

ALIGNMENT

Step Up to Writing* and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning

The *Step Up to Writing* program provides effective, multisensory writing strategies to improve students' overall literacy skills. This flexible, strategy-based program connects reading and writing to build a common language of literacy and increase proficiency across grade levels and content areas.

Extensive modeling, guided practice, and independent practice improve student writing, reading comprehension, vocabulary, note-taking, and critical-thinking skills. Students learn to read, write, listen, speak, and view with skill and confidence.

Because these critical 21st century literacy skills are also reflected in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning*, the *Step Up to Writing* program is a natural fit for helping improve overall K-12 student foreign language literacy and education.

While ACTFL offers five key foreign language learning standards, *Step Up to Writing* offers the "how to" – the methods, the tools, the concrete strategies for helping all students reach the highest levels of language communication and literacy development.

The Five C's of Foreign Language Education

1. Communication
2. Cultures
3. Connections
4. Comparisons
5. Communities

Communication is at the heart of second language study,
whether the communication takes place face-to-face,
in writing, or across centuries through the reading of literature.”

-- Standards for Foreign Language Learning

COMMUNICATION STANDARD 1.1: Interpersonal Communication

Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Step Up to Writing:

Students learn to write and speak for a variety of audiences and purposes; they learn different formats through explicit instruction and guided lessons; they apply and practice a number of writing strategies to various writing assignments across subject areas; they communicate/publish their work using appropriate mediums such as newspapers, bulletins, web sites, display boards, books, etc.

For example:

- Section 1: Writing to improve reading and listening comprehension (Learning to summarize; create useable and accurate notes; write and answer questions; respond to text; mastering short responses – writing for clarity and accuracy)
- Section 2: Vocabulary (Teaching tips; reading and understanding dictionary definitions; breaking down definitions; pronouncing vocabulary words; writing meaningful vocabulary sentences; creating detailed vocabulary word maps and webs; creating and using concept maps; understanding abstract nouns and vivid verbs; homonyms, homophones, and homographs; using strong vocabulary in writing across the curriculum)
- Section 3: Sentence mastery (Carefully selecting sentence structures; using a variety of sentences; considering purpose and audience; playing with language; adding quotations)
- Sections 4 and 5: Expository paragraph, report, and essay writing (Writing for a variety of purposes; writing in first, second, and third person; writing for a specific audience; recognizing two kinds of writing; planning with an informal outline; building accordion paragraphs; playing the organization game; defining topic sentences and thesis statements; writing with sentence variety; using transitions accurately and effectively to build cohesion; connecting conclusions to a topic sentence; blocking out essays and reports; developing plans for elaboration of detail, reasons, and facts; using transitions to build cohesion; writing successful conclusions; practice with framed essays/reports; stretching the writing – not stacking; writing documented essays/reports)
- Sections 6 and 7: Story and personal narratives (Writing to entertain, to share a message, and/or to create visual images; writing to share an experience; learning story elements and text structures; creating story maps, quick sketches and quick note planning; planning and developing characters; sequencing events; using a variety of narrative transitions; writing an interesting and successful beginning and ending; tips for revising, editing and proofreading)
- Section 9: Specific writing assignments (Writing in numerous formats – Examples: writing from a different point of view, writing letters, writing a skit, personal writing, writing to persuade, convince, or inspire, writing to inform, business writing, personal writing)
- Section 10: Assessment and high standards (e.g. checklists for revision; improving word choice with the ABC Activity; editing with CUPS – *capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling*; quick check for self-evaluation; practical, effective scoring guides with examples of *below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced* writing)

COMMUNICATION STANDARD 1.2: Interpretive Communication

Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Step Up to Writing:

Students are given a variety of active reading and listening strategies to better comprehend all texts, both fiction and non-fiction, written, oral, and visual. Students are equipped with multisensory literacy strategies for reading, analyzing, and evaluating texts, asking questions, making inferences, drawing conclusions and synthesizing information. Teachers are provided with examples to model with their students and guided lessons to incorporate into all subject areas, not just foreign language learning.

