CELEBRATE BY PUBLISHING STUDENT WORK

Students write for authentic reasons. A key purpose of being an Author is to publish your work—and publishing is a core concept in the more rigorous College and Career Readiness Standards. To address this purpose, create individual books of each student's work, including an Author Biography. As part of classroom writing instruction, students can also create special decorated covers, using special photo images, for their published work. Back covers for the published document can contain the student's biography with a photo of the student, or special quotes about writing. For example:

> " The secret to becoming a writer
> is to write, write, and keep on writing. "
>
> Ken MacLeod
>
> ---
>
> " Writers live their lives differently
> because they write. "
>
> Nancy Atwell

Classroom anthology books, featuring each student's "best" writing, could also be created. These books can be placed prominently in the classroom, in the school library, or sent home to families. There are multiple ways in which student publishing can be accomplished:

- Compile a set of student compositions
  Staple the documents or, a single hole-punch the upper left corner, and tie with a pretty colored ribbon

- Compile a set of student compositions and include a special cover
  Laminate the cover and a back page and use a binding machine to compile the documents

- Create a class website or blog

- Utilize local businesses or web-based companies that bind student work into a hardcover or e-book

- Utilize web-based sites where students can publish their work

CELEBRATE BY HOSTING AN "AUTHOR'S WALL" EVENT

A fun way to celebrate writing accomplishments, and highlight students as Authors early in the school year, would be to create an Author's Wall. The students' published work is made available for others to see in a school hallway. Typically, the Author's Wall is created at the end of the fall semester and includes a small celebration with cake and punch. Before the class event, students create an Author Biography and choose their best writing to display on the Author's Wall. Each Author's Biography and writing are mounted on a ½ sheet of poster board. During the day of the celebration an Author's Chair is held and students share their poster during this time. After the Author's Chair students ceremoniously go with an adult to hang their work on the Author's Wall. A way to expand on this idea is to add a form where adults or peers in the school can add comments for the authors. On the day of the event, special individuals in the school could also be invited to visit the Author's Wall.

HOST A "MEET THE AUTHOR" CELEBRATION

The Meet the Author Celebration is designed to be a culminating end-of-school-year venue for the student authors. This event provides students with authentic opportunities to work on speaking and listening skills and to share their writing in a live experience with a larger audience.

Send special invitations to important individuals in each student's life (inside and outside of school), administrators, and other educational staff.

Prior to the event, have students:

• Create Author Biographies

• Make covers for their published work

• Choose their best writing to share on that day

• Practice sharing their writing during the Author's Chair

• Work with educational staff to create tri-fold posters that feature Author Biographies, student writing samples, and photos of the Author's writing

During the event:

• Display tri-folds on large tables, or desks, around a room

• Provide each student with an outcome booklet that includes:

• Create an introductory letter from the teacher

• Display data tables of the First Author Writing Measures

• Develop a table of Special Moments

Ways to take the Meet the Author Celebration up a notch include:

- Have special t-shirts made for students that say, "I'm an Author!"
- Create a PowerPoint slide show containing candid photos of the students participating in the *First Author Writing Curriculum* throughout the school year and playing it on a large screen for all to see. It is really nice to have music associated with the slide show as it is shared during the poster session and the time for cake and punch.
- Create Author Comment Sheets to be placed in front of the tri-fold posters where adults can write special notes to make comments or congratulate students on their accomplishments.

The Meet the Author Celebration begins by having invitees spend time viewing the tri-fold posters and outcome booklets and hearing stories about the student Authors. Students stand near their posters and introduce attendees to their work.

Immediately following the poster session, everyone is seated; the classroom teacher welcomes everyone to the event and tells the group a little about the program (see the Teacher Resource USB drive for tools to support this event).

Next, each student takes a turn sharing his or her biography and writing piece in the Author's Chair.

Each student is then given a special award for gains in writing or speaking and listening. Of course, each is applauded for his or her efforts and cake and punch are served!

