

ELA REPORTER

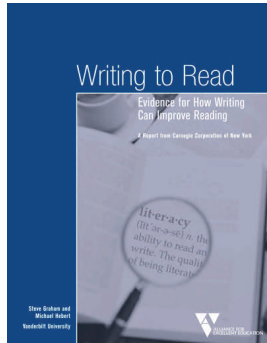


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YOUR PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY

The Missing Link? Reading-Writing Connection



The authors of *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* insist that "...the emphasis on the writing standards is parallel to and equal to the emphasis on reading, and furthermore, one can't help but

think that reading will be assessed through writing, making writing even more critical." In this month's *ELA Reporter*, we seek to articulate the connection that reading has to writing.

Writing to Read

The Carnegie report *Writing to Read: Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading* (2010) builds on *Writing Next* (2007) by identifying practices found to be effective in helping increase students' reading skills and comprehension.

While the report is 74 pages, the strength of the report lies in pages 13 through 20. The authors elaborate on the activities involved in implementing these practices in the classroom.

For example, researchers found that having students answer questions about a text in writing, or creating and answering written questions about a text has a consistent impact on improving the reading comprehension of students in grade 6-12. Answering questions in writing involves responses to questions inserted into text or presented at the end of a segment of text. Students may be asked to write short answers to four questions (one detail, two inferences, and one main idea) after reading a segment of text. They then check and correct their responses before reading the next segment of text.

Following are recommendations for effective practices for strengthening reading through writing.

Writing Practices that Enhance Students' Reading

- I. **Have students write about texts they read.** Students' comprehension of science, social studies, and language arts texts is improved when they write about what they read, specifically when they
 - ◇ respond to text in writing.
 - ◇ write summaries of a text.
 - ◇ write notes about a text.
 - ◇ answer questions about a text in writing, or create and answer written questions about a text.

- II. **Teach students the writing skills and processes that go into creating text.** Students' reading skills and comprehension are improved by learning the skills and processes that go into creating text, specifically when teachers
 - ◇ teach the process of writing, text structures for writing, paragraph or sentence construction skills (improving reading comprehension).
 - ◇ teach spelling and sentence construction skills (improves reading fluency).
 - ◇ teach spelling skills (improves word reading skills).

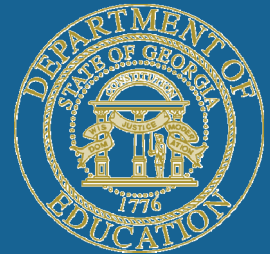
- III. **Increase how much students write.** Students' reading comprehension is improved by having them increase how often they produce their own texts.

The report confirms that writing increases students' reading comprehension. Reading and writing instruction work together to achieve the goal of students acquiring knowledge, skills, and strategies. Knowing the strategies and how and when to implement them is key.

This month's *ELA Reporter* will focus on writing instructional practices aimed at improving students writing and reading.

For further reading on this report, click here: [Writing to Read](#).

Georgia
Department
of Education



Dr. John D. Barge,
State School
Superintendent

*"Making Education
Work for All Georgians"*

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Suggested Reading About Writing

Educational Leadership April 2014 issue focuses on Writing: A Core Skill. Inside the issue are articles on writing written by some of the leading instructional practitioners: Jeff Anderson, Carol Jago, Mary Ehrenworth, Kelly Gallagher, and Penny Kittle, to name a few.

These authors offer their insights about writing in general and writing that specifically meets the demands of the Common Core Standards. Below are the top five articles we highlight for the teaching of writing.

Jeff Anderson's *What Writing Is & Isn't*

Jeff Anderson encourages teachers to "float above the din and do what is write: meet our student writers where they need to be heard right now." Anderson also offers meaningful best practice in grammar lessons that focus on function and practical application. Below are the sub heading in his article:

Writing Isn't ...

In a Kit or Program
Test Preparation
Memorizing Parts of Speech
Separate from Reading

Writing Is...

A Transaction
A Skill That Can Be Learned
An Igniter of Passion and Freedom

Carol Jago's *Writing is Taught Not Caught*

Carol Jago's insightful article articulates the way in which teachers can assist student writers in developing writing habits. Jago describes the thoughtful process of teaching students to write. Each section of the article supports skill instruction that "enables all of our children to think clearly and to express what they think coherently." Her articles includes instructional practices under such sub-headings as: Give Students Something to Write About, Have Students Write Frequently, Offer Students Feedback That Matters, and Teach the Features of Good Writing.

