Literacy Spotlights

Spotlight Topic	Students need to see themselves as writers.
Standard	**Writing Standard 3**: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. **Writing Standard 6**: Write independently, legibly, and routinely for a variety of tasks, purposes, and audiences over short and extended time frames.
Background Information	For students to be successful writers, the first step is for them to believe they are writers. That means they need to believe they have something to say that other people would be interested in hearing. To do that, it's easiest for students to write from what they know, and for secondary students, that's what's happening in their own lives (Van Sluys, 2011). Students also need an authentic purpose and audience for their writing.
Activity	So what can you do at home to help your student learn to value their voice as a writer? How can you give them an authentic purpose and audience? Try keeping a family memory journal. Get a blank journal and keep it somewhere easily accessible for everyone in your family (maybe the coffee table, by the computer, or in a special drawer in the kitchen). Make sure all family members know anyone in the family is allowed to write in it. Whenever something happens that someone wants to remember, they can pull out the journal and write it down. It could be something funny--remember that time Mom forgot she put toast in the oven and no one realized until the smoke alarm was going off and we had to go out for pizza because the whole house smelled like burnt bread? Or perhaps something sweet--remember when my sister helped me clean my room and fold the laundry so I could finish in time to go to my friend's birthday party? Have one night a year where you sit together as a family and read aloud everyone's entries. Perhaps you could take it with you on vacation and read a few every night after dinner. Or read some in the airport during a layover. Maybe read a few on people's birthdays. Recording and sharing these written stories will help everyone in your family develop their own identity as a writer and provide you with great family memories for years to come. (It'll also come in handy when you need a great story for a toast at a graduation party or wedding down the line!)