

Why We Wrote This Book

We developed this book because we've been there—we are former classroom teachers who have felt that there is a deep well of lessons for teaching informational writing. That's why we wrote with a "more is more" approach, providing 17 lessons so you have options for a wide range of students.

The lessons in this book address various genres of informational writing and offer explicit support for types of writing your students will learn to write. They also support students at a range of developmental stages, from kindergarten through sixth grade. Each lesson is designed with your busy schedule in mind, and includes three features among others:

- the ideal genre(s) for the strategy presented
- suggested developmental stage(s)
- concise and explicit teaching language
- cross-references to other augmenting lessons
- tips for making the learning stick



Erik



Michelle



Kirsten

In each lesson, we took a flexible approach to teaching, providing one of four different methods while still offering alternative approaches for instruction. This lesson is critical to our vision because so many of the teachers with whom we work have expressed frustration with ready-made lessons that didn't differentiate for students—or for teachers. So you will discover a host of lessons, accommodations and alternative options for

Demonstration when you sense that students need explicit modeling

Explain with Examples when you want students to learn from experts

Guided Practice when you think your students are ready to join in

Inquiry when students have enough background knowledge to coconstruct their own meaning

These five options help you scaffold instruction so you can be responsive to the needs of your unique class. The options also help you design a path between the complexity of a particular strategy and students' current writing abilities.

And finally, we knew this process is also built on a deep trust in you—in your desire to bring each lesson to life with your own style, language, personal questions, favorite resources, and so on. We hope it helps you build learning that is both personal and grounded in massive evidence of the effectiveness of the informational genre.

Sincerely,

Erik, Michelle, and Kirsten

LLJ: The Living Library Network

www.livinglibrarynetwork.com

How This Book Works

The levels of science is represented by labeled sections: **Engagement & Habits**, **Foundations & Connections**, **Genetics & Experimentation**, **Change & Balance**, **Plan & Develop**, **Scale & System**, **Exit & Reconnect**, and **Process & Reflect**. Each section includes an *At-a-Glance Guide* of science topics that are generally related by complexity and/or grouped by grade when possible. With each lesson, the *At-a-Glance Guide* indicates the grade and developmental stage(s) that are most appropriate for that lesson. The developmental stages of science are presented into three broad categories: **Emergent**, **Transitional**, and **Fluent**. See the chart below.

Developmental Stage	Description	Typical Grade Levels
Emergent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use formal observations with labels, photos, or simple sentences to capture something. 	Emergent, Early First Grade
Transitional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use sketches and multiple sentences to write with detail. Use a variety of strategies to approximate words and spell many words correctly. 	Late First, Second, Early Third Grade
Fluent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write with easy details early across paragraphs. Use a large repertoire of strategies and spelling patterns to spell words with ease. 	Late Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth Grade

Figure 1. Book Templates with Explanations

The figure shows a page from the book 'Engagement & Habits'. The page has a green background. At the top, the title 'Engagement & Habits' is written in white. Below the title, there is a section titled 'Descriptions for High Levels of Engagement and Good Habits'. This section is divided into two columns: 'Emergent Writers' and 'Fluent Writers'. The 'Emergent Writers' column lists characteristics such as 'Writes simple sentences and uses simple words to describe something' and 'Writes simple sentences and uses simple words to describe something'. The 'Fluent Writers' column lists characteristics such as 'Writes paragraphs that include details and uses a variety of strategies to approximate words and spell many words correctly' and 'Writes paragraphs that include details and uses a variety of strategies to approximate words and spell many words correctly'. At the bottom of the page, there is an illustration of a child holding a large pencil and a lightbulb. A red callout box on the right side of the page points to the title and says: 'The *Engagement & Habits* and *Foundations & Connections* Frameworks include science topics that are generally related by complexity and/or grouped by grade when possible. The text of the sections are designed to support the writing process, offering content and strategies that are most appropriate for that lesson. The developmental stages of science are presented into three broad categories: Emergent, Transitional, and Fluent. See the chart below.' Another red callout box on the right side of the page points to the 'Emergent Writers' and 'Fluent Writers' columns and says: 'In the book about 200 we included activities, illustrations and short stories to help students with a good reference point for representing scientific phenomena.'

