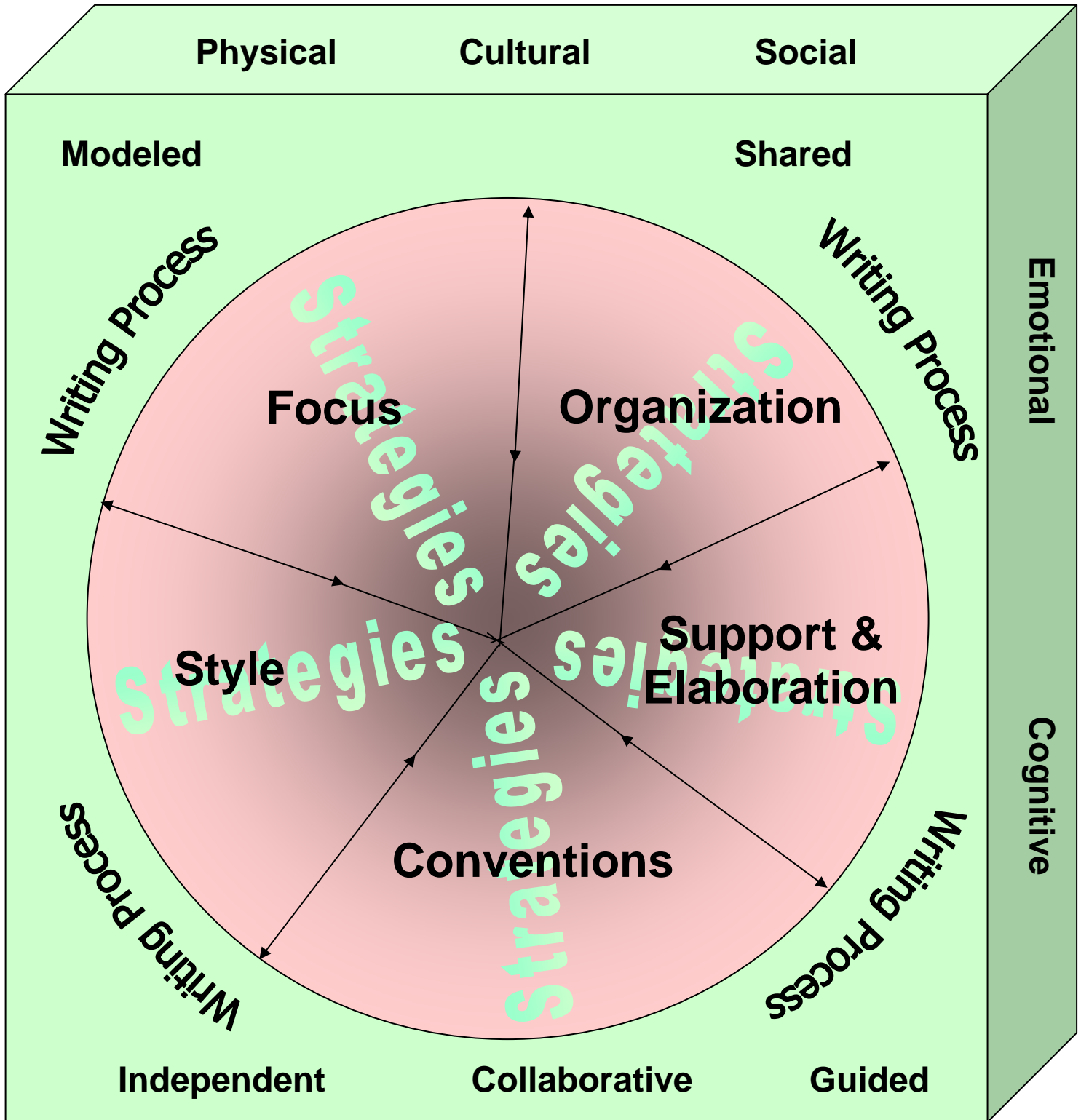


Writing Model for the Wake County Public School System



Classroom Environment

An Overview of Writing In the Wake County Public School System

Rationale

Recognizing the importance of writing, the Instructional Services Division formed a Writing Committee that reviewed system writing assessment data to determine Wake County’s success in developing proficient writers. An analysis of the North Carolina Writing Test Scores over a period of three years reveals the following:

Analysis	Fourth Grade			Seventh Grade			Tenth Grade		
Prompt	Narrative Personal	Narrative Imaginative	Narrative Imaginative	Argumentative Problem/ Solution	Argumentative Evaluative	Argumentative Evaluative	Informational Definition	Informational Definition	Informational Cause/Effect
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
% Passing	47.7%	64.6%	59.3%	62.3%	58.8%	59.5%	66.2%	62.8%	65.5%
Content Proficiency	39.75%	45.7%	32.22%	27.24%	23.7%	22.32%	36%	18.5%	28.63%
Convention Proficiency	39.02%	64.69%	60.48%	68.62%	62.9%	64.71%	66%	71.3%	74.25%
Average Total Writing Score (out of 20 possible points)	11.4	11.9	11.67	11.8	11.5	11.47	11.9	11.2	11.71
Reading Assessments	89.5% EOG	88.6% EOG	90.8% EOG	90.2% EOG	90.4% EOG	91.5% EOG	87.5% Eng I EOC	87.4% Eng I EOC	87.3% Eng I EOC

While encouraged to see that over 50% of students at Grades 4, 7, and 10 passed the N.C. Writing Test, this percentage was significantly lower than the number of students passing the North Carolina Reading Assessments at the same grade levels. Further analysis of this data revealed that students’ proficiency in conventions (*the mechanics of writing*) was much higher than their proficiency in content (*the ability to convey their ideas in an organized and detailed manner*).

