



**WRITING FUNDAMENTALS:
SUPPORT FOR LIMITED ENGLISH
PROFICIENCY STUDENTS**

INTRODUCTION

Schoolwide’s Writing Fundamentals Units of Study have been designed to include supports to help Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students attain English language proficiency so that they are able to access the conventional writing curriculum and obtain the knowledge and skills to meet academic standards.

Each Writing Fundamentals Unit of Study includes mentor texts and shared texts to be used during interactive read-alouds, shared writing, and/or independent writing. The mentor texts include beautifully illustrated, engaging picture books. The visuals in these picture books support English Language Learners (ELLs) and LEP students in building vocabulary and content knowledge, as well as responding to and connecting with stories and informational texts.

The Units of Study also include a sequence of explicit lessons built on models of best practice that focus on one skill at a time. Teachers model and demonstrate that skill through thinking aloud, shared writing, and/or reading; rereading mentor texts; and guided practice. Also included with each lesson are extension suggestions for teachers to differentiate and extend student learning by providing additional support (e.g., graphic organizers, question or discussion stems, homework, follow-up mini-lessons using different texts, small-group guided reading suggestions, etc.).

Throughout each Unit of Study, students have multiple opportunities to use and respond to words they learn through collaborative discussions, listening to texts read aloud, responding to what is read, and writing often.

In addition, each unit includes multiple authentic assessment tools to check students’ understanding, acknowledging that students who are learning a language need a variety of ways to demonstrate their understanding of concepts that are not wholly reliant on advanced language skills.

Lastly, each unit lasts from 4–6 weeks, which allows ELL/LEP students time to develop a deep understanding, appreciation, and application of what is learned.

THE STRUCTURAL DESIGN OF WRITING FUNDAMENTALS INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES PROVEN TO BE EFFECTIVE WITH ELL/LEP STUDENTS:

- Interactive Read-Alouds – Effective interactive read-alouds include an explicit, systematic approach that incorporates thoughtful discussions and teachers’ **modeling** (thinking aloud) of higher-level thinking. The teacher asks thoughtful questions to call for analytic talk and prompt students to recall a story and make predictions (Dickinson, 2001). The teacher can guide ELL/LEP students through effective writing strategies by modeling how to read like a writer and look at various texts for qualities of good writing and genre features, such as topic or focus, organization, word choice or vocabulary, conventions, and grammar. These lessons engage students in thoughtful **discussions** about the text.
- Mini-Lessons – These lessons focus on **explicit whole-class instruction** wherein the teacher models **one** specific, essential writing strategy or skill (e.g., focusing on one idea; organizing an idea with a beginning, middle, and end; adding meaningful details; etc.). Students will then quickly practice the skill with peers and will have teacher support.
- Independent Writing – Students write about topics that are personally meaningful or interesting. Students **apply writing strategies they learned** and can collaborate with peers when composing, revising, or sharing stories. Research shows that when students are interested in something and can connect it to their lives or cultural backgrounds, they are more highly motivated and learn at a better rate (Alliance for Excellent Education).

- Conferences – The teacher **differentiates instruction** through one-on-one or small-group conferences. First, the teacher listens carefully to what the student says about his or her reading. The student may read his or her piece, or part of the piece, to deepen or clarify the teacher’s understanding of the student’s work. The teacher finds one aspect of the student’s writing to compliment. Then the teacher decides, based on the conversation with the student, **one** skill or strategy to model for the student. The teacher explicitly teaches the student that one skill or strategy that will help him or her with this writing assignment and also with writing in the future (Anderson, 2005).

THE AUTHORS OF WRITING FUNDAMENTALS ALSO CONSIDERED THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES PROVEN TO BE EFFECTIVE WITH ELL/LEP STUDENTS AND INCORPORATED THESE STRATEGIES INTO EACH LESSON AND ELL/LEP EXTENSION:

