

Writing Professional Development 2020-2021

provided by Jennie Ellis – ELA Coordinator for Pacific Charter Institute

Session #1: Introduction and Purpose, Focus and Audience

Session #2: Organization and Structure

Session #3: Evidence and Elaboration Tools

Session #4: Feedback and Revisions Tools

Session #5: Grammar (Sentence Level Errors)

Session #6: Writing for High Stakes Assessment

Session #7: Sentence Power

Session #8: Connecting the Dots

In order to create cohesive writing goals across PCI schools, Jennie Ellis, ELA coordinator, provided bi-weekly Professional Development focused on teaching strategies for writing that were immediately practiced with students. Each Sutter Peak Charter Academy teacher engaged in the PD by actively choosing 2 focal students for the duration of the school year. Implementing direct writing instruction and giving continuous feedback throughout the year, teachers were able to track growth of students as well as engage in professional discussions and ongoing learning of tools to teach writing while meeting the needs of individual student learning goals.

Cultivating Student Writers SPCA
Session #1: Introduction and Purpose, Focus (and Audience!)

1. Introduction to the Professional Development Series
 - Our Whys
 - Our Goals
 - Our Content and Format
 - Our Tools

2. Welcome to Staff Notebook

3. (Quick) Deep Dive into Common Core Writing

4. Exchange of Ideas
 - Learn from Experts
 - Learn from Colleagues

5. Introduction to Purpose and Focus

6. Resources and Tools for Teachers and Parents

7. Closure and Appreciations

INTRODUCTION

- Our Whys



*Writing
Matters
in
School*

- Writing skills positively impact...
 - Success in school (learning in content areas; demonstration of learning; potential for college preparedness and acceptance; Coker & Lewis, 2008; Schumaker & Deshler, 2009)
 - Critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration (“Writing is thinking on paper” (Zinsser, 2001)



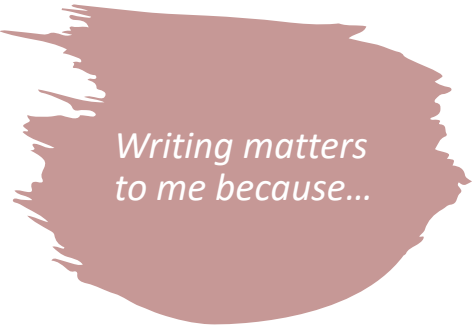
*Writing
Matters
Beyond
School*

- Writing skills positively impact getting, keeping, and being promoted in most jobs...
 - “Writing well is not just an option for young people—it is a necessity. Along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and the global economy.” (Graham and Perin, 2007)
 - Scientists, artists, mathematicians, lawyers, engineers—all ‘think’ with pen to paper...hands on terminal keys.” (Young and Fulwiler, 1986)



*Writing
Matters
in
Society*

- Writing skills are the gateway to the language of power and to social and economic opportunity...
 - “Failing to learn these [standard English] writing skills handcuffs students. Their lack of fluency with the language of power will follow them like the stench of poverty long after students leave school...” (Christensen, 2003)



Writing matters to me because...

- Why is it important to YOU to help your students become stronger writers?

- Our Goals



We will become (even more) competent and confident writing instructors for our students and parent educators--our partners in this process.



We will explore new learning and consider dynamic approaches to supporting student writers.



We will compile a rich bank of shared resources that captures best practices and tools.



We will keep a record of our learning goals each month to gain ownership of our learning and practices.



We will identify two focal students to target with the new applications and strategies.



We will support our colleagues, sharing expertise and successful applications and practices.



