

# Principles in Practice

The Principles in Practice imprint offers teachers concrete illustrations of effective classroom practices based in NCTE research briefs and policy statements. Each book discusses the research on a specific topic, links the research to an NCTE brief or policy statement, and then demonstrates how those principles come alive in practice: by showcasing actual classroom practices that demonstrate the policies in action; by talking about research in practical, teacher-friendly language; and by offering teachers possibilities for rethinking their own practices in light of the ideas presented in the books. Books within the imprint are grouped in strands, each strand focused on a significant topic of interest.

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# Cultivating Young Multilingual Writers

Nurturing Voices and Stories in and  
beyond the Classroom Walls

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For Milagros, always remember the power of your voice.  
For my mom and dad, Vivian and George Flores,  
thank you for always encouraging me as a writer.  
–TTF

In memory of my parents, Herminio and Esther Fránquiz,  
who were my first teachers and gave me a strong  
foundation en la fe, la confianza, y la educación.  
–MF

Dear Reader,

As a former high school teacher, I remember the frustration I felt when the gap between Research (and that is how I always thought of it: Research with a capital R) and my own practice seemed too wide to ever cross. So many research studies were easy to ignore, in part because they were so distant from my practice and in part because I had no one to help me see how that research would make sense in my everyday practice.

That gap informs the thinking behind this book imprint. Designed for busy teachers, *Principles in Practice* publishes books that look carefully at NCTE's research reports and policy statements and puts those policies to the test in actual classrooms. The goal: to familiarize teachers with important teaching issues, the research behind those issues, potential resources, and—most of all—make the research and policies come alive for teacher-readers.

This book is part of the strand that focuses on *Writing in Today's Classrooms*. Each book in the series highlights a different aspect of this important topic and is organized in a similar way: immersing you in the research principles surrounding the topic (as laid out in the NCTE position statement, *Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing*) and then taking you into actual classrooms, teacher discussions, and student work to see how the principles play out. Each book closes with a teacher-friendly bibliography to offer you even more resources.

Good teaching is connected to strong research. We hope these books help you continue the good teaching that you're doing, think hard about ways to adapt and adjust your practice, and grow even stronger and more confident in the vital work you do with kids every day.

Best of luck,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy Fleischer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cathy Fleischer  
Imprint Editor

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# Acknowledgments

Writing a book is hard. Writing a book during a pandemic is even harder. Schools closed when the world shut down, and we learned new ways to (re)connect, share our challenges, and maintain our humor. Sitting at kitchen tables or office desks, we made connections with the teachers whose voices are part of this book. These connections made the work and world feel a little lighter.

Writing this book took us on many journeys. We journeyed back to our childhoods to remember the practices and pedagogies of our families and the teachers that supported us, in and out of the classroom. We traveled into our own classrooms, where we created learning communities alongside our students to reflect on our own values and beliefs as educators and teacher educators. Writing this book was also a journey into the cultural worlds co-constructed by teachers and students in and through the languages and literacies brought into and valued in their classrooms. In all the journeys, persons, spaces, materials, activities, sharing, and feedback affirmed writers and their developing craft.

Thank you to the talented and fierce teachers and their remarkable students, the heart of this book, for opening your classrooms and lives to us, and now, the world. Thank you for the visits, the phone calls, the Zoom pláticas, and the emails, and for trusting us with your stories. Your voices reverberate throughout each page of this book, your students' writing touches the lives of others, and your teaching will continue to change lives.

Finally, thank you to our editor, Cathy Fleischer, for your patience, guidance, and care along our journey.

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# *Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing*

Date: February 28, 2016

Category: 21st Century Literacies, Writing

Approved in February 2016, this revised statement replaces the *NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing* (November 2004), now sunsetted.

A subcommittee of the NCTE Executive Committee wrote the *NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing* in 2004. In over a decade since, the everyday experience of writing in people's lives has expanded dramatically. Increasingly, handheld devices are important instruments for people's writing, integrated tightly, nearly seamlessly, with their composing in video, photographs, and other media. Geographic location and embodied presence have become more salient to writing than at most times in human history. The ways writing and the spoken voice are mutually supportive in writing processes have become increasingly facilitated by technological capabilities. Globalized economies and relative ease of transportation have continued to bring languages into contact with one another, and US educational scholars and, sometimes, institutions have made progress in considering what it means for individuals to be adding new written languages to existing ones. Even as these expansions have enlarged the experience of writing outside school, implementation of the first USA nationwide standards in literacy—the Common Core State Standards—has, in some places, contributed to narrowing students' experience of writing inside school. In that contradictory and shifting environment, the NCTE Executive Committee charged a committee to update the *Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing*, attempting to reflect some of the historically significant changes of recent years. What follows are ten of the professional principles that guide effective teaching of writing. Each principle is followed by an explanation of what the principle means for teaching and where teachers can find related content in NCTE statements.

## **Writing grows out of many purposes.**

Writing is not just one practice or activity. A note to a cousin is not like a business report, which is different again from a poem. The processes and ways of thinking that lead to these varied kinds of texts can also vary widely, from the quick email to a friend to the careful drafting and redrafting of a legal contract. The different purposes and genres both grow out of and create varied relationships between the writers and the readers, and existing relationships are reflected in degrees of formality in language, as well as assumptions about what knowledge and experience are already shared, and what needs to be explained. Writing with certain purposes in mind, the writer focuses attention on what the audience is thinking or believing; other times, the writer focuses more on the information she or he is organizing, or on her or his own emergent thoughts and feelings. Therefore, the thinking, procedures, and physical format in writing are shaped in accord with the author's purpose(s), the needs of the audience, and the conventions of the genre.

Often, in school, students write only to prove that they did something they were asked to do, in order to get credit for it. Or, students are taught a single type of writing and are led to believe this type will suffice in all situations. Since writers outside school have many different purposes

beyond demonstrating accountability and they use more diverse genres of writing, it is important that students have experiences within school that teach them how writing differs with purpose, audience, and other elements of the situation. Even within more academic settings like college courses, the characteristics of good writing vary among disciplines; what counts as a successful lab report, for example, differs from a successful history paper, online discussion contribution, essay exam, reflection on service learning, or interpretative statement about a work of art.

Thus, beyond the traditional purposes that are identified in school, purposes for writing include developing social networks; reasoning with others to improve society; supporting personal and spiritual growth; reflecting on experience; communicating professionally and academically; building relationships with others, including friends, family, and like-minded individuals; and engaging in aesthetic experiences.

### ***What does this mean for teaching?***

In order to provide high-quality writing opportunities for all students, teachers need to understand:

- The wide range of purposes for which people write and the different kinds of texts and processes that arise from those purposes;
- Strategies and forms for writing for public participation in a democratic society;
- Ways people use writing for personal growth, expression, and reflection, and how to encourage and develop this kind of writing;
- How people make creative and literary texts, aesthetic genres, for the purposes of entertainment, pleasure, or exploration;
- The ways digital environments have added new modalities while constantly creating new publics, audiences, purposes, and invitations to compose;
- The range of non-public uses of writing for self-organization, reflection, planning, and management of information, and the many tools, digital and otherwise, that people use for these purposes;
- Appropriate genres for varied academic disciplines and the purposes and relationships that create those forms;
- Ways of organizing and transforming school curricula in order to provide students with adequate education in varied purposes for writing; and
- How to set up a course that asks students to write for varied purposes and audiences.

### **Related:**

*Writing Now: A Policy Research Brief Produced by the National Council of Teachers of English*

## **Writing is embedded in complex social relationships and their appropriate languages.**

Writing happens in the midst of a web of relationships. Most clearly, the relationship between the writer and the reader can be very specific: writers often have a definite idea of who will read their work, not just a generalized notion that their text will be available to the world. Furthermore, particular people surround the writer—other writers, friends, members of a given community—during the process of composing. They may know what the writer is doing and be indirectly involved in it, though they are not the audience for the work. In workplace and academic settings, writers often write because someone in authority tells them to. Therefore, power relationships are

built into the writing situation. In every writing situation, the writer, the reader, and all relevant others live in a structured social order, where some people's words count more than others, where being heard is more difficult for some people than others, where some people's words come true and others' do not.

Writers start in different places. It makes a difference what kinds of language writers spoke while growing up and may speak at home now, and how those experiences relate to the kinds of language they are being asked to take when composing. It makes a difference, too, the culture a writer comes from, the ways people use language in that culture and the degree to which that culture is privileged in the larger society. Important cultural differences are not only linguistic but also racial, economic, geographic, and ideological. Digital environments have created new contexts in which new languages are being invented continuously, and young people are often leading innovators of "digitalk." The internet brings global languages into contact, even as it provides new contexts for each language—written and oral—to change.

