

## Non Genre Specific Units: A Cycle of Writing

The CSISD Writing Units of Study now include If...Then...Units of Non Genre Specific Writing Instruction. The purpose of these units is to provide an opportunity for students to live as writers, cycling through a writing process, selecting their own topics, and making decisions as writers to support self-selected publication. A cycle of writing helps us teach as a process what remains the same for all writers throughout the year and also those things that change when working within specific genre studies. Within these open ended If...Then...Units, teachers choose writing instruction that is specifically tailored to the writers in their classrooms.

Consider each Non Genre Specific Unit as a menu of possibilities, selecting only the teaching points that meet the needs of your students. You may use your assessment data, observations, and other information to decide on a plan that is tailored to the needs of your class.

These teaching points may be used as whole-group mini lessons, mid-workshop teach points, or to support conferences and small-group work. You need not use every teaching point. Also, you may use the teaching points you have selected in any order and at any time throughout the year, according to need.

# *If...Then...Units*

## A Cycle of Writing

### ● Key Understandings of a Writing Process ●

Writers need stretches of time where they are in control of the decisions they make as writers regarding materials, strategies, and process to sustain their work.

Writers need multiple opportunities to practice reading for craft. Through craft study, writers practice responding, describing, and speculating on the writing.

Publication makes the writing process meaningful. It drives and motivates the writer to continue creating texts as authors in the world. Reflection after publication helps the writer think about their unique process and growth as a writer.

The most productive time for talk is throughout the process as the writing is emerging. After the draft is the least productive time to talk about the writing. Writers need many opportunities to talk with partners, small groups, and the teacher.

Even in genre studies, writers learn to use their notebook as a workbench to revisit and use previous entries. In this way, writers discover that topics in their notebook are never used up. Writers study the craft of a genre by noticing and emulating what the writer is doing. The teacher may select a few touchstone texts for the class, but the writer self selects mentor texts to study.

Writers thrive in a workshop where there are routines that promote inquiry, work time supported by the teacher, writing process as a cycle, and students as decision makers.

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### Getting Ready

- Provide notebooks for students who may not have their own. Discuss the importance of living with a notebook.
- Make sure to provide a variety of paper for drafting. You might start off by giving students a choice between blank paper and lined paper.
- Provide writing folders or a place to hold work and table tools such as: pens, markers, sticky notes, scissors, a date stamp, stapler, tape, strips and flaps of extra paper, etc.
- Be sure to create your own pieces of writing and books to use as teacher mentor texts for demonstration
- Gather a collection of mentor texts to show your students how published authors create books and texts
- Be sure to have chart paper ready for creating anchor charts with the students

### Process

- Begin each day by gathering students together and inviting them to live like writers in a community of other writers. A mini lesson may be provided as a suggestion, but they don't always have to try them out that day.
- Once students have begun to collect entries in their notebook, they can reread to find a magnet topic (a topic they are drawn to and want to explore more.)
- Students may now collect around the chosen topic by researching, asking questions, looking at other memories, analyzing the topic, investigating and growing the topic, etc.
- With mini lessons and conferences, your students will begin to start envisioning the design of the text based on their topic. What is this text going to be? What are parts? What is the genre? What is my plan for this text? etc. At this point, the writer begins to think about the reader and the experience they will have.
- When writers have a vision for the text, they draft quickly outside of the notebook using loose leaf paper of their choice.
- Revise the draft by making it different, moving chunks of meaning or deleting parts.
- Edit with the reader in mind, making decisions about word choice, spelling, etc. This step is done late in the process as to not shut the writing down.
- Finish each cycle of writing with a publication celebration to honor the work and approximations of each writer.
- Through reflection, students can think and talk about the strategies, process, and growth as a writer of each published piece. Writers return to the notebook to continue writing.

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### Habits

- Writers' Workshop is a predictable routine that may begin each day with a mini lesson that introduces a strategy or a way to get thinking started. The teacher may use shared writing, teacher mentor text, or published mentor text to demonstrate the strategy. Students know that these are suggestions for things writers do, and they don't always have to try them out that day.
- Students know where to find tools at their table or around the room to help them as they write.
- Students know how to use the tools that work best for them as to not distract from their writing.
- Students choose writing spaces that work best for them as to not distract them from their writing.
- Students have strategies for talking, sharing, and responding to other writers in their community
- Students know that writers often work on more than one piece a day.
- Writers often collect entries around a topic to help them generate more ideas for pieces they want to write.
- Writers often return to entries or pieces to reread, revise, and edit.
- Writers are designers of text who make sure all the parts of the text and layout of the piece work together to make meaning for the reader.
- Students are honored as published authors of the world.

### Sharing/Publication

- Sharing Strategies with Partners
- Interviewing Writers about their Process
- Writing Partners can be Writing Teachers
- Admiring the Work of Other Writers in the Class
- Selecting Pieces for Publication
- Reflecting on Process
- Publishing Big: Class magazine or blog, Public Readings, Special format books (School Mate Publishing), Walls of school, Writing for younger grades
- Publishing Small: Grade level gallery walks, Inviting guests for publishing party, Kid reading one line on phone (Quick voice), Publishing Partnerships

## A Cycle of Writing

### Mini Lessons

- Putting Ideas on Paper with Pictures and Words
- "Writers are never done, we've just begun"
- Working Independently as Writers
- Writers think about what they want to say and write that down
- Writing Hard-to-Write Ideas
- Ways to Collect Around a Topic
- Asking Questions in Order to Write More
- Getting Ideas for Stories by Storytelling
- Planning Piece by Piece
- Adding More Details
- Adding Dialogue and Other Features to our Text
- Rereading to Revise
- Using Tools to Revise & Edit
- Editing: Fixing up & Fancying up our books
- Showing Action
- Going Back to Old Entries & Writing More
- Making Sure our Ideas all go Together

### Conferring & Small Group

- Helping Students get Ideas on Paper
- Problem Solving Management Concerns
- Supporting Students to get Words on Paper
- Nudging Early Writers
- Encouraging students to Add to their Writing
- Directing Students to Return to Earlier Pieces
- Helping Writers Tell their Stories
- Stretching Stories Across Multiple Pages
- Writers may work on More than one Piece a Day
- Self-Assessing & Reflecting
- Drawing & Writing to Show Action
- Working with Writing Partners
- Designing the Layout of our Text for Readers

## A Cycle of Writing

★ A Predictable Framework for a Genre Study in Writers' Workshop ★

1

Gather a stack of texts that are good examples of the books students are trying to make

2

Make sure students know what kind of books they are writing so they know what features or elements to include

3

Immerse ourselves in reading and talking about the gathered texts and what we notice about how they're written

4

Study some of them closely until we can explain to others about how to write this kind of book

5

Write (both teacher & students) something that could go in the stack of books we have studied and tell why it fits

More on Genre Studies Here