- Our Content and Format

Overview of the Year Long Series

Session 1 Aug. 31	Session 2 Sept. 28	Session 3 Oct. 26	Session 4 Nov. 30	Session 5 Jan. 11	Session 6 Feb. 8	Session 7 Mar. 8	Session 8 Apr. 19
Introduction & Purpose and Focus (and Audience!)	Planning: Organization and Structure	Elaboration and Use of Evidence	Feedback and Revision & Student Analysis	Sentence Editing: Grammar and Written Conventions	Sentence Fluency: Word Choice and Language Structures	Writing on High Stakes Assessments	Connecting the Dots and Planning for the Long Term & Student/Self Analysis

Intersession 1 Sept. 18 & 21	Intersession 2 Oct. 9 & 12	Intersession 3 Nov. 13 & 16	Intersession 5 Jan. 22 & 25	Intersession 6 Feb. 22 & 26	Intersession 7 Mar. 19 & 22
How to Write Your Own Prompts	Connecting Reading and Writing: How to Teach Text Structures	"They Say, I Say": Using Professional Literature to Inform Practice	Grammar 101 for Teachers	Advanced Grammar for Teachers (6-12) / Becoming a Language Coach (2-5)	How to Use Item Analysis to Individualize Support

- Our Tools

Microsoft Teams

...



**Professional Writing
Community**

This is the tile for our Team for Professional Development in Writing all year. Our meetings will be held here as well as documents, our Staff Notebook, and access to the Intersessions

Staff Notebook

More on this below...

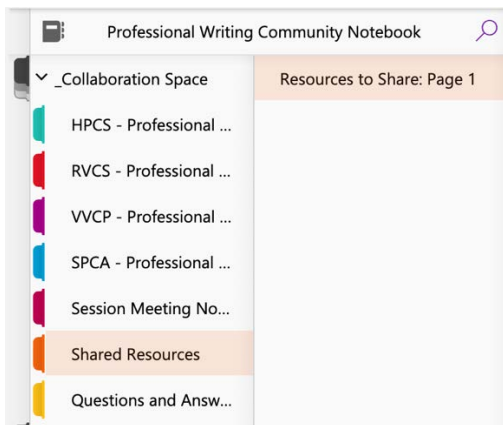


Writing Intersessions

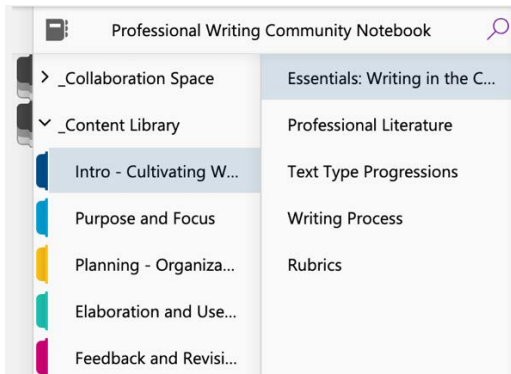


Recorded Intersession “modules” located in Microsoft Stream (and accessible from the top menu of the “General” channel

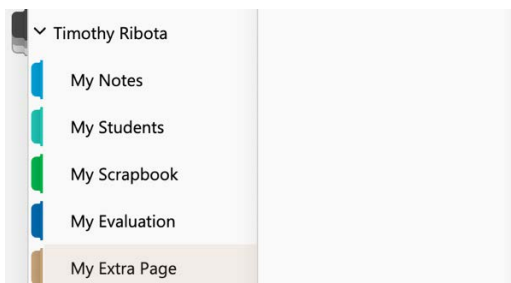
WELCOME TO STAFF NOTEBOOK



Collaboration Space for all staff to work together. Anyone can add content to these sections (but stick to your own school page). You can also add additional pages to each section.



Content Library for leaders to share resources. These sections house information on each topic including handouts, videos, links, and more.



Staff Member Notebook that only you and Team Leaders can see. Take your own notes, collect ideas and artifacts, and complete any assigned activities in these sections.

QUICK DEEP DIVE INTO COMMON CORE WRITING

See the Intro – Cultivating Writers section of our Staff Notebook for details

- There are important shifts in the Common Core that inform the way writing is taught
- There are 4 types of writing standards and 10 total writing standards
- See the progression of each standard from kindergarten through 11th/12th grade in order to be able to support students at all grade levels
- Writing is a process! Review the model. There are some essential terms/academic vocabulary that all students, teachers and parents need to know and use facilely
- Rubrics are essential for evaluating student writing and giving actionable feedback

EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

Watch a clip of writing guru Steve Graham talking about “What Works in Teaching Writing.” Some of his key ideas are:

