STEVE DUNN WRITING WORKSHOP

An Evidence-Based Curriculum for Supporting English Learners

Proven Results

By adhering to the *Six Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners* put forth by TESOL, Steve Dunn's Writing Workshop has proven results for increasing English learners' reading and writing achievement and narrowing the achievement gap.

Six Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners

1. *Know your learners*

2. *Create Conditions for Language Learning*

3. *Design High Quality Lessons for Language Development*

4. *Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed*

5. *Monitor and Assess Student Language Development*

6. *Engage and Collaborate with a Community of Practice*

Writing Workshop Teacher Guide
Common Core Edition
By Steve W. Dunn

A month-by-month guide to writing workshop using the gradual release process.

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Every
Teacher
Child
Day

Introduction

As the number of students with limited English proficiency grows (ten percent of public school students in the United States are English learners), ELs' academic achievement continues to lag significantly behind their English-only peers. This gap continues to grow. Consider the following statistic from the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) exams for reading in 2013: "In fourth grade, the achievement gap between the average scores of non-English learners and English learners was 39 points, a larger gap than in 2011. Sixty-nine percent of the fourth grade English learners performed Below Basic, but only 28% of the non-English learners did. Only 7% of English learners scored as Proficient or Advanced in Reading, whereas 38% of non-English learners were Proficient or Advanced" (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013b).

✦ *Know Your Learners*

Learning about students' culture, background, values, and identity helps teachers form personal connections and adapt instruction to best serve their students. Throughout the Writing Workshop, Steve Dunn builds in protocols to learn about, embrace, and leverage the resources that English learners bring to the classroom. For example, during the personal narrative units in grades two through five, the first days of instruction are spent generating ideas with students and engaging in classroom discussions to get to know students' backgrounds. Students not only share with the teacher, but also with each other, building a safe and collaborative work environment. In the grammar units at fourth and fifth grade, teachers and students use students' background knowledge to craft sentences and review grammar instruction. English learners have the least amount of time to waste in the classroom. By aligning community building practices and instruction, students are able to gain language knowledge and practice while at the same time building a safe and supported community.

✦*Create Conditions for Language Learners*

Dunn's Writing Workshop begins by having teachers carefully create an environment that promotes differentiation and provides opportunities for students to engage in all language modalities. This environment includes a whole group space for the teacher to model their thinking and have students interact with each other, small group spaces for the teacher to lead differentiated instruction, and independent spaces for students to read and write on their own to show mastery of learning. Content anchor charts, procedural anchor charts, and sentence frames enhance these purposefully crafted spaces by encouraging interaction with text and peers.

Stephen Krashen, professor emeritus at the University of Southern California and respected linguist writes, "Simply telling a story, or reading a story aloud as it is written in a book, may not be comprehensible for those just starting on the road to [English] literacy…there is a need for elaborative

> *"If it isn't in a student's oral language, it will never be in their written or reading language."*
> *Steve W. Dunn*

assistance and comprehension-aiding supplementation." Effective classrooms for ELs must create conditions for learning English by using a wide variety of techniques to make input comprehensible. This is well established by the Writing Workshop Curriculum. Each lesson is strategy based and taught using the gradual release of responsibility. This means each strategy is first modeled by the teacher using think alouds, anchor charts, visuals, and language supports. Before students are released into guided practice, they have demonstrated understanding to the teacher, and are able to use the anchor charts to replicate and transfer learning. While these conditions are good for all students, they are essential for students acquiring English.

Verbal scaffolding alone is not the only scaffolds needed to create conditions for language learning. Each genre in Dunn's Writing Workshop also include procedural and instructional scaffolds to support student learning. For example, in the Summarizing Unit, teachers use procedural anchor charts made before instruction to guide students in the nonfiction reading process. This procedural anchor chart helps students follow the steps of nonfiction reading to comprehend and retain the information in the paragraph so that they can summarize the main idea and key details. This procedural anchor chart is paired with an instructional scaffold of modeling the use of the summarizing graphic organizer with the students so that students can replicate the summarizing strategy. Along with this instructional scaffold, Steve also uses sticky notes in the graphic organizer to model for students how thinking can change when you are presented with more information. These three supports, verbal, procedural, and instructional scaffolds allow teachers to create a classroom that is conducive to academic language development.