In addition to conducting this data analysis, members of the Writing Committee reviewed instructional strategies and materials and evaluated the professional development opportunities in Wake County Public Schools. The committee recognized the importance of helping all students K -12 reach their writing potential in order to become literate and independent citizens. Therefore, it was the charge of this group to develop common understanding and consistent language of what *every* student needs to become a proficient writer.

Proficient Writers

Effective writing instruction requires understanding the characteristics of proficient writers. According to several researchers (*Handbook of Writing Research*, MacArthur, 2006; *Writing Better*, Graham and Harris, 2005, *The Access Center*, www.k8accesscenter.org; *Assessing Writers' Knowledge and Processes of Composing*, Faigley, et al, 1985), proficient writers have the ability to:

- View writing as developing ideas
- Set goals based on audience, purpose, and appropriate form
- Organize ideas using knowledge of text structures
- Generate sentences using sentence variability and clear word choice
- Self-regulate writing by selecting and monitoring strategies according to assignment
- Use revision to develop ideas and communicate meaning more effectively

These characteristics describe strategies that proficient writers employ before, during, and after writing. As writers become more competent in the use of these strategies, they view writing as a desirable activity, are more motivated to engage in writing and become more confident. These characteristics can be developed in all writers.

Foundational Skills that Impact Effective Writing

Early literacy skills and motor production are foundational to the success of written communication. A writer's oral language significantly impacts his or her ability to clearly communicate his or her thoughts and ideas. A writer's knowledge of phonics and sound patterns will influence not only the readability of the spelling, but also the writer's confidence to use more demanding vocabulary. Motor production is the physical vehicle for written language, whether it is manuscript, cursive, or keyboarding. Each of these foundational writing skills associated with printed communication needs to be directly instructed and developed to a fluid and automatic level in order to support both the completed composition and the writing process.

WCPSS Comprehensive Writing Model

The work of the committee culminated in the development of a writing model that reflects the major factors influencing proficiency in writing. This model depicts what the student brings to the classroom (cognitive, emotional, social, cultural and physical factors), the importance of the classroom environment, and a comprehensive, balanced approach to writing instruction (see A Balanced Writing Program). This instructional approach scaffolds students' learning and fosters their success through modeled writing, shared writing, guided writing, collaborative writing, and independent writing (see Scaffolding Writing Instruction). This model is grounded in an understanding of the five essential features of writing identified by North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction. These features, which are reflected in the Standard Course of Study at all grade levels, provide a framework for Wake County's K-12 writing instruction. Good writers exhibit proficiency in each feature.

Features of Effective Writing

- **Focus:** Topic is established and maintained throughout the response.
- **Organization:** Ideas are complete, related, and progress logically.
- **Support and Elaboration:** Topic is developed through relevant and specific details. There must be sufficient elaboration to effectively develop the topic.
- **Style:** Precise, purposeful vocabulary and sentence variety are appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context of writing task.
- **Conventions:** Correctness of the response is defined by sentence formation, usage, and mechanics (spelling, capitalization, punctuation).

These features are directly taught through the writing process, using a variety of strategies to support student writing.

Writing Process

Teachers must teach their students the importance of the process that writers use as they compose a variety of texts. Proficient writers engage in *prewriting* tasks that include identifying a topic, narrowing the topic, and organizing the ideas through the use of planning strategies. Writers compose a *draft* by reflecting on their plans and writing with a focus on content. Next, they *revise* by revisiting their draft and clarifying the content of their writing. Some work requires multiple revisions. In the final stages, writers *edit* their writing to ensure that they have followed the conventions of Standard English. Certain writing pieces may be taken to *publication* to share with a larger audience. Though the writing process is taught sequentially, in practice, writers often revisit stages as they develop a final product.

Differentiated Support

The shaded circle in the model represents the instructional support available for individual students in WCPSS. Students learn literacy skills at different rates. Most students develop proficiency through initial instruction in the five features of writing (represented by the lightest shade in the model). If a student encounters difficulty or demonstrates a need for acceleration or enrichment, differentiation is needed. The process of providing differentiated instruction becomes more complex and is represented by more intensive shades of color. Complexity in the process of planning includes:

- conducting in-depth analysis of both formal and informal assessment data to determine individual needs,
- determining appropriate instructional approach(es) that match these needs and learning styles, and
- providing targeted, timely, and meaningful feedback on the feature(s) for incorporation in future writings.

Effective writing instruction provides differentiated structure and support for students. Students who need more instructional support may be served individually or in flexible groups to address their identified area(s) of need. The arrows indicate the fluid nature of planning and instructional approaches based on student needs. With practice through authentic writing experiences and the development of skills and strategies, the ownership of learning is transferred from the teacher to the student and is ultimately internalized by the writer. The goal of WCPSS is for each student to achieve proficiency in writing.