Mary Ehrenworth's *Parents as Writing Partners*

Mary Ehrenworth (co-author of *Pathways to the Common Core*) gives parents a tool kit that will show them how to support their children's writing skills. These practical tips help parents become "writing partners" not teachers of writing. This tool kit offers practical advice:

1. Help writers rehearse their structure.
2. Help writers elaborate.
3. Work with checklists and exemplars.
4. Show children how to work with study partners.

Among these tips, Ehrenworth suggests that school leaders play an integral part in set the stage by articulating the vision for students as writers and how that shapes the way the school teaches writing. Ehrenworth also offers ideas for workshops that help parents implement the tools. "Teaching parents to be effective writing partners can have a huge effect on student achievement."

Kelly Gallagher's *Making the Most of Mentor Texts*

Kelly Gallagher, author of *Write Like This: Teaching Real-World Writing Through Modeling and Mentor Texts* offers teachers the "how" to use mentor texts to teach students to write. Gallagher posits that "effective modeling entails much more than handing students a mentor text and asking them to imitate it." Gallagher shows teachers how to teach students to imitate model texts *throughout* the writing process: discerning what to write during the prewriting state, keeping an eye on the model during the drafting stage, and modeling improvement during the revision stage. Gallagher, like other writers, uses this process in his own writing, and if it works for him—and other writers—it will work for students.

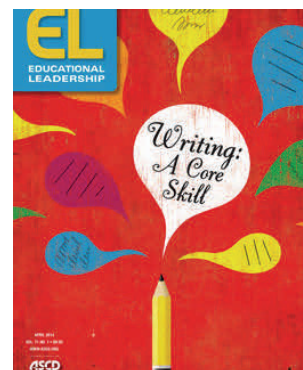
Penny Kittle's *Teaching the Writer's Craft*

Penny Kittle insists that the best teaching and learning are thorough. In her article, Kittle gives six practices to build savvy writers: Independent Reading, Providing Topic Choice, Daily Revision, Sentence Study, Combining Sentences, and Modeling the Writer's Craft. At the center of teaching the writer's craft is the student. Kittle says, "We don't teach semi-colons; we teach students how to use them well. A subtle but essential difference." She encourages teachers to invite students into a lifelong relationship with the power of language.

Resource for Further Reading

For further reading about these articles, click here:

[*Educational Leadership*](#)



Threading the Tapestry: Building Reading Stamina

Laura Hooven, DDE

Stamina is defined as the ability to sustain prolonged physical or mental effort, but did you also know stamina is derived from the Latin word *stamen* meaning “thread” and has a mythological connection with the Fates who spun the threads of life for humans? I could expand upon this connection with the myth; however, while I find mythology most entertaining, my purpose of this article is to share with you strategies for creating threads, if you will, to implement with our students who find it difficult to read text for extended periods of time. As you are most aware, today’s tests require students across grade levels and content areas to read longer passages for comprehension at deeper complexity levels. With the emphasis on challenging readers with texts at and above their Lexile levels, our students must be well equipped to meet the goals of the high stakes tests. So, if you will bear with me and this unusual metaphor, I will happily share techniques that may be helpful as you develop reading stamina in your students.

A weaver must spin the weft through a warp of fine threads to create a beautiful tapestry. As the shuttle moves back and forth, the weaver closely observes the fabric for a tight and consistent fit. Similarly, teachers must steadily weave the threads of persistence and determination within their students to create a tapestry of stamina. In her article “Teaching Persistence: How to Build Student Stamina,” Norene Wiesen (2014) offers several strategies for weaving these fine threads. Wiesen’s article reveals the following:

Help Learners Develop a Growth Mindset

Learners need to know that they have the ability to grow and change, and the effort is the key. Praise them when they focus their efforts toward specific, clearly defined goals. Help learners make the connection between effort and achievement. The goal is for learners to become intrinsically motivated to engage in effortful learning now and in the future.

