WHAT YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE SAYING . . .

"*Teaching Writing From Content to Career* offers useful tools and techniques that you can put to work immediately, while inviting you throughout the book to pause and reflect on what you and your students are trying out in your classroom. The authors routinely connect their concepts and content to the world beyond school for which we are always preparing our students."

—Jim Burke, Author
Teaching Better Day by Day and
The Six Academic Writing Assignments: Designing the User's Journey

"Don't go to school without this book! It is chock-full of ideas, tools, and engaging lessons for teaching writing to middle and high school students. It is just the resource you need to ensure your students write well in and out of the classroom."

—Steve Graham, Regents and Warner Professor
Arizona State University

"Grant, Lapp, and Thayre have developed a book that allows teachers to reflect upon writing beyond the ELA classroom – then teach the necessary skills. These authors bridge practicality with theory and research, something that is much needed in professional literature. Their insight and ideas into fostering confident and competent writers is inspiring and timely."

—Rebecca G. Harper, Associate Professor of Literacy
Augusta University, and
Author, *Writing Workouts* and *Write Now & Write On*

"Grant, Lapp, and Thayre's book bravely tackles a necessary (yet often humbling) question: Why do our students really need to write? Both now, and in a future that is getting harder for us all to predict? The authors patiently show us how teachers can ensure that our approach to writing instruction remains focused on these real-world applications. *Teaching Writing From Content Classroom to Career* offers no shortage of concrete lesson examples; my favorite is the one about how students (and teachers!) might best write an email that is not only clear and understandable, but also strikes a friendly enough tone—something that students in my classes always need instruction on. The authors also provide a refreshingly honest take on the role of artificial intelligence models in writing instruction, going so far as to include Chat GPT prompts in a lesson plan and how to refine the prompting process. Overall, this is an important, timely book—one that will remain useful for a long time."

—Matthew R. Kay, ELA Teacher and Author
Not Light but Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom,
and Co-Author, *Answers to Your Biggest Questions About*
Teaching Middle- and High School ELA

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"The overall focus of this book and the importance of considering purpose and audience is fresh and inspiring. I haven't seen other professional literature on the subject, and it's becoming more vital every day. We must prepare students for THEIR future and stop parroting what and how we were taught."

—Ruthanne Munger, Writing Specialist
Union School Corporation
Modoc, IN

"This book provides clear explanations on the meaning of writing purpose, of audience, and of the writing process with scenarios and examples that allow teachers to see the transformation of guidelines to actionable items. Through embedded stopping points, the teacher is asked to take the position of the writer -- and write as their students will. The text and its stopping points are well designed, making the book interactive, clear on its meanings, and equipping teachers with skills and knowledge to help students write well beyond classroom contexts."

—Zoi Philippakos, Associate Professor
Literacy Education
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

"In *Teaching Writing From Content to Career*, Grant, Lapp, and Thayre have skillfully crafted a book that shifts writing instruction from a "one day you'll need this" to "see how you'll need this" approach. This is so needed in classrooms that are determined to meet true, useful writing expectations postsecondary writing students will encounter."

—Andy Schoenborn, National Writing Project Teacher Consultant
Co-Author, *Creating Confident Writers: For High School, College, and Life*

"This is a book every teacher should read. We sometimes forget that there is a world out there beyond our standards because we do have so much to cover. If we can shift, as the authors suggest, to a curriculum built around student interest and their ideas for their future careers, we can better evaluate their mastery in a way that is effective for our classes as well as relevant to their lives. Students will be more engaged and will develop a sense of agency well before many of us did."

—Melissa Wood-Glusac, ELA Teacher
Thousand Oaks High School, Thousand Oaks, CA and
Co-Director, CSUN Writing Project

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Teaching Writing From Content Classroom to Career, Grades 6–12

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Teaching Writing From Content Classroom to Career, Grades 6–12

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CORWIN Literacy

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-0718-8900-8

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

23 24 25 26 27 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Acknowledgments

The authors wish to acknowledge wonderful Corwin editors and managers like Amy Schroller and Margaret O'Connor who make writing a book such an enjoyable task.

