

# DOINGWHATWORKS



## PRESENTATION

5:40 min

[Full Details and Transcript](#)



## Building a Solid Foundation for Writing

Eagle View Elementary School, Virginia  
April 2012

**Topic** TEACHING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EFFECTIVE WRITERS

**Practice** FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

- Highlights**
- » Kindergarten students use hand movements, or “air writing,” to practice forming letters.
  - » Kindergarten students have their own word walls to learn sight words and incorporate them into their writing.
  - » Third-grade students learn spelling patterns to recognize commonalities and exceptions.
  - » Fifth-grade students use word meaning rather than sounds to understand the parts of words.
  - » Fifth-grade students practice their knowledge of grammar by analyzing mentor texts.
  - » Eagle View students also practice typing skills.

**About the Site** Eagle View Elementary School  
Fairfax, Virginia

### Demographics

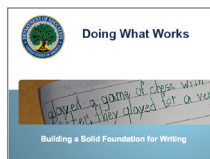
- » 36% Asian
- » 27% White

- » 15% Hispanic
- » 14% Black
- » 6% Other
- » 21% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Eagle View Elementary School, in Fairfax, Virginia, integrates writing into the daily curriculum of all subject areas. The teachers emphasize writing's importance in communication and learning. Eagle View teachers:

- » Provide daily writing time through Writer's Workshop;
- » Teach the writing process and writing for a variety of purposes;
- » Develop students' foundational writing skills, such as spelling, handwriting, text structure, and sentence construction; and
- » Build an engaged community of writers.

## Full Transcript



### Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to Building a Solid Foundation for Writing.

### Slide 2: Introductions



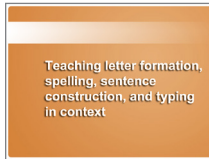
My name is Erin Boyce. I'm a kindergarten teacher here at Eagle View Elementary in Fairfax, Virginia.



My name is Sarah Boddie. I'm a third-grade teacher at Eagle View Elementary in Fairfax, Virginia.



I'm Sarah Kim. I teach fifth grade here at Eagle View Elementary in Fairfax, Virginia.

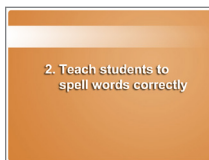


### Slide 3: Air writing

#### Teaching letter formation, spelling, sentence construction, and typing in context

##### *1. Teach very young writers how to hold a pencil correctly and form letters.*

**Boyce:** We do a lot of air writing, it's called, or we'll write in our hands so students are constantly engaged. And it's still meaningful, so students aren't just sitting there; they are involved. So if we are doing community writing, and one student's writing on the board, we say, "Air writing, fingers up." And there's a lot of lowercase letters that we call "Magic C" letters. So it starts with "Magic C, up like a helicopter, slide down, bump the bottom."



### Slide 4: Sight words

##### *2. Teach students to spell words correctly.*

**Boyce:** In kindergarten, we teach spelling not by itself. We teach sight words, which overlap nicely with reading and writing.

We'll start with a check-in of practicing sight words they know. And in each guided reading group, we practice one new sight word where we have four steps. We read it, we erase the letter, and then we guess what's missing. So they see that visual, and they can also see the right and the wrong way to write a word. We mix it and fix it, and then we practice writing it on the table and on a whiteboard. Each child has an individual word wall in their writing folder, so they need to check their word wall.

As a kindergarten teacher, I do expect each one of those word wall words to be spelled right in their writing. So if it is spelled wrong, that is the only time I as a teacher write on their paper is if it's a word wall word, and I circle it, and they correct themselves if they are not doing that already through self-editing and peer editing.



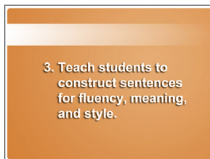
### Slide 5: Word study

**Boddie:** In third grade, we use a program called Word Study, where it's not just learning how to spell words, but it's learning spelling patterns and then using those spelling rules and the exceptions to the rules so that they can apply that to unknown words in their own writing.



### Slide 6: From sound to meaning

**Kim:** In fifth grade, we continue the same pattern. Most students by fifth grade are no longer working on sound, they are working on meanings now. So it's a lot more etymology, Greek words, roots. So that's when they start breaking up the meaning within a word.



### Slide 7: Forming sentences in kindergarten

*3. Teach students to construct sentences for fluency, meaning, and style.*

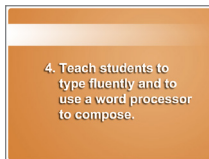
**Boyce:** In kindergarten, forming a sentence can be a complicated and complex process because, first, they have to think what they want to say in their heads and then they have to verbalize it and say it aloud. And they have to be able to say the same sentence again and actually remember it, which is more complicated than adults, who don't really think of a sentence. So I have come up with four steps in kindergarten that we use when we first develop a sentence. Step one, think it. Step two, say it. Step three, write it. And step four, reread it after every word.



### Slide 8: Mentor text

**Kim:** In fifth grade, we embed grammar in reading/writing workshop. We teach in isolation first the specific grammar rule, and we have to do that so they understand the reason behind why the comma needs to be put there. But if we teach it in isolation alone, usually they do not retain that information. So I use a mentor text, and that's when I use authors, real authors write stories, where they actually use

those rules. So we read it together as a group, and we look at where they actually put those commas and see what the reasons were for those commas to be placed there. And we sort of discover what other authors do so that they, when they become the writers, and they are the authors of a story, they know exactly where to put them.



### Slide 9: Typing and word processing

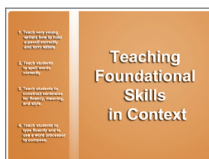
*4. Teach students to type fluently and to use a word processor to compose.*

**Boyce:** In kindergarten at Eagle View, our students are fortunate to be exposed to technology often. They are using laptops in stations, and at least twice a month, in my classroom, we go to the computer lab, where there is a laptop for every student. So in the beginning, we want to begin them as soon as possible now that testing is online already in third grade, where they have to type their stories.



### Slide 10: Typing instruction

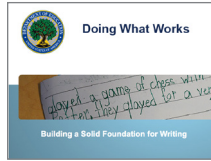
**Boddie:** In third grade, our students all have the opportunity to use a typing instruction program where it teaches them their home keys and how to reach to the other keys in order to type so that it expedites the process. So they are already comfortable with logging on to a computer, but they are getting a lot of exposure to being able to type and draft and write a story on the computer.



### Slide 11: Embedding foundational writing skills across the curriculum

#### Teaching Foundational Skills in Context

**Boyce:** At Eagle View, we have found that teaching grammatical skills, spelling skills, all these foundational writing skills cannot be taught in isolation, they need to be embedded across the curriculum because it is in context and it is meaningful to students when it is in context.



## Slide 12: Learn more

To learn more about Building a Solid Foundation for Writing, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-PEP-11-C-0068. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.