

## Recommendation 2 *(continued)*

### Example 1. Applying the writing process in an upper elementary classroom

#### Operation Robot

Students in grades 4 through 6 wrote about robots as part of a class project.<sup>43</sup>

#### Process of Writing

- The class discussed robots and what robots could do if they had certain specialty parts, such as telescopes on their heads to see great distances. Prompts such as toy robots and pictures of robots were used to spark discussion (**planning**).
- Students created robot diagrams with vivid pictures and written descriptions of their robots (**drafting**). Students then wrote stories about their robots, explaining how they became friends and what they do together (**drafting**). They used their diagrams to help them describe their robots in the stories.
- Each student shared his or her story with another student (**sharing**), who provided positive and constructive feedback (**evaluating**). The students then revised their stories using the feedback, along with their own evaluation of their texts (**revising and evaluating**).
- Students read their stories aloud in class (**sharing**). The class commented on what they liked and asked questions about anything that was unclear (**evaluating**). Students again **revised** their stories and were invited to **publish** them in a class book about robots.

## Recommendation 2b. Teach students to write for a variety of purposes.

### How to carry out the recommendation

#### 1. Help students understand the different purposes of writing.

Students should understand the purpose of each genre so that they can select the genre best suited to their writing task.<sup>44</sup> In teaching a particular genre, teachers should emphasize the purpose of that genre and how its features are related to the purpose. Teachers also should relate genres to real-world scenarios. For example, the purpose of a persuasive letter is to convince the reader to agree with the writer. To achieve this purpose, writers should think of compelling reasons for readers who might not agree, then state those reasons clearly and support them with appropriate evidence. In class, teachers might provide

a real-world scenario of students writing a persuasive letter to convince their parents that a friend should be allowed to spend the night, or a letter to the principal asking for permission to go on a special field trip. Table 4 provides examples of specific genres within four purposes: describe, narrate, inform, and persuade/analyze. Although the table links genres to specific purposes, teachers should note that many genres can be used for various purposes. For example, a letter can be written to persuade someone to do something, to narrate an event to a friend, or to inform a family member about an upcoming event.

## Recommendation 2 *(continued)*

**Table 4. Purposes for writing**

Purpose	Explanation <sup>a</sup>	Examples of Genres
<b>Describe</b>	to describe something, such as a person, place, process, or experience, in vivid detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ descriptions (e.g., people, places, or events)</li> <li>▪ character sketches</li> <li>▪ nature writing</li> <li>▪ brochures (personal, travel, and so on)</li> </ul>
<b>Narrate</b>	to tell a story of an experience, event, or sequence of events while holding the reader's interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ diary entries (real or fictional)</li> <li>▪ folktales, fairy tales, fables</li> <li>▪ short stories</li> <li>▪ poems</li> <li>▪ eyewitness accounts</li> </ul>
<b>Inform</b>	to examine previously learned information or provide new information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ summaries of new or previously learned information</li> <li>▪ instructions or directions</li> <li>▪ letters</li> <li>▪ newspaper articles</li> <li>▪ science reports</li> </ul>
<b>Persuade/analyze</b>	to give an opinion in an attempt to convince the reader that this point of view is valid or to persuade the reader to take a specific action (writing to express an opinion or make an argument has a similar purpose); to analyze ideas in text, for example, by considering their veracity or comparing them to one another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ persuasive essays</li> <li>▪ editorials</li> <li>▪ compare-and-contrast essays</li> <li>▪ reviews (e.g., of books and movies)</li> <li>▪ literary analysis</li> </ul>

### 2. Expand students' concept of audience

Writing for different purposes often means writing for different audiences.<sup>46</sup> To help students understand the role of audience in writing, it is important to design writing activities that naturally lend themselves to different audiences. Otherwise, students may view writing in school as writing only for their teacher. When discussing writing purposes, teachers and students can generate a list of potential audiences for a given writing assignment. Students then can choose the audience that best fits their writing topic. For example, when writing persuasive letters, students could write for parents, friends, companies, or newspapers, depending on their chosen topic. When working on narratives, students could write a fable to read to preschool students. It is important that students' writing is shared with their intended audience.

Students should learn to adjust their tone and word choice to better convey their meaning

#### **Technology Tip**

Find examples of exemplary texts online from the American Library Association's list of Newbery Medal award winners, the Database of Award-Winning Children's Literature (<http://dawcl.com/introduction.html>), or state department of education websites (e.g., <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/l/>).

and suit their audience. To develop this skill, students might write about the same topic for different audiences. For example, students could write a description of their favorite video game for a friend who also plays the game. Then, they could write a description for an adult, such as the school principal, who is unfamiliar with the game. Allowing students to write for a range of audiences enables them to think of writing as an authentic means of communication to accomplish a variety of goals.