- Systematically guide students through the writing process, explaining and modeling each stage of the process using mentor texts and other concrete examples and models.
- Make lessons visual. Use visual representations of new vocabulary words. Use graphs, maps, photographs, drawings, and charts to introduce new vocabulary and concepts (Haynes and Zacarian, 2010).
- Display photos and illustrations from the mentor texts to demonstrate how pictures communicate ideas or tell stories.
- Utilize mentor texts that share cross-cultural experiences, showing commonalities and distinctions across cultures, including students’ own cultures.
- Build upon what’s known. Link new information to prior knowledge. Ask students what they know about the content, genre, or author.
- Make connections between what is new and what is known. Use writing partnerships to help ELL/LEP students make text-to-self and text-to-text connections. Use these connections as ideas for writing.
- Engage students in collaborative peer activities. Before independent writing, partner an ELL/LEP student with a student who is proficient in English. Provide prompts for partnerships to ask each other questions and support one another in finding ideas that are meaningful and interesting for them to pursue.
- Utilize graphic organizers and charts to help ELL/LEP students represent and organize their ideas so they are meaningful and clear. Organizers should be differentiated to support each student and his or her purpose for writing.
- Begin with art. Drawing is another way to communicate. Encourage students to respond to the texts you have read aloud through drawing pictures first. Model how to tell a story with only pictures.
- Use labels and pictures to create a word wall or personal dictionary.
- Shared writing and interactive writing will scaffold ELL/LEP students by having them share in the composing process in a supportive environment. Students can dictate and help each other spell words while the teacher acts as the scribe. Create class texts together as a scaffold for independent writing.
- Hold written conversations as a one-on-one way to write with a student on a topic of special interest. Have the student pick the topic. Written conversations enable teachers to provide a lot of support for struggling writers and ELL/LEP students (Barrett Dragan, 2005).
- Hold one-on-one writing conferences. Scaffold ELL/LEP students by slowing down the writing process and helping them get words on the page, one word at a time. Remind them to listen for the sounds and write down the sounds they hear. Say the words slowly and clearly so they can hear the sounds that come at the beginning, middle, and end of words.



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Certification:

New York State Permanent Certification: TESOL K–12

Education:

- Master of Science in Education, TESOL
Long Island University Graduate Center
- Bachelor of Science in Speech Pathology (Minor: Spanish)
State University of New York at Cortland

Studies Abroad:

- The State University of New York at Oswego – Madrid, Spain
- The Center for Bilingual Multi-Cultural Studies – Cuernavaca, Mexico

Teaching Experience:

ESL Specialist K–5 (16 years)

HARRISON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, Harrison, NY

- Mentor teacher
- Responsible for all assessment and placement of ELLs
- Participated in and led professional development workshops for the ESL department
- Presented in the HCSD Summer Literacy Institute: *Understanding the ELL and Approaches to Making Your Content Comprehensible to Them*
- Helped develop the current SIOP model in HCSD
- Attended professional conferences
- Worked closely with Dr. Virginia Rojas and Dr. Nancy Cloud
- Responsible for NYSESLAT and LAB-R turnkey training
- Led yearly scoring sessions for the NYSESLAT
- Developed a district parent handbook
- Led workshops for parents of ELLs
- Developed and coordinated district- and school-wide multicultural events
- Collaborated with mainstream teachers to scaffold curricula
- Served as a liaison between the ESL department and the district
- Wrote CR Part 154 and Title III-approved grants on a yearly basis

MANHATTANVILLE COLLEGE, Purchase, NY

English Language Institute
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EF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, MARYMOUNT COLLEGE, Tarrytown, NY

ESL Teacher

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Memberships:

NYS TESOL
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Paula E. Barnick-Eoanidis

Education:

- Master of Science in Education, Administration and Supervision
Fordham University
- Master of Science in Education, Reading
Queens College
- Master of Science in Education, TESOL
Hofstra University
- Associate of Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences
SUNY Farmingdale

Teaching Experience:

ESL Teacher K-6 (17 years)

VALLEY STREAM DISTRICT #13, Valley Stream, NY

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, Elmhurst, NY

Honors, Published Works, and Presentations:

- New York State Association for Bilingual Education and The Long Island/Westchester Bilingual and ESL Teacher Leadership Academy Recognition Award for *exemplary leadership and in honor of contributions to the education of English Language Learners*.
- Co-authored article with Dr. A. Honigsfeld titled “Do You Speak Mnemonic in the ESL Classroom?” for NYS TESOL’s *Idiom*.
- Recipient of Waterford Early Education Reading Program, “Best Practices Site” and presenter at annual conference in Salt Lake City, UT.