- Kids have to write
- We need to teach them how to carry out the processes of planning, revising, evaluating, and monitoring while they’re writing
- Students must be knowledgeable about the genres in which they write
- Students must develop fundamental skills of handwriting, spelling, and typing
- Help students become facile at putting their ideas into sentences
- Help writers set goals for what they are going to write about
- Students need to work together with one another around the processes of writing
- Give them feedback about their writing

- Help them assess their own writing and give feedback to other writers
- Students must use 21st century tools when writing
- Set up a “classroom” that’s supportive, pleasant, and helps kids develop over time as a writer

As follow up, apply Graham’s advice to our model of education by discussing three questions with colleagues:

- 1) Which of these priorities CAN we do/address?
- 2) What MIGHT we be able to do/address?
- 3) Which priorities are unlikely to be addressed or will be extremely challenging?

INTRODUCTION TO PURPOSE AND FOCUS

Purpose and focus frame every writing task. Purpose and focus are at the left or on the top of every writing rubric for a reason. Without a solid purpose and focus (and a reasonable sense of audience), student writing is likely to drift, be extremely short, and/or be unconvincing or confusing.

How do we know which students need to back it up all the way to purpose and focus? It is often students who:

- Stare at a blank page
- Can’t tell you what they will be writing about
- Produce rambling writing
- Produce very brief pieces

RESOURCES AND TOOLS FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

What are some quick ways to help students with purpose and focus? See the Staff Notebook → Purpose and Focus for details.

1. **Deconstructing/unpacking the prompt!** What are the writing directions? What type of writing are they being asked to produce? Help them learn the task verbs they will encounter in prompts.

2. **Talk it out!** If students can't tell you about their plan, their purpose, or their audience, they don't know! Use conversation to help them get focused. Ask guiding questions. Be a thinking coach. Guide them to do some prewriting.

3. **Hands-on strategies!** Use highlighters and colored pens to mark up the prompt. Brainstorm on post-it notes and rearrange them until the writing plan starts to come into focus. Be creative, but make it visible.

4. **Thesis statements (or controlling idea)!** Give students sentence frames, models, and practice for building good ones. Model the process for them. These routines will set them up for success in the future. A valuable place to spend time with a student writer!

5. **Penzu.com** This free journaling site is a low-key way to:

- a) get students writing more
- b) provide them with an authentic audience
- c) respond to them without passing judgment or correcting anything
- d) give them non text-based opportunities to practice different genres and purposes

1. Finish looking through the "Purpose and Focus" section in the Staff Notebook
 2. Identify two focal students to target for writing support this year:
 - A. student who is a decent writer, who even likes writing, but has room to grow
 - B. struggling writer with low skills, who doesn't like writing, and has a lot of room to grow
- Enter their names, grade level, and status (homeschool, IS, EL, etc.) in the "My Students" section of your Staff Notebook
3. Consider Intersession #1: "How to Build Your Own Writing Prompts." Video available for viewing beginning Monday 9/14. Roundtable discussions will be here on the Team on Friday 9/18 and Monday 9/21 from 11:00 - 12:00.

"Homework"

Cultivating Student Writers PCI

Session #2: Organization & Structure

Agenda

- Recap of Session #1: Purpose and Focus
- Recap of Intersession #1: How to Write Your Own Prompts/Writing Tasks
- Mentimeter Activity: Effect Size of Elements of Writing Instruction
- Resources for Organization and Structure
- Group Evaluation of Student Writing
- Preview "Homework" Assignment


RECAP SESSION #1

Across PCI, teachers responded to the video from Session #1 with more "CAN-DOS" than either of the other categories. There are many critical components to writing instruction that we can do (and are doing!) during distance learning as homeschool and independent study teachers. There are four concrete suggestions for areas to improve/increase our practices.

Collective Responses to Steve Graham Video

What CAN we do?	What MIGHT we be able to do more of / get better at?	What is UNLIKELY or EXTREMELY CHALLENGING?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include more prewriting• Provide accommodations for all students to develop fundamental writing skills• Have students write in journals• Have students using typing and editing tools• Write across the curriculum• Have conversations with parents, connecting with them and customizing writing goals for each student• Set expectations whether grade level assignments or ability level assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a go-to collection of sentence frames and organizers• Have key assignments for different grade levels• Teach students and parents the features of the text types through samples and modeling• Give better feedback that doesn't make students defensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peer reviews• Having all students use a universal writing program• Coaching students on the different stages of the writing process while they are writing

We explored (in greater depth) Penzu.com, a free online journal and diary tool. This simple tool can help teachers and parents target several writing goals.



penzu.com

A free online diary and personal journal focused on privacy.

