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White Paper:

How *WritingCity* Aligns with Curriculum Standards, Research, and Expert Opinion on Elementary Writing Programs

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Introduction

Writing represents a critical part of the elementary curriculum—now more than ever. A substantial body of research and expert literature published during the last 15 years provides a solid foundation for describing principles of effective writing instruction. In addition, revised state standards focused on college and career readiness have broadened the scope of skills that can serve students no matter what path they choose post-graduation. Transferable skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy are enhanced by the ability to communicate clearly through writing and speaking.

While there are some variations from state to state on the exact combination of skills that state standards consider in determining college and career readiness, a commitment to an enriched writing curriculum is something they share. This white paper examines how the instructional program *WritingCity* is aligned to appropriate content standards, research, and expert opinion related to writing instruction that supports college and career readiness.

About *WritingCity*

WritingCity is a comprehensive, technology-enhanced K-5 writing program that also teaches grammar in the context of developing students' writing ability. The program combines explicit instruction in foundational writing skills and strategies with frequent opportunities to engage in guided writing assignments.

Step-by-step lessons support teachers in providing effective writing instruction through modeling and interactive activities. Teachers have flexibility in how to engage with students, including options for:

- Paper and pencil writing activities
- Digital writing activities
- Interactive whiteboard lessons
- Instructional videos

WritingCity aligns to state and national writing standards, with instruction in multiple forms of writing; writing strategies; grammar, usage, and mechanics; the 6 traits of writing; and a rigorous writing process—in a spiraling curriculum across the K-5 grade span. Students' daily practice provides guided opportunities to apply writing skills and strategies to authentic writing assignments. Supporting resources enable teachers to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Methodology

IESD conducted an analysis of college and career readiness standards in writing across a sampling of states and a review of recent high-quality research and expert opinion related to effective writing instruction. Based on this analysis and review, IESD developed a set of evaluation categories and criteria for grades 2 and 5, then reviewed grades 2 and 5 of *WritingCity* to determine alignment according to the criteria.

About This White Paper

The remainder of this white paper includes the following sections:

- Evaluation Categories—Describes the categories used in the writing program evaluation, including supporting curriculum standards, research, and expert opinion
- How *WritingCity* Supports College and Career Readiness in Writing—Presents summary conclusions based on our analysis
- References
- Appendix: Evaluation Criteria and *WritingCity* Alignment—Presents a category-by-category explanation of how *WritingCity* aligns to criteria for college and career readiness writing instruction

Evaluation Categories

This section presents the categories used in the writing program evaluation, including supporting curriculum standards, research, and expert opinion. It is divided into three parts:

- **College and Career Readiness Writing Standards and Related Instructional Features**¹, including student writing samples and rubrics in support of various text types
- **Other Aspects of Writing Curriculum and Instruction**
- **Professional Development**

College and Career Writing Standards and Related Instructional Features

Taken together, the College and Career Standards and each state’s grade-level content standards outline the writing skills students should be able to demonstrate at the end of each grade in order to be prepared for college or the workforce. Expectations are broken into broad categories related to purposes and forms of writing, writing process and publishing, and conducting research to build and present knowledge, as shown below.

- **Purpose and Forms of Writing:** Write informative/explanatory and narrative texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences of events. Write opinions using valid reasoning and relevant evidence.
- **Writing Process:** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting to ensure that it is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. Use technology, including the Internet, to collaborate during the writing process and to produce and publish writing.
- **Research Skills:** Conduct research projects demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. Gather relevant information from multiple sources and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism. Draw evidence from literary and informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

For more detail about grade-specific criteria for grades 2 and 5, see the **Appendix: Evaluation Criteria and *WritingCity* Alignment**.

Student Writing Samples to Support Different Types of Writing

According to a summary of writing instruction research by Troia and Olinghouse (2013), a strong evidence-base supports having students “read and analyze examples of one or more texts in order to recognize and emulate the patterns or forms in these examples in their own writing” (p. 349; see also Graham & Perin, 2007a, 2007b). More specifically, a study of third and fourth graders found a positive effect from having students use a model paper to “scaffold the process of generating a list of criteria for an effective story or essay” and then use a rubric to assess their own work (Andrade et al., 2008)². This finding supports the recommendation to have students “critiqu[e] sample pieces of writing” as part of learning to apply a rubric (p. 4).

¹ The college and career readiness writing standards cited in this white paper are a composite of standards across multiple states.

² The comparison group generated a list of criteria for effective stories/essays, but did not analyze a model or use a rubric.

