



Writing with Multilingual Learners

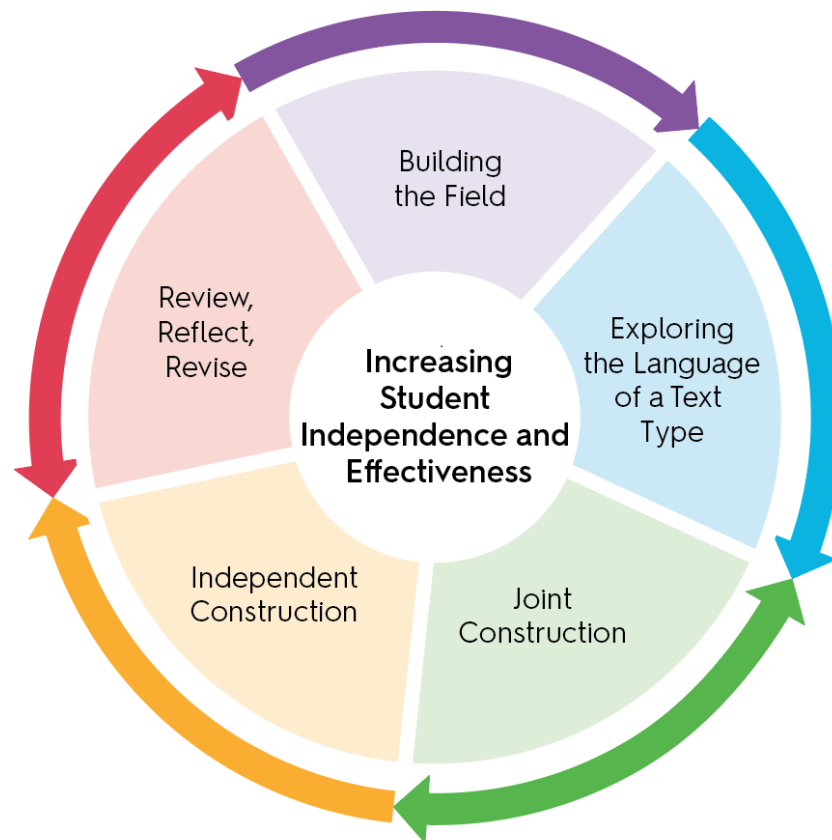
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SETTING THE STAGE

The Teaching and Learning Cycle



Source: Developed by WIDA, based on Brisk (2015), Derewianka and Jones (2016), Gibbons (2015), and Spycher (2017).

An Introduction to the Teaching and Learning Cycle

In her book *English Learners, Academic Literacy, and Thinking* (2009), Pauline Gibbons states that prior to expecting students to write independently, teachers should discuss, model, and practice with students how to write in a particular genre. This approach provides students with a gradual release into independent writing and is known as the Teaching and Learning Cycle.

The Teaching and Learning Cycle is a pedagogical framework for scaffolding academic writing through deep and critical thinking tasks, academic discussions, interactive reading, and language development. The model was first developed in Australia in the 1980s by teachers working with educational linguists who drew on the theoretical framework of Systemic

SETTING THE STAGE

Functional Linguistics*. Since then, the model has spread globally as educators have witnessed how the framework’s intentional, language-focused support simultaneously improves the quality of their students’ writing and builds deep content knowledge.

The goal of the Teaching and Learning Cycle is to support students’ independence and effectiveness in a specific genre, or text type, within a discipline (such as a science explanation, historical argument, or literary story). This approach is quite different from other approaches to writing instruction that provide more generic writing support such as the use of graphic organizers or sentence frames. Instead, through the Teaching and Learning Cycle, teachers apprentice students in academic writing through the following stages:

Building the Field: Students build deep content knowledge through language-rich experiences such as discussion, hands-on exploration, and reading. This enables multilingual students to build up reserves of both content knowledge and the content-area language they will need to write effectively about the topic.

Exploring the Language of a Text Type: Students and teachers analyze and “unpack” discipline-specific written text types through an analysis of mentor texts. Teachers highlight and amplify the purpose, overall structure, and particular language features of the texts students will be writing on their own by the end of the unit.