Push a Little Bit—and Know When Enough is Enough

Sometimes learners just need a little bit of encouragement to get past a hurdle. Supportive words can make all the difference. On the other hand, a learner may need to know that it’s okay to take a break and come back to a particular task when he’s feeling less frustrated.

Model Persistence

Most learners love to hear personal stories from their teachers. Telling your learners about an experience that didn’t go as planned and how you got through it and completed it is a great way to help learners see that everyone feels like giving up sometimes.

Teach Positive Self-Talk

Some learners need a lot of help knowing what to say to themselves to stay motivated. Giving learners specific wording, like, “I know I can do this if I keep at it,” or “If I’m really stuck I can ask a friend or my teacher for help,” can begin to change the way they think and act when faced with a challenge.

Expect More

Let learners know that you have high expectations and that you have confidence that each and every one of them can meet those expectations. Be sure they have access to the tools they need to be successful, and that they know how to use them.

Make the Most of Technology

Online tools provide learners with opportunities to build reading stamina. Further, many programs provide immediate performance feedback once completing activities within the program. This tool can increase learner stamina while integrating technology into the lesson.

Call Out the Brain

It’s never too early—or too late—to teach students about how the brain learns. Introduce the concept of brain plasticity—the idea that the brain changes in response to how it’s used—as a way of reinforcing the idea that learning is achieved through focused, sustained effort. Help them understand that every brain is capable of making dramatic changes and leaps in learning.

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

Students learn stamina in the same way that they learn sight words or multiplication tables—through repetition. Strategies like modeling persistence, connecting effort to achievement, and pushing students to do a little more than they think they can aren’t a one-time deal. But when repeated over time, the cumulative effect will likely be increased stamina, improved persistence, and intrinsic motivation for even greater learning.

Weaving a tapestry is no easy task; however, the threads of persistence and determination can be woven tightly into individual tapestries to develop reading stamina. To be successful, teachers must consistently provide readers with high-interest, challenging texts on a variety of subjects, and interventions when students become frustrated with longer reading passages. Remember, tapestries take time to weave. It takes patience and skill. Building reading stamina within our students is no different.

Wiesen, N. (2014, January 14). Teaching persistence: How to build student stamina. *The Science of Learning*. [Blog]. Retrieved from <http://www.scilearn.com/blog/teaching-persistence-how-to-build-student-stamina.php>



Teaching Argument Writing to English Learners

How in the world are we supposed to apply Common Core writing standards to teaching English language learners?

Authors Larry Ferlazzo and Katie Hull-Sypnieski (2014) assert that they have developed a tentative answer to this question in their article titled *Teaching Argument Writing to ELLs*. After reviewing the resources on teaching English language learners and combining what they have learned through their own classroom experiences, they provide examples of what it looks like in the classroom with ELLs at three different levels of proficiency. We have provided each level with a brief explanation.

Beginner ELLs: *For Want of a Loaf of Bread* Teaching Problem/Solution Writing—

This example shows how to use students' prior knowledge in conjunction with explicit academic language and grammar support. The activity offers repeated opportunities for students to reinforce their listening, speaking, and writing skills, including being able to focus on just one or two grammatical issues, such as subject-verb agreement. (For example, all English language learners, and especially for beginners, it's crucial to not go overboard and correct every single grammatical error).

Intermediate ELLs: *Whose Neighborhood is Best?*

Teaching Evidence and Claims—

In this neighborhood comparison project, students identify the criteria they'll use to determine their claim—not the other way around. They're doing close reading of digital texts and field research to identify additional evidence that supports their claims. Finally, the concept attainment approach gets students to use an assisted discovery process to improve grammar.

Advanced ELLs: *Smartphones—Good or Bad in Class?*

Teaching Argument Writing—

In this example, students identified the features of effective claims and evidence and explored these features through close reading by making both annotations and their thinking visual. Graphic organizers and sentence frames, as well as preteaching and regular reinforcement of academic vocabulary, served as scaffolds for their learning. Responding to a writing prompt was less overwhelming because students learned how to create their own graphic organizers to support their thinking and writing.

