

WRITERS' WORKSHOP



PHILOSOPHY: Students need to be given ample time to practice reading and writing skills. Therefore, the classroom environment promotes a safe place for students to read books of their choice and write about feelings, concerns, and ideas they may have.

This year we will embark on a writing adventure that incorporates the Six Traits of Writing with The Writers' Workshop. Students will delve into four units of study that focus on narrative, argument (covered in your child's social studies class), expository, and poetry. Within these units, they will create short stories, essays, informational texts, letters, literature responses, and original poems. We will examine the many purposes for writing and focus our attentions on gathering ideas, organizing thoughts, examining word choice, developing sentence structure, improving vocabulary, revising ideas, and using editing strategies to correct punctuation, grammar, and spelling (mechanics).

Writing is essential to success in school and the workplace, but it is a skill that cannot be learned on the spot. Writing is complex and challenging. In fact, learning to write well is one of the most challenging tasks for anyone, regardless of age. Writing well takes time, practice, and a lot of encouragement. My goal as a teacher of writing is to provide students with ample time to practice what they learn in class. To write well, kids need to see me as a writer. Therefore, I will model by showing them how I write, so they will know what is expected of them. The connection between writing and reading is inseparable. Research has shown that better writers tend to be better readers, and better readers produce better writing.

The purpose of Writers' Workshop is to challenge students to organize their thoughts, expand their ideas by repeatedly revising their work, become aware of writing for different audiences, and create focus within a topic by allowing students regular opportunities to practice independent writing. Students will benefit from seeing the power of their words to express thoughts and from writing for a specific purpose.

Using Writers' Workshop with my students will allow me to see a student's vocabulary level; organizational skills, their ability to learn, retain and apply information in new situations; attention span, and how a student's abilities grow throughout the year.

There are three major parts to Writers' Workshop:

1. The first is the mini-lesson where I will teach a new concept or review a concept to allow students more practice. A typical mini-lesson could be reviewing punctuation rules, discussing the format of poetry, or focusing on one of the Six Traits of Writing (ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency, & conventions). The mini-lessons will reflect the needs of the students and the Oregon State Standards.
2. The majority of the Workshop allows the students ample time to practice writing. During this time, I will confer with individual students to help brainstorm ideas, organize thoughts, revise written work, edit for correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar, and finalize written work for publication.
3. The final piece to the Workshop is allowing students time to share their work with others. Whether it be with the whole class or in small groups, students need to bounce their ideas (writings) off their peers.

The students will keep a portfolio of all of their written work on a flash drive or Google docs. I will use these portfolios for assessment and evaluation. Flash drives will be returned by year's end and I will share access to Google docs with students.