Joint Construction: Teachers facilitate a language-focused think aloud as they jointly write text (or part of a text) with students that is in the same genre as the one that students will later write independently. This opportunity to “rehearse” writing is critical for multilingual learners.

Independent Construction: Building on the language focus of the previous stages, students are now well prepared to write texts with increased independence. This means they could be writing by themselves, with a peer, or in a small group with less teacher support.

Review, Reflect, & Revise: Recognizing that self-reflection is an important part of the writing process, teachers guide students through the iterative process of writing that involves multiple rounds of review, reflection, and revision of one’s own texts.

The Teaching and Learning Cycle is an approach to writing instruction that provides powerful writing support in any content area. It can also be applied in any instructional setting whether you are the content area teacher, are co-teaching writing in a content area, or if you are a dedicated ELD teacher using a pull-out model.

*To read more about Systemic Functional Linguistics and the Teaching and Learning Cycle model, see: de Oliveira & Lan (2014); Derewianka & Jones (2016); Gibbons (2015); Klingelhofer & Schleppegrell (2016); Rose & Martin (2012); Rothery & Stenglin (1995); Spycher (2007); Spycher & Linn-Nieves (2014); and Spycher & Spycher (2016).

BUILDING THE FIELD

Building the Field

The first stage of the Teaching and Learning Cycle, building the field, emphasizes the importance of building shared knowledge of the topic in preparation for writing about it. During this stage, teachers focus on building deep content knowledge by engaging students in language-rich experiences that include ample time for discussion and exploration.

The focus is on developing students' language related to the unit of study, while they also become experts in the specific content-area topic. Emphasis at this point is usually on students' spoken language, although talk will frequently center around written text, images, and other artifacts. Activities are interactive so that students have opportunities to use, hear, and see the language associated with the topic. The building the field stage continues throughout the Teaching and Learning Cycle as understandings are progressively developed to further depth and complexity (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). For example, as students explore the language of a text type, they continue to build and reinforce their knowledge of the content-area topic (Brisk, 2015).

Experiences that Scaffold Writing

Strong building the field activities:

- help the teacher find out what students know
- extend students' initial understanding of the topic
- are interactive so that students have opportunities to use, hear, and see the language associated with the topic
- build a shared experience with the topic

BUILDING THE FIELD

Activities that Build the Field

- **Home Conversations:** Ask students to talk with people at home or in their communities about the topic. Encourage students to have these conversations in any language. This can serve to activate and build students' background knowledge and make connections between school topics and family or community knowledge.
- **Field Trips:** Field trips do not have to be expensive or elaborate. Consider planning a walking field trip to a nearby community location or utilizing online resources to host a virtual field trip or virtual reality experience.
- **Floorstorming:** Have students respond to visual stimuli, such as a montage of images related to the focus topic and discuss what these add to their understanding of the topic.
- **Dialogic Read-Aloud:** Read-aloud from expert texts on the topic. Stop strategically to think aloud or engage students in responding to the text, synthesizing key ideas, or responding to text-dependent questions.
- **Collaborative Summarizing:** Have students collaboratively construct, in pairs, a summary statement (15-20 words or fewer) of a short section of an important text in order to distill the most critical information from the text. The pairs might share their summary with another pair, critique them, and work as a group of four to create a revised one before sharing with the whole class.
- **Visual Record of Learning:** Create a visual representation that tracks the group's learning. It can include labeled pictures/photos or a visual portrayal of learning so far. It can be organized as a timeline of evolving understanding and include sequential language to track the progression of ideas and can include changes and revisions to class explanations or theories.
- **Videos: Watch relevant videos.** Provide a structure for students to note relevant information as they watch. If using guiding questions for the video, encourage oral communication by dividing students into two groups with each group having a different set of questions they're answering during the viewing. After the video, have students combine their learning by pairing up and sharing their answers to different questions.
- **Academic Vocabulary Word Wall:** Over time, create an academic vocabulary word wall related to the topic. Include multimodal supports such as photographs, diagrams and drawings that support the meaning of important vocabulary.