A very special thank you is reserved for Tori Mello Bachman who believed in the idea of this book and offered endless counsel and positive tips throughout its development.

Hats off to each of you!

With so much appreciation, Maria, Diane, Marisol

Publisher Acknowledgments

Corwin gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following reviewers:

Andy Schoenborn
English Teacher
Clare Public Schools
Midland, MI

Melissa Wood Glusac
English Teacher
Thousand Oaks High School
Thousand Oaks, CA

Ruthanne Munger
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INTRODUCTION

What Happens in English Language Arts Class Shouldn't Stay There

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. . . The English language is a multifaceted oration

Subject to indefinite transformation

—Jamila Lyiscott, "3 Ways to Speak English"

To write well, express yourself like the common people, but think like a wise man.

—Aristotle

A writer, I think, is someone who pays attention to the world.

—Susan Sontag

Writing is often a source of anxiety and confusion for both students and adults alike. It can be difficult to know where to start when asked to compose a piece of text, let alone manage the courage to eventually share it with someone else. This is problematic for a variety of reasons, since we know that, beyond the college requirements for writing, writing is a common tool used in almost every workplace setting. Therefore, it becomes an urgent task to find ways to develop our students' confidence in their own writing process, so that they will be empowered in their chosen careers. People who approach the writing process with apprehension are more

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likely to deliver a subpar end product (J. Daly, 1978; J. Daly & Miller, 1975; Faigley, et al., 1981; McCarthy et al., 1985), and writing anxiety can even go on to influence the types of majors students choose (Wiltse, 2006). The aim of this book is to explore ways in which you, the teacher, can guide your students through a purpose-based writing process that will equip them with the skills and confidence to address writing tasks in and out of the classroom. We believe students should leave school with the realization that no matter what plans they have for their futures, they will be asked every day to communicate their ideas when talking, reading, and writing.

The prerequisite for writing effectively is to know what you want to say, why you want to say it, and who you want to hear it. Writing without personal meaning and writing without an authentically chosen audience turns purposeful writing into a nebulous writing task. Additionally, it's essential to understand and acknowledge that language is regional, situational, and community based. Not all scenarios that demand writing can be addressed with a formulaic approach. Instead, apprentice writers need to learn to assess audience and purpose before they even begin to outline their approach to a piece of writing. What's more, our understanding of "conventional" writing norms is evolving as we learn to embrace the diverse ways in which different communities approach language. While traditional academic writing may be appropriate in some workplace settings, in others it may be considered cold, detached, or simply not effective for the audience and task at hand. Instead of teaching students that there is one "right" way to approach an audience, what if we taught them how to assess what their connection to the purpose and audience is, and then select the best approach to reach them? As part of this introduction we quote Trinidadian American poet Jamila Lyiscott whose spoken word poem reminds us that language is dynamic and ever changing, which means our approaches to writing should be too.

Lyiscott points out the real-world application aspect of language: part of being a successful communicator is knowing how and when to move in and out of different modes of speech. She addresses the need to flexibly use all of one's language resources to be understood and valued in different arenas. To understand this a bit better let's consider both the practices of code-switching and translanguaging. Code-switching, which was explained well by Joos (1962) in his book, *Five Clocks*, typically refers to the practice of switching between two or more languages or language varieties within a single conversation.

Translanguaging on the other hand refers to a broader use of language and language varieties to support communication, learning, and meaning

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making. Translanguaging involves the practice of flexibly using multiple languages and semiotic and linguistic resources to achieve one's goals during a communication. For example, a multilingual speaker may use translanguaging in their writing by combining their knowledge of multiple languages and semiotics, signs and symbols, such as diagrams and symbols, to more effectively convey their ideas. This speaker is using their multilingualism and their knowledge of multiple modes to convey their ideas.

