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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Simply Stations: Writing, Grades K-4*. In this excerpt, Debbie Diller explains timeless writing standard 1, which focuses on generating ideas and choosing a topic.

LEARN MORE about this title, including Features, Table of Contents and Reviews.

Timeless Writing Standard 1

The student will generate ideas, choose a topic, and make a plan that matches audience and purpose before writing.

Let's examine this timeless standard before we begin teaching and moving it into a Writing station. By teaching this standard well, children will know how to choose their own ideas and plan for their writing. They will learn how to think about who will read their writing and why they are composing this piece. By practicing these same skills on their own or with a partner at the Writing station, learners will have the opportunity to continue to grow as writers.

Look closely at your own state standards for specific grade-level expectations and academic vocabulary. Most states focus on these skills as part of the writing process. This standard may include words like **first draft**, **brainstorming**, **plan**, **writing process**, or **prewriting**.

What It Is

- Writing starts with an idea, a topic, something the writer is interested in writing about!
- Writers plan what they will write. Some make outlines. Some jot down notes on paper. Others sketch or storyboard their ideas. Their writing might change throughout the process, but there is usually a plan to start with.
- Writers think about their audience before writing. They think
 - Who will read this? Why?
 - What will the reader want to know?
 - What do I want the reader to visualize or feel as they read?
- Before writing, writers in Grades K-4 may
 - Talk to someone about their ideas

- Tell what they'll write before writing it down
- Draw pictures to rehearse and plan their ideas
- Use a graphic organizer to plan their writing
- Think about their audience and purpose

Why It's Important

- Having a plan for what to write makes the writing clearer and easier to compose, especially for those who struggle with writing.
- If students are always given topics of what to write, they often have trouble coming up with their own ideas.
- Writing about something they know and care about gives students ownership of their writing.
- Thinking about audience and purpose strengthens writing and may increase motivation to write.

Myths and Confusions

- Giving students writing prompts is one option when teaching writing. On state tests children are given prompts, but that doesn't mean we must teach most writing through telling kids what to write every day. If students are always given prompts and story starters, they may have trouble coming up with their own ideas for writing.
- Using a formula for writing may help some students get started. But to really tap into student voice, it's important for children to select topics they know and care about.
- Free writing in journals is not writing instruction. It gives children a chance to write and may help them generate ideas of what to write about. But it should be coupled with models where the teacher writes and thinks aloud in front of the class on a variety of topics in a range of genres regularly.
- Having young writers in kindergarten and early first grade use a graphic organizer to plan their writing can be counterproductive. They will often try to write *everything* on the graphic organizer and then copy their words. This can frustrate them (and you!). Try having them draw pictures to rehearse their ideas and tell someone what they'll write as a plan.
- Be sure children understand *audience* when writing. If the audience is always the teacher, kids may not care much about what they write.

Expand audience to include their peers, family members, other classes, children’s book authors, and community members, to name a few.

- Ditto for *purpose*. Authentic purpose is critical. Students should write for reasons beyond passing the state test or because my teacher said to write this.

Real-World Connections

- We use writing in everyday life. Think of the kinds of writing you do at work and beyond—emails, texts, lesson plans, notes, letters, lists, reports. You start with an idea before you write any of these, and you consider audience and purpose.
- We write for a variety of purposes—to send messages to friends and family, to communicate ideas with peers, to plan and remember things to do, to ask for assistance, to record what we’ve learned. Share your writing with students so they see how we use writing in our lives.
- Writing leaves lasting impressions, especially in online spaces. It’s important to be thoughtful about our ideas, audience, and purpose to communicate clearly. Having a plan helps to structure and organize our writing.



EL TIP: Drawing and talking about ideas before writing is important for multilingual students. This helps them rehearse what they will write.

How Practice at the Writing Station Helps Students

- Having a partner to talk to about what to write is motivating and can help kids come up with writing ideas.
- Talking to and making a writing plan with a partner is less overwhelming than doing this on your own.
- If students share with a partner what they will write about, tell who their audience is and why they are writing something, it may clarify their thinking and make their writing more focused.

It’s important to teach concepts well in whole group before moving this work into the Writing station. This will help students to learn how to practice the same activities with a partner independent of you.

Start with helping kids generate ideas. Then move into having them choose a topic or idea. Finally model how to think about audience and purpose. Show different ways to plan for writing, too. Consider these steps for student success with this standard.



EL TIP: Let multilingual students make a recording of what they will write about and listen to it before they write. This can help them organize their thinking.