps students recall what they've learned and see how they have progressed. It can also help you focus on areas where a student may need reteaching or additional support.

## Application

### DAY 5

- Daily Writing (Day 5 of each lesson plan)