BUILDING THE FIELD

Activities that Build the Field (Continued)

- **Group Sort:** In small groups, have students talk with one another to decide which topic-related information (images, sentences or parts of sentences, words, or even whole texts) belong in which category. When appropriate, students can generate ideas, record each idea on a single sticky note, then sort ideas into categories. The categories can be summarized or titled, and then students can walk around and view the groupings and titles.
- **Picture Dictation:** In this listening activity, have students put a number of individual pictures into the correct order as they listen to you read a description of a sequence aloud. For example, you might read an explanation of the water cycle as students place relevant diagrams in the correct order.
- **Expert Interviews:** As a class, interview an expert to learn more about the topic. This can be done either live or digitally. Local experts who can speak about culturally- or community-related aspects of the topic can offer a particularly rich layer to the learning.
- **Inquiry Activator:** Engage students in an “image analysis gallery walk” in which they roam the room in triads to 1) view and discuss various images related to the topic and 2) add “I notice...” and “I wonder...” sticky notes to make their thinking visible and see that of their peers.
- **Jigsaw:** Divide students into “expert” groups of 3-5 students, where each group reads and discusses a different text on the same topic (e.g., different ways that humans impact bat ecosystems) or one section of a longer text. “Jigsaw groups” are then formed where members of each expert group come together to share their particular area of expertise with members of other expert groups. This activity can be extended by asking jigsaw groups to use their joint knowledge to answer questions such as:
 - What does all this tell us about how people’s thinking and beliefs changed?
 - What common ideas have we found in the topics we’ve researched?
- **Picture/Sentence Matching:** Have students match a series of pictures or diagrams related to the topic to appropriate sentences. This could be based on a book that is being used in class. This is a useful activity for beginning EL students. Adapt length and complexity of sentences as necessary.

BUILDING THE FIELD

Activities that Build the Field (Continued)

- **Use Home Languages:** Encourage the use of students' home language(s) by having same-language students work together in any building the field activities and by encouraging older students with home language literacy skills to create bilingual notes. You can also have older students keep their own dictionary of topic-specific words and encourage students to do this bilingually if possible.
- **Gallery Walk/Brainstorm Carousel:** Tape large pieces of chart paper on the walls, each with a question or topic written at the top. Divide students into pairs or small groups. Ask students to respond in writing to the question on each chart. They can write on a sticky note or onto the chart directly. Signal when it is time for students to rotate to the next chart. There they read what has already been written, put a check by existing ideas they agree with, and add new ideas.

Source: Compiled from Derewianka & Jones (2016), Gibbons (2009), Levine, Lukens & Smallwood (2013) and Spycher (2017)

Activities that Build the Field / New Ideas

BUILDING THE FIELD (Elementary)

Science Notebook

Use this page to capture information that you learn about the rusty patched bumble bee in response to these three inquiry questions.

1. What is happening to the rusty patched bumble bee population?

Information	Source
<i>has declined by 87% in last 20 years</i>	<i>U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service website (2019)</i>

2. What habitat does this species need to survive?

Information	Source
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3. Why should we take action to save this species?

Information	Source
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BUILDING THE FIELD (Secondary)