Researchers García and Lin (2017) explain the following:

> Translanguaging should also be seen differently from code-switching. Code-switching, even to those scholars who see it as linguistic mastery (see, for example, Auer, 2005; Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 2005), it is based on the monoglossic view that bilinguals have two separate linguistic systems. Translanguaging, however, posits the linguistic behavior of bilinguals as being always heteroglossic (see Bakhtin, 1981; S. Bailey, 2015; Bailey, 2007), always dynamic, responding not to two monolingualisms in one, but to one integrated linguistic system. It is precisely because translanguaging takes up this heteroglossic and dynamic perspective centered on the linguistic use of bilingual speakers themselves, rather than starting from the perspective of named languages (usually national or state languages), that it is a much more useful theory for bilingual education than code-switching.

According to researcher-scholar Rodriguez-Valls (2023), translanguaging involves empowering students to use their linguistic repertoires without the constraints of using one named language at a time. Rodriguez-Valls shares these examples: *I like esta paleta* and *This tree is grander than the other.* Translanguaging promotes the fluidity of language. As we grow to embrace the assets that all our students bring to the classroom in terms of language, we must consider the promotion of language fluidity to create and promote a message or a written idea. To contrast, code-switching involves changing from one language to another depending on the audience, the purpose, or the context. Rodriguez-Valls offers this example: A student speaks in Spanish to other students in her project group but switches to English when presenting to the teacher and the whole class. Translanguaging skills are not skills to be taught; rather they are linguistic assets that students bring to the classroom (Dover & Rodriguez-Valls, 2022). While we should teach students to pay attention to purpose, audience, language, structure and evidence, and revision and editing, we should also embrace the linguistic riches they bring to the classroom. These two concepts, while related, differ in that translanguaging refers to a broader and more strategic and integrated use of multiple languages and language variations to support one's communication goals.

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In a math classroom where the teacher and the students are speakers of both English and Spanish, the teacher may use translanguaging strategies by drawing on the students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and multiple forms of representation. First, the teacher might introduce the math concept in English with the support of visual aids such as diagrams and graphs. Next, she might model the concept by sharing some of the key concepts in Spanish or whatever additional languages they all speak. Finally, she could ask the students to communicate as pairs or in small groups to solve the problem in both English and Spanish and to include any semiotic representations they feel support their thinking. In this way she is encouraging them to use all of their language resources to solve and share the problem.

As educators, we support both code-switching and translanguaging since we believe one can never have too much language or knowledge about language use. Instead of privileging one method of communication, we want to encourage you to ask students to capitalize on their various funds of knowledge, including their language knowledge, to meet their audience and purpose.

PAUSE AND CONSIDER

What language practices do your students already bring to the classroom? To answer this, consider their interactions. Whom do they talk with? What are they talking about? What are the styles they use for these communications? How can these be leveraged in the teaching of writing? Jot down any ideas regarding how you might encourage your students to use and broaden their language practices. Revisit these ideas as you read through the chapter.

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Many take for granted that one must know how to read and speak well to communicate effectively. But we posit that to be a success in most jobs one needs to know how to write well, too. In fact, in a study compiled by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, **73.4 percent of employers** said they wanted employees with strong written communication skills because, *Clear writing is a sign of clear thinking. Great writers know how to communicate. They make things easy to understand. They can put themselves in someone else's shoes. They know what to omit. And those are qualities you want in any candidate. Writing is making a comeback all over our society . . . (Fried & Hansson, 2010).*

Think about it! Are we preparing our students to be these workers? As students, we completed many teacher-assigned writing tasks intended to teach us to think and to share our thinking, often as arguments, debates, essays, stories, and poems. We were usually taught the nuances of each genre in the process of completing the assignment. To support us, our teachers shared model texts and posted sentence frames to illustrate examples of the desired language and format. Many of us learned to write these styles fairly well. Those of us who attended college were tasked with similar assignments, and, hopefully, we got even better at writing these genres. Then, off we went into the world of work, where we are sometimes asked to write within these same genres—probably not so many stories unless we chose film writing as a career, and we are seldom asked to write poems unless we are sending a greeting card to a friend or crafting a roast for a colleague.