## Recommendation 2 *(continued)*

### 3. Teach students to emulate the features of good writing.

Students should be exposed to exemplary texts from a variety of sources, including published or professional texts, books and textbooks, the teacher's own writing, and peer samples.<sup>47</sup> Teachers should select texts that

- support the instructional goals of the lesson
- are appropriate for the students' reading levels and abilities
- provide exemplary models of what students will write

Exemplary texts can illustrate a number of features, including text structure; use of graphs, charts, and pictures; effective word choice; and varied sentence structure. For example, if the instructional goal is to teach 4th-grade students to describe a setting using concrete, sensory details, the teacher could read a chapter from E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* in which the author uses sensory details, such as sights, sounds, smells, and movements, to bring a barn to life. Students then can apply what they learn to compose a rich, sensory description of their own setting.

Teachers should either read exemplary texts out loud or direct students to read and reread selected exemplary texts, paying close attention to the author's word choice, overall structure, or other style elements, based on the instructional goals of the lesson. Teachers should explain and students should discuss how each text demonstrates characteristics of effective writing in that particular genre. Students will then be prepared to emulate characteristics of exemplary texts at the word, sentence, and/or text level (see Example 2), or they can use the text as a springboard for writing (see Example 3).

Students of all ages can participate in emulating text activities. The closeness with which students will emulate the text, as well as the complexity and length of the text itself, will depend on the instructional goals of the lesson and on students' abilities. At the word level, for example, after reading *Rosie's Walk* (Example 2), teachers could introduce a variety of synonyms for the word *walk* and physically demonstrate the examples in front of the class. Students could then arrange the words in order from slow to fast (e.g., *trudge*, *amble*, *stroll*, *walk*, *stride*, *scurry*, and *run*). Students also could emulate sentences from the text, replacing synonyms in the sentences.

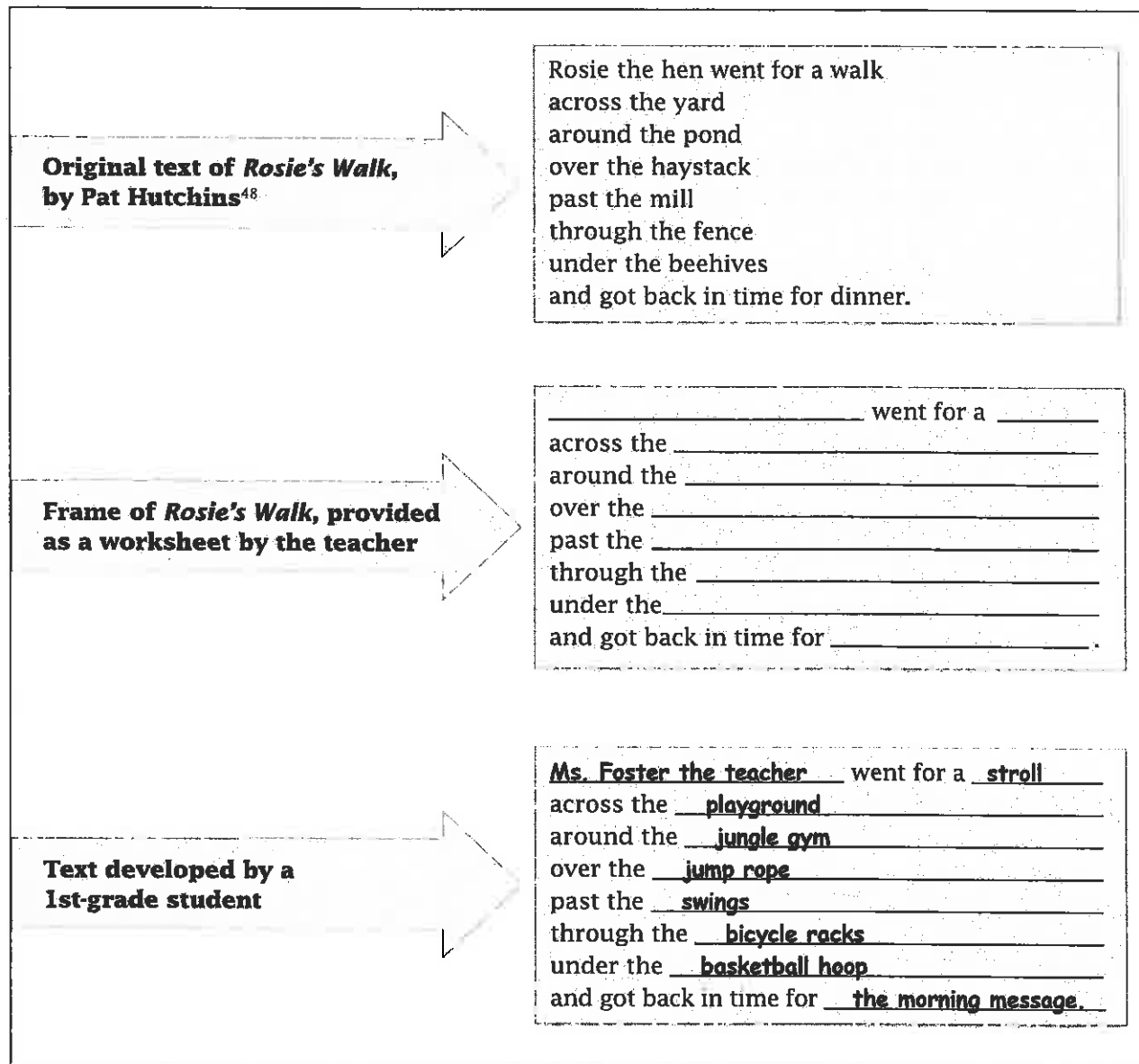
Struggling writers or students in lower grades may specifically focus on emulating sentence patterns or identifying and substituting words in appropriate places. Students should read a story, or have a story read to them, and then complete a story frame to create a story emulation (see Example 2).