### ***What does this mean for teaching?***

The teaching of writing should assume students will begin with the language with which they are most at home and most fluent in their speech. That language may be a variety of English or a different language altogether. The languages students learn first are the bedrock upon which all other language traditions and forms will be constructed. The ultimate goal is not to leave students where they are, however, but to move them toward greater flexibility, so that they can write not just for their own intimates but for wider audiences. Teachers will want to engage in respectful inquiry with students about significant differences between patterns in their use of their first language and more conventionally written English. Even as they move toward more widely used English, writers find that it is not necessary or desirable to eliminate the ways their family and people in their neighborhood use words to express themselves. The teaching of excellence in writing means adding language to what already exists, not subtracting. Further, expert writing teachers deliberately teach students to incorporate their heritage and home languages intentionally and strategically in the texts they write. The goal is to make more relationships available, not fewer.

In order to provide high-quality writing opportunities for all students, teachers need to understand:

- How to find out about students' language use in the home and their neighborhoods, the changes in language context they may have encountered in their lives, and the kinds of language they most value;
- The ways wider social situations in which students speak, write, read, and relate to other people affect what feels to them natural or unnatural, easy or hard;
- How mixing languages within a text can promote students' acquisition of academic language, deeper competence in a repertoire of codes, ability to communicate complex thoughts, and ways of communicating with various audiences;
- How teachers who do not speak or understand a student's home language can embrace and support the use of home languages in the classroom;
- How to discuss respectfully with students expectations for flexibility in the employment of different kinds of language for different social contexts in order to gain access to some powerful social worlds;

- How to help students negotiate maintenance of their most familiar and cherished language practices while developing strength in academic classroom English;
- Control and awareness of their own varied and strategic ways of using language and the social contexts that expect them;
- An understanding of the relationships among group affiliation, identity, and language;
- Knowledge of the usual patterns of common dialects in English, such as African American English, Spanish, and varieties of English related to Spanish, common patterns in American rural and urban populations, predictable patterns in the English varieties of groups common in their teaching contexts; and
- The online spaces through which students communicate, and how their uses of digital talk differs from conventional written English.

**Related:**

*CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers*

*Resolution on the Student's Right to Incorporate Heritage and Home Languages in Writing*

### **Composing occurs in different modalities and technologies.**

Composing has always required technology, whether it's the technology we associate with print—including pens, pencils, and paper—or the technology we associate with the digital—including word processors, digital imaging software, and the internet. Like all texts, print texts are multimodal: print, whether hand-created or machine-produced, relies for meaning on multiple modalities, including language, layout, and the visual characteristics of the script. Moreover, print has often included visuals—including maps, line drawings, illustrations, and graphs—to create a fuller representation of meaning, to tap the familiarity of a visual to help readers make meaning in a new genre, to add aesthetic value, and to appeal to a wider audience. Film, television, and video involve such combinations of modalities, as do presentation software and websites. As technologies for composing have expanded, “composing” has increasingly referred to a suite of activities in varied modalities. Composers today work with many modalities, including language, layout, still images, other visuals, video, and sound. Computers, both the stationary and mobile varieties, provide a work environment where composers can employ and combine these modalities. Moreover, the internet not only makes a range of new and diverse materials available to writers, but also brings writers and readers closer together and makes possible new kinds of collaborations. Thus, when students have access to a computer with full internet access, composing opportunities expand.

Additionally, increased access to various modalities and technologies has created opportunities for students with a wide range of abilities, backgrounds, and languages to compose with more independence and agency. As more digital tools become available, and more forms of expression are not only accepted but expected, more students are able to employ these tools independently.

### ***What does this mean for teaching?***

Writing instruction should support students as they compose with a variety of modalities and technologies. Because students will, in the wider world, be using word processing for drafting, revision, and editing, incorporating visual components in some compositions, and including links where appropriate, definitions of composing should include these practices; definitions that exclude them are out-of-date and inappropriate.

Because many teachers and students do not have access to the most up-to-date technologies, such as portable devices with cameras, teaching students to compose multimodally may best be accomplished by foregrounding multimodal dimensions of composing in low-tech environments. An assignment for students to create picture books, for example, can allow them to consider how languages and images complement each other and assist the reader. Similar kinds of visual/verbal thinking can be supported across the school curriculum through other illustrated text forms, including journals, design notebooks, and posters. Attention to modalities in assignments and genres like these demonstrates the extent to which “new” literacies are rooted in older ones.

In order to provide high-quality writing opportunities for all students, teachers need to understand:

- A range of new genres that have emerged on the internet;
- Open-source platforms that students can use for composing and electronic portfolios;
- Design and layout principles for print and digital publication;
- Conventions for digital communication, including email, chat, text messages, social networking, and online discussion forums;
- Ways to navigate both the World Wide Web and web-based databases;
- Ways to access, evaluate, use, and cite information found on the internet;
- Theory about and history of modalities, technologies, and the affordances they offer for meaning making;
- Operation of hardware and software that composers use, including resources for solving software and hardware problems;
- Tools that help students compose as independently as possible, in the modalities that best fit their needs and purposes; and
- internet resources for remaining up-to-date on technologies.

**Related:**

*Resolution on Composing with Nonprint Media*

*Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies*

*CCCC Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments*

*21st-Century Literacies: A Policy Research Brief*

## **Conventions of finished and edited texts are an important dimension of the relationship between writers and readers.**

Readers expect writing to conform to their expectations. For public texts written for a general audience, contemporary readers expect words to be spelled in a standardized way, for punctuation to be used in predictable ways, for usage and syntax to match that used in texts they already acknowledged as successful. They expect the style in a piece of writing to be appropriate to its genre and social situation. With that in mind, writers try to use these surface elements strategically, in order to present the identity, create the relationships, and express the ideas that suit their purpose.

### ***What does this mean for teaching?***

Every teacher has to resolve a tension between writing as generating and shaping ideas and writing as a final product, demonstrating expected surface conventions. On the one hand, it is

important for writing to be as correct as possible and for students to be able to produce correct texts so that readers can read and make meaning from them. On the other hand, achieving correctness is only one set of things writers must be able to do; a correct document empty of ideas or unsuited to its audience or purpose is not a good piece of writing. There is no formula for resolving this tension. Though it may be desirable both fluently to produce writing and to adhere to conventions, growth in fluency and control of conventions may not occur at the same time. If a student's mental energies are focused on new intellectual challenges, he or she may attend less fully to details of grammar and punctuation.

Such uneven development should be tolerated and, in fact, encouraged. Too much emphasis on correctness can actually inhibit a writer's development. By the same token, without mastering conventions for written discourse, writers may find their efforts regarded less highly by readers they had wanted to influence. Each teacher must be knowledgeable enough about the entire landscape of writing instruction to guide particular students toward a goal, including increasing fluency in new contexts, mastering conventions, and perhaps most important, developing rhetorical sophistication and appropriateness—all of which work together. NCTE's stated policy over many years has been that conventions of writing are best taught in the context of writing.

Most writing teachers teach students how to edit their writing that will be shared with audiences. This is often considered a late stage in the process of composing, because editing is only essential for the words, visuals, and other materials that are left after all the cutting, replacing, rewriting, and adding that go on during revision. Writers keep an image in their minds of conventional grammar, spelling, and punctuation in order to compare what is already on the page to what their audience expects. They also need to be aware of stylistic options and larger language choices that will best articulate their ideas and produce the most desirable impression on their readers. Language choices may be a matter of the identity a writer seeks to project, and those identities may not be productively standardized. In digital environments, there may be an expected way of using language due to the nature of the platform, such as in texting or blogging, where the conventional usage might differ from language in other contexts.

An area of consideration with respect to conventions in writing is the development of language proficiency for students learning English as an additional language. Experienced teachers understand that these multilingual students will enter the classroom at different stages and vary in the pace with which they acquire their new language. Knowledge of students' cultural and linguistic background and the way that background intersects or differs from English language conventions helps ensure that students are receiving instruction appropriate for their current stage of language learning. Writers who are learning English as an additional language will have multiple possible patterns in mind for phonology, morphology, syntax, and often genre and pragmatics as well. That is, they know more, and are sorting through that knowledge. Some may require support in analyzing the expectations of a wider English-dominant audience in contrast to the patterns of their earlier language(s). For many, patterns from the first language will persist and should be treated with the respect and generosity that should be afforded to spoken accented English.

In order to provide high-quality writing opportunities for all students, teachers need to understand:

- Developmental factors in writing, including the tension between fluency with new operations or content and the practices that produce accepted spelling, punctuation, syntactic, and usage conventions;

- Diverse influences and constraints on writers' decision making as they determine the conventions that apply to this situation and this piece of writing;
- A variety of applications and options for most conventions;
- Appropriate conventions for writing for a particular public audience;
- Linguistic terminology that is helpful for teaching particular kinds of usage without employing excessive linguistic terminology;
- Linguistic terminology helpful for communicating professionally with other educators;
- The relationship among rhetorical considerations and decisions about conventions, for example, the conditions under which a dash, a comma, a semicolon, or a full stop might be more effective;
- Conventions beyond the sentence, such as effective uses of bulleted lists, mixed genres and voices, diagrams and charts, design of pages, and composition of video shots;
- The conditions under which people learn to participate in new social situations, both personal and professional, with language; and
- How to understand technologies such as grammar and spelling checkers to decide which changes are applicable in a given editing situation.