Rubrics to Support Different Types of Writing

Another practice identified by Troia and Olinghouse (2013) as having strong supporting evidence is the use of rubrics, described by Andrade et al. (2008) as “a document that articulates the expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria, or what counts, and describing levels of quality from excellent to poor” (p. 3). While rubrics are sometimes thought of primarily as assessment tools, they also help teach key characteristics of specific types of writing, provide a common framework for revision suggestions and feedback, and guide students in self-assessment (Andrade et al., 2008; Graham & Perin, 2007b; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013).

Other Aspects of Writing Curriculum and Instruction

Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics Instruction

College and career readiness standards in all states sampled for this paper call for students to learn the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics, and to apply these conventions in their own writing.

Research on traditional grammar instruction raises doubts about its ability to improve student writing (e.g., Graham & Perin, 2007a, 2007b; Weaver, 1996). Instead, leading experts recommend that students should be taught about grammar, usage, and mechanics in a writing-related context (Smith, Cheville, & Hillocks, 2006; Weaver, 1996). For example, Weaver suggests extensive use of examples, a focus on production of effective sentences, and discussing usage in context (pp. 26-27).

Writing Strategies

A meta-analysis of 20 studies of elementary writing instruction found a strong positive effect from strategy instruction, in which “the teacher modeled how to use specific strategies for planning, revising, and/or editing text; students practiced applying the target strategies in at least three sessions, with the goal of using these strategies independently” (Graham, McKeown, Kiuahara, & Harris, 2012, p. 881)³. The authors explained:

Most of the studies . . . involved teaching genre-specific strategies (e.g., how to plan and write a persuasive text), whereas the rest focused on teaching strategies that could be applied across genres (e.g., semantic webbing). . . . All of the studies produced a positive effect. (p. 886)

Writer's Workshop Model

A popular and influential approach to writing instruction has been the writer’s workshop, as developed over multiple decades by Lucy Calkins and colleagues at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop. Key elements of the writer’s workshop include opportunities for students to write daily or almost daily; student selection of topics; explicit teaching of skills and strategies through mini-lessons, often including teacher demonstrations/modeling; a writing process approach; consulting with individual students or small groups about their writing in a workshop/conference format; and writing for an audience, including sharing of writing with other students (Calkins, 1994, 2006; Smithson, 2008).

³ Effect size of 1.02, considered a large effect in education research (p. 885).

Process Writing Approach

Substantial evidence supports a process approach to writing, which researchers have defined as including extended opportunities for writing; writing for real audiences extending beyond the teacher; personalized individual assistance and instruction; engaging in cycles of planning, writing, and reviewing; and self-reflection and/or self-evaluation (Graham, McKeown, Kiuahara, & Harris, 2012, p. 881; see also Graham, Bollinger, et al., 2012; Graham & Hebert, 2010; Graham & Perin, 2007b; Troia & Olinghouse, 2013, p. 349)⁴.

6 Traits/6+1 Traits Model

This influential and widely used model “empowers students and teachers to communicate about qualities of writing—ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, [and] conventions” (Culham, 2006, p. 53)⁵. Pioneered by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (now Education Northwest), the model provides a framework for instruction, assessment, and revision. A large-scale study of grade 5 students found that use of the model “significantly increased student writing scores during the year in which it was introduced to schools” (Coe et al., 2011, p. xiii)⁶.

Concise Daily Lesson Plans

Concise daily lesson plans represent an important resource for teachers in planning effective instruction. According to Stronge (2007), “Organizing time and preparing materials in advance of instruction have been noted as important aspects of effective teaching.... Both the organization of time and the preparation of materials are components of the broader practice of planning carefully for instruction” (Chapter 4; “Planning and Preparing for Instruction,” para. 1). Similarly, Cunningham (2009) writes, “Few factors are as vital to teaching success as having well-designed lessons” (Chapter 7; “Lesson Plans: Success by Design,” para. 3). Effective lesson plans integrate learning objectives, learning activities, and “strategies to check student understanding” (Milkova, 2012, para. 1; see also Stronge, 2007). Experience suggests that lesson plans should be concise in order to make them easy for teachers to apply.

Technology-Enhanced Writing Instruction

Technology can enhance writing instruction in a variety of ways. Technology can:

- Provide flexible supporting resources for teachers
- Provide students with 21st century research, communication, and collaboration experience
- Help teachers to engage and support students to become better writers
- Support the home-school connection

Flexible support for teachers. Despite increasing demands for writing expertise in students, few states require a separate writing methods course for teacher certification (National Commission

⁴ Based on 16 studies; moderate effect size of 0.40 (Graham, McKeown, Kiuahara, & Harris, 2012, p. 885).

⁵ In addition to the six primary traits of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions, “presentation” was later added as a seventh “important but optional” trait (Coe et al., 2011, p. 5). This version is typically referred to as the “6+1” model.