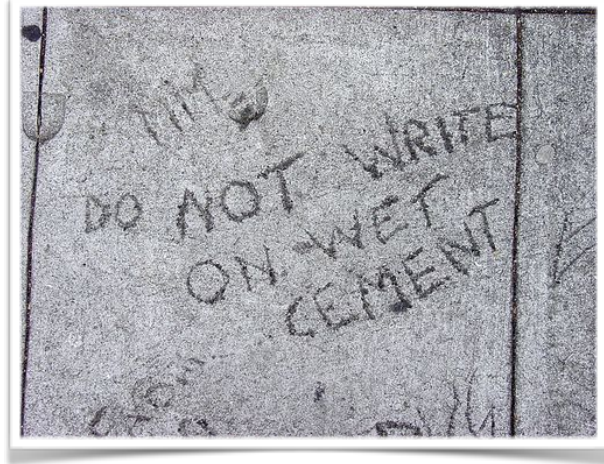### ✦ *Design High Quality Lessons for Language Development*

As evidenced above, all lessons are designed and taught through the gradual release of responsibility. One of the most important pieces of this for an English Learner is a clear and purposeful think aloud. Fisher and Frey, in their most recent article in Language Magazine state, "Thinking is invisible. The only avenue we have is to talk about our thinking. (2019). Making thinking visible is the foundation of every level of the Writing Workshop curriculum: from reading complex texts to revising writing to incorporate more vigorous verbs, each step is modeled and thought aloud in front of students so that they are able to replicate the strategy.

Another foundational piece in the Writing Workshop is interaction. Students are asked to process and share their thinking orally with a partner throughout the lesson. This is imperative for ELs as oracy develops much quicker than written production. If it isn't in a student's oral language, it will not appear in their written language. For example, in the Paraphrasing Units in grades 3-5, first students visualize and discuss key words with a partner both verbally and through actions before writing the key words on a sticky note. Key words being placed on a sticky note is essential. This allows students to first orally rehearse the sentences they create by arranging the sticky notes in different ways before they paraphrase. By allowing students to

manipulate the sticky notes, it invites students to play with language and to use a variety of sentence lengths and types in their writing.

✦ *Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed*

This principle stresses the importance of checking student comprehension frequently in order to adapt and adjust instruction. "The interactions between teachers and learners during classroom instruction provide teachers with a great deal of information about the effectiveness of their teaching." Dunn's Writing Curriculum builds in frequent turn and talks between partners so that the teacher can listen in at each step of instruction in order to monitor and adjust their teaching. As Madeline Hunter wrote, "New learning is like wet cement, it can be easily damaged. A mistake at the beginning of learning can have long-lasting consequences that are hard to eradicate." By establishing frequent turn and talks, teachers are able to quickly monitor and make adjustments in learning while the "cement is wet." Turning and talking with peers also allow ELs the opportunity to clarify key concepts in their first language. This supports native language transfer of strategies to the target language. Another example that frequent checks for understanding are embedded in the Writing Workshop is in the graphic organizers used in prewriting stage of every genre. In the Compare/Contrast Unit, students use a T-chart to fill in the important similarities and differences they see, and organize their thinking. By having students use a graphic organizer in the prewriting stage of compare and contrast, teachers are able to determine if there is a break down in comprehension, understanding of the content, or in the organization of ideas before writing begins, and are able to intervene through small group or individual instruction.

Teacher self-reported surveys were given to measure gains in pedagogy and instructional knowledge before and after the implementation of the Writing Workshop. The survey found that after implementing the Writing Curriculum, educators were more confident in delivering instruction and better able to respond to students individual learning needs.