In middle and upper elementary grades, students may use concepts in exemplary texts as a springboard for developing their own writing. In Example 3, 6th-grade students read the poem "Where I'm From," by George Ella Lyon. Using the structure of the text, they applied knowledge from a recent science lesson to create a poem about earthquakes.

Text emulating exercises can vary in length based on available instructional time, be assigned as homework, and/or be incorporated into activities across the curriculum. Once students are comfortable analyzing and emulating writing styles, they may be better able to enhance their own writing style, thinking critically about the meaning they wish to convey and the words they choose to convey that meaning.

## Recommendation 2 *(continued)*

### Example 2. Story emulation of *Rosie's Walk* with 1st-grade students



## Recommendation 2 (continued)

### Example 3. Using text as a model

<b>Original text of "Where I'm From," by George Ella Lyon<sup>49</sup></b>	<b>Text developed by a 6th-grade classroom<sup>50</sup></b>
<p>I am from clothespins, from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride. I am from the dirt under the back porch. (Black, glistening, it tasted like beets.) I am from the forsythia bush the Dutch elm whose long-gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.</p> <p>I'm from fudge and eyeglasses, from Imogene and Alafair. I'm from the know-it-alls and the pass-it-ons, from Perk up! and Pipe down! I'm from He restoreth my soul with a cottonball lamb and ten verses I can say myself.</p> <p>I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch, fried corn and strong coffee. From the finger my grandfather lost to the auger, the eye my father shut to keep his sight.</p> <p>Under my bed was a dress box spilling old pictures, a sift of lost faces to drift beneath my dreams. I am from those moments— snapped before I budded— leaf-fall from the family tree.</p>	<p>I am from elastic strain, from the focus and the epicenter.</p> <p>I am from the destructive surface waves that run through the 40–200 kilometer fault zones.</p> <p>I am from the "Ring of Fire," the tectonic and lithospheric plates.</p> <p>I can cause tsunamis and fires.</p> <p>I am from convergent, divergent, and transform plate boundaries.</p> <p>I am from seismographs that determine my strength.</p> <p>I am from speedy but weak p-waves, from slow and hardy s-waves, but I do not reach.</p> <p>Seismic waves are caused by me.</p> <p>Who am I? An earthquake.</p>

## Recommendation 2 *(continued)*

### 4. Teach students techniques for writing effectively for different purposes.

Students also must learn to use techniques that are specific to a purpose of writing.<sup>51</sup> Table 5 shows five examples of techniques specific to the four purposes for writing, accompanied by the grade levels for which the technique is appropriate. These techniques help students frame their writing for a specific purpose. When developing a persuasive essay, for example, students can use the TREE (Topic sentence, Reasons—three or more, Ending, Examine) technique, whereby they make a plan for their paper that includes what they believe, reasons to support their beliefs, examples for each reason, and an ending.<sup>52</sup>

Techniques should be taught explicitly and directly through a gradual release of

responsibility from teacher to student until students are able to apply the techniques independently (see Recommendation 2a, Figure 1). Teachers should describe the technique, articulate how it relates to specific writing purposes, and model its use. Students should learn to select techniques that help them achieve their writing purpose and reach their target audience. Teachers should encourage students to practice applying the techniques as they flexibly use the components of the writing process. (See Recommendation 2a for more information on gradually releasing writing responsibility from the teacher to the student, teaching students to select and use techniques, and teaching students to use the components of the writing process flexibly.)