⁶ “After controlling for baseline writing scores, the estimated average score of students in the treatment group was 0.109 standard deviations higher ($p = .023$) than the estimated average score of students in the control group” (p. xiii). The study included data from “102 teachers and 2,230 students in the treatment condition and 94 teachers and 1,931 students in the control condition” (p. xii).

on Writing, 2003). Writing instruction for preservice teachers is usually embedded in reading methods courses (Morgan, 2010), which leaves teachers ill-prepared to effectively teach writing to their students. Technology-based writing instructional systems can provide an array of resources to support teachers, including curriculum guides and lesson plans, on-demand professional development, instructional video presentations for students that reduce the load on teachers, and other resources such as graphic organizers and anchor charts they can use with their students.

A technology-based writing program that provides several ways to deliver instruction lets teachers choose a method that will offer the level of support they need. Less confident teachers might benefit from starting their writing lesson with a professionally-developed instructional video intended for students, then following step-by-step guidance through the lesson. Alternatively, seasoned writing teachers might prefer to develop their own lessons based on a brief lesson overview. Offering teachers choices for delivering writing lessons provides multiple pathways to effective instruction.

Technology as a tool for 21st century writers. Districts across the country have identified technology skills that children will need throughout their academic life and into adulthood, including word processing, research and information gathering, communication, collaboration, and multimedia presentation skills. These are often introduced in the early elementary grades, and many are expected to be mastered by fifth grade. Development of these skills is supported by the US DOE, Office of Educational Technology as part of the Guiding Principles for Using Technology with Early Learners and is consistent with the International Society for Technology in Education's *ISTE Standards for Students* (ISTE, 2019).

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Fred Roger Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College:

...appropriate experiences with technology and media allow children to control the medium and the outcome of the experience, to explore the functionality of these tools, and... how they might be used in real life. (2012, p. 7)

Education technology experts advise that technology skills should be introduced and practiced as an integrated part of a diverse curriculum rather than being taught in isolation (e.g., see Edutopia, 2007).

Engaging and supporting students to become better writers. Engaged students experience greater satisfaction with their school experiences, which produces a higher level of learning. When teachers effectively use technology as a tool to deliver instruction, students are not only engaged and learning content, they see authentic purposes for using technology. According to the November 2016 issue of the American Academy of Pediatrics Journal, "an advantage of incorporating digital technology devices and resources into young children's educational experiences is enhanced engagement" (Hosseini, 2018). Hosseini, Delnaz, "Digital Literacy in Early Elementary School: Barriers and Support Systems in the Era of the Common Core" (2018). Dissertations. 16.

American Academy of Pediatrics (2016). Children and adolescents and digital media. Retrieved from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2016/10/19/peds.2016-2593.full.pdf>

More specifically, research has shown that use of multimedia resources with interactive whiteboards (IWBs) can have a positive impact on student engagement, with the potential to improve student learning (Glover et al., 2005; Higgins et al., 2007; Marzano & Haystead, 2009; Miller & Glover, 2010; Smith et al., 2005). This is more likely to happen if resources focus on key content (Marzano, 2009, pp. 80-81) and are used to stimulate student-teacher and student-student interaction, as opposed to passive presentation of information (Lewin et al., 2008; Miller & Glover, 2010; Smith et al., 2005).

Technology is changing how students engage in the writing process. The use of a digital student platform provides a place to brainstorm ideas, organize thoughts, compose pieces, and add multimedia. Their digital notebooks are collections of their work where they can “showcase their writing, document their growth as writers, receive feedback on a body of written work, and consider next steps and new directions for their writing.” (Pytash, 2015) Students see authentic purposes for using technology, which engages even a struggling writer.

Essential to engaging and supporting students in their learning is meaningful feedback. According to John Hattie’s research, providing instructional feedback has an effect size of 0.75, making it one of the top ten most powerful teaching strategies.

When students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, they are more likely to respond to feedback because they need that information to continue growing and learning. (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2016)

Effective feedback guides students’ learning and provides direction needed to reach instructional goals. Teacher feedback is needed in order to differentiate instruction, and to celebrate student progress. Teacher monitoring of student academic performance is necessary in order for teachers to provide appropriate feedback. In a technology-based system for writing instruction, students can submit their written pieces online and receive timely feedback from the teacher and their peers. This feedback can be discussed in further depth during teacher-student conferences.

Home-school connection. According to research by Henderson and Mapp (2002), “Regardless of family income or background, students whose parents are involved in their schooling are more likely to have higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school.”

Today’s technology provides a variety of ways to improve communication between home and school. When used as a tool, technology allows parents to use their smartphones, laptops, or tablets to stay connected to their child’s school life. As technology continues to evolve and becomes more integrated into school curricula, the home-school connection can strengthen and grow.