The Meet the Author Celebration is a proud day for students and their families!

HELP! I NEED SOME "MORE" SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

You may be thinking ahead about the individual needs of students who present particular instructional and / or behavioral challenges. Or, you may have been using the *First Author Writing Curriculum* for a while and have encountered some barriers with individual students for whom you would love some additional, helpful strategies. Maybe you are interested in a few more ideas to help you improve your instructional time (e.g., choosing good pictures or using your lesson board). This is where you will find some help!

This section discusses some common barriers, along with strategic solutions that can be used by all educational staff supporting the students. For example, some students (e.g., those with autism spectrum disorders) may write repeatedly about a topic, for a year or more. Your goal—to get the student to write varied topics—might benefit from applying a strategy such as consistently offering him or her a range of new, potentially motivating topics during every writing session, while continuing to allow self-selected topics and topic repetition to continue until the student is ready to change topics (i.e., the student is in the driver's seat).

Research and classroom observations, have shown that, while a student may write only about a single topic for an extended period of time, we can encourage writing gains in other areas (e.g., Text Type Diversity, Total Intelligible Words, Total Unique Words) as well as gains in communication and behavior. While Lesson Time provides students with extensive adult models, "think-alouds," and collaborative co-construction, additional instructional scaffolds are provided to individual students during Writing Time and Author's Chair to support speaking and listening, writing and language.

In a middle school special education classroom, one student with autism began her time as an Author by drawing daisies for her topic each day. She appeared to have lots of anxiety about doing so, and would spend time sitting under her desk. As she became more comfortable, this student participated together with her peers as they all shared their work during Author's Chair. Her peers were writing at a higher level, and the Author's Chair was a time where she saw what was possible as an Author. Over time she began to write lists about nature, and her peers and the educational staff gave her lots of praise for her gains. By the end of the school year, this student had not only progressed into writing paragraphs about nature and about cartoons, but she had also become an active communicator with her peers during Author's Chair. She was incredibly proud of her writing and her speaking and listening accomplishments!

Speaking and Listening

STUDENT BARRIERS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Does not initiate	• Provide consistent, subtle verbal encouragement for the student to take a turn (provide positive input for any forms of initiation). • Cue the student by verbally reminding him or her that the Talking Stick is available for turn-taking. When providing the verbal cue, show the Talking Stick. • Provide extensive praise when the student takes a turn. You can reference the student author who was on the receiving end of the comment. For example, you might say, "<student> just thought your work was really amazing! He told you three times!"
Talks out of turn	• Provide verbal cues to the student about classroom rules for turn taking. Include a reminder that the only person talking should be the person with the Talking Stick. **NOTE**: All educational staff who takes a turn during Author's Chair must also use the Talking Stick to reinforce the concept.

Jumps topics when commenting	• When handing the Talking Stick to the student:
	  • Point to the Author's photo
	  • Provide a verbal reminder for the Author's Topic
	  • Place the Author's photo and writing directly in front of the student
	  • Provide intermittent verbal cues and physical reminders (e.g., pointing to the Author's photo) as needed, when the student is commenting.
	  NOTE: Use the fewest number of cues and remember to take the scaffold down over time.

Makes excessive, multiple comments (e.g., 6-8 comments) **in a row without allowing a communicative partner to take a turn**	• As the student is handed the Talking Stick, provide verbal cues limiting the student to 2-3 comments. • Remind the student that the Author can then take a turn, after which he or she will be provided an opportunity to respond with 2-3 additional comments.

Check pages 47–60 for Universal Design for Learning strategies and assistive technology tools.

STUDENT BARRIERS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Uses the exact same comment with each Author	• As the student is handed the Talking Stick, make sure he has the Tip Sheet for making comments (i.e., offering five choices) in front of him. • Provide verbal cues, reviewing the five comment choices (e.g., *I liked your topic*, or *That was really interesting!*) before the student takes a turn making a comment. • Verbally praise the student for making new comments.