Related:

*Students' Right to Their Own Language*

*CCCC Statement on Second Language Writers and Writing*

## **Everyone has the capacity to write; writing can be taught; and teachers can help students become better writers.**

Developing writers require support. This support can best come through carefully designed writing instruction oriented toward acquiring new strategies and skills. Certainly, writers can benefit from teachers who simply support and give them time to write. However, high-quality instruction matters. Teachers of writing should be well versed in composition theory and research, and they should know methods for turning that theory into practice. They should be capable of teaching writing in both print and digital environments.

Students are different from one another, and they bring to the experience of writing a wide range of resources and strengths. At the same time, any writer can be positioned as weak, struggling, or incompetent. All writers need to learn multiple strategies and modalities to compensate for moments when they feel stuck or defeated, to get on with the business of composing.

As is the case with many activities, becoming a better writer requires that students write. This means actual writing for real audiences, not merely listening to lectures about writing, doing grammar drills, or discussing readings. The more people write, the more familiar it becomes and the more they are motivated to do it. Writers learn from each session with their hands on a keyboard or fingers on a pencil as they draft, rethink, revise, and draft again. Improvement is built into the experience of writing when writers revise, strategizing ways to make their writing better.

### ***What does this mean for teaching?***

Writing instruction must include ample in-class and out-of-class opportunities for writing, including writing in digital spaces, and should involve writing for a variety of purposes and audiences, including audiences beyond the classroom. Teachers need to support students in the

development of writing lives, habits, and preferences for life outside school. We already know that many students do extensive amounts of self-sponsored writing: emailing, keeping journals or doing creative projects, instant messaging, making websites, blogging, creating fan fiction. Though critically important for college and career, the teaching of writing should also be geared toward making sense in a life outside of school, so that writing has ample room to grow in individuals' lives. It is useful for teachers to consider what elements of their curriculum they could imagine students self-sponsoring outside school. Ultimately, those are the activities that will produce more writing.

In order to provide high-quality writing opportunities for all students, teachers need to understand:

- How to interpret curriculum documents, including standards, skills, strategies, concepts, and content that can be taught while students are actually writing, rather than one dimension of composing at a time to all students at once;
- How to create writing lives for the world beyond school;
- How to construct social structures that support independent work;
- How to confer with individual writers;
- How to assess students' work while they are in the process of writing—formatively—in order to offer timely assistance during the composing process;
- How to plan what students need to know in response to ongoing research;
- How to create a sense of community and personal safety in the classroom, so that students are willing to write and collaborate freely and at length;
- How to effectively employ a variety of technologies such as brainstorming tools, collaborative word processors, and bibliography managers for students to engage in writing fully;
- How to ensure that every student has the tools and supports necessary to be as independent as possible; and
- How to encourage and include students writing in their home languages.

**Related:**

*NCTE Beliefs about Students' Right to Write*

*Resolution on Students' Right of Expression*

*What We Know about Writing, Grades K–2*

*How to Help Your Child Become a Better Writer (English)*

*How to Help Your Child Become a Better Writer (Español)*

## **Writing is a process.**

Often, when people think of writing, they think of texts—finished pieces of writing that stand alone. Understanding what writers do, however, involves both thinking about what texts look like when they are finished as well as thinking about what strategies writers might employ to produce those texts, especially when using a variety of technologies. Knowledge about writing is only complete when writers understand the ensemble of actions in which they engage as they produce texts. Such understanding has two aspects, at least. First is the development, through extended practice over years, of a repertory of routines, skills, strategies, and practices, for generating, revising, and editing different kinds of texts. Second is the development of reflective abilities and meta-awareness about writing. The procedural knowledge developed through reflective practice helps writers most when they encounter difficulty, or when they are in the middle of creating a

piece of writing. How does someone get started? What do they do when they get stuck? How do they plan the overall process, each section of their work, and even the rest of the sentence they are writing right now? Research, theory, and practice in the teaching of writing have produced a rich understanding of what writers do, those who are proficient and professional as well as those who struggle.

Two further points are vital. First, to say that writing is a process is decidedly not to say that it should—or can—be turned into a formulaic set of steps or reduced to a set of traits. Experienced writers shift between different operations according to their audience, the purpose of the writing task, the genre, and circumstances, such as deadlines and considerations of length, style, and format.

Second, writers do not accumulate process skills and strategies once and for all. They develop and refine writing skills throughout their writing lives, as they take up new tasks in new genres for new audiences. They grow continually, across personal and professional contexts, using numerous writing spaces and technologies.

### ***What does this mean for teaching?***

Whenever possible, teachers should attend to the process that students might follow to produce texts—and not only specify criteria for evaluating finished products, in form or content. Students should become comfortable with prewriting techniques, multiple strategies for developing and organizing a message, a variety of strategies for revising and editing, and methods for preparing products for public audiences and for deadlines. In explaining assignments, teachers should provide guidance and options for ways of accomplishing the objectives. Using formative assessment to understand the processes students follow—the decisions they make, the attempts along the way—can be at least as important as evaluating the final product with a holistic score or grade. Moreover, they should understand how various digital writing tools—mind mapping, word processing, bibliography managers—can be employed in academically useful ways. At least some of the time, the teacher should guide the students through the process, assisting them as they go. Writing instruction must provide opportunities for students to identify the processes that work best for themselves as they move from one initial idea to final draft, from one writing situation to another.

Writing instruction must also take into account that a good deal of workplace writing and other writing takes place in collaborative situations. Writers must learn to work effectively with one another to create writing, provide feedback, and complete a final draft, often with the use of collaborative technologies.

In order to provide high-quality writing opportunities for all students, teachers need to understand:

- The relationship between features of finished writing and the actions writers perform to create that writing;
- What writers of different genres, including political arguments, stories, poems, blog posts, technical reports, and more, say about their craft;
- The process of writing from the inside, that is, what the teachers themselves as writers experience in a host of different writing situations;
- Multiple strategies for approaching a wide range of typical problems writers face during composing, including strategies for invention, audience, and task analysis, incorporation of images and other visuals, revision, and editing;

- Multiple, flexible models of the writing process, the varied ways individuals approach similar tasks, and the ways that writing situations and genres inform processes;
- How to design time and possibly staged intervals of work for students to do their best work on a given assignment; and
- A range of digital writing tools that writers might find useful in their processes, including word processors, databases, outliners, mind mapping software, design software, shared-document websites, and other hardware, software, and web-based technologies.

**Related:**

*Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*

*CCCC Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing*

### **Writing is a tool for thinking.**

When writers actually write, they think of things that they did not have in mind before they began writing. The act of writing generates ideas; writing can be an act of discovery. This is different from the way we often think of writers—as the solitary author who works diligently to get ideas fixed in his or her head before writing them down. The notion that writing is a medium for thought is important in several ways and suggests a number of important uses for writing: to solve problems, to identify issues, to construct questions, to reconsider something one had already figured out, to try out a half-baked idea. This insight that writing is a tool for thinking helps us to understand the process of drafting and revision as one of exploration, and is nothing like the idea of writing as transcribing from prerecorded tape. Nor is the writing process simply fixing the mistakes in an early draft; rather, it involves finding more and more wrinkles and implications in what one is talking about.

#### ***What does this mean for teaching?***

In any writing classroom, some of the writing is for the writer and some for other audiences as well. Regardless of the age, ability, or experience of the writer, the use of writing to generate thought is still valuable; therefore, forms of writing such as personal narrative, journals, written reflections, observations, and writing-to-learn strategies should be included in the curriculum.

In order to provide high-quality writing opportunities for all students, teachers need to understand:

- How to employ varied tools for thinking through writing, such as journals, writers' notebooks, blogs, sketchbooks, digital portfolios, listservs or online discussion groups, dialogue journals, double-entry or dialectical journals, and others;
- The kinds of new thinking—such as questioning, discovery, and invention—that occur when writers revise;
- The varieties of thinking people do when they compose, and what those types of thinking look like when they appear in writing;
- Strategies for getting started with an idea, or finding an idea when one does not occur immediately;
- Exploring various technologies such as drawing tools and voice-to-text translators for brainstorming and developing one's initial thinking; and

- Ways to accommodate differences among students, such as those who find writing physically challenging, by using oral rehearsal of ideas, gesture, diagramming, or other options that would still allow exploration and development of thought.