Digital tools built into online curriculum systems make it easy for parents to view their children’s portfolios, assignments, assessments, and reports on demand. A class page allows teachers to share and celebrate students’ published work with families and others. Based on its research on the use of technology to enhance parental involvement, the Center for the Study of Education Policy at the Illinois State University College of Education (2004) recommended use of technology-based systems as part of a mix of methods to communicate with families.

Formative Assessment

Based on a meta-analysis of research on formative writing assessment, Graham, Harris, and Hebert (2011) recommended that teachers should “use formative writing assessment to enhance students’ writing,” including feedback from teachers and peers, teaching students to assess their own writing, and monitoring students’ writing progress over time (p. 6)⁷.

Professional Development

Program Implementation Training

In order to effectively implement a new instructional program, teachers must be trained on its features and implementation. According to a summary of key research-based features of effective professional development, there is a need for both “some initial learning in training sessions as well as considerable longer-term work in which teachers incorporate the new methodologies into their actual classroom practice” (Odden, 2011, p. 27).

Follow-up Professional Development and Coaching Are Ongoing

Effective professional development is not a one-time event, but continues over time in order to support teachers in learning and applying new practices. A summary of current research on effective professional development explained:

[E]ffective professional development for teachers is ongoing, which involves a combination of contact hours, duration, and coherence. . . . Research shows that teacher learning and changes in teaching practice involve a recursive and continual process that takes place over time. . . . This is because teachers often need several months or even years to transition from personal concerns about a new innovation to planning, implementation, and management concerns aimed at addressing student needs. (Hunzicker, 2010, pp. 7-8)

With the movement away from one-shot workshops toward ongoing PD that helps teachers implement new practices, *coaching* has become an increasingly popular model for supporting teachers. According to Odden (2011):

Active learning implies some degree of coaching during regular school hours to help collaborative groups use student data to hone instructional strategies, to help teachers incorporate new instructional strategies into their classroom instructional practices, and to help teachers debrief on the effectiveness of the unit after it is taught. (p. 27)

⁷ The recommendation to provide feedback was based on 16 comparisons ranging from grades 2-9, with a large average weighted effect size of 0.77 (pp. 17-18). The recommendation to teach student self-assessment was based on 7 comparisons ranging from grades 3-12, with a moderate average weighted effect size of 0.46 (pp. 18-19). The recommendation to monitor student progress was based on 7 comparisons of mostly weaker writers and students with special needs in elementary and middle school grades, with a small average weighted effect size of 0.24 (p. 19).

Coaches “support staff in implementing new learning with expert modeling, observation, feedback, and coaching until the new practice is mastered” (Vermont Department of Education, 2011, p. 10). While coaching is often conducted by local personnel, it can also be provided by outside consultants (Odden, 2011, p. 29).

Classroom Demonstration Videos

An increasingly popular way of providing professional development support for teachers is through videos that present actual classroom instruction for teachers to analyze and use as models. Such video clips “can inspire and transform a teacher’s daily performance” (Pianta, 2011, p. 4), as well as lead to increased “understanding of the teaching-learning process, knowledge of subject-matter specific instructional.

How *WritingCity* Supports College and Career Readiness in Writing

WritingCity was designed to align with college and career readiness writing standards as well as research and expert opinion on effective writing instruction. The Appendix to this report presents specific category-by-category criteria for writing instruction at grades 2 and 5 followed by details on how *WritingCity* meets these criteria. This section summarizes the results of this analysis.

College and Career Writing Standards and Related Instructional Features

Types of writing. *WritingCity* includes dedicated units for the three types of writing specified in most state standards: opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative. For these writing types, students learn the difference between fact and opinion, read and discuss an overview of each writing type, use graphic organizers for planning purposes, learn techniques and strategies specific to each type of writing, and gain guided experience writing several pieces representing each writing type in a multi-phase writing process.

Samples and rubrics for forms of writing. *WritingCity* provides rubrics for each type of writing, and students apply these rubrics to writing samples and to their own writing as part of the revision process. Teachers use provided rubrics to assess student writing.

Writing process. *WritingCity* guides students through a rigorous multi-phase writing process and use of tools for applying this writing process to their own writing.

Use of technology in writing. Ideas for using technology and the Internet to produce and publish student writing are provided and can be applied to the various types of writing. (Also see **Technology-Enhanced Writing Instruction** below.)

Skills re: research and information gathering, assessment, and integration. *WritingCity* includes a dedicated unit that guides students through a multi-phase research and writing project. In this unit, students learn how to gather relevant information from a variety of sources, summarize and paraphrase the information, and prepare a list of sources reviewed in their research.

