



# PUBLISHING STUDENT WRITING

*Educator Tool*



DIGITAL

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## THE POWER OF PUBLISHING

Publishing student work is an essential part of 826's approach to writing education. It not only provides an opportunity for students to share their thoughts and ideas but also amplifies their voices to new and diverse audiences. When students first see their writing appear in a book, something magical happens. They see their ideas reflected and valued in a tangible way that they can share with others; their confidence and pride in themselves and their writing reaches new levels as they begin to see themselves as authors with words worth reading.

“ It feels good to have my voice out there and that I have left a mark on this world, even if it's small.

**BRANDON R., GRADE 11, 826LA**

# WHY PUBLISH STUDENT WRITING?

- ✦ Create real-world learning opportunities that motivate students to write.
- ✦ Increase students' feelings of ownership and pride in their writing.
- ✦ Use it as a learning tool for other student writers.
- ✦ Include and amplify student voices in larger societal conversations.

When we ask students to describe what it feels like to be published, their responses are positive across the board:

"I couldn't take it seriously at first because I couldn't believe it. I never saw myself as a writer before."

**HAWI E., GRADE 9, 826 MSP**

"It feels Awesome, Amazing, Great. I love it that people will know that we're not just kids, we're smart and we know how to write a story."

**ANGEL S., GRADE 3, 826MICHIGAN**

"It feels like sharing your art with the world."

**MARISSA B., GRADE 7  
826CHI**

Writing is a powerful tool for students to grapple with their own stories and identities. But when the element of writing for an audience is added, students build a sense of pride in their writing and begin thinking about how their words can have an impact on others. To learn more about the benefits of publishing student writing, read the 826 National report [Publishing Student Writing](http://www.826national.org/Publishing_Student_Writing), available at [www.826national.org](http://www.826national.org), which includes additional findings and information about the Student Editorial Board at 826.

# LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

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Before jumping into the writing itself, we work with students to establish an open and supportive culture and to build knowledge around the publishing process. During a publishing project, it is essential that students feel safe, invested, and open to both sharing their words and ideas and receiving feedback. Here are a few things to consider as you begin a publishing project:

## Create a welcoming and brave space.

Before students pick up a pen, make sure to create a safe, friendly writing community. You can play icebreakers and engage in community-building conversations so that students practice sharing and listening with their classmates. For more tips, check out the Educator Tool [How to Co-Create a Safe and Brave Space with Students](https://www.826digital.com/educator-tool/how-to-co-create-a-safe-and-brave-space-with-students) found at [www.826digital.com](https://www.826digital.com).

## Teach mini lessons.

A mini-lesson is a brief, whole-group lesson that teaches a single idea about writing. These are typically teacher-led and are about ten to fifteen minutes long. Mini-lessons can make a longer project feel manageable, emphasize the different parts of the writing process, and result in concrete skill-building that both enriches the project and is applicable to students' future writing. You can also introduce students to mentor texts that will help inspire or inform their own writing.

# LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

## Consider the audience.

All throughout the writing process, ask students to consider the audience they're writing to. Who are they? What is or isn't interesting or compelling to them? How do you want to come across to them? What impact do you hope your writing has on them?

## Choose a theme.

It is important to know where the book is going before students start drafting their pieces—is it an informational book about the community they live in? A collection of short stories about time travel? Poetry inspired by mentor texts? Suggestions for civic leaders? It's crucial to get student buy-in before moving forward with the theme of the publishing project and for students to have agency over their writing with prompts that invite dynamic responses. One way to do this is to have students lead or participate in the decision-making process.

“ I think the biggest impact it has had on me is the realization that other people see the writing I do. Other people can also refer to me as a writer, and it's not just me. It makes me want to improve and do better.”

**BLESS A., GRADE 9, 826 BOSTON**

# THE PUBLISHING PROCESS

At 826, we emphasize that writing is not just putting pen to paper—it’s everything a writer does from the moment they start thinking about a project until the moment they share their final piece with an audience. In every publishing project, we guide students through the five stages of writing: Pre-Writing, Drafting, Revising, Editing, and Publishing. Through this process, we aim not to teach students to write formulaically but instead to develop their own unique writing voices and communicate them to the best of their abilities. We encourage you to introduce each stage of writing with your students and review how each one plays an important role toward publication.

## Pre-Writing

Everything you do before you actually sit down and start to write in complete sentences, such as brainstorming and outlining.



## Drafting

Getting ideas down on the page, even if they’re messy or imperfect.



## Revising

The process of strengthening your ideas and adding or changing the structure of your first draft to make your writing as clear and effective as possible. For more tips on this stage of writing for publication, check out the Educator Tool [Guide to Revision](#).



## Editing

The nitty-gritty aspect of the writing process, this is the time for making final changes, particularly relating to grammar and readability. As much as possible, we try not to edit out the student’s voice, as we want them to be comfortable writing in their own vernacular.



## Publishing

The time to pull all the content together, brainstorm what the final product is going to look like, and decide how to share and celebrate your work with the world!

# ELEMENTS OF THE PUBLISHING STAGE

The first four stages of writing for publication probably sound familiar, as they are staples of the writing process in general. Let's dig deeper into the stages directly related to publishing.

## Peer Editing

It is important to cultivate spaces that foster sharing, reflection, and dialogue from day one.