Vocabulary development is also critical component of the *Step Up to Writing* program. Students are given a multitude of strategies to learn, comprehend, and use new vocabulary words. Similarly, students are empowered to develop a repertoire of appropriate writing styles and to complete final drafts that are free of mistakes and follow the established writing conventions. As a result, students develop the ability to edit and proofread their own and others' writing for usage, punctuation, spelling, syntax, and style. Students are taught to present writing that effectively conveys a message to their audience for a specific purpose.

For example:

- Section 1: Writing to improve reading and listening comprehension (Various strategies for making connections between the message and the self/other texts/world; taking effective reading and research notes; making inferences and analyzing the text; paraphrasing, retelling and summarizing main ideas and details; asking and answering questions; recognizing text structures; using informal outlines)
- Section 2: Vocabulary (Mastering vocabulary; teaching tips for reading dictionary definitions, breaking down definitions, using correct pronunciation, developing concept maps, creating meaningful vocabulary sentences with context; using vocabulary note cards to develop definition/synonyms/antonyms/part of speech, categorizing vocabulary words and content-specific terminology, understanding homonyms/homophones/homographs, and developing subject-specific vocabulary)
- Section 3: Sentence mastery (e.g. writing better sentences; using a variety of sentence structures – simple, compound, complex, compound/complex; understanding the kinds of sentences; writing with sentence variety; recognizing parts of speech; using sentence fragments effectively; eliminating run-ons; playing with language; learning parts of sentences with diagrams; adding quotations; considering purpose and audience)
- Sections 4 and 5 (Recognizing and working with two kinds of writing: expository/informational and narrative; defining *fiction*, *non-fiction*, *prose*, *poetry*, *explain*, and *entertain*; creating informal outlines)
- Sections 6 and 7 (Understanding story grammar and terminology; recognizing story elements; sequencing events; creating and developing characters; showing, not telling; composing, sharing, and publishing personal narratives)
- Section 8: Speeches (Asking and answering questions; developing good listening skills; participating in one-on-one and large group discussions)
- Section 9: Specific writing assignments (Array of non-fiction and informational forms including persuasive writing; supporting opinion with fact; compare/contrast; cause/effect; technical writing; science reports; writing in math)
- Section 10: Assessment and high standards (Using quick checks for self-evaluation; implementing practical, effective scoring guides)

COMMUNICATION STANDARD 1.3: Presentation Communication

Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Step Up to Writing:

The strategies and activities in *Step Up to Writing* empowers writers to present writing and speeches that effectively convey a message to the audience; to incorporate technology as a means of writing and presenting, and more.

For example:

- Section 2: Vocabulary mastery (Teaching strategies for vocabulary development and use across the curriculum)
- Section 3: Sentence mastery (Writing headlines and sentences; purpose and audience considerations; adding quotations; playing with language)
- Section 4: Information/expository paragraphs (Two kinds of writing, the writing process and organization)
- Section 5: Accordion essays and reports (Planning, writing, and revising; writing documented essays and reports)
- Section 6: Story and narrative writing (Writing drafting and revising, editing and proofreading)
- Section 7: Personal narratives (Preparing and writing personal narratives; sharing and publishing personal writing)
- Section 8: Speeches (Giving speeches, focusing on the audience; speaking for different purposes; components of a good speech; including stories/anecdotes; speaking with a purpose; convincing)
- Section 9: specific writing assignments (Supporting an opinion with facts; writing letters; writing in math and science; technical writing; writing a skit; news writing)
- Section 10: Assessment and high standards (Neat paper rules; printing and cursive writing; improving word choice with the ABC Activity; editing with CUPS – capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling; using a checklist for revision; conducting peer review; using a quick check for self-evaluation; practical and effective scoring guides)

REFERENCES

Auman, Maureen. *Step Up to Writing*. 3rd ed. Boston: Sopris West Educational Services, 2008.

National Standards in Foreign Language Education. 3rd ed. Alexandria, VA: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2010. < <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3324>>