You might wonder then, instead of the five-paragraph essay, what are folks writing at work, and how did the preparatory writing courses and assignments they did in school prepare them to succeed? Wolsey and Lapp (2017) asked many professionals what they write at work. One re-emerging theme from this study was that while the features and practices of writing required when working in various disciplines vary, all of the professionals who were interviewed noted how important it was for them to be able to communicate complex ideas specific to their fields with nonexperts, as well as other experts in their profession or discipline.

Realizing this need for good workplace writers, we wondered what type of writing instruction should occur across disciplines in order to prepare students for the unknown writing tasks that lay ahead of them. To be able to share some specific instructional practices, we continued asking additional professionals what type of writing they were required to do at work. We wanted to extend the insights provided from related work (Gallagher, 2011; Graham & Perin, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Wolsey et al., 2019) with a view toward instruction that prepares students to flexibly use the knowledge they learn in school to craft their future workplace and situational texts. To share what we learned—and help you put it into practice in your classroom—we've organized this text into six chapters and an

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appendix with sample lesson plans shared by the people we interviewed. Each chapter highlights an area to consider when writing any type of text. For example, we address the purpose for writing, the audience of focus, the language structure and format, evidence to support the writing intent, and the continuous evaluation via feedback. While each of these areas is highlighted in its separate chapter, we do not believe they are addressed separately when writing since writing involves a recursive process with the writer moving fluidly among these areas.

PAUSE AND CONSIDER

Before you begin reading each of these chapters, which we hope will support your instruction, we invite you to consider the following question: What kind of writing do you believe people do beyond high school? Notice if your responses grow broader as you read the scenarios we've shared throughout the book.

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Our goal is to augment the great teaching you are already doing by sharing sample lessons, tools, and ideas you can use to illustrate to students that any written presentation must change according to its purpose and audience. We offer some instructional ideas to support you teaching students about selecting the appropriate register, tone, voice, audience, organization, and style that can prepare for their future worlds of work. You'll be able to guide students through understanding, then producing the types of associated writing they may be asked to craft in the workplace. Through broadening their exposure and deepening their insights as you question, model, and share examples it will become obvious to students that writing *does* happen

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after high school—and even though the finished assignment may look different than the traditional five paragraph essay, they can confidently apply what they have learned in English class to any new writing situation.

EXPANDING HOW WE TEACH (AND LEARN) WRITING

Remember when you first learned to lace your shoes? It was a painstaking, thoughtful endeavor in which you followed a pattern that was shown to you many times, over and over again. Finally, you mastered lacing, and henceforth, it became an effortless endeavor. You became highly fluent (Hattie, 2008). Perhaps you are one of the many who seek to lace your shoes in fancy or varied ways—the straight bar, the biker-hiker lace, the sawtooth, checkerboard lacing, or the complex woven lacing for special occasions. To learn a new way to lace shoes, you again have to go through the process of thinking through the patterns. You eventually learn, though, that there is a functional reason for each type of lace. Some are better for skateboarding or riding a bike; some just look interesting. Once you know the intent and the possibilities, you can choose the pattern that is most suitable, and you might be in a better position to invent your own lacing technique.