Modified Cornell Notes

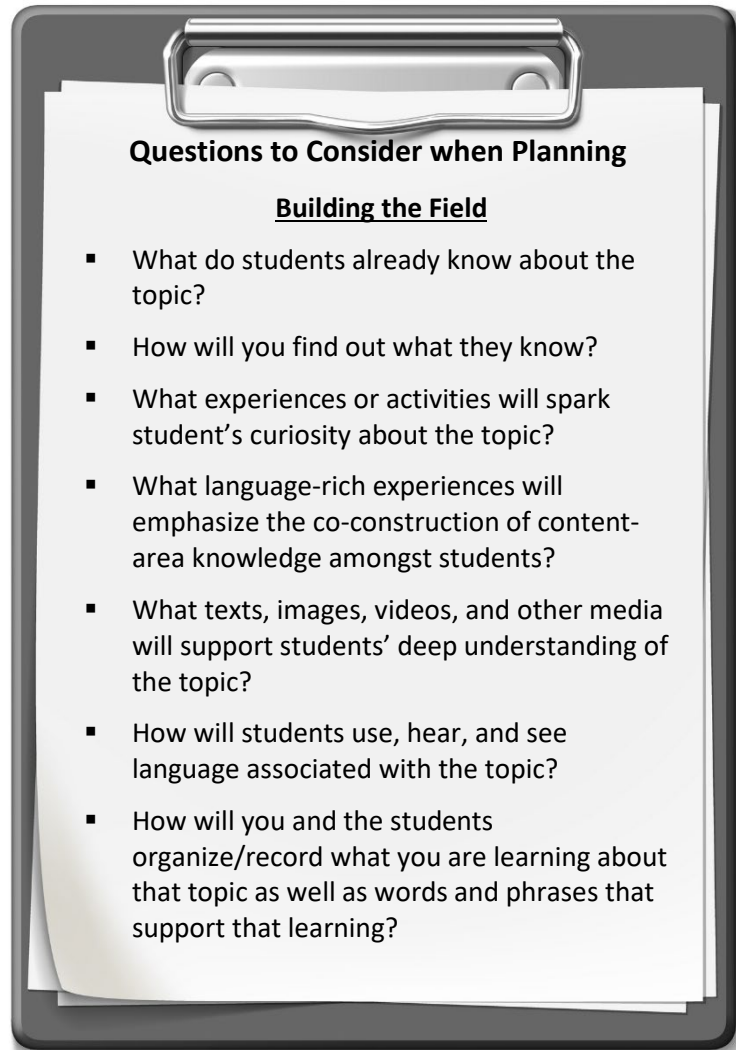
As you participate in the *Building the Field* stations, keep track of each source in the “**Source**” column and the key information you learn about the youth voice topic in the “**Key Ideas**” column. These can be in the form of a gist/notes/symbols, etc. You will also fill in the “**Pro or Con**” column based on the source.

Essential Question: How much power should youth have to influence change?

Social Studies Station 1		
Source	Key Ideas	Pro or Con for lowering the voting age?

Social Studies Station 2		
Source	Key Ideas	Pro or Con for lowering the voting age?

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION – BUILDING THE FIELD



Taking These Ideas Forward

Which ideas from this section would you like to try? How might you need to adjust them for your context?

EXPLORING THE LANGUAGE OF A TEXT TYPE

Exploring the Language of a Text Type

This stage is an opportunity for teachers to highlight and discuss the purpose, organization, and key language features of a particular text type or genre. This exploration allows students the ability to discuss interesting and important characteristics of a given text type.

In this stage, teachers and students explore language together, reading mentor texts as a writer to “turn the text inside-out to see how it is made, how it is held together, and what makes it work” (Brisk, 2015). Since students will be expected to write in ways that are characteristic of this genre, this close analysis of language and the accompanying language-focused conversations serve as a critical support for students. All students, and multilingual learners in particular, will benefit from this type of close analysis of language. This is especially true for students who are less familiar with the norms of academic literacy in English. Exploring the language of text types highlights for students what is not “picked up” incidentally and allows them to learn from exemplary writing that effectively achieves the genre’s purpose. This exploration provides students with an expanded repertoire of language choices that they can then draw from as writers. This explicit focus on language allows for equitable access to the prominent written genres (i.e., arguments, narrative recounts, information reports) that are valued in education.

Essential Steps for Exploring a Genre

1. **Purpose** – Students need to see examples of the genre and understand its social purpose.
2. **Organizational Structure** – Students need to see how the whole text is organized and discuss the various parts included in the organizational structure.
3. **Language Features** – Students need to explore key language features characteristic of the genre.

NOTE: You’ll want to consider the culminating task you’re expecting your students to produce independently and the audience they’ll be addressing.

