

Write Your Way Writing Curriculum

Unit Calendar: Grades 9-12

This 4-week writing unit is designed to engage students in the joy and power of writing. Each week, students will write with a different authentic purpose: to reflect, to connect, to create, and to advocate. They will write about their identity, their community, and the positive change they can create by sharing their voice. Use it at the start of the new year or semester—or any time of year! In this guide, you’ll find a unit calendar, weekly schedules, links to all writing Sparks and lessons, and strategies to build brave spaces for young writers.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Reflect	Personal Narratives (prompt 1)	Memories of Home	A Place Worth Being with Jason Reynolds	Read Mentor Text + Revise	Share Out!
Connect	Identity Statements	Neighborhood Poem	Essential Words	Read Mentor Text + Revise	Share Out!
Create	Creative Recipes	No Lab Coats Required: A Writing Laboratory	Playing with Words with Aracelis Girmay	Read Mentor Text + Revise	Share Out!
Advocate	Taboo Emotions with Tiphonie Yanique	Social Movements with Lisa Ko	“The Hill We Climb”	Read Mentor Text + Revise	Share Out!

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Weekly Schedule at a Glance

WEEK #: WRITE TO _____

Each week, students explore a different purpose for writing by responding to 3 writing prompts, reading a student mentor text, revising their favorite piece from the week, and sharing their writing with peers. You'll find ideas for how to introduce each week's writing purpose in this section of your weekly schedule.

MONDAY: Writing Day, Prompt 1 (30 Minutes)

TUESDAY: Writing Day, Prompt 2 (30 Minutes)

WEDNESDAY: Writing Day, Prompt 3 (30 Minutes)

THURSDAY: Read + Revise (30-40 Minutes)

- **Read-aloud mentor text:** Read aloud student mentor text and discuss what students noticed about the piece.
- **Revision strategy:** Students revise one of their favorite pieces from the week using a different revision strategy.

FRIDAY: Share + Celebrate! (20-30 Minutes)

- **Share out strategy:** At the end of the week, students try a fun new way to share their writing with their peers!

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Week 1 Schedule

WEEK 1 PURPOSE: WRITE TO REFLECT

This week, students will write about who they are and how they feel. Ask students, what does a mirror show? Like a mirror, writing can reflect who you are. Unlike a mirror, writing can also reflect how you feel on the inside.

MONDAY: [Personal Narratives \(prompt 1\)](#)

TUESDAY: [Memories of Home](#)

WEDNESDAY: [A Place Worth Being with Jason Reynolds](#)

THURSDAY: Read + Revise

- Read-aloud mentor text: [In Between](#)
- Revision strategy: Read Out Loud (pg 7)

FRIDAY: Share + Celebrate!

- Share out strategy: Mirror, Mirror (pg 9)

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Week 2 Schedule

WEEK 2 PURPOSE: WRITE TO CONNECT

This week, students will write to connect. Writing is a powerful way to understand each other and to build community. You might demonstrate this idea by creating a collaborative poem together, or starting a “shout out wall,” in person or online, for students to shout out each other during the week.

MONDAY: [Identity Statements](#)

TUESDAY: [Neighborhood Poem](#)

WEDNESDAY: [Essential Words](#)

THURSDAY: **Read + Revise**

- Read-aloud mentor text: [Managing to Find Joy](#)
- Revision strategy: **Add Details (pg 7)**

FRIDAY: **Share + Celebrate!**

- Share out strategy: **Golden Line Paper Chain (pg 9)**

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Week 3 Schedule

WEEK 3 PURPOSE: WRITE TO CREATE

Writing can capture our dreams and stretch the limits of our imaginations. This week, students will write to create! And since there is no *one* way to create, encourage students to take a risk in their writing this week and try something they've never done before.

MONDAY: [Creative Recipes](#)

TUESDAY: [No Lab Coats Required: A Writing Laboratory](#)

WEDNESDAY: [Playing with Words with Aracelis Girmay](#)

THURSDAY: Read + Revise

- Read-aloud mentor text: [Laughter Means You're Alive](#)
- Revision strategy: Swap words and sentences (pg 8)

FRIDAY: Share + Celebrate!

- Share out strategy: “Musical Chairs” Reading Circle (pg 10)

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Week 4 Schedule

WEEK 4 PURPOSE: WRITE TO ADVOCATE

Students will close the unit by writing to advocate. When we write, we can use our most powerful tool, our voice, to make an impact. Illustrate this point by asking students to think about changes they want to see in their school or community. How could they use writing to advocate for these changes?