Flexible Use

You can utilize this book for several different purposes:

- to create genre-based writing units
- to enhance current units
- to differentiate instruction
- to support other writing tasks

Create Genre-Based Writing Units

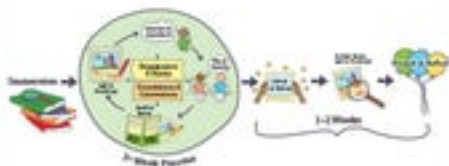
If you are using this book to create your own genre-based writing units or to enhance your current instruction, the book makes under the assumption that the writing process is the responsibility of the student. The writing process looks slightly different across the grades (Figure 2). The primary writing process (K-2) is meant to be cyclical in nature, giving students multiple exposures to writing in a genre, building their stamina as writers, and most importantly producing a high volume of writing. This means that emergent writers will have frequent and often numerous "bookend" units before choosing one final item to go to the final stages of the writing process.

In the intermediate grades (3-5), the writing process is more linear in nature.

The volume of writing will appear differently at each stage of the writing process. In the early phases, volume refers to notebook entries. Typically, in Grade 3, writers are able to fill one notebook page in a sitting. 4th graders may fill 2-3 pages per writing. For drafting volume refers to the number of sentences on a page, paragraphs written, or one-line run-tell-if-a-student-is-particularly-engaged. However, it is important to note that a student should not produce only one piece of writing after a five-week unit. Rather, a student could produce multiple drafts within a unit to allow for increased independence and improved skill at writing in a genre before choosing one to publish.

Figure 2. Writing Process

Primary Grades



Intermediate Grades



Enhance Current Units

In each unit, you will find a series of lessons. Usually, the lessons move from least complex to most complex. Most of the time, if you are looking for a lesson for a concept within, those lessons are listed toward the beginning of the unit. There is an indicator that alerts you to the developmental stage of the lesson. There are no grade-level indicators because it's highly likely that teachers will use lessons ranging in complexity to meet the needs of individual writers. Teachers might find that they have a first-grade writer who needs sophisticated lessons. At the same time, a fourth-grade teacher might have a student who would benefit from some of the emergent lessons.

The reason as the teacher to look at any unit as a whole and select lessons as needed to fill in any instructional gaps.

Differentiate Instruction

The related lessons make it easy to find lessons that address needs in 1:1 situations or in small groups because each section is organized by skill. Again, because the lessons generally progress from Emergent to Fluent, you will know where in the section to look to find relevant teaching points for students. You might have a specific group of students who need help planning with lines. In this case, the "Plan It (writing)" section will have an array of lessons to choose from to map out a series of small-group lessons. If some students struggle to find ideas, you could go to the "Generate It (speaking)" related section to find support. Overall, these sections help you create a game plan that targets specific areas for writers by using the lessons you find will meet the students' needs.

Support Other Writing Tasks

The book can also be used as a flip-and-find resource to support other types of writing tasks or assignments. Custom-use teachers can easily access lessons to align with their writing projects. Additionally, teachers who use an assigned topic or task approach to the teaching of writing can find lessons to support student writers.

