

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Thinking Strategies Used by Proficient Learners:

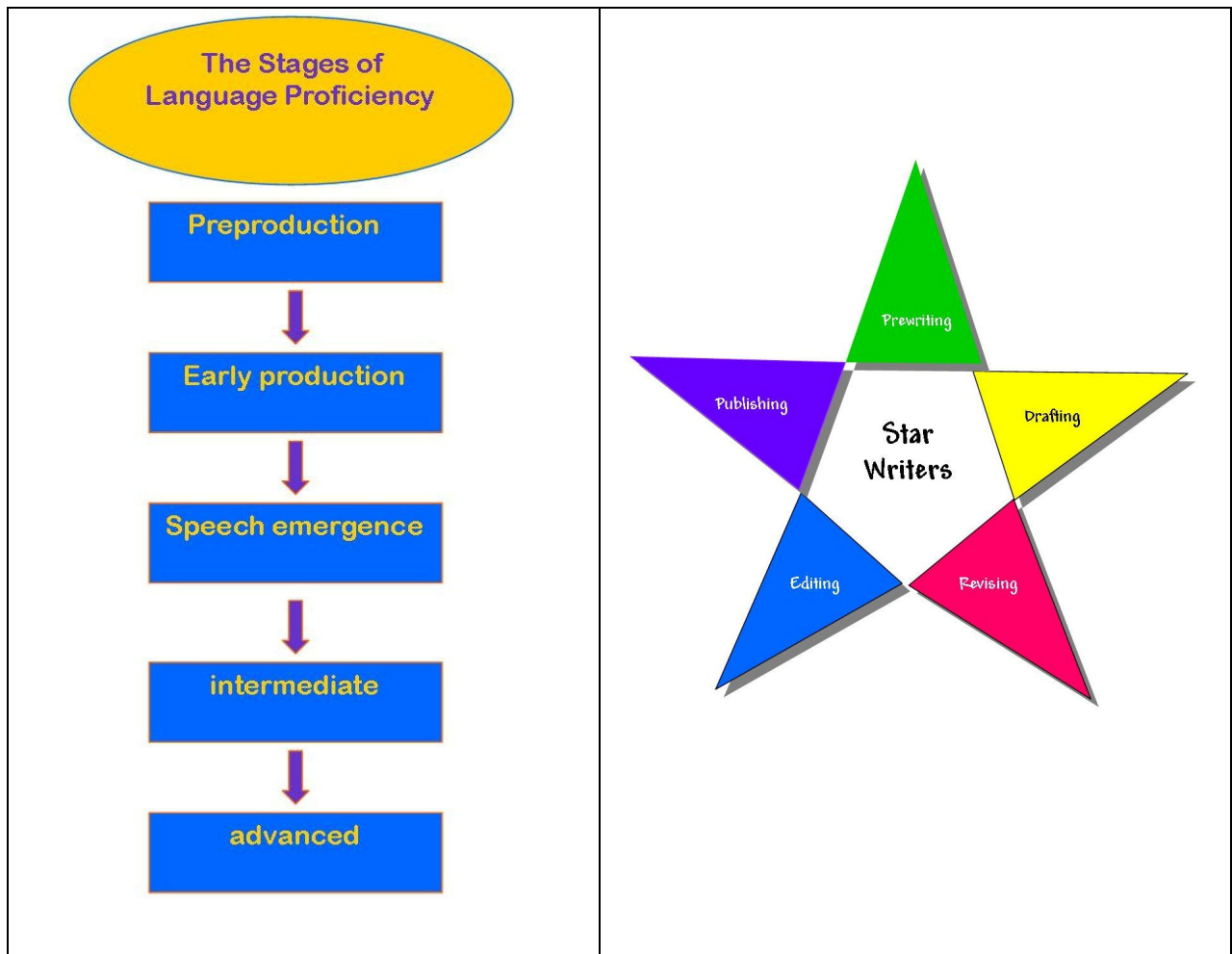
Wow! Writing really *is* a combination of *thinking and learning processes!*

Focus on what the writer can do:

I agree with the author that in order to teach our students how to write we need to “leave behind what the writer cannot do and look at what proficient writers do and then teach students how to do it.” To start, analyze the student work then focus on the things they can do and develop lessons from this. This is great because instead of looking at our students like there is something “wrong” with them and we need to “fix” them, we can instead build on what they can already do well.