✦*Monitor and Assess Student Language Development*

All students benefit from a teacher monitoring errors and providing feedback. However, for feedback to be effective for ELs, it must be delivered strategically, in a timely manner, and

according to the language proficiency level of the student. This is exactly what the Praise and Prompt strategy does in the Writing Curriculum. Teachers are taught to give specific feedback on one language objective at a time. This feedback is first given orally, modeled for the student, and then finally recorded on a sticky note so that both the teacher and student have a focus for their next individual conference. This type of specific feedback allows ELs to improve their writing without feeling overwhelmed. The Praise and Prompt strategy begins in kindergarten and continues through secondary as a way to continuously improve writing

✦ *Engage and Collaborate with a Community of Practice*

A report on effective professional development from the U.S. Department of Education found that when there are at least 49 hours of professional learning, impacts were seen on student achievement on state standardized tests, with an increase of at least 21 percentile points. However, when teachers only participated in 14 hours or less of professional learning, there was NO IMPACT on student achievement. Dunn's Writing Workshop curriculum is taught through job-embedded, personalized, and sustained professional learning that consists of in-classroom demonstrations, presentation of instruction/theory, examination of student samples, and time for teachers to practice new learning within the workshop setting. Through this type of support, teachers are able to engage in reflective practice, collaborate and co-plan with one another, and strengthen relationships with school colleagues to build a community of practice.

Not only are are Steve Dunn's Workshops collaborative and promote a community of practice with teachers, but Steve also helps foster a community of practice with students as well. An important component in the personal narrative units in grades two through five is building a collaborative community of peer editors. Through explicit instruction, the teacher trains students in listening and providing effective feedback to peers. Using anchor charts and sentence frames, students engage in collaborative conversations in order to revise their writing. This process of establishing writing partnerships is not only motivating for all students, but serves as another example of how Dunn's writing fosters an environment focused on building oral language for ELs.

As Jim Cummins writes, "A major strength of [The Six Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English learners] is its inclusion of the entire school community within the scope of exemplary teaching of English learners...My expectation is that [these principles] will act as a catalyst for a process of collective pedagogical inquiry in schools across the United States." Steve Dunn's Writing Workshop gives a clear and explicit way to exemplify these principles for ALL students and especially English learners as a way to ensure high quality tier one instruction.

✦ *Evidence-Based Results*

Below are two year studies that document growth in EL students as measured on state tests. A background profile is established, followed by a graph of the results of implementation with fidelity. Test scores are for fourth grade in all schools and reflect shifts in quartiles.

School A

School A has a student population of 594 of which 0.7% are American Indian, 0.0% Asian, 2.0 % African American, 3.4% Anglo and 93.9% Hispanic. At this school, 97% of the students are receiving free/reduced lunch, and there is a mobility rate of 104.2%. School A is a bilingual school and addresses the needs of 38% LAU A, 15% LAU B and 7% LAU C students. Because this school has such a high percentage of poverty students, it has a Title I school-wide program. Growth was measured on the State Standardized Test by the number of students scoring in Q1 (students scoring 0-25%), to Q2 (students scoring 26-50%), to Q3 (students scoring 51-75%), and to Q4 (students scoring 76-100%) over the course of four years in reading. From year one to year four, Q1 was reduced by 12%. Q2 was increased by 8%. Q3 was reduced by 1%, while Q4 increased by 7%.
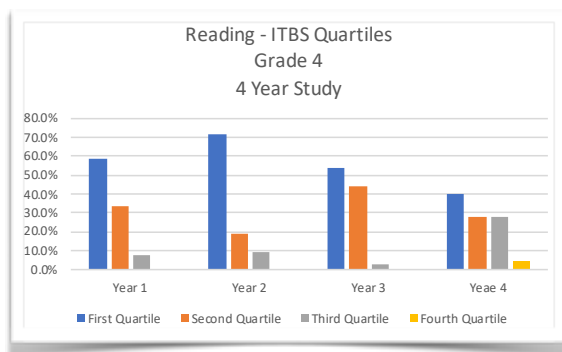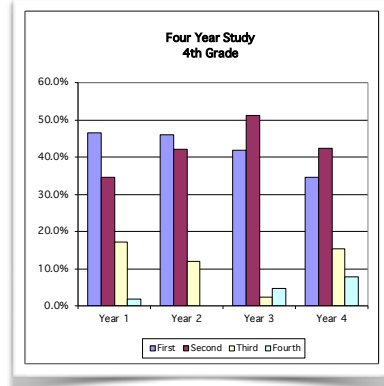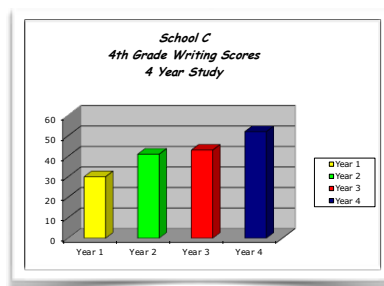