Figure 3 Lesson Templates with Labels and Explanations

The diagram illustrates a lesson template titled "Borrow Ideas from Others" with several callout boxes explaining its components:

- Top-left box:** Each lesson is organized in the following order: Introduction, Generate It (speaking), Plan It (writing), Write It (writing), and Revise It (writing).
- Top-middle box:** Lesson titles can be changed to match objectives or used as a subheading for the lesson content.
- Top-right box:** A related lesson can be highlighted in the background and placed on a page with a note about its date.
- Left box:** The introduction of this lesson is an important one because it sets the stage for the writing process. The goal of the lesson is to provide an opportunity for students to generate a unique idea for their writing.
- Bottom-left box:** The "Plan It (writing)" section provides students with a chance to plan their writing. This section includes a writing prompt and a writing task.
- Bottom-middle box:** The "Write It (writing)" section provides students with a chance to write their ideas. This section includes a writing prompt and a writing task.
- Bottom-right box:** The "Revise It (writing)" section provides students with a chance to revise their writing. This section includes a writing prompt and a writing task.
- Bottom-right box (separate):** Type and relevance activity is important to support independent and collaborative writing.
- Bottom-center box:** Supporting writing tasks are important to support independent and collaborative writing.

Intentional Teaching Methods

You might consider a variety of ways to teach each lesson. Which the students will depend on the complexity of the strategy or concept, the level of scaffolding and support needed, and the method that will be most clearly. These considerations make lessons effective and efficient. Each lesson offers suggestions using the six teaching methods.



Demonstration

"Watch me as I show you how" is the key to writing in a concrete method for your demonstration. Demonstration shows students how you utilize a strategy or technique while explaining your thought process or you go through your writing. Through "watching me how" you show your decision-making as you consider multiple possibilities before settling on the best choice. It also shows you anticipate and track "lead" support for the struggles and challenges that your students will likely face when applying their own writing. (See Lesson 11 on pages 20–21 for a sample Demonstration lesson.)



Explain with Examples

Let's take a look at a few examples. With this method, you display examples of writing and discuss the effect that a particular technique might have on the writing or on the reader. Examples can be pulled from a writer's work, writing produced by fellow classmates, or the writing of published authors. These examples are complete and ready to share before instruction, which saves time when students are too lengthy to write while students are watching. It is particularly powerful when a classroom's work is presented as a way to learn from peers. (See Lesson 12 on pages 24–25 for a sample Explain with Examples lesson.)



Guided Practice

Let's try it together! You might explore when guiding students through the steps of a strategy. Collaborating helps students learn as possibilities and make decisions independently. When students work on the way, the level of engagement is particularly high, as all students are participating while you synthesize responses. This method is beneficial if the strategy is relatively new or complex. With guided practice, you will have students brainstorm, then discuss shared writing, practice writing, or experience writing. The three approaches are briefly described below.

Shared Writing

In shared writing, you enter with the students and act as the writer. Many or all of the ideas will come from the students as you guide, offer suggestions, combine ideas, and ask questions to provide elaboration. Shared writing works at all levels, purposes, and genres of writing. However, in order for the students to contribute in meaningful ways, the topic must be based on shared experiences or content knowledge. Encourage you act as scribe, the students are able to share their strongest content like development, language, style, and other key features of the writing.

Interactive Writing

Interactive writing, much like shared writing, provides students with the opportunity to write with you. However, in this instructional approach you share the pen with the students. The act of "passing the pen" invites students to come to the front of the class and write parts of the composition. The rest of the class observes or participates in key areas locally. Most often, interactive writing focuses on conventions. With purposeful students, you might focus on looking for words to revise, using appropriate capitalization, or including punctuation. With older students, interactive writing can be used for spelling patterns, using conjunctions and transitions, and punctuation.

Interactive Editing

Interactive editing also involves sharing the pen with students. However, here the focus is on editing rather than composing. Instead of being a shared pen, you take the role with interactive writing to interactive editing the text as already written. The focus is on checking for errors and making corrections. Depending on the grade level, you might also decide to teach students proofreading marks in order for them to transfer that work to peer writing and proofreading each other's work. (See Lesson 13 on pages 30–31 for a sample Guided Practice lesson.)