Although writing isn't the same as lacing shoes, the effort that goes into learning how to write in various ways and learning about the myriad ways writing can be used can help build learning at a deeper level and add the same kind of value through gained expertise. Hattie (2008) explains, "When a student attains a high degree of fluency on a topic, then they have more cognitive resources to devote to the next phase in learning" (p. 30). Deliberate practice makes a difference. van Gog et al. (2005) point out that "Deliberate practice requires students to stretch themselves to a higher level of performance" (p. 75). Hattie references Charness et al. (2005), who notes that "all this practice leads to higher levels of conscious monitoring and control, that leads to more refinement, and more higher order understandings of the surface and deeper level notions." Simply put, more exposure to writing practice for a variety of purposes will help our students sharpen their writing skills, which will translate to higher self-efficacy and better writing overall.

Practice in a variety of world situations will lead to deeper levels of understanding about the process of writing in various situations. Deliberate practice leads to surface and deep-level understandings and thus makes transfer learning possible. Once you have mastered checkerboard lacing to compliment the black-and-white pattern of your sneakers, you know how to learn and how to transfer your learning appropriately to any situation. Using the

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notions of process, practice, and transfer, classroom teachers can support students to take on writing in whatever circumstance they find themselves in.

We asked you to envision what people write at work and in their post–high school lives and how preparatory writing courses and assignments prepare them to succeed? A continuing theme from our studies (Wolsey & Lapp, 2017; Wolsey et al., 2019) was that while writing practices vary in work settings, it was noted by all of the professionals who were interviewed that being able to express complex ideas in writing is a must. Our school-learned skills are valuable, but our curriculum may need a bit of expanding to support students in thinking about what is the *just right* writing for the specific task. Students need experience in transferring skills learned in the classroom to their future world spaces, whether as citizens expressing their political or social views to a congressperson or as workers composing an informative email to a new client on behalf of their firm.

With this realization, we wondered what type of writing instruction should occur across disciplines in middle and high school to prepare students for the unknown writing tasks that lay ahead. When students tell us that they don't like to read or write, our job as educators is to help them understand the reasons why being proficient in these literacies helps them in school and beyond. To promote this understanding, our students need to know how to write real-world texts well by critiquing them and practicing how to craft them.

Let's teach students that their writing is dynamic and evolving and that there are various dialects, genres, styles, and vocabularies used when writing. Let's show them that writing resides in unique ways within cultures, generations, and in industries. **There is not just one correct way to write.** Let's model respect and hold regard for the many ways that people communicate in our world. To accomplish these goals, this book, therefore, is not about teaching students to write the *right way* or the *academic way*. It is, instead, about guiding students to notice language, tone, and style. It is about identifying purpose and audience. It is about finding the best way to communicate to particular groups of people for a purposeful reason.

The premise that foregrounds the instructional ideas shared in this text is that writing is likely to be a critical part of getting, keeping, and being promoted in most jobs (Human Factor, 2023). More importantly, it is a foundational part of sharing ideas and informing others. Or, as noted by Graham and Perin, "Writing well is not just an option for young people—it is a necessity. Along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy" (2007, p. 3). As their teachers, we must identify real-world writing purposes and then revamp our current instruction to illustrate that writing is a valued skill to learn and use throughout life.

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THE PATHWAY TO PURPOSEFUL WRITING FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER

Educators must and can go beyond formulaic writing models to support future writers in thinking about relevant, meaningful ways to convey ideas and express thoughts. The base can be laid in these familiar genres, but what has been taught about audience, tone, style, and structure must be transferred and expanded to new situations if workplace writing is to be met with success.

We believe this transfer can be accomplished by considering situational writing tasks that prepare students for the writing tasks they may encounter after high school. Most students are not seeking careers as professional writers, so the significant goal of writing instruction should be to get students to share the ideas they have in an identified written form using the style, tone, and language that is appropriate for the situation.

To accomplish this, what's shared in the chapters of this book can provide a schema for teaching these crucial elements that will inform a person's writing. If we can help young people think about the purpose and use of words to send a message in a way that is best received by an intended audience, they are empowered to let their ideas be heard.