**Related:**

*Resolution on Writing Across the Curriculum*

## **Writing has a complex relationship to talk.**

From its beginnings in early childhood, through K–12 and college classrooms, and throughout a variety of workplaces and community settings, writing exists in an environment of talk. Speakers often write notes or scripts. Writers often talk in order to rehearse the language and content that will go into what they write, and conversation often provides an impetus or occasion for writing. Writers sometimes confer with teachers and other writers about what to do next, how to improve their drafts, or how to clarify their ideas and purposes. Their usual ways of speaking either may or may not feed into the sentences they write, depending on intricate, continuous, important decisions.

### ***What does this mean for teaching?***

In early childhood, teachers expect lots of talk to surround writing, since children are figuring out how to get speech onto paper. Early teaching in composition should also attend to helping children get used to producing language orally, through telling stories, explaining how things work, predicting what will happen, and guessing about why things and people are the way they are. Early writing experiences will often include students explaining orally what is in a text, whether it is printed or drawn.

As they grow, writers still need opportunities to talk about what they are writing about, to rehearse the language of their upcoming texts and run ideas by trusted colleagues before and as they take the risk of committing words to paper. After making a draft, it is often helpful for writers to discuss with peers what they have done, partly in order to get ideas from their peers, partly to see what they, the writers, say when they try to explain their thinking. Writing conferences, wherein student writers talk about their work with a teacher, who can make suggestions or reorient what the writer is doing, are also very helpful uses of talk in the writing process.

In order to provide high-quality writing opportunities for all students, teachers need to understand:

- Ways of setting up and managing student talk in partnerships and groups;
- Ways of establishing a balance between talk and writing in classroom management;
- Ways of organizing the classroom and/or schedule to permit individual teacher–student conferences;
- Strategies for deliberate insertions of opportunities for talk into the writing process: knowing when and how students should talk about their writing;
- Ways of anticipating and solving interpersonal conflicts that arise when students discuss writing;
- Relationships—both similarities and differences—between oral and literate language;
- The uses of writing in public presentations and the values of students making oral presentations that grow out of and use their writing; and

- How technologies such as voice recording apps on smartphones and audio editing tools can be used as students create podcasts, videos, or other multimedia work in which they share their writing through oral production.

**Related:**

*What We Know about Writing, Grades 3–5*

*What We Know about Writing, Grades 6–8*

### **Writing and reading are related.**

Writing and reading are related. People who engage in considerable reading often find writing an easier task, though the primary way a writer improves is through writing. Still, it's self-evident that to write a particular kind of text, it helps if the writer has read that kind of text, if only because the writer then has a mental model of the genre. In order to take on a particular style of language, it also helps to have read that language, to have heard it in one's mind, so that one can hear it again in order to compose it.

Writing can also help people become better readers. In their earliest writing experiences, children listen for the relationships of sounds to letters, which contributes greatly to their phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge. Writers also must learn how texts are structured, because eventually they have to compose in different genres, and that knowledge of structure helps them to predict and make sense of the sections and sequencing of the texts they read. The experience of plotting a short story, organizing a research report, or making line breaks in a poem permits the writer, as a reader, to approach new reading experiences with more informed eyes.

Additionally, reading is a vital source of information and ideas. For writers fully to contribute to a given topic or to be effective in a given situation, they must be familiar with and draw on what previous writers have said. Reading also creates a sense of what one's audience knows or expects on a topic.

### ***What does this mean for teaching?***

One way teachers help students become better writers is to make sure they have lots of extended time to read, in school and out. Teachers also make sure students have access to and experience in reading material that presents both professionally published and student writing in various genres. If one is going to write in a genre, it is very helpful to have read in that genre first.

Overall, frequent conversations about the connections between what we read and what we write are helpful. These connections will sometimes be about the structure and craft of the writing itself, and sometimes about thematic and content connections.

In order to provide high-quality writing opportunities for all students, teachers need to understand:

- How writers read for the purposes of writing—with an eye toward not just what the text says but also how it is put together;
- The psychological and social processes reading and writing have in common;
- The ways writers imagine their intended readers, anticipating their responses and needs;
- That text structures are fluid enough to accommodate frequent exceptions, innovations, and disruptions; and
- How writers can identify mentor or exemplar texts, both print and digital, that they may want to emulate in their own writing.

**Related:**

*On Reading, Learning to Read, and Effective Reading Instruction*  
*Reading and Writing across the Curriculum: A Policy Research Brief*  
*Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*

**Assessment of writing involves complex, informed, human judgment.**

Assessment of writing occurs for different purposes. The most fundamental and important assessment of writing is that of the writer, whose efficacy and growth demands that she or he determine and intend what to work on next, throughout the process of producing a single text and across experiences as she or he grows through a writing life. Sometimes, a teacher assesses in order to decide what the student has achieved and what he or she still needs to learn. Sometimes, an agency or institution beyond the classroom assesses a student's level of achievement in order to say whether he or she can go on to some new educational level that requires the writer to be able to do certain things. At other times, school authorities require a writing test as a mechanism for requiring teachers to teach writing, or a certain kind or genre of writing. Still other times, as in a history or literature exam, the assessment of writing itself is not the point, but the quality of the writing is evaluated almost in passing.

In any of these assessments of writing, complex judgments are required. Human beings need to make these judgments, not software programmed to score essays, because only human beings can be sensitive enough to purposes, audience, quality and relevance of evidence, truth in content, and the like. Furthermore, such judgments should be made by professionals who are educated and informed about writing, writing development, the various ways writing can be assessed, and the ways such assessments can support writers.

Instructors of composition should know about various methods of assessment of student writing. Instructors must recognize the difference between formative and summative evaluation and be prepared to evaluate students' writing from both perspectives. By formative evaluation here, we mean provisional, ongoing, in-process judgments about what students know and what to teach next—assessments that may be complex descriptions and not reduced to a grade or score and that are intended to support students' writerly development. By summative evaluation, we mean final judgments about the quality of student work (typically reflected in a grade).

In order to provide high-quality writing opportunities for all students, teachers need to understand:

- How to find out what student writers can do, informally, on an ongoing basis;
- How to use that assessment in order to decide what and how to teach next;
- How to assess occasionally, less frequently, in order to form and report judgments about the quality of student writing and learning;
- How to assess ability and knowledge across multiple different writing engagements;
- What the features of good writing are, appropriate to the context and purposes of the teaching and learning;
- What the elements of a constructive process of writing are, appropriate to the context and purposes of the teaching and learning;
- What growth in writing looks like, the developmental aspects of writing ability;
- Ways of assessing student metacognitive process as they connect writing to reading;

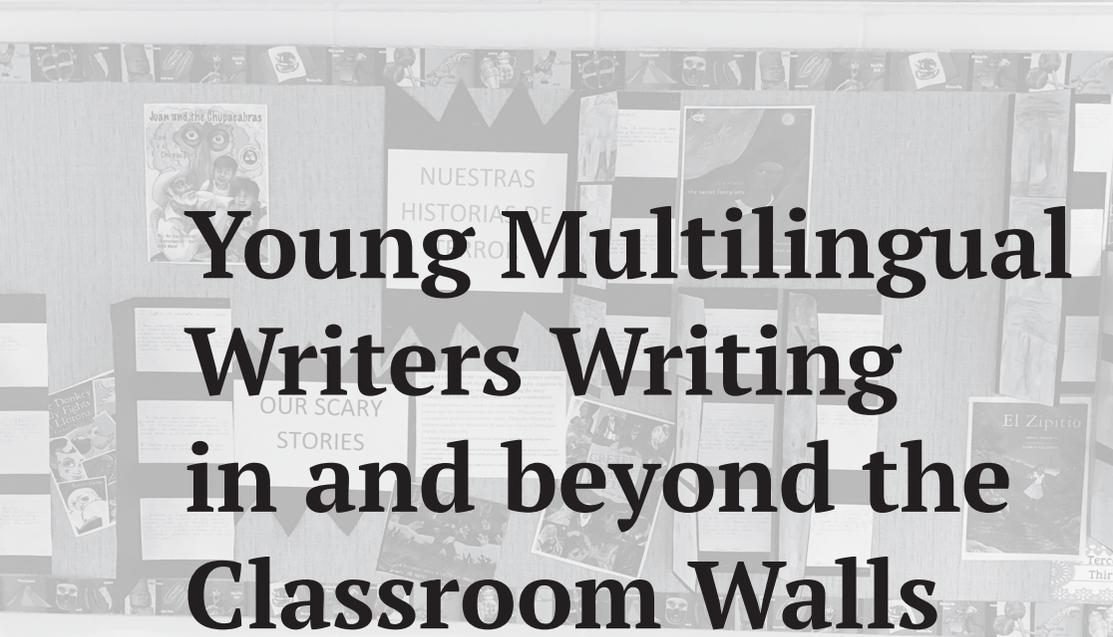
- How to recognize in student writing (in both their texts and their actions) the nascent potential for excellence at the features and processes desired;
- How to deliver useful feedback, appropriate for the writer and the situation;
- How to analyze writing situations for their most essential elements, so that assessment is not of everything about writing all at once, but rather is targeted to outcomes;
- How to analyze and interpret both qualitative and quantitative writing assessments and make decisions about their usefulness;
- How to evaluate electronic texts;
- How to use portfolios to assist writers in their development and how to assess portfolios;
- How self-assessment and reflection contribute to a writer's development and ability to move among genres, media, and rhetorical situations; and
- How to employ a variety of technologies—including screencasting and annotation, embedded text and voice comments, and learning management systems—to provide timely, useful, and goal-oriented feedback to students.