School B

School B has a student population of 709. The student population is 1% African American, 93% Hispanic, 4% Anglo and 2% Asian or Native American. School B has 97.5% of its students eligible for free or reduced lunch, and a mobility rate of 130.9%. Approximately 70% of the students in ECE through fifth grade are Spanish speaking LEP students. School B is a Title 1 school-wide program. Growth was measured on the State Standardized Test by the number of students scoring in Q1 (students scoring 0-25%), to Q2 (students scoring 26-50%), to Q3 (students scoring 51-75%), to Q4 (students scoring 76-100%) over the course of four years in reading. From year one to year four, Q1 was decreased by 20%. Q2 was increased by 5%. Q3 was increased by 20%, while Q4 increased by 4%.


School C

School C has a student population of 444. The student population is 8% African American, 90% Hispanic, and 2% Anglo. School C has 83% of its student eligible for free or reduced lunch and a mobility rate of 73%. Approximately 67% of the students are Spanish speaking LEP students. School C is a Title 1 school-wide program. Growth was measured on the State Standardized Writing Test by the percentile increases.   Over the course of four years, School C increased 22% on the writing test. In a third and fifth grade two year study during the first year of implementation, third grade showed an increase of 29% while fifth grade increased 17% on the State

		48.5	56.5		

Standardized Test.

School D - Charter School

School D has a student population of 385 students, of which 94% are African American (primarily Somali), 1% Anglo and 5% Hispanic. 97% of the students are receiving free/reduced lunch. School D is a Title I school-wide program with 98% free and reduce price lunch, 75% ELL, and 10% special education. Growth was measured on the State Standardized Reading Test over a three year period. School D made growth by increasing 10.3%. In addition, they were identified as "beating the odds" by their State. In addition, this school beat the state average of students progressing in English language development 9.2%.

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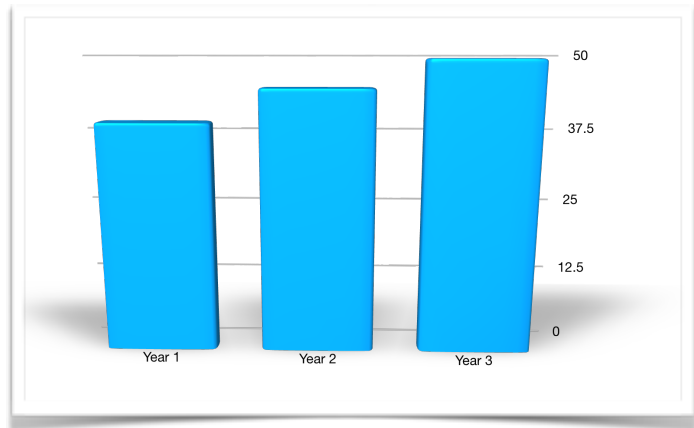
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