- Center peer review around not only observation and suggestions but also around curiosity:
  - What are students curious about or interested in when they read each other's work?
  - What do they want to know more about?
- You could also establish a student editorial group, assigning roles to interested students. This format allows students to act as the collective editor and designer of the book and to become ambassadors for their fellow students' ideas.

## Design

Design gives students the opportunity to dive into the technical details of publishing a book.

- Students can identify unifying themes within the book and explore how the presentation of the pieces can reflect those themes.
- Here are some questions you might ask your students:
  - How can the design best reflect the themes of the book?
  - How will we order the writing pieces?
  - What font should we use?
  - What will the final product look like (e.g., a physical book, an online publication, an instruction manual)?
  - Should we include a table of contents?



# ELEMENTS OF THE PUBLISHING STAGE

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## Title

The best titles often come directly from the students' writing itself.

- Have students read through each other's pieces and pull out two or three of their favorite lines and phrases that they feel best represent the theme of the publication.
- Have the class vote for their favorite titles, or hold a student-led full-group discussion about the options.

## Cover Art

Designing a cover challenges students to a deeper inspection of their theme by thinking about how it can be brought to life through images.

- You might first ask the class to weigh in on key design decisions, such as the following:
  - What images come to mind when you think about the book?
  - Should the cover be colorful or monotone?
  - Should the cover be full of details or minimalist?
  - How much space should the title take up?
- If you have the luxury of working with a professional designer or illustrator, ask them to present several different directions for the cover. If not, see if any of your students are interested in creating the cover art for the book!

# ELEMENTS OF THE PUBLISHING STAGE

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## Student Introduction

The introduction, written by students, will often talk about what the process of writing the book was like, what they learned from it, and what they want the reader to get out of the book.

- This is a chance to explore another kind of writing with your students, as they have to both broadly summarize the contents of the book while also acclimating the reader to the tone and themes of the publication.
- Before your students begin work on an introduction, have them do some brainstorming based on the following questions:
  - What important aspects of the book and the writing process do we want to tell our readers about?
  - Is there anything a reader needs to know before diving into the book?
  - How can we ensure that the introduction reflects the thoughts/intents/perspectives of all the student authors?

## Guest Forward

Include a foreword written by an influential adult in the school or community who is chosen by the students.

- In a way, the foreword writer is the first audience for the book, and their words help to validate and honor the student authors' work. It also elevates the students' work to stand alongside acclaimed writers or public figures in a publication as fellow writers.
- Together, talk to students about whom they would be interested in hearing from—maybe they have a favorite teacher or school administrator, or they admire a local community artist— and have students write a letter or email to solicit their help with the foreword.

# ELEMENTS OF THE PUBLISHING STAGE

## Author Biographies

Include an author biography for each piece. Biographies range from the name and age of a student to a brief “about the author” paragraph that you would see at the end of a professional publication.

- Students have said this is a favorite part of the project, both because they enjoy the style of writing and because it helps them see themselves as real authors. We recommend starting out by sharing some examples with students so that they understand the format.
- You can then have students fill out a form with helpful prompts. Here are some ideas:
  - Tell your readers a little bit about where you are from.
  - What do you love to do?
  - Tell us an interesting fact about yourself.
  - What is something that is important to you?
  - What did or do you enjoy or find challenging about writing?
  - What are your goals for the future?
- Once students have filled those out, they can start crafting their own author biographies!

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I want you to know that I am a powerful  
black student with a lot of potential.

**PAUL, GRADE 8, 826 NEW ORLEANS**

# CELEBRATIONS

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No publishing project would be complete without a book launch party to celebrate the hard work of the student authors! While these celebrations offer a wonderful opportunity to gather in community and provide an immediate audience for your authors, they can also be broadcast virtually and/or recorded to share with family, friends, and members of the community who are unable to attend in person. Our launch parties serve three important purposes:

## ★ Celebrate

The launch party celebrates the student writers and all they accomplished! Students help to plan the party in order to create a space in which they feel safe and celebrated, often including traditions from their cultures and communities. Attendees play games and answer writing prompts, eat and drink, give author signatures, and hold the book in their hands for the first time.

## ★ Community

The launch party is also the time when we invite families and the broader community into our spaces to listen to and celebrate our students' words. The party, like the book, reflects the students and the communities they come from.

## ★ Share

The launch party is an opportunity for students to share their work directly with an audience and take even more pride in their writing. Students volunteer to read their pieces and to talk about their experience writing the book.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Below are a few additional resources you can use to guide your students through publishing. All of the resources can be found at [www.826digital.com](http://www.826digital.com).

## ★ **Once Upon a Time In a City Called...**

In Session 5, [Love Notes](#), students peer edit classmates' writing, analyzing for strengths and weaknesses.

## ★ **Who Ya Gonna Call: Writing Spooky Stories**

In Session 6, [Finishing Touches](#), students give peer feedback on their classmates' stories.

## ★ **All About You Brochures**

In Session 3, [Publishing and Presenting](#), students discuss the expectations for sharing writing and presenting.

## ★ **Write Your Way Curriculum**

The Share Out Strategies on pages 9–10 of the Write Your Way Curriculum Guide provided for each grade band include four ways your students can share their writing and receive feedback.

- [Write Your Way Curriculum: Grades K–2](#)
- [Write Your Way Curriculum: Grades 3–5](#)
- [Write Your Way Curriculum: Grades 6–8](#)
- [Write Your Way Curriculum: Grades 9–12](#)