According to Ferlazzo and Hull-Sypnieski, “[t]his is the basis of much writing: **We read and listen** to the claims and proposals of others, **and we respond** and join the conversation.” At the outset of the article, the authors point out that “[e]ducators need to keep in mind three crucial elements when teaching writing to English language learners (ELLs) in the context of the Common Core Standards:

- ⇒ Students should begin by reading more informational texts than they did before—these can include closed captioned videos and digital-supported forms— and they should engage in close reading...There should be a strong connection between reading and writing.
- ⇒ As students read in preparation for writing an argument, they should look for evidence they can use to inform their valid and logical claims to critique other claims and evidence they might read.
- ⇒ In their writing, students should use the structure, vocabulary, and style that best suits their purpose, topic, and audience. Teachers should provide ample opportunities for students to develop and use higher academic vocabulary.

In order for students to become better, stronger writers, they need explicit instruction. Teachers must make an explicit connection between reading and writing for their students. One of the strongest features of this article is the practical application of instructional strategies to facilitate writing with ELLs. The authors' detailed explanations for teaching ELLs argumentative writing gives the kind of specification that is helpful for teachers when planning and designing instruction.

For full explanations of each example at three proficiency levels, click on the title of the article.

Ferlazzo, L., & Hull-Sypnieski, K. (2014). *Teaching Argument Writing to ELLs*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

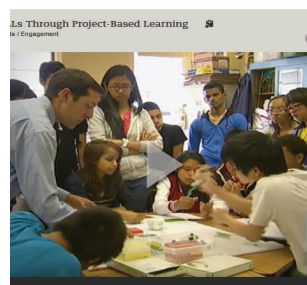
Watch with a peer...Click on the title below the image to see and hear insights on deepening learning for English Language Learners.



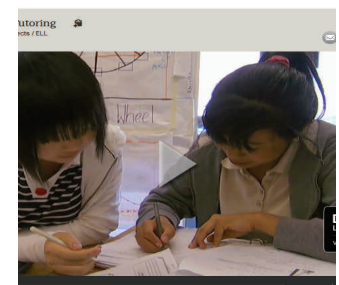
[Milton Chen on Deeper Learning for ELLs](#)



[Deeper Learning for English Language Learners](#)



[Supporting ELLs Through Project-Based Learning](#)



[Peer-to-Peer Tutoring](#)

Teaching the Writer's Craft

Penny Kittle is an English teacher and literacy coach at Kennett High School in North Conway, New Hampshire. Her books include *Book Love: Developing Depth, Stamina, and Passion in Adolescent Readers* (2012) and *Write Beside Them: Risk, Voice, and Clarity in High School Writing* (2008).

Talk about the voice of experience and the power of a hook... reading Ms. Kittle's article indicts the way we customarily teach the craft of writing! Kittle explains, "...[T]eachers too often act like scolds, red pens in hand, stamping out sin and punishing errors. There's a better way; we can lure students into crafting artful sentences through systematic and playful practice." This and some of her other anecdotes make the reader cringe, for the incredibly punitive practices perpetrated on our students have all but castrated any student's love of writing, and fun is absolutely forbidden in the tundra of classroom practices, many of which are antithetical to raising student achievement. This article is a **must-read**.

Kittle advocates *Six Practices That Build Savvy Writers*:

- ◆ **Independent Reading** Have you noticed a trend in the thinking of outstanding educators? All the experts agree that reading makes better writers, and writing makes better readers. Why is this so hard to understand? *Students need rich reading lives of depth and complexity and power. They need to be exposed to the fine craft of skillful writing in large doses.* Find passages from beautifully crafted sentences by great writers, and let students explore the power of such writing. [This is exactly the same rationale for dumping the practice of giving students butchered sentences to correct in the DDL/DGP world!]
- ◆ **Providing Topic Choice** *Students who choose what they write about bring passion and focus to the task of writing. Don't ask students to write only about Walden or the impact of slavery on early America; let them write about what captivates them. Ask them to argue for changes they believe in.*



- ◆ **Daily Revision** Did you notice the words "daily" and "revision"? It begs the question, are you asking your students to WRITE daily? *This daily rereading, listening, and tuning of their writing has a huge effect on my students' understanding of the power of their voice and the rhythm of their words.*

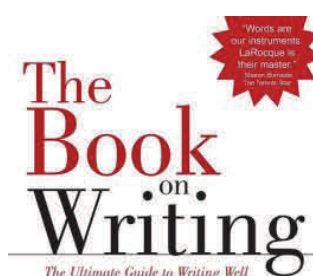
- ◆ **Sentence Study** *Students can learn to write with a sense of craft guiding them. I ask students to imitate interesting sentences, noticing how punctuation works in a sentence and then practice using it as they craft their own sentences.* Call it DDL, if you must, but give students extraordinary sentences, and let them discuss the power of the punctuation and word choice (Jeff Anderson... again).