Graphic Organizers:

I found it helpful to create a couple of graphic organizers for the stages of language proficiency and writing process.



CHAPTER 2 BEST PRACTICES

Including Language and Culture:

I have always been a big proponent of including the students' culture and language as much as possible in the classroom for the reason that I want them to feel their culture is valued and respected. I want diversity to be alive and well in the classroom with individual differences being celebrated. However, I also learned something new regarding other positive outcomes of including language and culture in the classroom! It is a way to access prior knowledge which aids in comprehension! Along these same lines, the questions for examining cultural relevance of writing will be very helpful to me in the classroom as well because it is specific and gives a practical guide for both the teacher and the students to use.

Noticing the World:

This reminds me of when I journal. It isn't for an audience, it is instead my thinking in words. I like the use of the Writer's Notebooks as a tool for perceiving the world. This not only acts as a way for students to use thinking skills and to make sense of the world around them, it also is a fantastic way to address social issues! One of my other passions is helping kids to become socially aware and realizing they can make a difference. This is such a good set of mini-lessons all the way around because it addresses social issues, jumpstarts students' thinking processes and ties it all together with writing.

CHAPTER 3 ASSESSING WRITING

"...getting ELLs to write and to love writing and to become proficient writers."

I didn't know there were so many assessments available to use to help ELLs become better writers and most importantly *teach the writer!* Assessments for future reference:

- High-Stakes Testing
- Three-Day Writing Assessment
 - *remember: use of prompts and "writers make their own decisions."
- Quick Assessment
- Rubrics, Scoring Guides and Checklists (see the chart "Building an Effective Writing Process Over Time.")
- Anecdotal Records

Writer's Notebooks:

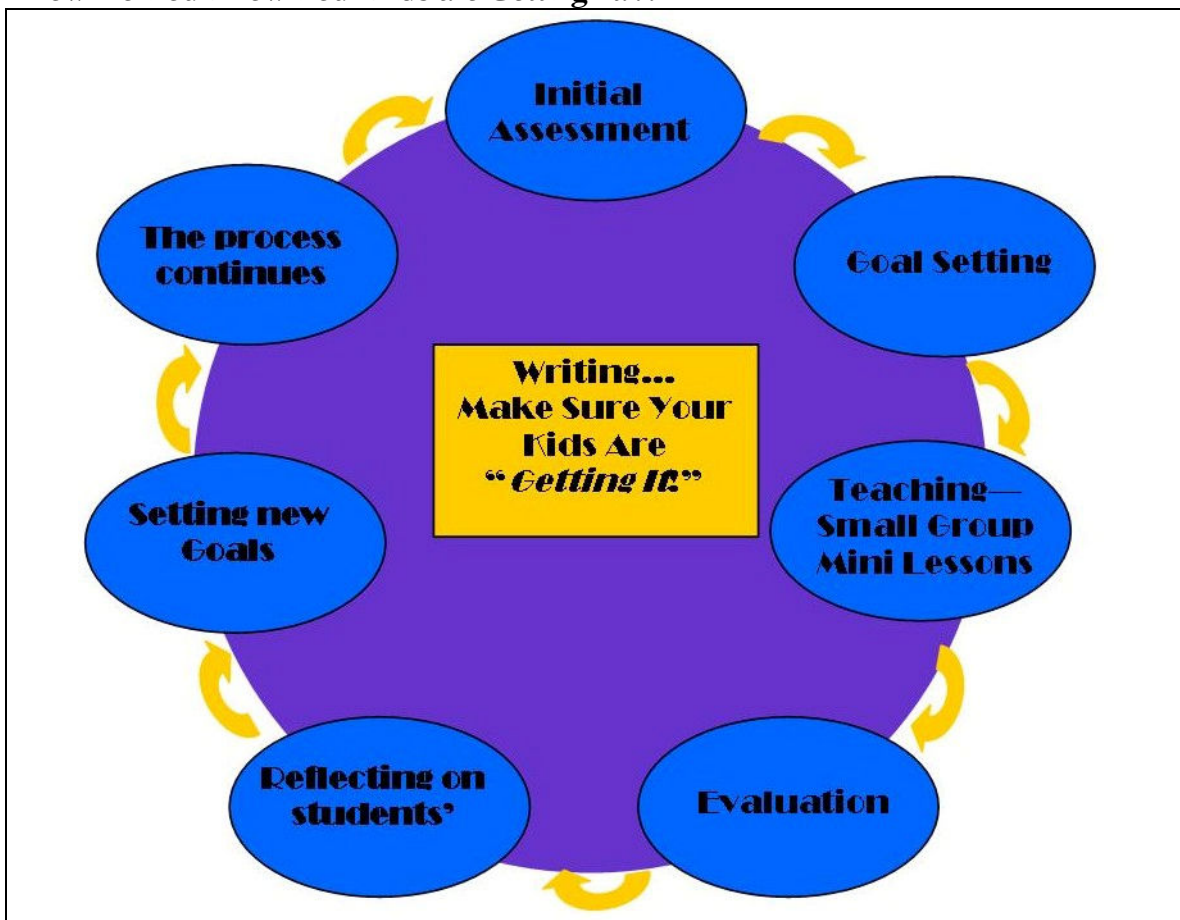
I've been doing this for a few years with the end result being: a yearly Holiday newsletter (! I don't just write about what my family has been up to I also write inspirational pieces, write about books that I would suggest, etc.), stories (fiction and non-fiction-my favorite ones are ones about my daughter when she was a baby), plans, my websites (MySpace, Professional Portfolio and Personal) and my blog page. Wow, I didn't even know I was doing something great! The only difference is my notebook is located on my computer. This works well for