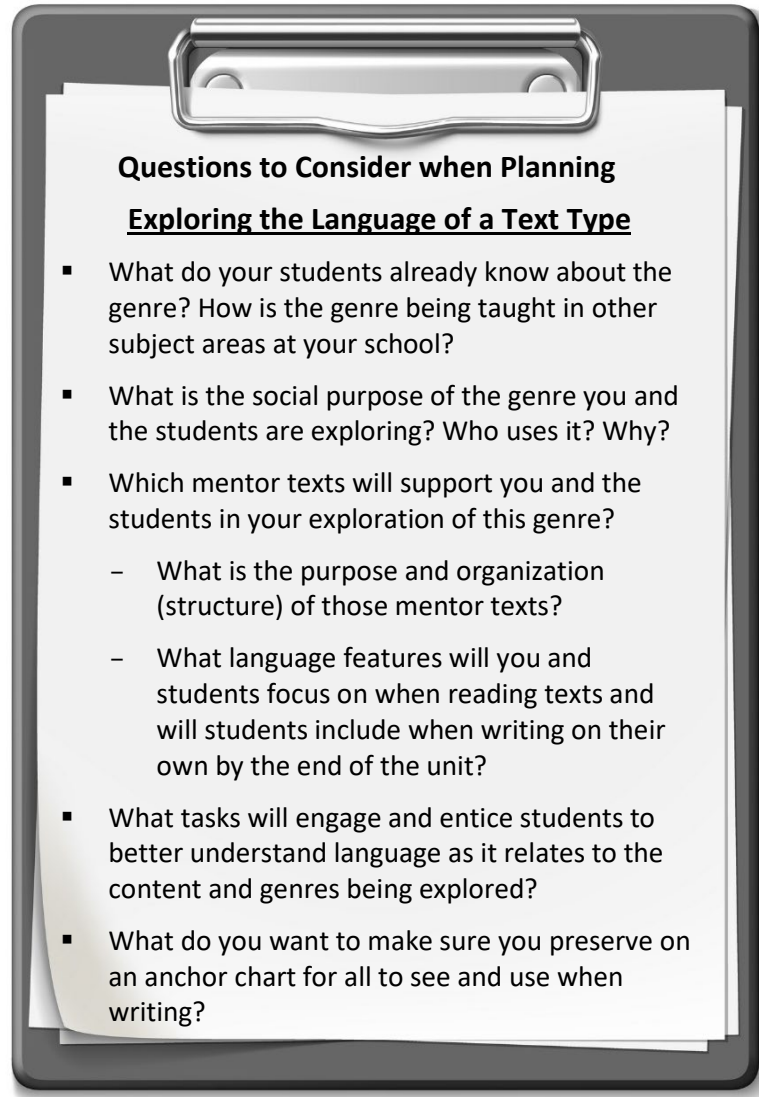
EXPLORING THE LANGUAGE OF A TEXT TYPE

Practicing Together with Joint Construction

Once students were recognizing examples of lexical cohesion in our mentor texts, they were eager to apply it as a way to make their own writing more interesting. But before students went off to try it on their own, we practiced it together as a group.

The students decided they would like to write about the koala which is an animal that is being threatened in Australia. Through some books and short videos, we took notes and gathered background information about what koalas look like, where they live, what they eat, and what they do. From there, we used what we knew about the koala to give it more names. For example, we noted that koalas have gray fur and a black nose. Based on that information, we decided we could call the koala a “furry gray animal” or a “black nosed critter.” Using our notes, we brainstormed and listed all the different names we could think of for a koala. Then, we used those different names (or referents) to jointly write a cohesive paragraph to tell about the koala. Again, to reinforce the idea that we were using a variety of names for one animal, we circled the referent ties and drew an arrow back to “the koala,” as it was named in our first sentence. Following the opportunity for joint construction, students were ready to try using lexical chains with a partner.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION – EXPLORING THE LANGUAGE OF A TEXT TYPE



Taking These Ideas Forward

Which ideas from this section would you like to try? How might you need to adjust them for your context?

