

Seven Steps to Higher Writing Scores!

1. Provide at least 15 minutes each day when students must write with “no strings attached.” They will not be required to share this writing unless they choose. This is “writing practice” time and it’s OK to make mistakes or to just “think on paper.”
2. Provide time for students to share writing orally *if they wish*. This can be done with the full class, small groups, writing partners, or in a cross-age arrangement with another class.
3. Write WITH your students (at least occasionally) and share your writing *just for fun!* If YOU model a love for writing, they will pick up your enthusiasm.
4. Only a small percentage of students’ writing should be taken to the end of the writing process. This practice tends to bore students – and they may begin to hate what they have written. Most writing should be seen as “practice.” Only a few pieces need to be “published” - and those should be for an authentic purpose and audience.
5. Rely on “Mini-Lessons” of 5 – 10 minutes to teach conventions. Keep “Common Error” or “Our Writing Rules” charts prominently visible at all times. Students will refer to this chart when they are editing their own work or that of their peers. Have students keep lists of personal rules and spelling challenges in addition to the class chart.
6. Use a “Kid Friendly” Scoring Guide” on a regular basis so that students begin to internalize the six areas in which their writing is evaluated. Using the scoring guide vocabulary regularly will help students understand the concepts. Never focus on all areas at once. Students (and teachers!) may feel overwhelmed.
7. “IDEAS before MECHANICS”
“CONCEPTS before SKILLS”

When students become excited about *IDEAS and CONCEPTS*, they will feel motivated to improve mechanics and skills. Focusing on mechanics and skills first may kill enthusiasm to generate ideas and think about concepts, or the “Big Ideas.” Always remember that learning to write is learning to *think*.