me but I want to transition over to a physical notebook so I can have something concrete to model with kids. (I do have an actual notebook/binder for planning and goals for my life that sounds similar to what the kids made with the writer's notebooks but the end result isn't writing).

What I like about Writer's Notebooks:

- Connecting back to the student and the cultural identity
- Creativity
- Planning and Organizing Skills
- Thinking Processes at work
- Live as writers
- Assessment
- Note student progress

How Do You Know Your Kids are Getting It???



CHAPTER 4

SELECTING TEXT AND MENTOR AUTHORS



Selecting Mentor Authors and Text:

New Idea!!! “With English Language Learners, there are additional considerations for selecting books for writing instruction.”

Keep in mind the following:

- Student’s primary language
- Background experiences
- How will the text support ELL student as they write?
- Does the structure of the language in the book match the student’s stage of language acquisition?
- Choose books allow for flexibility regarding modeling strategy use

Choosing Mentor Authors:

Teach students how to choose a mentor author. When students learn how to learn from writing mentors they have begun to build independence into writing instruction. Kids should choose their own mentor authors and model using an author who writes across grade levels and genres. *Commentary: I have never heard of mentor authors before. It makes a lot of sense and I like that it focuses on the students and their thinking process along with learning how to be independent learners.*

CHAPTER 5

PREPRODUCTION

The beginning stage of language proficiency:

This is where the students do not have enough English to simply sit down and write. However, I was happy to know that there are other ways that students can begin to try out their own stories and experiment with language such as:

- Interactive Writing
- The Language Experience Approach
- Drawing to tell stories
- Making flap and pop-up books and using

The Language Experience Approach:

I really like how this approach uses common experiences of the teacher and students, classroom community and an opportunity to tell their stories through drawing and art. It supports ELL students in learning English.

Non verbal communication:

It is so important to offer students opportunities to use interactive writing where they can communicate without verbalizing. In this way they can demonstrate learning and understanding in a successful way without having to verbalize.

Making connections:

“Writers frequently choose their topics and write about subjects they care about.” This supports what has been communicated several times throughout the book, that drawing on students prior knowledge helps them with their thinking processes and with comprehension.

Notable to remember:

- “Watch me as I do it.”
- “You try it while I watch.”
- Sharing the pen

CHAPTER 6

EARLY PRODUCTION

Classroom Community is important!:

The beginning of this chapter starts out “It is important that ELLs be able to take risks and experiment with new language in a **low-anxiety** setting and the early production stage of language proficiency.” This reiterates the importance of a classroom environment where a community of learners coexists and feels comfortable. This is very important for the students to be able to participate in the activities in class presented in this book and learn to their fullest potential.