MONDAY: [Taboo Emotions with Tiphonie Yanique](#)

TUESDAY: [Social Movements with Lisa Ko](#)

WEDNESDAY: [“The Hill We Climb”](#)

THURSDAY: Read + Revise

- Read-aloud mentor text: [Nothing New to Us](#)
- Revision strategy: Add Dialogue (pg 8)

FRIDAY: Share + Celebrate!

- Share out strategy: Loud and Proud (pg 10)

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Revision Strategies

WEEK 1: Read Out Loud

Reading out loud helps writers hear the rhythm and flow of their words, sentences, and ideas. Students could pair up and read out loud to a partner, or record themselves reading their own piece and play it back. After students listen to their writing out loud, they should consider: What do they notice about how ideas and sentences flowed (or not)? What can they add, remove, or change to improve the reading?

WEEK 2: Add Details

When we add details to writing, we help readers picture our story as they read—like a movie in their mind! You could illustrate this idea by bringing in a collection of like things: apples, buttons, balls, etc. In the collection, each item should be unique. Tell students, these are all “apples,” but they are not the same. What words can we use to describe one so that it stands apart from the rest? What are the details that you notice about the skin’s surface, the color, the stem, the shape and size? When we write with specific details, we help the reader picture the same, one-of-a-kind “apple” in our minds!

Practice writing detailed descriptions as a class. Then, have students reread their drafts and mark 2-3 places where more detail would be helpful. You can provide a five senses checklist to prompt students as they brainstorm details to add, or to encourage them to add different kinds of details into their story.

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Revision Strategies

WEEK 3: Swap words and/or sentences!

Challenge students to find 3-4 words (or sentences!) to “swap” with new ones. This could take many directions, depending on your focus—here are just a few examples:

- Change bland words to more specific, vivid words
- Look for words that are used too often and replace with synonyms
- Turn “telling” phrases into “showing” phrases

WEEK 4: Add Dialogue

Adding dialogue is a wonderful way to bring your story to life! To add dialogue to a scene, ask students to recall: What did you say? What did you hear from [another character]? What did you *think*? Remember, dialogue can also show a reader what you were thinking in your head; this is called internal dialogue.

Then, have students mark 1-2 places in their draft where lines of dialogue could go, and either type or write it in.

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Share Out Strategies

WEEK 1: Mirror, Mirror

In pairs, students will read their writing out loud to each other. Alternatively, teachers could work with a group of students and read each piece aloud. Students who are listening will be a “mirror” for the writer by reflecting on the piece using the following sentence starters:

- “I heard...”
- “I pictured...”
- “I felt...”
- “I wondered...”

WEEK 2: Golden Line Paper Chain

This is a simple idea to illustrate the connection among writers. To start, pass out a sentence strip for each student. Ask them to choose a favorite, or “golden,” line from their writing and write it down on the strip. This could be a word, a phrase, or a sentence.

After students write their line on the sentence strip, start a paper chain by stapling strips together in loops. Students can either read their “golden” line out loud as they bring their strip up to add to the chain, or in small groups before the chain is assembled.

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Share Out Strategies

WEEK 3: “Musical Chairs” Reading Circle

If space allows, this activity works best when students can gather in a big circle, either on the floor or with their desks arranged. Students need 3 materials to start: their writing, a pencil, and 4-5 sticky notes. Tell students that they will read 4-5 pieces of writing and leave praise for their fellow writers. You will start by playing music. Students will leave their writing at their seat, then with their sticky notes, walk around the circle (or dance, hop, tip toe, etc!) until the music stops. When it does, they will stop and read the piece that is in front of them—like musical chairs, except every piece of writing stays in the circle for every round of this game. Students can respond to the writing using the sentence starters from week 1, or with the ones below:

- “I connect with this because...”
- “I love your choice of...”
- “I like how you tried...”

WEEK 4: Loud + Proud

Students will pick one piece they wrote over the course of the entire unit and read it, loud and proud, to a small group (or class!). Remind students that as their classmates read, be sure to listen very closely—the same way you want to be listened to. Don’t forget to give snaps, a round of applause, etc. when they’re done! After, students will draw or write what it felt like to share their piece.