Writers can:

- keep a diary of notes, ideas, and feelings
- have safe space to practice writing
- share their entries only with other readers that they choose


Which goals does this help us target?

- students need to write, write, write
- use 21st century skills
- become more facile putting ideas into sentences
- "classroom" that is supportive, pleasant, and helps students develop over time as a writer

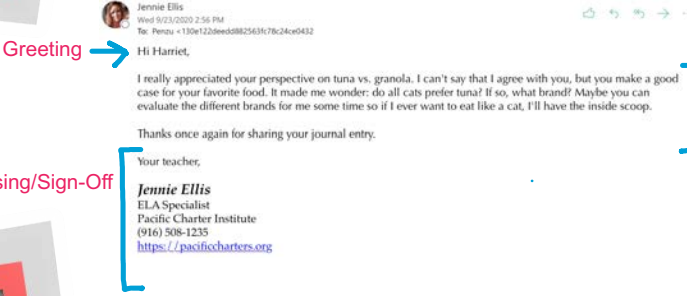
Additional benefits:

- social and emotional needs → a sense of identity
- build stamina and foster engagement
- use email for authentic communication

Penzu also creates opportunities for students to practice the craft of writing professional emails (this is how Penzu shares journal entries with other readers).



- Use email for personal communication
- Model professional email format and language



Greeting → Hi Harriet,

I really appreciated your perspective on tuna vs. granola. I can't say that I agree with you, but you make a good case for your favorite food. It made me wonder: do all cats prefer tuna? If so, what brand? Maybe you can evaluate the different brands for me some time so if I ever want to eat like a cat, I'll have the inside scoop.

Thanks once again for sharing your journal entry.

Closing/Sign-Off → Your teacher,
Jennie Ellis
ELA Specialist
Pacific Charter Institute
(916) 508-1235
<https://pacificcharters.org>

Formal, friendly register

We revisited each teacher's commitment to identifying two focal students for additional support in writing this academic year. The following Q & A covered the most common questions and concerns related to this undertaking.

Focal Students Q & A

Who should I pick?
Any 2 students who could benefit from additional support in writing (one functional writer with room for growth; one struggling/reliuctant writer). These students should be generally available and amenable to your support.

Will the students have to do additional assignments?
At your discretion. They/their parents will for sure receive additional coaching, instruction, and strategies/tools to apply to their current assignments.

Will I need to change the curriculum or plans for the students that are already in place?
No. This is not a prescribed program. When you discover a practice or resource that can support a student with existing curriculum, try or suggest it.

I already track my students' writing intervention progress. How is this different?
In the Staff Notebook, we have the opportunity to collect, analyze and reflect on artifacts of student writing to better our own practices and build common ground across PCI..

What information am I supposed to record?
For now, only name, grade, and program info. Soon, writing samples and your own notes/observations

RECAP INTERSESSION #1

Those who watched the asynchronous intersession video learned about task templates from the Literacy Design Collaborative that can be used to create text-based common core writing tasks for nearly any content, text structure and writing product that the teacher or parent has in mind. Following is a summary of the ideas and observations of those who elected to attend the Round Table discussions. The templates are useful for:

- Creating formal writing tasks in the content areas
- Targeting student interests and providing choices
- Infusing pre-common core and/or literature focused programs with nonfiction writing
- Providing guidance and standardization that conveys grade level expectations
- Students/families who are reading alternative or extra novels and text sets
- Encouraging research-based writing tasks