Effective writing has a dynamic nature. The audience, circumstance, tone, and mode of dissemination will change, but the intent will remain the same—to communicate. Today we communicate through message apps, email, blog posts, shared documents, and by other means. The future may offer us an even wider array of modes of written communication. Because of this dynamic nature, knowing one style of writing won't be sufficient to support the writing tasks a person needs to do. As educators, we must consider how we can help students figure out how to write for a particular purpose and how to produce a resulting piece of writing that achieves this purpose.

We propose that students need to be taught to think critically about the areas shown within each segment of the schema in Figure 0.1. Addressing these areas fluidly and interactively will support students' writing for various purposes. This schema will guide the focus of each chapter. While one area will be given the major focus in each chapter, all of the areas are at play in every chapter because writing is a recursive process that involves the continuous interaction among these areas (A. N. Applebee, 1984).

The schema which highlights a focus area within a chapter is therefore intended to guide students to address key questions about that area during the writing process. Each question shown in a block of the schema correlates with a chapter of this book:

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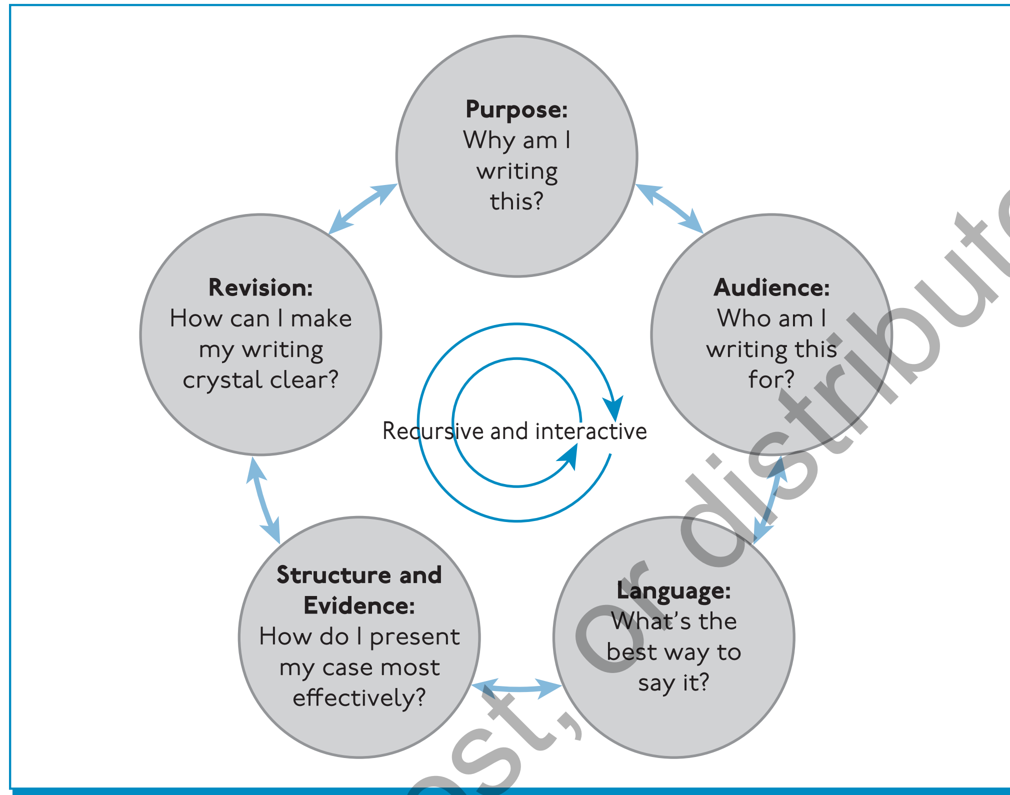
Figure 0.1 ◆



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- The first question addresses the purpose by asking, *Why am I writing this?* To address this question, students are guided to think about why they are writing, how they can use model texts to support their writing, while also identifying what tools like graphic organizers they could use to support their writing.
- When considering the audience, students ask *Who am I writing for?* as they consider how to analyze and use model texts to address an audience.
- When asking *What's the best way to say it?* students think about language registers, language varieties, and writing practice.
- *How do I present my case most effectively?* is a question that guides students to consider the structure of the text being composed and to review evidence to support their writing. As they determine appropriate structures for a target audience, they will learn to pay attention to text features.
- Finally, students will be guided to ask *How can I make my writing crystal clear? How can I use feedback to revise my work?* A final look-through is essential before finalizing and sharing. Students need to understand feedback and how to use it to polish their final product.

