

DOINGWHATWORKS



PRESENTATION

5:04 min

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Teaching Foundational Skills to Help Students Become Effective Writers

July 2012

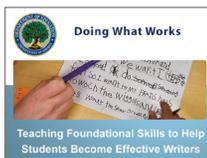
Topic TEACHING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EFFECTIVE WRITERS

Practice FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Highlights

- » Students need to learn foundational writing skills so they can focus on developing ideas.
- » Young writers need to learn how to hold a pencil and form letters correctly.
- » Students must learn to spell commonly used words and use rules to generate and check plausible spellings for unfamiliar words.
- » It is important to teach students how to construct effective, well-formed sentences.
- » Learning how to type and use a word processor has become an essential foundational skill.

Full Transcript



Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to the overview on Teaching Foundational Skills to Help Students Become Effective Writers.



Slide 2: Foundational skills

Students need to learn foundational writing skills so that they can focus more on developing and communicating ideas in their writing. Handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing should become effortless as students move to middle and upper elementary school. Younger students need explicit instruction and frequent practice to acquire and polish these skills.



Slide 3: Pencil grip

Young writers in kindergarten and first grade need to learn how to hold a pencil and form letters correctly. Teachers should demonstrate how to hold a pencil comfortably between the thumb and forefinger while resting on the middle finger. Although children may change their grip over time, a comfortable pencil grip will prevent students from getting tired, which can discourage writing.



Slide 4: Letter formation

Teachers need to show young children how to form print and cursive letters correctly from memory. Handwriting practice diagrams can be helpful in showing students how to form letters.

Practicing specific letters in isolation is not sufficient to achieve handwriting proficiency; students need to apply their handwriting skills to authentic writing activities.

Handwriting practice is most effective when done in multiple short sessions.



Slide 5: Spelling

Students need to be proficient in the foundational skill of spelling. Teachers need to both help students learn the spelling of commonly used words, and teach them how to generate and check plausible

spellings of words they have not yet mastered. As students are drafting, they can learn how to apply spelling rules and check for correct spelling.



Slide 6: Invented spelling

Teachers can encourage very young children to write by allowing them to use invented spelling, or trying to spell a word using what they know about letter sounds and patterns. As students learn how to spell more words, they should rely less on invented spelling.



Slide 7: Spelling by analogy

While writing, students can learn how to spell words by analogy; they apply the spelling of a known word to generate a plausible spelling for an unknown but similar word. For example, if students know how to spell *camp*, they can use that knowledge when learning to spell *lamp*.



Slide 8: Sentence construction

When teaching the foundational writing skill of strong sentence construction, teachers should focus on how to construct sentences that convey their intended meaning and follow language conventions such as punctuation, capitalization, and other sentence mechanics.

Beginning in kindergarten, teachers can introduce what a sentence is and that it begins with a capital letter and ends with punctuation. Gradually, instruction can focus on teaching students to construct sentences that are more complex and interesting.

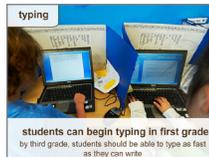


Slide 9: Principles of sentence construction

When working with students on their own compositions, teachers should take the opportunity to provide instruction in language conventions. Lessons can also be developed from books in the classroom, students' daily activities, school events, and magazine or newspaper articles. For example, teachers can use simple or more

complex sentence frames such as “I like to ‘swim’” or “When I ‘play,’ I like to ‘go outside.’”

The teacher can model completing the sentence frame and then ask students to write their own sentences using the frame. It is important to provide time for students to practice applying these principles on their own.



Slide 10: Typing

Learning how to type without looking at the keyboard has become an essential foundational skill in today’s world. Students can begin typing in first grade, and by third grade they should be able to type as fast as they can write.



Slide 11: Word processors

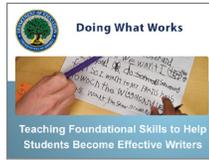
Students should become proficient in using a word processor as part of the writing process. They need to learn how to open, close, and save files and how to use editing functions. Teachers should emphasize that it is still important to proofread and edit their writing even when working with a computer’s spell checker. Students need to understand that, while they are useful, spell checkers will not flag a misspelling if the misspelling is a real word (for example, if a student writes *sad* instead of *said*) and may mistake a proper noun for a misspelling.



Slide 12: Conclusion

Mastering the foundational skills of handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing is essential for elementary school students so that they can clearly communicate their ideas in writing.

Writing is a process that begins with learning these foundational skills and leads to students being able to devote more attention to developing and conveying their thoughts.



Slide 13: Learn more

To learn more about teaching foundational writing skills, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.

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