Inquiry

"What do you notice the writer has done here?" A teacher will often ask this question during a guided inquiry while presenting a text. Students will answer the text requires that we notice because we can see how and why they are being used in a text. Inquiry is powerful because it allows students to recognize, draw conclusions, and become by themselves how writers can learn from other writers. Inquiry is best for sharing author's craft, analyzing sentence structures, and the appropriate use of conventions. (See Lesson 13 on pages 42–43 for a sample Inquiry lesson.)

Structuring the Lesson

Once you determine the teaching method that is best for students, organize your plan for the day. In this book, the lessons are structured using a four-part lesson. A four-part lesson is a lesson presentation to provide instruction in whole-class and small-group settings. You present students of about 15 to 20 minutes in the writing process and offer a tip with some guidance on how to move forward. Teaching is not an assignment but an offering of a helpful strategy, tool, or technique that students might try in their own writing when applicable. Some students are working with a variety of topics, one or different genres in their writing projects, and above all, are developmentally different, every strategy or technique that you teach may not be applicable or useful to every student on a particular day. (This thinking provides the application of the day's main lesson strategy may lead to confusion, frustration, or repeated technique application.)

Four-Part Structure

We recommend the four-part lesson structure:

1. **Introduce**
2. **Instruct**
3. **Guide**
4. **Release**

INTRODUCE

3-5 Minutes

In the first part of the four-part lesson, you introduce the new day's learning.

Then you identify what the day's lesson objective and discuss why a writer would use that particular technique and how it affects the development of the writing piece in its impact on the reader.

INSTRUCT

15-20 Minutes

In the second part of the four-part lesson, you apply one of the teaching methods—*Demonstrate, Explain, and Examples, Model, Practice, or Inquire*—depending on the level of scaffolding needed, student engagement, and student time.

GUIDE

15-20 Minutes

In the third part of the four-part lesson, you guide students through a quick opportunity to practice or attempt the technique together with you. During this time, students can help add to your writing, contribute ideas for a shared writing, write their own piece using the strategy in a partner task, try it on a dry-erase board, or in their own writing, or, even offer, name with a partner where they might attempt the strategy in their own writing. This is a crucial step to set students up for transfer, to assess understanding, and to provide time to work on spelling and grammar skills.

RELEASE

15 Minutes

In the final part of the four-part lesson, you release the lesson. Praise and reward students of how they are learning the new writing process. Encourage students that the day's lesson is also transferable to other writing projects throughout the unit and beyond. Then, students go off to work independently on their own writing while you monitor.

Pathways to Teaching Genre

Introduce students to a particular genre at the start of a unit of study. Intentionally allow for students to see the “big picture” before the unit starts so that they get a sense of how the kind of writing typically looks. In this first genre activity of units and place this in specific areas in the classroom where they are accessible—top of folders, labeled bookshelves, or displayed on top of bookshelves. Typically, instruction happens during reading, but it can also happen in writing during the first few days of a unit. You need about 10 minutes first to copy the text, and then to explore specific aspects of the writing, including the features, structures, craft, and style. You can create journal prompts for this and that students’ writings to serve as a reference throughout the unit.

Immersion increases students’ domain-specific vocabulary because they are exposed to terms related to writing and writing techniques, such as: expository writing, headings, compare and contrast structure, facts, statistics, onomatopoeia, etc.

Informational Genres

Informational writing encompasses any genre of writing whose primary purpose is to inform the reader or convey information about a topic. Within any text type, whether it be narrative, informational, or expository/argument, there exist many different genres and subgenres. The genre in the world is presenting information. Although a genre cannot be outlined in a single formula, a few common features that can be noted and described. Many lessons in this book are by used across genres due to these similar features. However, some lessons are better suited to teaching particular genres rather than others. In the chart on page 12, the genres we highlight in this text are listed and described.

Helpful Terms

Text structure: how the overall text, or a section of a text, is organized (compare/contrast, cause/effect, etc.)

Text feature: components of a text that are generally not part of the main body (text marks, diagrams, tables, etc.)