Drawing evidence from texts. In the upper elementary grades, students learn how to quote accurately from texts; explain relationships or interactions among individuals, events, ideas, or concepts within a text or across multiple texts; and use reasoning and evidence in various types of writing.

Other Aspects of Writing Curriculum and Instruction

Grammar, usage, and mechanics (GUM) instruction. *WritingCity* provides explicit instruction in GUM skills, opportunities to apply these skills, and tools for improving GUM aspects of their own writing through proofreading and editing.

Writing strategies. Throughout the *WritingCity* units, students learn writing strategies specific to the various text types, and use tools to support application of these strategies to their own writing.

Writer’s workshop model featuring a writing process approach. *WritingCity* offers explicit teaching, modeling, and guided practice of specific writing skills and techniques and the writing process, and application of these to their own writing in a writer’s workshop environment. In this model, students select their own writing topics, engage in a rigorous writing process over several days, participate in writing conferences with the teacher, share their writing with peers, have various options for publishing their written work, and use tools to self-evaluate their writing.

6 Traits model. *WritingCity* provides explicit instruction in the 6 Traits model and then builds this model into the rubrics used for revision and evaluation of students’ own writing.

Concise daily lesson plans. *WritingCity* provides teachers with daily step-by-step lesson plans that include student learning objectives, modeling and teaching techniques, resources, and suggestions for assessment.

Technology-Enhanced Writing Instruction

Technology for flexible teacher support. *Writing City’s* online system provides an organized collection of digital and printable resources for planning and implementing writing instruction, and for teacher professional development. Student instructional videos can support teachers who feel unprepared to teach writing on their own, while experienced writing teachers have the flexibility to choose just the resources appropriate to their teaching style.

Technology as a tool for 21st Century writers. *WritingCity’s* digital writing platform provides opportunities for teachers to introduce the use of technology as a writing tool, and for students to practice and apply 21st Century literacy skills.

Technology to engage and support students to become better writers. The program’s instructional videos and interactive whiteboard lesson resources help keep students engaged. *WritingCity’s* digital platform enables teachers to give timely feedback that students can use to improve their writing.

Technology for supporting the home-school connection. *WritingCity’s* digital writing platform enables students’ families to view lessons, writing assignments, assessments, and their children’s published works. Students can access the platform to watch instructional videos and submit writing assignments outside the classroom.

Formative Assessment

The culminating activity of each unit is a Formal Writing piece, which serves as an assessment. Rubrics are used by teachers to provide feedback to student writers, and by students to assess their own writing.

Professional Development

WritingCity offers teachers introductory virtual training via webinar, job-embedded follow-up training and coaching, and interspersed classroom videos that demonstrate real instruction, with support to guide teachers' thinking and reflection

In sum, *WritingCity* is well-aligned with college and career readiness writing standards and with research and expert opinion on effective writing instruction.

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Appendix: Evaluation Criteria and *WritingCity* Alignment

College and Career Writing Standards and Related Instructional Features

| <i>Evaluation Criteria</i> | <i>Grade 2 Criteria</i> | <i>Grade 5 Criteria</i> | <i>WritingCity</i> |
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| College and Career Writing Standard: Writing Opinions | Students learn to write opinion pieces that introduce a topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion including reasons in support of the opinion, use linking words to connect the opinion and the reasons, and then provide a concluding statement or section. | Students learn to clearly introduce a topic, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure to support their opinion. They draw information from both various sources and provide logical, ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details. Students include a concluding statement or section that supports the opinion. | Unit 4 focuses on writing opinion pieces. Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to distinguish fact and opinion • Review and discuss an overview on opinion writing • Use a graphic organizer to plan writing opinion pieces that include statement of the opinion, supporting reasons, and a concluding sentence • Learn to use linking words to connect ideas in their opinion writing • Gain guided experience writing several opinion pieces in a multi-phase writing process |

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 Criteria | Grade 5 Criteria | WritingCity |
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| College and Career Writing Standard: Writing Informative/ Explanatory Texts | Students learn to write informative/explanatory texts that introduce a topic, examine and convey complex ideas clearly and accurately using facts to develop points, and include a conclusion. | Students learn to write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic and then develop the topic with facts, definitions, details, quotations, and/or other information. They group related information logically, use language to link ideas within the text, and include formatting, illustrations, and multimedia to support comprehension. Students use precise language and domain-specific language to explain the topic. They include a concluding statement or section related to the information presented. | Units 3a and 3b focus on writing informative/explanatory texts. Unit 3a introduces and provides experience writing a multi-paragraph composition, including a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion. In Unit 3b, students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the distinction between fact and opinion • Read and discuss an overview on information/explanatory writing • Use a graphic organizer to plan writing information/explanatory pieces that include an introduction to the topic, answer questions about the topic, and a conclusion • Learn techniques for presenting definitions, facts, and explanations clearly while keeping the writing interesting • Gain guided experience writing several informative/explanatory pieces in a multi-phase writing process |