Using pictures and words to communicate:

Up until about 7 years ago (and from time-to-time after that) I used to wish that people could speak telepathically. It wasn't because I was shy, I was just quiet. I got tired of verbalizing and would have tremendous anxiety when talking in social settings. (I was and am fine with professional/school settings; in fact that is where I thrive with my oral communication because I have a purpose for what I'm saying). Also, I was and am very good at writing and good at conveying my ideas via the written word and art or visual aids. As you can imagine, it was difficult for one such as me who did not feel they were competent in socializing with others! So many times I just said things that later I thought to myself “that was really dumb” and so it was a downward spiral from there. My anxiety kept growing. However, a miracle happened for me in the spring of 1999. I had gone back to college full-time when my daughter was only six weeks old and my father had the insight to see that I would not have time to spare to spend extra hours at the college in the computer lab. So, he purchased me a computer with a modem. Up until this time the Internet and E-mail were foreign but I soon learned that e-mail and chat were my new best friends! My world literally changed because of being able to communicate via the written word! I thought “Wow! This is about as close to speaking telepathically as it gets only better because you can edit what you write and convey what you want to say clearly!” From that point on my social skills have done nothing but improve and I have little or no anxiety when it comes to socializing and actually talking to people. The e-mail and chat must have been “scaffolding” for me to help me in the other area. Sometimes, even now, I get in slumps where I start feeling anxious about socializing and I go back to my written and visual

communication when this happens. Technology has improved so much now that I can do all kinds of things to communicate without actually verbalizing. In the same way, I see ELL students being able to communicate via pictures and later words comparable to my experience. This will do nothing but benefit them!

CHAPTER 7

SPEECH EMERGENCE

How do I keep students actively involved in learning and using language?

Use sounds, pictures and descriptive words to help readers infer.

Using personal narratives to teach conventions:

I like this lesson because it uses authentic text including the students' own work to teach conventions. No boring worksheets and the students can process the information as they make connections.

Images to tell stories:

I'm liking this strategy more and more. This would work well with all students too, not just ELLs.

Explicitly teaching about making inferences:

I keep reading about how to teach this in this book and I'm realizing how much I took this skill for granted.

Informational Pages:

I love this! Having the students plan & write informational texts not only ties into other curricular areas, it also is a genre that can help students be successful writers by making connections!

Graphic Organizers!:

With so much going on around them ELLs can get their brains scrambled easily. Graphic organizers, like the one on page 104 work great to help kids unscramble their brains.

Visualization and use of concrete poems:

This is flexible and creative!

CHAPTER 8 INTERMEDIATE

Questions:

What, Where, When, Why and open ended questions really would help students to come up with more complicated responses and complex sentences, as they lend themselves to higher level thinking and language use! I also liked that along with this the book said to “encourage students to analyze, evaluate, create, justify, defend, support, debate, examine, complete, describe in detail, compare/contrast, evaluate cause/effect, and predict.” WOW! The use of a list of questions that readers ask to reference when they revisit, rework and revise is a great idea as well!

Katie Wood Ray and Lester Laminack on teachers writing what they teach:

I absolutely agree with them that teachers should try writing a genre before we teach it. This way we have encountered some of the struggles our students will face ahead of time and have a deeper understanding of the genre and what type of thinking goes into writing it. I also agree that students should see us struggle! This is the perfect opportunity for us to model how effective writers work through challenges as well as simply going through all the necessary processes and asking the types of questions that need asked to write.

Powerful Words:

Using poems to teach about the use of strong nouns and verbs in writing is much more meaningful than using a language arts text book and/or worksheets to teach nouns and verbs. The poem gives the students something to connect back to.

CHAPTER 9 ADVANCED

Comprehension Strategies:

As I read the beginning of this chapter I realized that I can use a lot of the strategies that I learned in the comprehension class that I took through PLS/Drake. Especially the strategies for teaching expository text!

Journalism:

Juli's journalism class was really neat! “...the room was bulging with life, and everyone's eager to share their articles.” When I read this I could just see all these kids excited about learning, reading and writing! These are exactly the types of experiences I want my students to experience.