- ◆ **Combining Sentences** *In their meta-analysis of writing instruction, Graham & Perin (2007) cite combining sentences as one of 11 strategies that move adolescent writers forward. This strategy helps writers experiment with possibilities.* Again, Kittle offers a classroom anecdote to prove her point. She gives her students four sentences and asks them to combine them into one with surprising results.

- ◆ **Modeling the Writer's Craft** OK, teachers, this one takes courage; you must expose your own writing and let students hear that you struggle to put the words together, too. *I write in front of my students, demonstrating the decisions I make to clarify and tune sentences. I model the composition of essays, letters, and stories that matter to me, that I am deeply invested in crafting. ... Passion is contagious.*

Click on the cover of the April, 2014 Issue of EL for the entire article (see p. 2).

Writing Resource



Paula LaRocque
America's Foremost Writing Coach

***The Book on Writing: The Ultimate Guide to Writing Well* by Paula LaRocque** (Grey and Guvnor Press, 2013)

Be wary of jargon. Use the active voice. Get right to the point, and stay there. These are a few of the dozen basic but powerful guidelines that Paula LaRocque explores in *The Book on Writing*. Writers at all skill levels can benefit from her thoughtful discussion of the writer's craft, illustrated with many examples.

The book also explores the more complex area of story-telling devices. In discussing the device "let sound echo sense," for instance, she muses on William Faulkner's choice of a name for the repellent Snopes family at the center of three of his novels:

"Words make more than meaning; they make sounds, and Faulkner knew that SN words often identified something distasteful or unpleasant; snot, snub, snitch, snit, sneer, snoop, snaggletooth, and so forth. He was persnickety about the words he chose, as careful writers are, because he knew that he could get more mileage out of words that had the right sound." (p. 161)

The above review is provided by the publisher, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

ELA Summer Academy Update— “Teachers: Classroom Change Agents”

ABOUT THE ACADEMY

In February we announced our 2014 ELA/Literacy Summer Academy professional learning series. The Summer Academy will feature a two-day-long series of workshops presented by educators from across the state. The workshops will focus on creative, unique instructional strategies designed to enhance and facilitate the shifts that are inherent in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards: text complexity, rigor, informational text, and writing from evidence.

June 3-4 KSU Center

June 11-12 Coastal Georgia Center

June 16-17 Middle Georgia State College (FULL)

June 23-24 Darton State College

July 14-15 UGA Conference Center (FULL)

July 21-22 Clarence Brown Conference Center

There is no fee to attend the Summer Academy.

Be sure to check with you district contact for information travel and hotel expenses (they will be reimburse to you through your local school district).

Check your local district for what is required.



DAILY EVENT SCHEDULE

Day 1

8:00 to 8:30 am Plenary Session
 8:45 to 10:00 am Workshop I
 10:15 to 11:30 am Workshop II
 11:30 to 1:00 pm Lunch & Learn with TKES
 1:00 to 2:15 pm Workshop III
 2:30 to 3:45 pm Workshop IV

Day 2

8:00 to 8:30 am Plenary Session
 8:45 to 10:00 am Workshop I
 10:15 to 11:30 am Workshop II
 11:30 to 1:00 pm Lunch & Learn with TRL
 1:00 to 2:15 pm Workshop III
 2:30 to 3:45 pm Facilitated Team Time

For more information visit our website at <https://www.georgiastandards.org/Common-Core/Pages/ELA-Literacy-Summer-Academy.aspx>

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DOE ELA Home Page:

http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ci_services.aspx?PageReq=CIServEnglish

GeorgiaStandards.Org ELA Page:

<https://www.georgiastandards.org/Common-Core/Pages/ELA.aspx>

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