JOINT CONSTRUCTION

Joint Construction of Text

During this stage, the teacher leads the students in writing a text or part of a text in a way that weaves together what they learned during the building the field and exploring language stages of the Teaching and Learning Cycle. This jointly written text should be similar to, but not identical to, that which the students will later write independently. It might be a slightly different topic or audience but should focus on the same organizational structure and language features that the students analyzed and discussed during the exploring language stage. This joint writing can be thought of as a rehearsal for independent writing and is a vital support for multilingual learners.

Like the familiar practice of modeling writing for students, joint construction involves the teacher writing while thinking aloud with students. However, to achieve the apprenticeship goals of the Teaching and Learning Cycle, the conversation during joint construction is about making language choices as writers of a text in this specific genre. In joint construction, students are active participants in creating the text through ongoing discussion facilitated by the teacher. Collaboratively, the teacher and students construct a piece of writing while negotiating structure and how to include target language features in the text. The teacher is responsible for the writing and for drawing out content understanding and language from the students. For multilingual learners, the opportunity to “rehearse” writing collaboratively and think through writerly decisions together provides support that the traditional sequence of teach-model-release fails to do. Joint construction is a special kind of dialogue between teacher and students that involves oral negotiation and in-the-moment revisions to achieve a good example of the text type. This guided practice allows students to further develop their content and language knowledge, thus supporting them to write independently in a style that will be most effective for their purpose and audience.

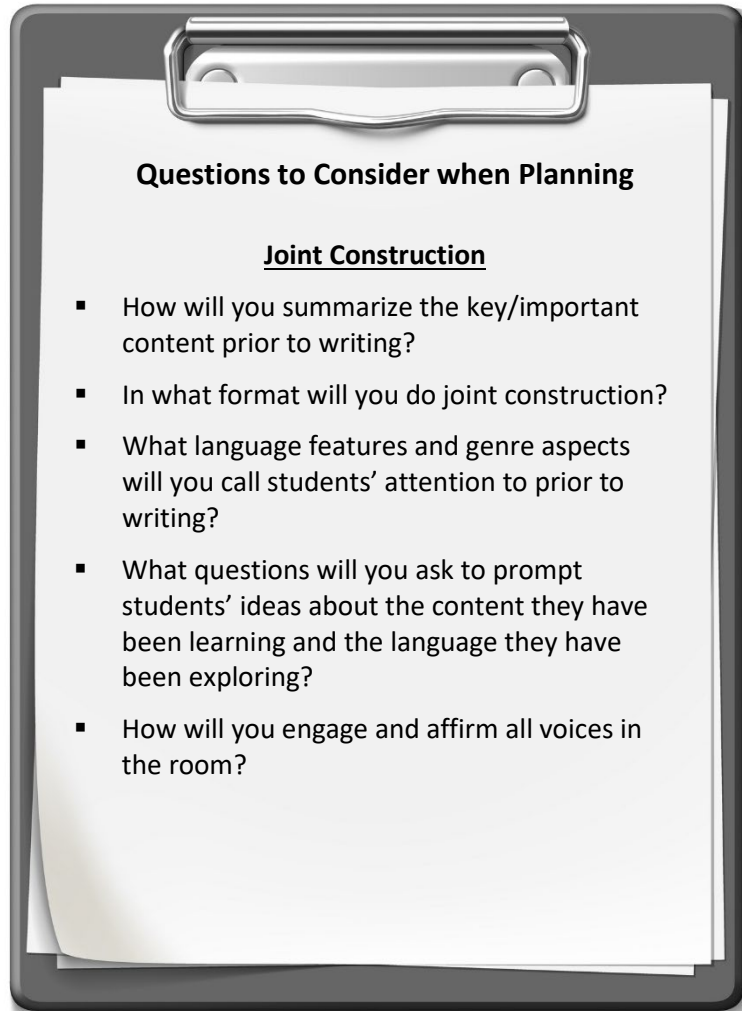
JOINT CONSTRUCTION

The Teacher's Role in Joint Construction

When facilitating joint construction, the following steps are key pieces of the process.