Highlighted Genres

Genre	Description	Structure	Language Style
Text Book	Nonfiction (expository) texts that are written to inform or persuade. They are often found in textbooks, encyclopedias, and other reference materials. They are typically written in a clear, concise, and objective style.	Expository Cause and Effect Compare and Contrast Problem and Solution Textbook Textbook Textbook	Formal, objective, and clear. Often uses a variety of sentence structures and vocabulary to convey information. Includes many technical terms and specific details.
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Tips for Making Every Lesson Great



- 1. Own your classroom.** Display your lesson plan maps, strategic questioning, or rules, make an anchor chart that can act as a co-teacher. Color code it, add visuals, and display it. You might even consider providing students with small copies of the chart to glue into their writer's notebooks, keep in their writing folders, or to add to a class folder exclusively for resources.
- 2. Use the entire school day.** Teaching, coach, observe, and write! Make use of all possible opportunities to reinforce a skill or concept taught. Write times in journals to give students easy access to your writing. Consider your subjects as an ideal place to embed shared writing and extensive writing practice.
- 3. Engage in shared writing and extensive writing.** Both activities provide a wealth of opportunities to reinforce skills. Shared writing is helpful for idea development— from considering a text's structure to elaborating on details. Extensive writing is essential for reinforcing connections, including organization, spelling, and punctuation.
- 4. Make sure every child can see.** Write down definitions, descriptions, and examples. Use large, bold print or enlargement is visible to children in the back of the classroom or off to the side. Be mindful of students with visual impairments, and of nonprint students. By keeping notes in place, have without excessive use of index or binder. Add visuals to notes to assist students.
- 5. Coach through some notes.** As children learn to write to practice during the lesson periods, begin carefully and move over to more students in the right direction when needed. Provide concise prompts, pose questions, and share thoughtful responses to facilitate the conversation.
- 6. Share thoughtful responses.** Share not only the best answers or reactions that you feel children can learn from, but also from carefully editing or modeling without parroting their responses. Encourage or prompt comments on others' responses. We want to send students off with correct information before they go off to work independently.
- 7. Model with developmentally appropriate work.** Only students don't do the work you keep expectations elevated. When you model how your volume of writing matches what your students can do developmentally—though it may take time to write them a bit further. The more kids see for topics, vocabulary, and craft elements.
- 8. Release spelling expectations.** Release writing students to spell words correctly with knowing what is acceptable at different stages of development. While students are developing phonological awareness, it is best to encourage them to use what they know about letters and sounds. This may mean that some words are not perfectly spelled and that's okay. Furthermore, when students are choosing topics, drafting, and writing, let them focus on content. When publishing to blogs, focus on writing words correctly.

Engagement & Habits

The focus of lessons in this section includes habits of writing that go beyond just informational writing. The lessons:

- can be used in any sort of study and can be repeated throughout the unit.
- are especially useful at the beginning of the year, while getting a writing workshop up and running, and
- can be revisited throughout the year to ensure that engagement and good habits remain central to nurturing student growth.

Descriptors for High Levels of Engagement and Good Habits

Emergent Writers

- Engaging writing in a 2-part folder— one side is designated for work in progress, while the other is for finished that we labeled "The now"
- Use tools to support independence: alphabet, blend, and graph cards, books of high-frequency words, and small copies of writer's charts
- Build minutes for writing, beginning at 10 minutes and increasing to 20 minutes by year's end
- Increase the volume of writing, beginning with a single sheet of paper that includes an illustration and quickly moving to stapled booklets of 2 pages or more
- Write a single sentence or two per day, alternating 2 to more pages with 2 plus lines per day

Fluent Writers

- Keep penmanship in a composition notebook and draft on loose leaf paper (insert in a folder to use as a laptop)
- Use tools to support independence: word banks, dictionaries, thesauruses, and small copies of writer's charts
- Build minutes for writing, beginning at 20 minutes and increasing to 40 minutes per writing
- Aim for 2-3 full paragraphs or longer leaf paper per day as the volume of writing