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 Criteria | Grade 5 Criteria | WritingCity |
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| College and Career Writing Standard: Writing Narratives | Students learn to write narratives to develop a real or imagined sequence of events that include well-chosen details that describe actions, thoughts, and feelings. They use temporal words to indicate the order of events. Narratives end with a sense of closure. | Students learn to write narratives that develop real or imagined experiences using narrative techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences of events. They use concrete words and sensory details to convey experiences and events clearly and precisely. Students provide a conclusion that is a logical outcome to the narrated experience or sequence of events. | Unit 2 focuses on writing narrative pieces. Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn a variety of narrative techniques, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Varying sentence length to control pacing ○ Using exclamations to convey mood ○ Using sensory details and different parts of speech to add interest ○ Developing a sequence of events ○ Developing a character’s voice through dialog and description • Gain guided experience writing several narratives in a multi-phase writing process |
| Student Samples for Forms of Writing | Students review grade-specific samples of the three types of writing—opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative—to analyze and emulate features of the writing. | Students review grade-specific samples of the three types of writing—opinion, explanatory, and narrative—to analyze and emulate features of the writing. | In every unit focused on a type of writing, students apply rubrics to writing samples to identify examples of techniques and traits of good writing. They use the same rubrics to determine strengths and weaknesses of their own writing—then edit and revise to improve their texts. |

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 Criteria | Grade 5 Criteria | WritingCity |
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| Rubrics for Forms of Writing | Rubrics specific to the three types of writing are shared with students as a guide to their own writing process, editing, and publishing. Teachers are guided to use the rubrics to assess student writing. | Rubrics specific to the three types of writing are shared with students as a guide to their own writing process, editing and publishing. Teachers are guided to use the rubrics to assess student writing. | In every unit focused on a type of writing, rubrics are provided, and students to learn how to apply these rubrics to the improvement of their own writing. Teachers are guided in how to apply rubrics to assess student writing. |
| College and Career Writing Standard: Writing Process | Students develop and strengthen writing as needed for clarity by planning, drafting, revising, editing, and rewriting, or trying a new approach. The writing program provides lessons or guidance to students on a writing process that includes, at a minimum, a topic focus, a first draft, and a revision/editing phase. | Students produce clear and coherent writing that has been strengthened as needed through planning, drafting, revising, editing, and rewriting, or trying something new. Students write routinely over extended time frames with time for research, reflection, and revision. The writing program provides lessons or guidance to students on a writing process that includes, at a minimum, planning, a first draft, and a second draft. | Throughout the units, students learn and apply a rigorous writing process to strengthen their writing. Students use graphic organizers, writing prompts, editing checklists, rubrics, and self-reflection to plan, organize, draft, revise, edit, and rewrite. They learn to use the writing process to craft texts that are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. Ideas for displaying and/or publishing student writing are provided. |
| College and Career Writing Standard: Use of Technology | Under the guidance of adults, students incorporate the use of digital tools to produce and publish their writing, including in collaboration with their peers. | Under the guidance of adults, students use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing alone and collaboratively with others. | Ideas for using technology and the Internet to produce and publish student writing are provided and can be applied to the various types of writing. (Also see additional criteria focused on technology-enhanced instruction below.) |

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 Criteria | Grade 5 Criteria | WritingCity |
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| College and Career Writing Standard: Research Skills | Students collaborate with peers in shared research and writing projects. | Students conduct research projects that use several sources to investigate different aspects of a topic. | Unit 6 guides students through the creation of a research project from the selection of the topic to the completed report. Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the requirements of a research project • Learn how to gather and integrate multiple sources • Use a guided process to record information by topic, subtopic, and details • Link ideas within and across categories of information • Gain guided experience applying a multi-phase writing process |
| College and Career Writing Standard: Gathering, Assessing, and Integrating Information | Students recall information from experiences or gather relevant information from multiple sources and integrate/synthesize the information without plagiarizing sources. | Students recall information from experiences or gather relevant information from multiple sources. They summarize or paraphrase information in notes and the finished work, and provide a list of sources. | Lessons in Unit 6 also help students learn how to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall and gather relevant information from various resources • Summarize and paraphrase information in notes and the finished work, and provide a list of sources |