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In this book, you'll discover ways that students can learn from their environments and particular situations. We will consider various means to teach writing for careers and college and offer suggestions and strategies. You'll find ideas for supporting relevant writing beyond the classroom for middle and high school students. Each chapter focuses on one aspect to consider when writing. We share tips for instruction, including teaching strategies, rubrics for student self-assessment and teacher assessment. You'll be able to use these ideas to teach any aspect of the schema you are planning to focus on in your classroom. Our goal is not to teach one way of writing but instead to promote the growth and development of critical thinkers who can flexibly navigate a changing world of writing communication.

Finally, every chapter provides instructional moves to guide and support students to become observant, critical learners and readers who can identify the purpose of a writing task, the audience, the tone, the language, the format, and the style needed to best communicate in their professional lives. Also included in each chapter are self-assessment rubrics that students can use to evaluate their communication knowledge and performance. With this information, they can identify alone or with their teachers their growing knowledge of language use and how to monitor and support themselves in current and future situations where their success depends on their abilities to communicate well.

Additionally, we have included a *points to consider* chart to support your lesson planning (Figure 0.2; also downloadable from the companion website, resources.corwin.com/ClassroomToCareer). The chart begins by inviting you to consider your lesson focus as you identify the standards your lesson will address, your learning intentions, and success criteria. Once these are decided, the phases of learning next identified reflect a model of the gradual instructional release. Although this model, as viewed in the template, shares the instructional path of beginning with modeling followed by guided practice, collaboration, and independence, the pathway is reciprocal (Grant et al., 2012) and can start with investigative collaboration, followed by modeling as needed as students move to independence. The goal of every lesson should be that your students gain the skills needed to ensure they are able to write for every situation in which they are asked to do so. You'll find completed lesson charts for each focus area of this book, along with useful tools for each lesson, in the Appendix.

It is our hope that all these tools, coupled with your professional expertise and knowledge of your students, will provide powerful classroom experiences that develop not only writing skills but thinking skills. We're

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Figure 0.2 • Points to Consider: Lesson Planning Template

Lesson Focus: ____	
Standards Addressed **(input the content standards you are addressing)**	
Purpose Statements **(identify the learning intentions)**	
Success Criteria **(identify what students will know and do to demonstrate success toward achieving the purpose statements)**	
Text Used and Rationale **(list the texts used and indicate why you are using them)**	
Phase of Learning	**Scaffolds/Supports**
Show Me: Modeling/Direct Instruction **Share the purpose statements:** **Modeling/Think Aloud (script your think aloud for modeling)**	Indicate how you will support all learners in your class to understand the modeling.
Help Me: Guided Practice **Provide opportunities for students to try out the strategies you have modeled.**	Indicate how you will support all learners in your class to practice strategies. Include supports, like visuals, and note questions you will offer to prompt thinking.
Let Us: Collaboration Provide opportunities for students to discuss and share ideas and to work together productively.	Indicate how your students will work together to discuss and clarify their learning and note what they will plan and create together.
Let Me: Independent Provide opportunities for students to showcase their learning on their own.	Indicate how you will support students to show and/or demonstrate their learning.

Available for download at **resources.corwin.com/ClassroomToCareer**

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inviting you on a shared journey to envision all that is known about purposeful and impactful writing as you think with us about how to enable students to be ready to use their arsenal of knowledge about best writing practices as they venture into any new writing situation with confidence.

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