

When students write, they draw upon the sum of their experiences in listening, speaking, and reading. As ELLs apply themselves to solving the problems they face in writing, such as how to spell a word, where to place a period or an adjective, how to introduce a character, or how to organize supporting details, they gain metalinguistic awareness. Producing text encourages conscious attention to the ways in which language conveys meaning.

Effective teachers try to differentiate between ELLs' content knowledge and their writing proficiency. Although ELLs may achieve a high level of content knowledge, aspects of their writing (e.g., incomplete knowledge of idioms, vocabulary, and writing styles) can suggest a poor grasp of content. ELLs need opportunities to explain their writing to teachers and to obtain help in expressing their knowledge effectively.

ELLs need to experience rich and well-integrated opportunities to participate in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Learning standard writing conventions is especially difficult for young ELLs who depend so much on visual cues and contextual relationships. Teachers help provide such cues and relationships when they write interactively with students and make writing a social activity.

When writing interactively, teachers verbalize their thinking as they write (e.g., "I'm going to put a comma here after bananas because I want to list three fruits: bananas comma apples comma and grapes period. The comma tells the reader to pause in between, and the period says that's the end of the sentence."). Writing is interactive when teachers invite student participation (e.g., "What would be a good title for this journal entry? What was my topic?").

Effective teachers often provide a visual context for writing by having students draw a picture before they write. Teachers may elicit more detail and provide language models by talking with students about their drawings (e.g., "Tell me more about what's happening? I see the dog near the house. What's the dog doing? Is he barking? Is he making noise?").

Writing becomes a social activity when the teacher and students brainstorm together, read their work to each other, and talk about each other's writing. When it is the focus of social interaction, writing is supported by oral language and interpersonal relationships. Students write for the audience of their classmates and are eager to hear what others have written. There are many opportunities for students to learn from each other and from the teacher's interactions with their peers.

Because writing in English is challenging for ELLs, their progress depends greatly on the learning environment and the scaffolding provided. When large writing tasks are subdivided into manageable steps, students experience greater success. ELLs may need more help with vocabulary, spelling, and word order than English-proficient students do, but helping ELLs get started is an investment in their development.

Advice like "Sound it out" or "Find it on the word wall" can be appropriate for English-proficient students with strong literacy backgrounds. Beginning ELLs, on the other hand, may need help with breaking down a word into component sounds or with locating and identifying the word on the wall. Effective teachers observe students carefully for indications of what tasks they are ready to manage successfully on their own. In addition, purposeful writing projects, such as making invitations, get well cards, announcements, and class helper charts, engage students in the types of writing that they may see in their homes. When teachers provide such integrated opportunities for learning, ELLs can thrive as writers.

## Strategies

1. *Teachers demonstrate how writing and reading are connected.*
2. *Teachers demonstrate how writing and reading are tools for thinking and learning.*
3. *Teachers explicitly demonstrate how brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing are recursive processes.*
4. *Teachers model exemplary writing practices for their students and demonstrate how writers write about topics that are meaningful to them.*
5. *Teachers teach grammar in the context of actual writing.*
6. *Teachers provide varied and increasingly challenging writing experiences for students at all grade levels.*
7. *Teachers develop a list of core words for their students to use in their writing.*
8. *Teachers regularly integrate spelling into writing and reading instruction.*

<http://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/teaching-diverse-learners/writing>