

Writing, Grade 1

Classroom Management

At the beginning of first grade, students may only draw or write for about ten minutes. As the year goes on, they will be able to spend more time on writing. Although writing is usually considered part of the language arts block, it can be done any time during the day. It can and should be integrated into science, math, and social studies and it should always be an option during Workshop. What is most important is that students write regularly each week, preferably every day.

Mr. Ohmer has set up his classroom to make group work—including group writing work—convenient, fluid, and focused. Note that he has:

- An overhead projector available for use during the class.
- A space in front of the room for students to sit close to the easel and the overhead projector.
- Chart paper available for group notes.
- The desks arranged to allow both him and his students to move smoothly from the desks to the sitting area. He has easy access to the students.

The following tips may prove helpful in creating an atmosphere conducive to writing.

Writing centers do not need to be elaborate. Use shelves for supplies and a small table for publishing. There may be more than one writing center (e.g., materials center, help center, publishing center, and reading center) to avoid congestion and competition for resources and space. Have students help set up these centers so that they feel involved, know what materials are available, and know how to use them.

Writing Folders keep writing organized and are invaluable for teacher and student assessment. Have students put their names and date on each piece of writing, and identify the phase of the writing (e.g., draft, revision, and so on). Keep all the students' folders in a file drawer or plastic container in a central location.

A few simple rules, generated with the help of the class, set a positive tone and support writing.

Such rules may include:

- Do not interrupt the teacher when the teacher is writing or working with another student.
- Keep the noise level down. Authors are at work!
- During writing time, everyone should be involved with a writing-related activity (i.e., planning, drafting, revising, publishing, reading, browsing, researching, using the writing centers, or working with a peer).

Student helpers may hand out *Writing Folders* during writing times. Sign-up sheets are useful in the publishing center, along with rules such as, "only five people at the center at a time," and "only whispering is allowed."