1. Review key ideas about the content learning.
2. Review the writing context by naming the social purpose of the genre and identifying the audience.
3. Act as a scribe, using open-ended questions to invite students to co-construct the language of the text.
4. As you write, review and name language features and genre aspects you want students to attend to. Refer to anchor charts. Prompt students to borrow language ideas or inspiration from those charts.
5. Draw out students' ideas for the text. Affirm and recast students' ideas to make the writing more effective. Coach students by thinking aloud.
6. Honor and capture student ideas, even if they are different from your own. After capturing them on paper, you can revisit and discuss them with the class, if

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION – JOINT CONSTRUCTION



Taking These Ideas Forward

Which ideas from this section would you like to try? How might you need to adjust them for your context?

INDEPENDENT CONSTRUCTION

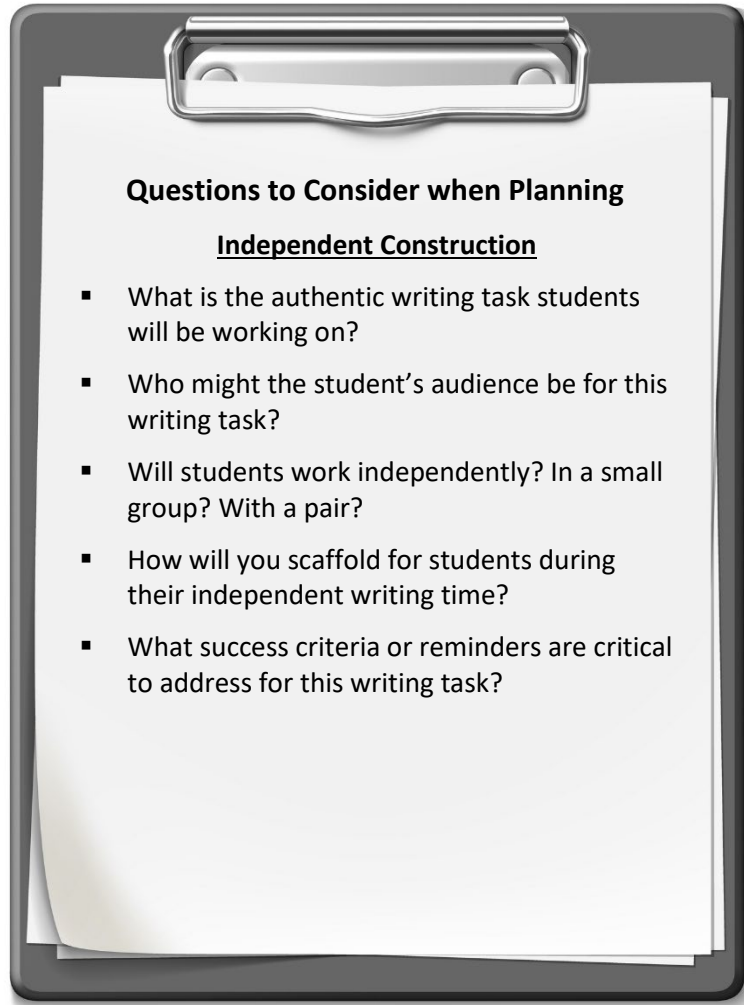
Independent Construction

During this stage of the Teaching and Learning Cycle, students apply what they have learned from the previous stages and independently engage in an authentic writing task in the selected genre. With independent writing, scaffolding and support are important. Depending on the student's age and proficiency level in English, some students may still require substantial teacher assistance whereas others may require little to none. This means that students could be writing by themselves, with a peer, or with a small group assisted by the teacher during this stage.

As students engage in independent writing, it is important that they be intentional about their language choices. Success criteria or framing questions can serve as powerful reminders of what is critical to include within a genre-specific writing task. These criteria or questions could be developed by the teacher or in conjunction with the students throughout the exploring the language of a text type stage of the Teaching and Learning Cycle.