**Related:**

*Writing Assessment: A Position Statement of CCCC*

*NCTE Position Statement on Machine Scoring*

*NCTE Resolution on Grading Student Writing*



# Young Multilingual Writers Writing in and beyond the Classroom Walls

## *My Mexican Culture*

*I've lived in America my whole life but still embrace some of my Mexican culture like my language, which is something that is very important to me. Somehow, it makes me feel special because when I think of my family, I think of México or even the language Spanish and that is why México and the language Spanish are special to me. Spanish reminds me of my family and culture, which makes me feel strong and powerful.*

*Something else that reminds me of my Mexican culture is food. Some types of food that remind me of my family and my culture are quesadillas, tamales, and barbacoa. The real reason these foods are special to me is that I get to share them with my family. They remind me of a part of my culture that I don't show very much.*

*Another thing that I love about my Mexican culture is the stories that my family tells me. My whole mom's side of the family is Mexican, so they tell me stories about their childhood and how they grew up so much differently than me. The stories are always so amazing. They are like windows that let me see into their life and how interesting it is.*

Virginia, a fourth-grade writer from Austin, Texas, wrote a piece titled “My Mexican Culture.” In her writing, Virginia describes the strength and power she feels as both an American and Mexican, embracing language, food, and stories as important parts of her identity and culture. Her words celebrate the beauty of her heritage and also reveal a deep connection to her family and their history. In Virginia’s writing, she shares the beauty of being Mexican American while using her voice to “change people’s minds” about Mexicans so that everyone can be seen, heard, and treated with respect. This type of bicultural voice (Darder, 2012) has been noted in studies in language arts classrooms as an important element for expanding identities and repertoires (Fránquiz & Salazar, 2004). In a bicultural orientation, the changing of minds that Virginia mentions brings visibility to the struggle of claiming hyphenated and multicultural identities when biased societal structures toward the children of immigrants from México (Darder, 1991; Rumbaut, 2005) and other children from Communities of Color exist.

## Contextualizing Writing

Virginia attends a K–5 school located in Central Texas. This school is situated in the middle of an economically and demographically changing neighborhood, in which recently flipped houses, newly built condos and townhomes, and Section Eight housing back up to the fence surrounding the school playground. Even though there are major shifts in the neighborhood as gentrification spreads, the school community remains consistent, strong, and vibrant in its anti-bias curriculum.

Virginia is enrolled in a dual-language (DL) classroom, where she receives instruction throughout the school day in English and Spanish. Her classroom experiences provide her with access to a curriculum delivered in her home and community languages. This supports her in further developing and sustaining her Spanish language, which she describes, in her writing, as deeply connected to her cultural identity.

She wrote this piece as part of a larger writing unit of study focused on identity. Her teacher, Ms. Soledad Bautista, designed this unit to open space for her students to examine and author their identities in writing. Ms. Bautista was invested in all classroom members exploring and noting their unique perspectives and experiences.

For five weeks, she and her young writers gathered ideas and discussed them with partners, during individual conferences, and as a community. As a member of the classroom community, Ms. Bautista shared her own writing and thinking, which opened up a lens into her life and what was important and mattered to her. They read different intentionally selected mentor texts, engaging in rich dialogue about purpose, audience,

and authors' craft. Each writer then selected an idea to take through the writing process toward publication. They further explored their topics by reading more mentor texts directly related to their selected topics and tried on different strategies in their writing.

Every writer in Ms. Bautista's community chose to write about a topic that was both personal and unique to their lived realities. Like Virginia, some writers wrote about their cultures, while others wrote about human rights, racism, or their families' (im)migration stories. Each writer took their ideas through the writing process, learning a variety of revising and editing strategies, to support them in publication. Although some writers chose to write about similar experiences, their unique perspectives and voices were evident in their approaches and their final, polished pieces. Their words and stories are situated within the local and global context in which they live, play, and learn—and their writings serve particular purposes within their community and sociocultural world (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1987; Wertsch, 1998). As an example, Virginia expressed that her heritage land, México, and her membership to the Mexican American community ought to be respected, honored, and preserved by her own community as well as by the larger cultural world outside her community.

Ms. Bautista explains that the purposes for writing process practices in her classroom embody her goals for students as writers and human beings. She believes in “teaching children that they matter, that they are citizens of the world, and that they have a right to have an opinion about it and the right to say it loud.”

## Showcasing Writing

At the end of the unit, Ms. Bautista and the entire fourth-grade team invited families and the school community to a celebration of their writing. Invitations were designed, food was prepared, and the cafeteria was transformed into a community art and writing gallery. On the night of the celebration, parents, siblings, neighbors, teachers, and school administration strolled through a gallery of original art and writing composed by the young writers, giving them a real audience for their work. This public display of writing provided each young writer with the opportunity to see the power of their bilingual voices and bicultural stories beyond the classroom walls.

Ms. Bautista's practice is rooted in her belief that writing is the most valuable tool for students to develop and amplify their own voices. She is inspired by the way that she learned how to write, which she describes as a process of deep reflection and examination of thinking about herself and the world. Her beliefs and her own experiences as a writer have influenced her practice as she is always “looking to what will be the most embracing way to develop student's voice and identity as their most valuable resources.”

Here, we see how Ms. Bautista puts her theories about writing and developing writers into practice. We see how her students use writing as tools to examine their lived experiences. These young writers understand the power of their voices and perspectives, and how their writing can educate people and share the ideas that are most important in their lives. In their compositions, these young writers are taking risks by sharing a part of themselves with their peers, their teacher, and their families and community. This type of writing takes time to nurture and develop. It happens within a community where young writers are encouraged and supported in taking brave steps as composers, amplifying their voices in the world.

Writing in community and writing bravely begins with our own beliefs as teachers of young writers. It is a deep belief that we, as authors of this book, value and hold—a belief that drives our own work alongside young writers and their teachers, and that drives our work in preparing literacy educators and researchers. More important, it is a belief recognized in the NCTE position statement on *Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing* (2016). As articulated in the statement, we believe that, “Everyone has the capacity to write; writing can be taught; and teachers can help students become better writers” (*Professional Knowledge*, 2016). This perspective on writing challenges teachers to interrogate their own beliefs and assumptions about their writers and the teaching of writing, and how they design instruction that tends to the strengths, resources, and needs of each writer in their learning communities.

## Everyone Has the Capacity to Write

The belief that everyone has the capacity to write suggests that to grow writers, we must start *with* the writer. As teachers of young writers, we need to recognize that our “writers start in different places” (*Professional Knowledge*, 2016) and sometimes in different languages. Each of our young writers comes to our learning communities with their own history and relationship to writing. They may have experienced success or failure related to writing in general or a genre in particular. Maybe they have never truly had a teacher who saw their capacity as a writer or provided them with quality writing instruction. It’s also possible that in their previous classrooms, writing was not viewed as a content area, but through a prescriptive lens and frame detached from their linguistic and cultural experiences in their homes and communities. Young writers’ histories and stories and relationship to writing matter deeply and can be expanded whether former instruction was thin or thick.

## Writing Can Be Taught and Expanded

Young writers need dedicated amounts of time and space (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001) to tinker, try, and approximate their writing because “becoming a better writer requires that students [actually] write” (*Professional Knowledge*, 2016). Along with time and space to write, writers need access to high-quality writing instruction. This includes teachers composing and modeling their own writing, as well as the intentional selection of inspiring mentor texts (Calkins, 1994; Dorfman, Cappelli & Hoyt, 2017) that tend to genre, structure, voice, languaging, and the taking of syntactic risks. The time and space for self-expression is coupled with consistent and constructive feedback on writing in progress (Graves, 1994). However, this type of instruction must begin, as we witnessed in the brief portrait from Ms. Bautista’s writing community, with a deep knowledge of who our students are, not just as writers but as human beings. What do we know about our students? What communities do they belong to? What matters most to them? Who are the important persons and places in their lives? Designing writing instruction, then, begins with a focus on who the writers are, what they have the potential to do, and the belief that we can teach our writers both strategies to improve their writing and tools to add to their existing linguistic and cultural repertoires.