Sample Writing Task Templates

Informational or Explanatory Template Tasks (Continued)		
	“After Researching”	“After Reading”
Synthesis	Task 18: [Insert optional question] After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write _____ (a report or substitute) in which you explain _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from your research. (Informational or Explanatory/Synthesis)	Task 19: [Insert optional question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts), write _____ (an essay or substitute) in which you explain _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s). (Informational or Explanatory/Synthesis)
Analysis	Task 20: [Insert optional question] After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write _____ (a report or substitute) in which you analyze _____ (content), providing evidence to clarify your analysis. (Informational or Explanatory/Analysis)	Task 21: [Insert optional question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts), write _____ (a report, essay or substitutes) in which you analyze _____ (content), providing examples to clarify your analysis. (Informational or Explanatory/Analysis)
Comparison	Task 22: [Insert optional question] After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write _____ (a report or substitute) in which you compare _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from your research. (Informational or Explanatory/Comparison)	Task 23: [Insert optional question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts), write _____ (an essay, report, or substitute) in which you compare _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s). (Informational or Explanatory/Comparison)

- See complete collection of tools for grades K-12 under Professional Writing Community Team General Channel / Files / “Intersession #1: Write Your Own Prompts”
- The Intersession module (located at the top of the Professional Writing Community Team General channel page) is available for viewing all year

SESSION #2

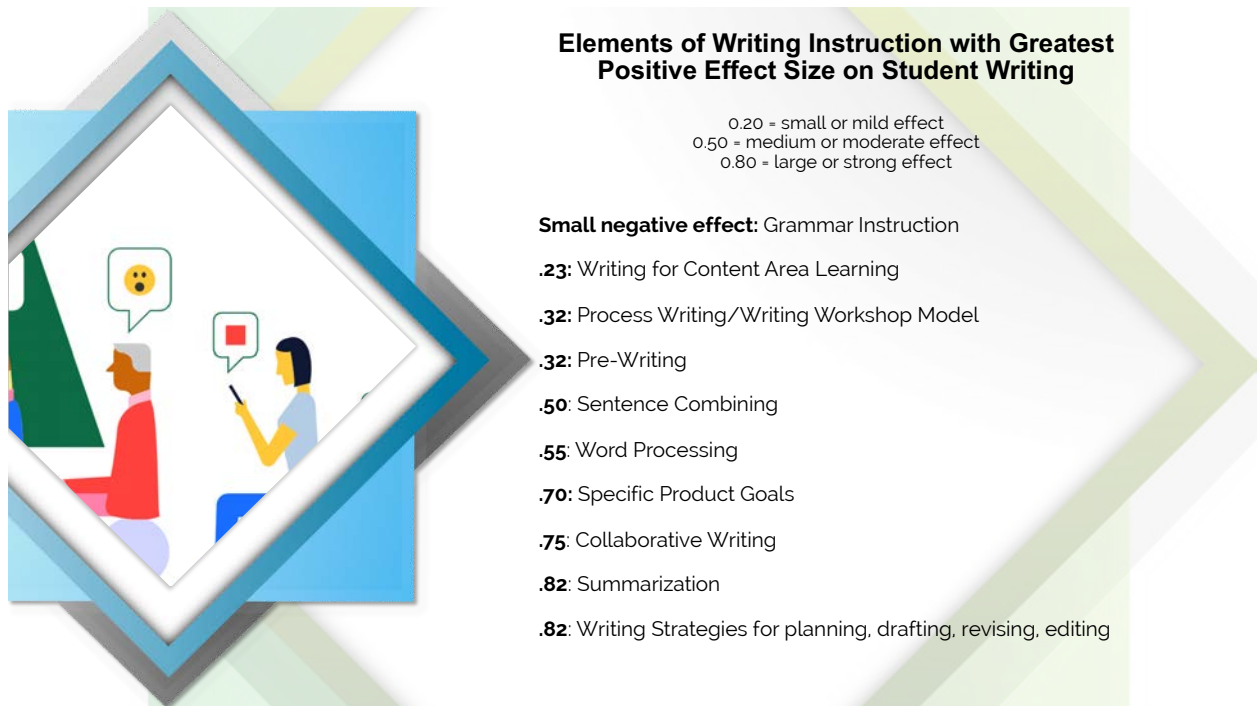
EFFECT SIZE OF ELEMENTS OF WRITING INSTRUCTION

Some elements of writing instruction have a greater effect size on student writing than others (based on an accumulation of research reported by Graham and Perin in *Writing Next: A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2011*).

