



Create an engaged community of writers



To enhance student motivation to write, teachers should create a supportive environment where students feel like they are part of a community of writers. When teachers participate in writing activities, they convey to students that writing is important, valuable, and rewarding. Teachers can foster students' motivation to write by allowing them to choose their own topics or modify teacher-provided prompts. Teachers should create regular, structured opportunities for students to collaborate with them on writing and to provide feedback to each other. Teachers can also communicate the value they place on students' writing by publishing it.



How to carry out the recommendation	Potential roadblocks
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers should participate as members of the community by writing and sharing their writing. 2. Give students writing choices. 3. Encourage students to collaborate as writers. 4. Provide students with opportunities to give and receive feedback throughout the writing process. 5. Publish students' writing, and extend the community beyond the classroom. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers may be uncomfortable sharing their own writing. 2. It is hard to cover content standards when students are given freedom to choose their own topics to write about. 3. It is hard to find time to provide feedback on all student writing.

Reference: Graham, S., Bollinger, A., Booth Olson, C., D'Aoust, C., MacArthur, C., McCutchen, D., & Olinghouse, N. (2012). *Teaching elementary school students to be effective writers* (NCEE 2012-4058). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/17>



How to carry out the recommendation

1. Teachers should participate as members of the community by writing and sharing their writing.

Teachers should demonstrate how writing is important in their everyday lives as well as the effort necessary to write a high-quality piece. Consider modeling writing while thinking aloud to convey to students the things you think about when composing. In addition, participate in writing assignments and use your process and final work as an example for students.

2. Give students writing choices.

Teachers should provide opportunities for students to make choices about what they write. For example, provide a writing prompt and allow students the option of modifying the prompt, if they wish. Students need to practice writing in response to prompts, as these activities provide an opportunity for teachers to teach particular content standards. However, prompts should be broad enough to allow students some freedom in what they choose to write. Another potential opportunity to allow students choice is to have them regularly update a notebook with a list of topics they are interested in writing about and to encourage them to consult the notebook throughout the school year before beginning writing assignments.

3. Encourage students to collaborate as writers.

Teachers should provide opportunities for students to collaborate with their peers. This can take place throughout the writing process. For example, students can collaborate during the brainstorming phase, they can offer feedback on peer's drafts, and they can work together to revise or edit work. Students can also collaboratively write a single text, such as a school newspaper article or a story.

4. Provide students with opportunities to give and receive feedback throughout the writing process.

In order to support students' ability to write clearly, teachers should provide opportunities for students to gather feedback about their writing. In addition to teacher-provided feedback, students should also have opportunities to receive feedback from other students. This not only provides the student receiving the feedback with guidance on how to improve their work, but it also allows those giving the feedback to develop a deeper understanding of the elements of good writing. Teachers should provide instruction on and establish norms for providing effective feedback. They can also demonstrate how to give verbal constructive feedback through a series of modeling scenarios.

5. Publish students' writing, and extend the community beyond the classroom.

Teachers should provide opportunities for students to share their work in meaningful ways. These could include classroom or school bulletin boards, school-based newspapers, and creating books that are made available in the school library. Publishing student work celebrates their writing and creates a community where they feel their writing is valued.

Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>Teachers may be uncomfortable sharing their own writing.</i>	An important aspect of creating a community of writers is establishing an environment where risk-taking is encouraged. It is important that students understand that writing requires effort even for adults. When teachers make mistakes and demonstrate how to identify and correct those mistakes, they can make the learning experience more meaningful for students.
<i>It is hard to cover content standards when students are given freedom to choose their own topics to write about.</i>	Allowing student choice is possible when focusing on a particular genre of writing that is required in the standards. For example, when teaching persuasive writing, teachers do not need to require all students to choose the same issue to write about. Teachers can also encourage students to choose which side of a particular argument they would like to write about.
<i>It is hard to find time to provide feedback on all student writing.</i>	To ease the burden on teachers, self-evaluation of writing and peer feedback can be used. Teachers can also consider focusing their feedback on particular elements of the writing assignment. For example, if students have been working on using more descriptive language in their writing, the teacher may choose to only provide feedback on that element. If they choose to do this, they should clearly communicate this to students in advance, so that expectations are clear.



For more information on the research evidence and references to support this recommendation, or for more detailed explanation from the What Works Clearinghouse committee who developed this recommendation, please refer to the practice guide cited at the bottom of the first page of this document.