

Writing Guide for W1, W2, and W3

First Grade

W.1.1 Opinion writing is the first developing form of argument writing. Opinion writing has many purposes – to convince the reader that the writer’s position is correct, change the reader’s position on a topic or encourage the reader to take action. Writers use reasons to support their positions on topics or books under study. First grade students introduce a topic or book they are writing about, state their opinions, give a reason for their opinions, and provide endings that create closure.

The teacher provides instruction on organizing information and ideas around the topic under study. For example, graphic organizers such as circle maps and 4-square models can be used to plan cohesive papers. Students state an opinion (e.g. Dogs are the best pets.), then use graphic organizers to generate reasons to support their points (Dogs are the best pets because we can play with them.) The teacher guides students by asking questions and providing feedback. Students respond to questions from the teacher as well as peers to add details to and strengthen their writing. The teacher facilitates this process by providing opportunities for students to practice peer conferences in pairs as well as in group settings, where students learn correct ways to give feedback to fellow writers.

First graders must also provide closure as they bring their writing to an end. The teacher helps his/her students become successful at this skill by comparing stories that end abruptly with those that come to a satisfactory conclusion. The teacher also explains that closure in opinion writing can restate the position and explain why the writer chose to take that stance.

The teacher models the organization and construction of opinion writing by reading texts containing well-developed opinions, listing possible topics on chart paper, and guiding students in choosing appropriate topics. As he/she reads mentor texts aloud, the teacher stops, questions, and elicits discussion about an author’s word choice and how he/she supports his/her stance with reasons. Students begin to construct their own opinion pieces, and the teacher refers to the author’s craft in those texts as support.

W.1.2 Informative/explanatory writing communicates information. It has many purposes – to increase the reader’s understanding of a topic, process, or procedure; to provide clarification on a topic, process, or procedure; and/or to answer “what,” “how,” and “why” questions regarding the topic under study. Writers use previous knowledge and information from primary and secondary sources in their pieces to increase the reader’s knowledge of a given topic. It is important for the teacher to emphasize that informative/explanatory writing is not

meant to convince people of a belief or influence people’s behaviors. First grade students write informative/explanatory pieces in which they name a topic, provide some facts about the topic, and provide closure.

Students select topics of interest or research topics chosen by the teacher. Students use their previous knowledge about the topic and use classroom materials or online sources to gather facts. The teacher can support students by modeling research and note-taking as a whole-group activity. The teacher can “think aloud,” as students make decisions about the relevancy of facts and decide what to include in their pieces. Students help evaluate the significance of facts in relation to the topic and help choose information that provides the best support. The teacher can also provide books and digital resources (such as websites), and students work individually or in teams to choose and collect research about a non-fictional topic. Group work can be an efficient way for the teacher to meet with and assist students.

Students use graphic organizers to plan and complete their compositions. The teacher supplies assistance as needed when students are organizing their information, planning, and writing. The teacher also supplies assistance as needed to ensure students remain focused on their topic when writing. Students can take notes, draw, and label diagrams to help compose one or more paragraphs about a subject. Students meet with the teacher and their peers to review their work and to develop closing statements summarizing their findings.

Students work in teams or cooperative groups to ask questions and make suggestions to help their peers add details and make corrections. The teacher also has conferences with students, where he/she assists students and focuses their writing.

W.1.3 Narratives share an experience, either real or imagined, and use time as their core structures. Narratives can be stories, novels, and plays, or they can be personal accounts, like memoirs, anecdotes, and autobiographies. Narrative writing has many purposes—to inform, teach, persuade, or entertain readers. Writers utilize event sequencing and pacing, create characters, use vivid sensory details and other literary elements to evoke reactions from and create effects on the reader. First graders may not immediately include these elements in their stories, so teachers help them understand what makes a story and how to structure the order of their writing. First grade students develop their voices as narrative writers by writing about two or more sequenced events. They use some details to help bring their stories to life, use temporal words to show the order of events, and leave the reader with a sense of closure.

The teacher helps students generate ideas for narratives by providing multiple opportunities for discussions about life experiences. Students can list story ideas in journals and brainstorm ideas

for class topics. The teacher can help students create personal stories by having them think of a “small moment” when something happened that made them feel a strong emotion. Students write about an event that happened in this important moment. Students use some details to describe the event(s) and focus on writing a story that describes that moment in order.

The teacher helps students organize their writing in a meaningful way. The teacher guides students in using graphic organizers, such as 4 square and circle maps, to model effective planning. Students review their story maps with the teacher, who makes suggestions and asks questions to help writers add details and strengthen their stories.

The teacher conferences with students to help them focus their narratives on two or more appropriately sequenced series of events. The teacher also assists students in the correct use of temporal transition words (e.g. first, next, at last) to establish order in their stories and assist students with providing a satisfactory sense of closure.