Some of our presumptions were confirmed and others were refuted by the survey activity we did on Mentimeter.com.

A few take-aways across all sessions were: the importance of having students write a lot of summaries, teaching strategies for all steps of the writing process, trying to find

unique ways for PCI students to collaborate with other writers, and not sweating grammar activities/instruction.



RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION & STRUCTURE IN STUDENT WRITING

In the Staff Notebook (Content Library), please find two sets of tools and resources (elementary and secondary) to scaffold (break into smaller chunks) the processes of writing:

- Pre-writing
- Planning tools:
 - Informational text structures
 - Basic paragraph models
 - Summaries
 - Mnemonic devices
- Transitional words and expressions

GROUP EVALUATION OF STUDENT WRITING

We spent valuable time reading and evaluating two pieces of student writing. We applied the corresponding rubric (primarily for the top two criteria: Focus & Organization/Structure). Then, for each student we completed the Evaluation Tool:

- 1) came to a consensus on a score
- 2) summarized the student's writing based on criterion/language from the rubric
- 3) Notes on strategies

First Evaluation of Focal Writers

Name	Criterion	Score	Notes	Overall Strategy & Resources
Student A Grade 6 Independent Study (Informative Text-based Essay)	Focus	1+	Lacks thesis statement; doesn't address prompt: how technology has helped explorers overcome challenges	Back it all the way up to paragraph writing (no text); teach topic sentence (in response to prompt) and practice building content with graphic organizer. Read model paragraphs and identify parts (with color). Differentiate StudySync writing assignments to support this approach.
	Organization/Structure	1	No clear paragraphing by topic; lists information from the texts; brief introduction; no conclusion	
	Support/Evidence	X	No evaluation at this time	
	Language/Conventions	2	Mostly correct sentence structure; struggles some with usage but hard to gauge because many of the facts come straight from text and aren't in her own words; no clear pattern of errors.	
Student B Grade 9 Homeschool (Argumentative Text-based Essay)	Focus	3+	Thesis buried in third paragraph ("let me explain why right now, it's not a great idea"). Thesis needs specificity. Student excited about topic but loses focus on argument/response to prompt; instead gives overview & pros/cons of drone. Shoves all of argument into P #4	This student loves to write so I am excited to work with him! Show model of argumentative writing (with sources cited); identify parts. Discuss structure. Work on developing thesis and blocking out essay. Let him choose next topic to research (2-3 sources) and develop his own argument.
	Organization/Structure	2+	Paragraphs generally have topics but aren't explicitly connected to reasons that build an argument	
	Evidence/Analysis	3	Very credible (and tons!) of evidence but not always used in service of the argument. All specific info needs in-text citations. No clear counterargument.	
	Language/Conventions	4	Clean! Virtually no errors; formatting not correct (spacing/citations)	

“HOMEWORK” WITH FOCAL STUDENT

We left prepared to engage in the preceding activity with our own focal students.

#1: BUILD PROFILE OF TWO FOCAL STUDENT WRITERS

Must

- Gather one formal independent writing sample (handwritten scans, Word docs, screen shots, etc.) from focal students in any format (physical copies in a folder, document folder on computer)
- Score student writing with Common Core rubric

Optional

- Upload samples to Staff Notebook

#2: EVALUATE STUDENT WRITERS AND DETERMINE NEXT STEPS

Must

- Download and complete the “Evaluation of Focal Writers” Doc from the Team Files
- Keep a folder of the evaluations (physical copies in a folder or document folder on computer)

Optional

- Save evaluation document as a PDF and upload to Staff Notebook

#3: APPLY LEARNING AND SUPPORT A GROWTH MODEL

Must

Reflect on the starting point/progress of each focal student in the Staff Notebook under “My Evaluation” by answering these questions for each student:

- ASSESS: What specific progress or strengths in student’s writing have you observed?
- PLAN: What skills or steps should be targeted next?
- BRAG: What is one “ah ha” moment –an applied resource, assignment, or teaching moment to remember?
- VENT: What is one elusive skill, challenging element to teach, or frustration with this student’s writing?