### Potential roadblocks and solutions

**Roadblock 2.1.** *Students use strategies and techniques when they are first taught them, but over time, they stop using the strategies and techniques.*

**Suggested Approach.** When students transition to using strategies and techniques independently, teachers should continue to monitor student use of the strategies and techniques and assess whether students are appropriately applying them to components of the writing process and/or specific writing purposes. After teaching a strategy for planning, for example, teachers should check to see if students are using the strategy and if their planning skills are improving. If students are no longer using the strategy, but their planning skills have improved, it may mean they no longer need the strategy. Alternatively, if students continue to struggle with planning components of the writing process, the teacher may need to reteach the strategy to the whole class or provide more opportunities for collaborative practice for a small group of struggling students. Teachers

also can ask students to monitor and report what strategies and techniques they used to develop and complete their text.

**Roadblock 2.2.** *State assessments ask students to write in only one or two genres, so time spent on other genres may not help them meet the assessment requirements.*

**Suggested Approach.** Regardless of current assessment practices in a particular state, it is important for students to learn to write for varied purposes. Writing for multiple purposes encourages preparation for high-stakes assessments, even if those assessments define the purposes of writing more narrowly. In fact, writing in one genre often calls on expertise from other types of writing. Writing a persuasive essay, for example, can involve providing a narrative example, drawing a comparison, or explaining a scientific concept in order to support a point. As teachers introduce new genres of writing, they can point out writing strategies or elements of writing that also transfer to other kinds of writing, including the types of writing required for the state writing assessment.

## Recommendation 2 *(continued)*

Table 5. Examples of techniques within the four purposes of writing

Purpose	Specific Technique	How Students Can Use the Technique	Grade Range
<b>Describe</b>	Sensory details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use their five senses, as applicable:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you <i>see</i>? How did it <i>look</i>?</li> <li>• What sounds did you <i>hear</i>?</li> <li>• What did you <i>touch</i>? How did it <i>feel</i>?</li> <li>• What could you <i>smell</i>?</li> <li>• What did you <i>taste</i>?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	K-3
<b>Narrate</b>	Story grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider the following questions when developing their story:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Who</i> are the main characters?</li> <li>• <i>When</i> does the story take place?</li> <li>• <i>Where</i> does the story take place?</li> <li>• <i>What</i> do the main characters want to do?</li> <li>• <i>What</i> happens when the main characters try to do it?</li> <li>• <i>How</i> does the story end?</li> <li>• <i>How</i> does the main character feel?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1-3
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In older grades, expand the strategy in the following ways:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell the story from the point of view of a character other than the main character.</li> <li>• Add an interesting or surprising twist to the story.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	4-6
<b>Inform</b>	Report writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete a K-W-L chart:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What I Know</li> <li>• What I Want to know</li> <li>• What I Learned</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ In the K-W-L chart, gather appropriate information:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Brainstorm. (What do I know about the topic?)</li> <li>▪ Extend brainstorming. (What do I want to know about the topic? What other information would be helpful to learn about the topic?)</li> <li>▪ Gather additional information and add to the chart. (What have I learned? Did I list anything during brainstorming that was inaccurate and needs to be crossed off the chart?)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Review the K-W-L chart and circle the most important ideas to include in the report.</li> <li>▪ Develop an outline, showing which ideas will be included in the report and the order in which they will be presented.</li> <li>▪ Continue planning while writing, gathering new information, and adding to the outline as needed.</li> <li>▪ Be sure to implement each aspect of the plan as they write.</li> </ul>	2-6
<b>Persuade/ analyze</b>	STOP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Before they write, STOP and:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspend judgment.</li> <li>• Take sides.</li> <li>• Organize ideas.</li> <li>• Plan to adjust as they write.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	4-6
	DARE <sup>53</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DARE to check their paper to be sure they have:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed their thesis.</li> <li>• Added ideas to support their ideas.</li> <li>• Rejected arguments on the other side.</li> <li>• Ended with a strong conclusion.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
	TREE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As they write:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell what they believe. (State a topic sentence.)</li> <li>• Provide three or more Reasons. (Why do I believe this?)</li> <li>• End it. (Wrap it up right.)</li> <li>• Examine. (Do I have all my parts?)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2-3
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In older grades, expand the strategy as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace the Examine step with Explain reasons. (Say more about each reason.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	4-6