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 Criteria | Grade 5 Criteria | WritingCity |
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| College and Career Writing Standard: Drawing Evidence from Texts | This writing standard does not apply until grade 4. | Students apply grade 5 reading standards to literature and informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. In literary texts, students compare and contrast elements within a text or across multiple texts. In informational texts, students explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in the texts. | <p>In grade 5, through activities in the units on opinion, informational/explanatory, and narrative writing, students learn how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly or when drawing inferences from the text • Explain the relationships or interactions of two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a text, or across multiple texts • Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research • Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in opinion and informational/explanatory texts • Provide logically ordered reasons supported by facts and details in writing opinion texts |

Other Aspects of Writing Curriculum and Instruction

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 & Grade 5 | WritingCity |
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| Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics (GUM) Instruction | Students are taught appropriate skills related to grammar, usage, and mechanics in a way that helps them apply those standards to their own writing. | Throughout the units, students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review text samples for models • Learn parts of speech and punctuation • Are provided with guided and independent practice applying GUM skills • Identify examples of well written texts with appropriate grammar, punctuation, usage, and mechanics • Learn how to use writing, proofreading, and editing checklists in reviewing their written work for application of GUM skills • Learn how to improve GUM aspects of their writing through editing |
| Writing Strategies | Students are consistently taught strategies for carrying out assigned writing tasks and reminded of these strategies as appropriate. | Throughout the units, students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and practice applying writing strategies specific to text type • Use graphic organizers and charts for planning their writing • Use revision checklists and rubrics to support application of writing strategies specific to text type • Use editing checklists to support editing as a writing strategy |

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 & Grade 5 | WritingCity |
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| Writer's Workshop Model | <p>Teachers use a writer's workshop model that includes the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent opportunities for students to write—daily or almost daily • Student selection of topics • Explicit teaching of skills and strategies through mini-lessons, often including teacher demonstration/modeling • A writing process approach • Consulting with individual students or small groups about their writing in a workshop/conference format • Writing for an audience, including sharing of writing with other students | <p>Students learn to write better by writing frequently. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose their own topics • Receive explicit teaching and modeling of specific writing skills and techniques • Engage in guided writing practice of specific writing skills and techniques • Write in response to prompts • Learn and apply a rigorous writing process, with teacher guidance • Participate in conferences with teachers for coaching • Share their writing with peers • Are provided with options for publishing their writing (e.g., recording and podcasting their pieces, posting pieces to a digital blog, creating a digital book) |
| Writing Process Approach | <p>Teachers use a writing process approach that includes the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for writing projects that are completed over an extended period • Writing for real audiences extending beyond the teacher • Personalized individual assistance and instruction • Engaging in cycles of planning, writing, and review and rewriting • Self-reflection and/or self-evaluation | <p>Beginning with Unit 1, the process of writing—planning, writing, reviewing, editing, and revising—is emphasized through all types of writing. Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write for real audiences • Complete written works over multiple days through a sequence of steps to improve their writing • Benefit from personalized and individualized teacher assistance and coaching • Learn to evaluate their own writing against models and rubrics |

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 & Grade 5 | WritingCity |
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| 6 Traits/6+1 Traits Model | <p>Rubrics/evaluation criteria for student writing incorporate the 6 traits/6+1 Traits model, and students are taught the model as a framework for evaluating and revising their own work. The model is integrated with writing process instruction, and students are provided with guidance/strategies on how to revise writing to improve each of the traits.</p> | <p>All rubrics are built around the 6 Traits model: organization; voice; word choice; sentence fluency; conventions; and presentation; which are outlined in Unit 1 at each grade level. In addition to using these criteria, each rubric is structured to include sub-criteria that directly reflect elements specifically associated with the text type being rated, ramping up the ability for students to build their pieces to the standards for that text type.</p> |
| Concise Daily Lesson Plans | <p>Successful lesson plans address and integrate these three key components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives for student learning • Teaching/learning activities • Strategies to check student understanding (Milkova, 2012, para. 1; see also Stronge, 2007) <p>Daily lesson plans must include clear objectives, description of activities, and regular assessment of student learning. Lesson plans must be concise for teacher convenience.</p> | <p>Each unit features step-by-step lesson plans that outline student learning objectives, modeling and teaching techniques, resources, and assessments to check student understanding.</p> <p>Daily lessons are divided into short, timed segments that can provide the background to a lesson, step-by-step directions to lead teachers through the lesson, guidance on student practice, and suggestions for assessment.</p> |