## Teachers Helping Students Become Better Writers

As teachers of young writers, our job is to demystify what writing is and what writers do. We can work with our young writers to read texts like writers (Fletcher, 2013; Ray, 1999) to understand the moves that writers make to tell stories, to enter into debates, to persuade, or to entertain. We can introduce students to the published writing and words of diverse writers, poets, and storytellers to show them examples of the many ways that authors compose. Through this exploration of writers and writing, we can discuss with students how writing happens beyond the walls of the classroom and can spill into their lives in powerful and purposeful ways.

Our work is to support young writers to understand that writing is a process not only for them, but also for the published authors whose work they are reading, and to see that they too are lifelong writers who can improve their craft within a supportive community of writers. Teachers in such supportive communities situate writing within their students’ worlds because they “help our students see themselves as writers with stories to tell and ideas to share” (Newman, 2012, p. 25). They use mentor texts in bi/multilingual classrooms to demystify the writer’s craft. Some premises guiding their writing instruction include:

- Young writers come to our classrooms with rich histories and with important stories and perspectives to share. They are storytellers, artists, dancers, musicians and creators of text—oral, written, and embodied.
- Young writers learn to use writing as a tool to explain, explore, examine, argue, amplify, and so much more.
- Young writers notice that writing lives and thrives beyond the classroom and is a tool for change—to raise consciousness of the lived conditions of their communities and the world.
- Young writers inquire about perspectives and languages different than their own and move “toward greater flexibility, so that they can write not just for their own intimates but for wider audiences.” (*Professional Knowledge*, 2016)

In helping students to inquire, name, describe, and raise consciousness of their communities and the wider world, teachers may ask themselves: How do we prepare our writers to recognize the power in their writing? How do we illuminate the ways in which writing can be and is a tool for changing unjust conditions? How do we cultivate the storied lives and traditions of all our students?

Our work as teachers of young writers begins from the perspective and deeply held belief that our students come to our classrooms as writers with important stories to tell. Our young writers are raised and nurtured within communities where stories and storytelling are important intergenerational literacy practices passed on by elders and family members. These values and beliefs are challenged by restrictive curricula, policies, mandates, and political agendas that seek to reproduce the status quo by silencing and marginalizing the voices of our youth and their teachers.

In Ms. Bautista’s classroom, and in the portraits of teachers you will meet across the chapters of this book, you will witness the power of writing communities in which young writers are provided with time and space to practice writing, are framed as writers, and are encouraged to write bravely alongside teachers who teach fearlessly.

## How We Come to This Project

Throughout this book, we invite you, the reader, into a process of self-reflection and self-examination of your personal views and beliefs for cultivating young writers and nurturing their voices. If we are to make our writing classrooms spaces where our young writers can flourish, we must be open to this ongoing, inner process of interrogation in the service of our students. Alongside this invitation, we open up our lives to you, sharing personal stories from our childhoods and classroom experiences that foreground our responsibilities to our communities and our deep commitments to powerful literacy curricula for all learners.

### **Tracey T. Flores**

As a second-generation Chicana growing up in Phoenix, Arizona, I was surrounded by the stories and *consejos* of my family. My immediate and my extended family shared stories when we would gather for meals, for holidays, or on any other occasion that brought us together. Their stories were always from their childhoods, and a majority of the memories they recounted involved moments spent with the family.

Of all the stories shared with me, the ones that have most vividly stayed with me came from my mother, Vivian. She told me many stories about her childhood and youth growing up in Holbrook, Arizona, surrounded by her family and with the dearest friends of her entire life. She recounted memories of attending daily mass with her mother, spending time with her nieces and nephews, and traveling with her high school band to Phoenix to march in parades. However, there is one story that my mother has shared time and time again, that as I've grown older, I have realized is part of my own story and history and shapes the way I come to my work as a teacher, teacher educator, and researcher.

When my mother was in elementary school, she had a teacher who punished her for speaking Spanish on the playground and in the classroom with her friends. The teacher would make her stay after school and write one-hundred times on the blackboard, "I will not speak Spanish on the playground." This was not a one-time punishment given by the teacher, but rather a regular occurrence, as my mother continued to speak Spanish, the language she had grown up speaking with her family, in class and on the playground. Each time my mother tells this story, I bear witness to the pain and shame she endured as a young girl that still stays with her to this day. As a result, my mother made the decision to not teach me and my sisters Spanish to protect us from this shame and ridicule.

While I was in the Multilingual/Multicultural (MLMC) teacher education program at Arizona State University, Arizona passed Proposition 203, which limited access to bilingual education for students learning English. Entering my own classroom as a fourth-grade English as a second language (ESL) teacher, I worked to ensure that my students never endured this same pain as multilingual children. However, I witnessed the social and academic harm of English-only policies and mandates (Garcia, Lawton & DeFigueiredo, 2012) in my classroom, as I would overhear students policing each other's language by calling attention to one another for speaking Spanish or other languages in the classroom.

Arizona's English-only mandates required that my students—multilingual children learning English as a second or third language—be placed in an English language development (ELD) classroom. In the ELD classroom, my students were mandated to receive four hours of discrete skill instruction in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This limited their access to the same curricular opportunities

as their native English-speaking peers, namely in the content areas (e.g., science) (Lillie, Markos, Arias & Wiley, 2012). The language and literacy instruction they did receive was often times based on an autonomous view of literacy (Street, 1995) in which instruction was decontextualized from their lived experiences and the linguistic practices of their homes and communities. At the core, these mandates positioned my students and families, a majority identifying as mixed-status, Spanish speakers and as Latinx, as deficient or in need of (re)mediation (Gutiérrez, Morales & Martinez, 2009).

During this time, I became a teacher consultant with the Central Arizona Writing Project (CAWP), where I formed a community with passionate writing teachers from across the state, working to create equitable writing classrooms. Within my ELD learning community, I invited my students and their families, the majority Latinx, to participate in an after-school family writing workshop in which we gathered to draw, write, and orally share our personal stories and histories (Flores, 2019). My students and their parents composed stories honoring friends, serving as tributes to beloved *abuelitos*, celebrating religious and cultural traditions, and naming their dreams for the future. Through the telling and composing of our personal stories and histories, we cultivated authentic relationships rooted in *confianza* (Alvarez, 2017).

From these workshops, I designed and facilitated *Somos Escritoras/We Are Writers*, a writing and art workshop that invites Latina girls in grades six to eight to share and perform stories from their lived experiences using art, theater, and writing as tools for self-reflection and self-examination. Our goal is to support girls to continue developing their writing while learning new tools to speak their truths, define themselves, and amplify their voices within a supportive community of Latina girls and women (Flores, 2023; 2021).

My commitment to this work and to this project is highly personal and political. My mother's language history, my experiences teaching alongside my students in restrictive language and literacy classrooms, and writing and sharing with Latinx families and girls in *Somos Escritoras* is what brings me to this current project. Their stories, voices, and experiences are woven into my teaching and research and are part of my own journey and story. I strive to prepare teachers to understand their role as advocates with and for their students, while creating classroom communities that center the languages, cultures, and identities of their students.

### ***María E. Fránquiz***

Like Virginia, I share with you, the reader, my wonderful *familia*. My *Mami* grew up in a poor *barrio* in Bayamón, Puerto Rico. She was the youngest of seven children and the only one to graduate from high school. My *Papi* grew up in the same *barrio*, was the oldest of thirteen children, and apprenticed to work in carpentry with his *Papi* after eighth grade. I was born and grew up in Puerto Nuevo, currently a densely

populated *municipio* in the metropolitan area of San Juan. I recall our neighborhood as a working-class community in which telling stories was the way to socialize the younger generations about the values, histories, traditions, recipes, and remedies that were often excluded from the formal structures of schools, churches, and governments. Sharing memories of the past under Spanish colonization, descriptions of present American colonization, and dreams of the island's independence from colonialism were common stories heard in day-to-day conversational exchanges among parents, neighbors, aunts and uncles, older cousins, and visitors from other parts of the island. *Bochinche* (a term that means *chisme* for Mexican-American speakers or gossip for English speakers) was ubiquitous and often centered on community norms or provided a sense of personal and collective pride. I remember being absorbed in the *bochinche* and feeling such pride when the buzz involved people I knew—my grandfather sharing news of his harvest with neighbors, my *Papi* being promoted to sergeant in the US Army, my sister being cured of thrush with herbal medicines, or my *madrina* (godmother) touted as the best seamstress in our *municipio*. These stories were communicated in Spanish and represent a community discourse that worked itself into my reader and writer identities. As stated by Sonja Z. Pérez (2002) “. . . one of the reasons that people in the United States tell stories is to write themselves into the discourse of nationhood, to revise the official stories of the nation, the constitution of We the People” (p. 277). This type of authoring became particularly poignant for me as my childhood became a diasporic experience in the middle of my third grade.