Keep in mind that the goal of this stage is not to formally assess students, but to continue to support students in becoming autonomous writers who write regularly to share their knowledge of a topic or to argue for things they believe in. By the end of this stage, students should be able to show increased independence as writers of this genre. However, student may or may not have complete independent control of the particular text type studied and may need further instruction and practice writing within the genre.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION – INDEPENDENT CONSTRUCTION



Taking These Ideas Forward

Which ideas from this section would you like to try? How might you need to adjust them for your context?

REVIEW, REFLECT, REVISE

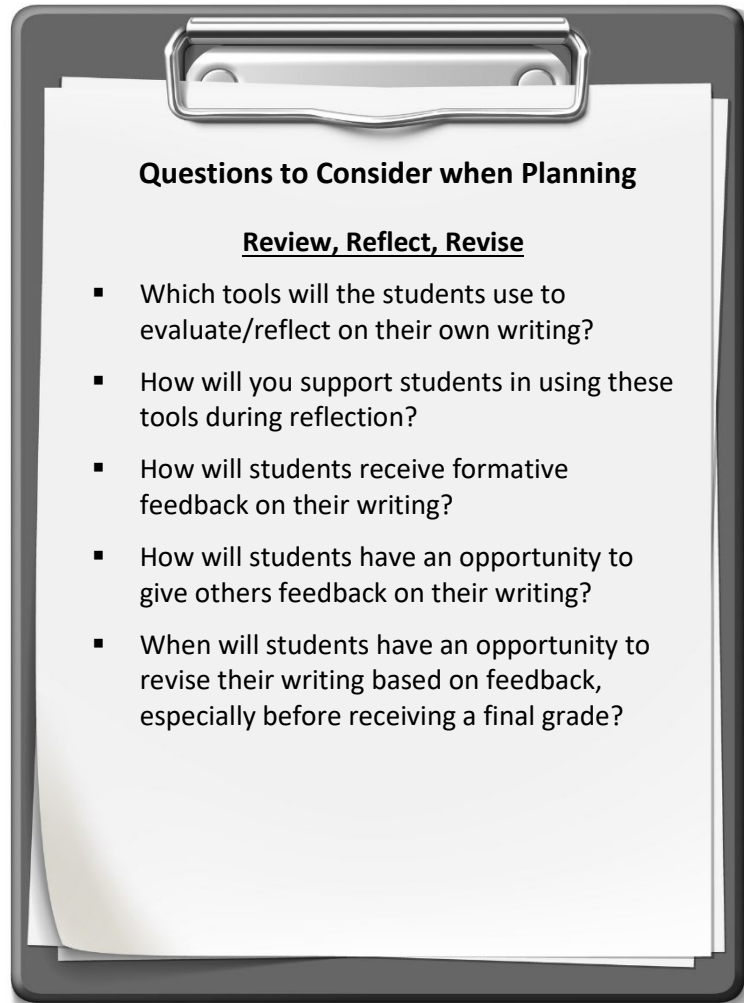
Review, Reflect, Revise

At this point in the Teaching and Learning Cycle, students review their text, engage in self-reflection, and determine next steps in order to revise and improve their writing. This stage is of particular importance due to the iterative nature of the writing process itself. Effective writers often engage in multiple rounds of review, reflection, and revision as they work towards crafting a published piece. Students grow as writers as they learn how to engage in this process.

Once students have written a solid draft of their texts, they can then convene with a peer, the teacher, or a small group, to analyze and critique one another's writing using the success criteria or framing questions as a guide to focus their feedback. Teachers can also utilize an author's chair, where students present their work to the class and ask for targeted feedback related to one of the established success criteria. Regardless of the arrangement, students deserve the opportunity to reflect on their own writing and to receive feedback on it. Students also benefit from analyzing and providing feedback to other writers.

It is important to note that student writing may not always be a perfectly polished product by the end of this stage. However, teachers can take the opportunity to analyze the writing students did produce and determine where students faced challenges in meeting the genre success criteria. Based on these observations, teachers can plan future lessons to provide additional opportunities to develop and use language in these genre-specific ways.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION – REVIEW, REFLECT, REVISE



Taking These Ideas Forward

Which ideas from this section would you like to try? How might you need to adjust them for your context?

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