Lacks depth and specificity when commenting	• After the student makes an initial comment (e.g., *I liked your topic*) provide a verbal cue asking "Why" (e.g., *Why did you like <student's> topic?*"
	• Provide additional scaffolds by offering more choices:
	  • Offer 2-4 verbal choices (e.g., *Did you like their topic because: you like horses too? you thought it was interesting? you thought it was funny?*)
	  • Offer a pictographic communication board.

Writing and Language

STUDENT BARRIERS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Uses inventive spelling with no spaces	• Provide verbal cues to the student, reminding him or her that Authors use spaces to separate words. • Offer the student models of inventive spelling with spaces using a "think-aloud" as you write (e.g., on a word processor or a laminated alphabet board that contains a "space bar") • Be sure to provide these models and "think-alouds" before or after the student writes. Don't provide the model on the student's writing product!
Uses inventive spelling with spaces but no words	• Provide the student models and think-alouds" showing how you sound out words in your head and spell them using a word processor or alphabet board. • In your cues, emphasize the first and last letters of words (developmentally, they are the first to occur). • Be sure to provide modeling before or after the student writes. Don't provide the model on the student's writing product! • Provide the student with extensive verbal praise for writing his or first recognizable words. Celebrate this achievement during writing and during Author's Chair. • Again, if a student lacks confidence with spelling and continually asks if he or she is spelling the word correctly, say, "I can totally tell what word you are writing. Nice job!"

STUDENT BARRIERS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Writing only in phrases	• Offer the student models and think-alouds" showing how you think of ideas in your head, say them aloud, and then write a sentence. • As you model, mention how sentences start with a capital and end with punctuation. • Talk about how you use certain words to set up sentences for different text types (e.g., "I like" for opinions, "I want to" for plans) • Provide the student with a Tip Sheet showing word combinations used to write a specific text type.
Writes about only one or two topics	• Obtain information from multiple sources (e.g., parents, paraprofessionals, etc.) about the student's preferences and favorite topics (e.g., leisure activities like sports, music, or TV shows; community activities; special family activities; community activities) • Identify photo images for topics and offer multiple options at the onset of each writing session. • If the student does not appear to have alternative topics that he or she prefers, engage in extensive "picture walks" with the student to identify new topics that might be motivating and to develop the student's preferences for alternative topics.
Writes only one or two text types	• Just prior to writing time, provide verbal cues about the possible text types the student might choose for a given topic. • Offer scaffolds that support the student in attempting a new text type by offering a Tip Sheet with the word combinations appropriate for that text type.
Writes coherent, but not cohesive, text (multiple sentences on one topic that can be reordered)	• Just prior to writing time, provide verbal cues about the possible text types the student might choose for a given topic. • Offer scaffolds that support the student in attempting to be more cohesive by offering the Tip Sheets for using cohesive words (e.g., transition words and conjunctions) for different text types. • Provide one-on-one desk side instruction, by offering the student models and think-alouds" showing how to use specific words (e.g., transition words and conjunctions) to make sentences sound better next to each other. • Model how you would use cohesive words for different text types.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

The *First Author Writing Curriculum* is designed to meet principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2011) so that all students have an equal opportunity to learn and maximize their potential. Application of the UDL principles fosters students' writing and speaking and listening skills through educator instructional scaffolds (verbal, visual, auditory, and physical), student materials (e.g., Tip Sheets), and assistive communication and writing tools. These UDL supports were designed to reduce barriers and support student engagement by flexibly offering students appropriate goals, materials and modalities for expression.

The *First Author Writing Curriculum* supports teachers in providing effective instruction to all students, including those with complex instructional needs, through methods, materials and assessments designed for beginning writers. The tables below show examples illustrating how the curriculum facilitates use of differentiated teaching methods and meets the needs of a range of learners through the three key principles and the 2.0 Guidelines of UDL.