From kindergarten to third grade, my teachers at Academia Santa Monica spoke Spanish, with the exception of one subject, English, taught by an Irish-Catholic nun. In March of my third grade, my *Papi* was transferred to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. Initially, life in the eastern seaboard at St. Patrick's School was a humbling experience. My sister cried during morning prayers because she did not understand English and was subsequently retained in kindergarten. My *Papi* spent all of his free time that spring and summer teaching his children English.

It was hard for my *familia* to live on the mainland, and there were many more humbling moments, as my *Papi* was transferred to different army bases. One bitter memory I carried for years was inflicted by a Mexican-American teacher in El Paso, Texas. She made fun of my Puerto Rican Spanish language variant on the first day of school. When I asked her, “¿Dónde puedo encontrar la parada de guaguas? (Where can I find the bus stop?),” she answered, “Speak English. And the correct word for bus is *camión*.” I assumed incorrectly that I could use Spanish in school. I also assumed that “*guaguas*” (buses) referred to the same vehicle in Puerto Rico and in El Paso, where there were many Spanish speakers. I was wrong on both counts.

My *familia* lived in many other linguistic and cultural contexts in California, Germany, and Alaska. Each relocation influenced our language and cultural ways. Since I went to college in the West, I became acquainted with the cultural nationalism

of the Chicax movement. Imagine, I was a Puerto Rican taking up Chicax causes. Consequently, my friends called me a ChicaRican—not because I had mixed parentage, but because I had mixed cultural and political affiliations. While I was enrolled in classes in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara, I was selected to be one of two teaching assistants for the late César Chávez when he taught the Farm Labor History of California. This remarkable educational experience sealed my cultural and political hybrid identity as a ChicaRican and added richness to my diaspora consciousness. At the end of my graduate studies, I became a teacher consultant of the South Coast Writing Project (SCWriP). Years later, I worked with the leadership team of the National Writing Project and the English Department at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez to revive the MayaWest Writing Project on the island. Presently, as a teacher educator and researcher, I bring to students the stories of my *familia* and my lived experiences as the seeds for writing their own stories.

## ***Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing: Theories of Teachers***

The revised and expanded NCTE policy statement on *Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing* (2016), written “by members for members,” provides educators and teacher educators with an updated vision for the teaching of writing in K–12 classrooms. This revised statement, like the one from which it was first established, is rooted in the latest research and provides insights into what effective writing instruction might look like across a lifespan. The updated statement reflects the shifting modes and modalities for which individuals write and use writing in the different spaces of their everyday lives.

The revised statement serves as a resource for teachers and teacher educators as they work to become the type of teachers of writers that our students, families, and communities deserve. It provides a link between theory and practice for teachers and teacher educators to recognize the ways that theory can materialize into practice in increasingly diverse classrooms, and the ways that practice can and should inform theory. This statement is mindful of the ever-changing landscape of writing and learning to write, in and out of school, while continuing to highlight the value and importance of highly skilled teachers for our young writers in the classroom.

This is a guide, however, as the role of the teacher is central. Teachers are the ones who truly know their students, families, and communities, and work within different locations with specific contextualizing factors. Teachers are the ones who navigate each day, making decisions informed by the unique students who come to their classroom each and every day.

*Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing* (2016) is not a script for teaching young writers. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching young writers. The statement offers principles that support teachers in the professional choices they make every single day. The statement stands on the shoulders of teachers who have had the courage and creativity to close their classroom doors and do the work of teaching and loving every child that becomes a part of their learning community. It is a testament to their advocacy, their fight, and their will to ensure that every child sees themselves as a reader, writer, and creator for change.

## The Teachers of Young Writers

The heart of this book centers the stories, practices, and voices of elementary classroom teachers working in K–5 settings. These particular educators teach in schools located in Arizona and Texas. Each state has a unique context for the educational policies and programming offered to students and families, with different sociopolitical contexts and theoretical and practical approaches to teaching young writers. The history of this educational programming is also part of the larger story of the ways in which teachers across the United States are innovating practices within local and national language and literacy policies and mandates.

## Language Context of Arizona

The official language of Arizona is English. The complexity of Arizona's language policies is contradictory. In the mid-1990s Ron Unz, a multimillionaire from the Silicon Valley, financed the California Proposition 227, "English for the Children" campaign, and characterized bilingual education as a failed and expensive experiment where children languished for years. His success in California inspired him to promote the passage of Proposition 203 in Arizona in 2000. English was declared as the official language of Arizona in 2006, and every school district was required to provide a four-hour model of structured English immersion (SEI) for students who were classified as "English Learners." Waivers from this rigid pedagogical approach were difficult for parents to obtain. Next, SB 1014 was passed in 2019. This law reduces the required hours of segregated English immersion from four to two hours for students in K–5. The new law is interpreted as allowing for alternative English instruction models such as dual-language or transitional bilingual education.

### *Bilingual Education Programs*

A common premise for all bilingual education programs, including dual-language programs, is for instruction and assessment to be provided in two languages, for example, Spanish and English or Vietnamese and English. In early-exit or late-exit bilingual programs, two languages are used to transition to the dominant English program and transitioning is planned for the early or the upper elementary grades. Typically, early- and late-exit programs are comprised of students from immigrant or mixed-status families. While dual-language bilingual programs include this same population of students transitioning from home language to English, they also include monolingual English speakers transitioning to their second language.

## Language Context of Texas

Texas does not have an official language policy. While 65 percent of Texans speak only English at home, a large number of Texas households speak Spanish. There are also significant numbers of Vietnamese and Chinese speakers. Along with Illinois, New Jersey, and New York, Texas is one of the only four states currently requiring bilingual education services for children who do not speak English at home. Bilingual education allows school districts to use the home language of students for reading and writing and for facilitating the development of bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy. The Latinx population of Texas is young, with Latinx students accounting for more than half of the number of Texas students in the public-school system. At least, four bilingual education program models are offered at the elementary level to linguistically diverse students in Texas. These are English as a Second Language, Transitional Bilingual, English Immersion, and Two-Way Immersion or Dual-Language Education.

These are the contexts for the states where the six teachers highlighted in this book work with young writers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds: in classroom settings, which are either English-only where instruction is delivered in English, or bilingual/dual-language classrooms in which students receive instruction in both English and Spanish. These teachers have varied years of experience with elementary students in these distinct settings, in different schools with differing sociopolitical contexts.

As educators, teacher educators, and scholars of literacy, we understand the high stakes that these language policies and resulting accountability measures place on teachers. Too often, this focus can cause a narrowing of the curriculum in favor of a rigid, skills-based approach to instruction in writing (Wohlwend, 2009). And, for some teachers, writing takes a back seat to “tested” subjects, being reduced to no more than short-answer responses to texts.

This book provides teachers and teacher educators with concrete examples of the ways that the six profiled educators (and others) are moving in a different direction: designing and implementing writing instruction that begins with the cultural, linguistic, and familial resources of young writers; centering their interests and voices; and extending writing beyond the classroom walls. The unique voices and perspectives of the teachers provide a contextualized approach to teaching young writers that can be used across grade levels, geographic regions, and district and state curriculum mandates. They each offer innovative ideas for working from within the walls of the classroom that all teachers of young writers in any context can bring into their own practice to develop powerful writing communities.

## **The Teachers:**

### ***Carmela Valdez, First-Grade Dual Language, Austin, Texas***

Ms. Valdez is currently an early childhood, Dual-Language teacher and in her sixteenth year of teaching. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in theatre from the University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Education in early childhood education from Texas State University. Ms. Valdez is a teacher consultant (TC) of the Heart of Texas Writing Project (HTWP), and an affiliate of the National Writing Project (NWP), located in the College of Education at UT Austin. Since 2019, she has co-directed the Invitational Summer Institute for K–12 teachers and conducts bilingual writing workshops for Texas school districts. In 2021, Ms. Valdez received the Donald H. Graves Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Writing from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). In 2022, she was awarded Teacher of the Year by the Austin Area Bilingual Association. She was also elected as a teacher representative to the NCTE Nominating Committee. Ms. Valdez is a passionate advocate for the rights of every multilingual student and believes language is a civil right.

### ***Miriam Ortiz, Second-Grade, Bilingual Teacher, Manor, Texas***

Originally from the U.S./Mexico border at Eagle Pass in Texas, Mrs. Ortiz has eleven years of teaching experience in Manor and Austin Independent School Districts (ISDs). She is a first-generation college graduate, and brings this experience to her classroom

to create college-going pathways for her students, families, and their communities to thrive. Mrs. Ortiz currently serves Austin ISD's community of learners within the Multilingual Education Department as a multilingual specialist for elementary schools. In this role, she develops dual-language (DL) curriculum that reflects the biliteracy framework under a 90/10 DL program. She also provides professional learning for DL elementary teachers, modeling student-centered best practices and oracy strategies that lead children to biliteracy. She was awarded the honor of Teacher of the Year in 2014 and 2019 by her school district. Mrs. Ortiz has also been recognized as the NCTE 2021 Early Childhood Education Assembly's Early Literacy Master Teacher. For her, "children deserve a world of opportunities for infinite possibilities," and for living up to this perspective, she continues to honor the profession.