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 & Grade 5 | WritingCity |
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| Technology for Flexible Teacher Support | Technology provides an array of resources to support teachers while offering flexibility for teachers of varying levels of expertise and experience in writing instruction. | <p>The <i>WritingCity</i> online system includes an organized collection of digital and printable resources for teachers, including year-at-a-glance and unit overviews, state standards correlations, pacing guides, daily lesson plans, interactive whiteboard lessons, student instructional videos (grades 2-5), teacher PD-on-demand videos, and more. Teachers are able to choose the resources and instructional methods that work best for their teaching style and their students.</p> <p>The student instructional videos can be used by teachers who feel unprepared to teach writing on their own. With this model, teachers show the instructional videos to the class and co-facilitate instruction alongside the video. Experienced writing teachers have the flexibility to choose among the many resources to tailor the lessons according to their teaching style.</p> <p>Classroom demonstration videos are also included in the professional development resources across all grade levels. These videos show how experienced writing teachers tackle challenging writing concepts. After viewing a video, teachers are free to add their own personal touches to the writing lessons and adjust the lesson steps to meet the needs of their students.</p> |

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 & Grade 5 | WritingCity |
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| <p>Technology as a Tool for 21st Century Writers</p> | <p>Students gain experience using technology as a tool while developing research and information gathering, communication, collaboration, and multimedia presentation skills—integrated into writing instruction.</p> | <p><i>WritingCity</i> provides opportunities for teachers to introduce the use of technology as a writing tool, and for students to practice and apply 21st Century literacy skills necessary for their future.</p> <p>Writing projects provide opportunities for students to research topics and gather information, with teacher guidance.</p> <p>Students in grades 2-5 using <i>WritingCity</i>'s digital platform practice technology skills within authentic writing experiences. The platform allows students to obtain feedback on drafts from their peers, communicating and collaborating in a classroom community of writers. At the conclusion of each writing project, suggestions for using technology to publish their works are provided. Their digital collection of writing allows students to reflect upon their growth as writers throughout the school year.</p> |

| Evaluation Criteria | Grade 2 & Grade 5 | WritingCity |
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| Technology to Engage and Support Students to Become Better Writers | Teachers use technology to engage students and support them with instructional feedback about their own writing process. | <p><i>WritingCity</i>'s instructional videos and interactive whiteboard lesson resources help keep students engaged in the lessons. The program also provides students with daily opportunities to apply the foundational skills and strategies they are learning to authentic writing contexts.</p> <p>These writing assignments enable teachers to provide feedback that further develops students' writing skills and strategies. <i>WritingCity</i>'s digital student writing platform makes it easy for teachers to give timely feedback in the form of comments, annotations, and rubric scores. Students use this feedback to strengthen their writing before finalizing their work. Teachers can provide ongoing digital feedback that accommodates individual students' needs throughout the entire writing process. The sequence of initial drafts, digital feedback from the teacher, and revised drafts creates a record of progress to be viewed by teachers, students, and parents.</p> |
| Technology for Supporting the Home-School Connection | Teachers use technology to involve students' families by keeping them apprised of lessons and assignments, and their children's performance and progress. Teachers also use technology to provide instructional support to students at home. | <p>Teachers and students can login to their <i>WritingCity</i> account at any time and on any device. Teachers can publish student work on their "class page" for families to view. At home, from a student's personal account, family members can view lessons, writing assignments, and assessments. Teachers can create digital writing portfolios to showcase each student's work.</p> <p>Students can access the <i>WritingCity</i> platform to watch the instructional videos outside the classroom, as lesson reviews or previews. This feature and the ability to submit writing assignments online enable students who miss school to keep up and avoid falling behind.</p> |
| Formative Assessment | Students receive feedback on their writing from peers and/or teachers; students are taught to assess their own writing; and teachers are guided to monitor students' progress in writing across multiple assessments. | Formal assessment is embedded into the program. The culminating activity of every unit is a Formal Writing piece, which serves as an assessment. Rubrics are used by students to assess their own writing. A Teacher Comments column provides evidence that it is used to provide feedback to students. |

Professional Development

| Evaluation Category | Evaluation Criteria | WritingCity |
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| Program Implementation Training | Introductory training for teacher implementation is provided. | <i>WritingCity</i> offers introductory virtual training via live webinar focusing on program features, resources, and implementation. |
| Follow up Professional Development and Coaching | Substantial, ongoing, follow-up teacher training and coaching is offered. | <i>WritingCity</i> offers follow-up teacher training and coaching, which are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job-embedded • Ongoing • Conducted with individual teachers or instructionally meaningful groups of teachers (e.g., grade-level or subject-area groups) • Focused on teachers' own implementation of the program with their students • Conducted in real time |
| Classroom Demonstration Videos | Program takes advantage of video technology to demonstrate and model teacher best practices. | <i>WritingCity</i> intersperses a substantial body of classroom videos demonstrating real instruction, with supporting features/resources to guide teachers' thinking and reflection. |