### ***Sandra Springer, Third-Grade Bilingual Teacher, Austin, Texas***

Mrs. Springer is a native of El Salvador. Being a survivor of a twelve-year civil war in her country contributed to her developing a critical consciousness toward social justice issues. Mrs. Springer completed a master's reading teaching certificate and a master's degree in bilingual and bicultural education at the University of Texas at Austin. For the last twenty-one years, she has worked in various models of bilingual education. She was honored twice by her colleagues as "Teacher of the Year," and was also named Austin Bilingual Teacher of the Year by the Austin Area Association for Bilingual Education. In 2017, she was honored as Texas Bilingual Teacher of the Year by the Texas Association for Bilingual Education, and in 2019, she was runner-up for the National Bilingual Teacher of the Year sponsored by the National Association for Bilingual Education. Mrs. Springer is a member of the NCTE Professional Dyads and Culturally Relevant Teaching (PDCRT) program and serves as the vice president of the Austin Area Association for Bilingual Educators (AAABE), where she has implemented "Pláticas," a co-learning space for teachers. She based the co-learning space on cross-generational teacher pláticas in which she participated with preservice, newly inducted, and veteran teachers for several years (see Fránquiz & Salinas, 2022).

### ***Kerry Alexander, Fourth-Grade Teacher, Austin, Texas***

For ten years, Mrs. Alexander has taught fourth-grade language arts and reading in Central Texas. As a classroom literacy educator, she focuses on putting learners' identities at the center of her practice and curriculum design. Most recently, Mrs. Alexander is working toward her doctorate in language and literacy studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Through critical, multimodal, and inquiry-based pedagogies, she embodies what she calls an act of *language artistry*: the relational, multimodal, meaning-making involved in designing for a more inclusive world. As

a graduate student, Mrs. Alexander has developed a self-produced podcast series, *Coaching with Kerry*, focusing on community-teacher voices and stories. Additionally, she has a two-year appointment as equity chair at a local elementary school. Together, caregivers, teachers, and administrators ask: What is the community's vision for equity in literacy classrooms? Mrs. Alexander is a teacher consultant (TC) for the Heart of Texas Writing Project (HTWP) where she leads Saturday writing workshops for HTWP, and has led professional development sessions for teachers throughout the state.

### ***Soledad Bautista, Fourth-Grade Dual-Language Teacher, Austin, Texas***

Emigrating from Guadalajara, Mexico, to Texas as a young adult, Ms. Bautista has taught first, second, and fourth grade during her twelve years of teaching in the United States. To her classroom teaching, she brings experiences as a psychologist in Mexican hospitals and other institutions. She is a teacher consultant (TC) for the Heart of Texas Writing Project. Currently, Ms. Bautista is the director of professional development and outreach for Creative Waco, an organization that builds the relationship between businesses and creativity in that community. She is responsible for the launch of the first bilingual cohort in the nation for Air Collaborative. Her recent relocation to Waco, Texas, has reconnected her with her love of art, theater, and film. She strongly believes that if we have had to endure collective trauma due to the pandemic, there has to be a way to experience collective healing. A healing example is an HBO award-winning film, *When You Clean a Stranger's Home*. It was made for the 2021 Latinx Short Film Competition, and Ms. Bautista played a role in it. In this film, an individual story embraces and highlights the importance of every story. She believes that “multilingualism and multiculturalism are perhaps one of the strongest hopes we have to write a different history.”

### ***Christina Bustos, Fifth-Grade Teacher, Mesa, Arizona***

Born and raised in Arizona, Ms. Bustos taught for nineteen years in grades three to eight in the cities of Phoenix, Tempe, and Mesa. Most recently, she added educational technology expertise to her responsibilities and serves as an ed-tech coach for Mesa Public Schools. She is also actively involved in the Mesa Education Association (MEA), the local affiliate of the Arizona Education Association (AEA), where she serves as the vice president and the committee chair for social and racial justice. She has been chosen to participate at the national level in the AEA initiatives for recruitment and retention of diverse educators. She represented MEA at the National Education Association 2022 Leadership Summit and participated in Leaders for Just Schools and NEA coconspirators for antiracist education. For NCTE, Ms. Bustos

has created principles for teachers to create multimodal text sets that include books, audio/video read-alouds, podcasts, recorded interactions with authors, websites, articles, timelines, and song. In all her efforts, she is an advocate for learners to develop healthy and well-rounded understandings on a variety of topics.

As noted earlier, this book is written in response to and connection with the most recent revisions to the NCTE position paper on *Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing*. We provide elementary school educators, future educators, teacher educators, and classroom researchers with concrete examples of effective writing pedagogy for all young writers, with particular emphasis on engaging culturally and linguistically diverse young writers and their repertoires. Throughout the book, we highlight the voices and stories of these six classroom educators, teaching in varied settings—from bilingual, dual-language, and English-only contexts—and their work alongside their young writers. Through classroom portraits, each educator shares examples of their pedagogical approaches for cultivating young writers and the ways they organize, design, and facilitate writing curriculum to meet the unique needs of their students. These teachers share the ways they use mentor texts to facilitate writing and performing, examples of multimodal writing artifacts from students written in different genres (e.g., narrative, how-to pieces, poems, etc.), strategies to center students' personal interests in various writing opportunities, and approaches for engaging students' families and communities through publishing and public performances (i.e., young writers' celebrations).

## Development of This Book

We ourselves have gone through a process of becoming critical teacher educators and scholars. For the purposes of this book, critical teacher educators are those who identify, acknowledge, and lift up the voices of extraordinary teachers of writing who are invested in elevating the voices of all their students. Critical teacher educators and scholars highlight the practices of teachers who examine what counts as power in writing and reimagine the multiple ways to expand provincial views with their students. As such, we present in this book portraits of these six extraordinary elementary school teachers. The portraits reveal how they create space for students to write, reframe, revise, publish, and celebrate their cultural and linguistic strengths and complexities. The methods of portraiture require the portraiture (i.e., the authors of this book) to examine the intersection between self and the teachers to consider the powers that may be inherent in their relationships (Chapman, 2006; Fránquiz, Salazar & DeNicolo, 2012; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraits examine deeply the ebb and flow of feelings, discoveries, and commitments that students and teachers express during normalized, as well as challenging, times.

In Chapter Two, we provide portraits of Ms. Bustos's fifth-grade classroom in Arizona and Ms. Alexander's fourth-grade classroom in Texas. The teachers have sketched the environment in which they invite their students to write, revise, and publish their stories. They also share how they use the physical space and the material culture of the classroom, including mentor texts, to provide the time and models necessary for deep thinking and composing.

Mrs. Ortiz's bilingual second-grade classroom and Mrs. Springer's bilingual third-grade classroom are highlighted in Chapter Three. Underscored in this chapter are the ways in which each teacher organizes projects or units of study and the types of writing children generate. The two teachers plan writing lessons that may be completed in Spanish and/or English, and they integrate subject area learning so that students write for different purposes.

In Chapter Four, we highlight the classroom practices of first-grade teacher Ms. Valdez and fourth-grade teacher Ms. Bautista. Both teachers use a writer's workshop approach to teaching young writers in their respective classrooms in different geographical areas of a large urban metropolitan city in Central Texas. We focus on the ways each teacher plans for the assessment of students' writing through daily writing conferences that involve sitting alongside their students to document their strategies while providing in-the-moment teaching to support their development as writers.

At the end of each chapter, you will find a section titled, "Pause, Reflect & Write." In this section, we offer questions that invite you to pause *and* reflect on your own pedagogical practices and beliefs and classroom learning community, to envision how you might integrate new learnings from these teacher portraits into your current teaching context. We encourage you to write down your reflections, questions, and ideas, and to share them as part of a study group or with a critical friend who can support you and push you in envisioning new possibilities for your students and your classroom teaching.

The concluding chapter to this book links together the exemplary practices of these six teachers who specifically plan for students to use their linguistic and cultural repertoires to write their voices and identities and those of their families and communities into the elementary language arts curriculum. At the end of the book, we provide an annotated bibliography, with some of our favorite resources curated by the educators featured in this book. Along with our six teachers' recommendations, we provide our own suggestions from our K-12 writing classrooms, in after-school community writing spaces, and alongside preservice teachers in our methods courses to support your work in cultivating multilingual writers.

**Pause, Reflect & Write:**

- **What are your earliest memories of learning to write? How did you learn? What was challenging? When did you feel successful? Why?**
- **Who was your audience? How was your writing shaped by your imagined reader?**
- **What approaches do you draw on to support the growth of young writers?**
- **What experiences do students need to see themselves as writers? How do I provide these experiences?**