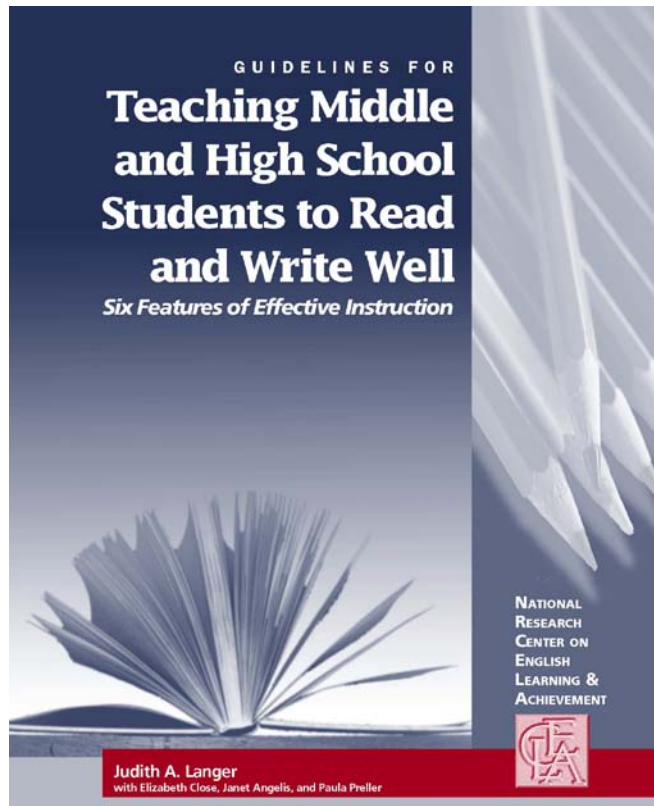


Step Up to Writing and the Judith Langer Research*



I first learned about Judith Langer and her work at CELA (Center on English Learning and Achievement) several years ago from the curriculum director in a small rural district in Colorado. She recognized the fact that the *Step Up* methods and strategies addressed all six of the recommendations for effective instruction identified by Langer and her colleagues.

The director gifted me with a large stack of the *Teaching Middle and High School Students to Read and Write Well* booklets. I shared the booklets with teachers in my middle school and with participants in my workshops and college classes. When I ran out, I ordered more.

The methods, strategies, and goals in *Step Up to Writing*, I discovered, were a perfect match to the results of the research. The most obvious connections were with the *Step Up* strategies and with the way the strategies prepare students for informal and high stakes assessments. Lessons in *Step Up* include explicit instruction as well as application to content area assignments and to the types of tasks students face in exams. Students, for example, who learn the “happy face” strategy for answering questions, know how to write great short answers in class and on a test. They also learn how to generate ideas and share them. Students know they will be asked to analyze, critique, compare, etc. as they read, write, and share.

Because *Step Up* strategies are taught with a variety of multisensory lessons, students have many different opportunities to learn skills and practice them. Students quickly move from learning the strategies to using the strategies to learn content.

As you implement *Step Up to Writing* in your school or classroom, check your effectiveness by reflecting on Langer’s “six features of effective instruction.” Use the following correlation for ideas about using *Step Up* strategies to meet all six goals.

Maureen Auman

* You can download a free copy of Judith Langer’s “Six Features of Effective Instruction” at: <http://cela.albany.edu/publication/brochure/guidelines.pdf>

CORRELATION

Step Up to Writing Correlation to Judith A. Langer's *Guidelines for Teaching Middle and High School Students to Read and Write Well: Six Features of Effective Instruction*

***Step Up to Writing* Supports the Six Features of Effective Instruction**

Even with the “right” materials and lesson plans, with hours spent preparing for instruction, and with ongoing assessments in place, many teachers and schools are not as successful as others. Academic researcher Judith A. Langer has studied this problem and from her research has identified six features of instruction that make teachers the most successful. She notes in her research report, *Beating the Odds: Teaching Middle and High School Students to Read and Write Well* (from which the document, *Six Features of Effective Instruction*, is taken), that the six features of effective instruction are “interrelated and supportive of one another.” The greatest improvement in student success resulted when the instructional methods are addressed and integrated. Langer observed that the higher performing schools exhibit all six characteristics in their classroom instruction.

Fortunately, the researched-based, multisensory reading and writing strategies promoted in *Step Up to Writing* are applicable to all six aspects of effective literacy instruction *and* content/subject area instruction. This allows teachers to integrate all of the important literacy teaching methods within their classroom – as suggested by Langer’s research – while still providing students with effective, hands-on strategies and tools to develop content/subject area knowledge. The flexible, strategy-based *Step Up to Writing* program connects reading, writing, vocabulary, sentence mastery, and more, to build a common language of literacy and increase proficiency across grade levels, content areas, and student abilities.

Extensive modeling, guided lessons, and independent practice improve students’ writing, reading comprehension, note-taking, and critical-thinking skills. Students, including English language learners and other diverse student populations, learn to read, write, listen, speak, and view with skill and confidence.

Six Features of Effective Instruction

1. Students learn skills and knowledge in multiple lesson types
2. Teachers integrate test preparation into instruction
3. Teachers make connections across instruction, curriculum, and life
4. Students learn strategies for doing the work
5. Students are expected to be generative thinkers
6. Classrooms foster cognitive collaboration

Step Up to Writing (3rd edition, 2008) Section Titles

Section 1: Writing to Improve Reading and Listening Comprehension
 Section 2: Vocabulary
 Section 3: Sentence Mastery
 Section 4: Information/Expository Paragraphs
 Section 5: Accordion Essays and Reports

Section 6: Story and Narrative Writing
 Section 7: Personal Narratives
 Section 8: Speeches
 Section 9: Specific Writing Assignments
 Section 10: Assessment and High Standards

<p>Six Features of Effective Instruction <i>Judith A. Langer, et al</i></p>	<p>Step Up to Writing, 3rd Edition (2008) Practical Tools, Strategies, and Lessons</p>
<p>1. Students learn skills and knowledge in multiple lesson types (<i>separated, simulated, and integrated</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ...Offers separated, simulated, and integrated strategies, tools, and activities for individual students, small groups, or the entire class ▪ ...Uses various instructional strategies to “scaffold ways to think and discuss” such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Making inferences (Section 1) ○ Analyzing a text (Sections 1 and 9) ○ Summarizing to demonstrate comprehension (Section 1) ○ Asking and answering questions about a reading (Section 1) ○ Responding to the text (Sections 1 and 9) ○ Quotation / Response (Section 1) ○ Making connections to the text (Sections 1 and 9) ○ Quotation/response (Section 1) ○ And more! ▪ ...Provides opportunities for teachers to model new strategies and skills, for students to practice and develop mastery ▪ ...Equips students with hands-on, multisensory literacy strategies for reading, writing, evaluating, and discussing fiction and non-fiction, written and visual ▪ ...Provides direct instruction in strategies and methods to apply literacy skills to specific tasks and assignments ▪ ...Integrates models and examples for peer and self-evaluation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ...Teaches skills, concepts, conventions, mechanics, vocabulary to be used in classroom discussions ▪ ...Encourages the use of literacy strategies across subject areas and embedded within content learning ▪ ...Connects reading to writing practice and writing assignments
<p>2. Teachers integrate test preparation into instruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ...Includes ongoing opportunities for test preparation, practice, and assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Active reading strategies (Section 1) ○ Mastering short answers and/or longer constructed responses (Sections 1, 3, 4 thru 10) ○ Vocabulary development and mastery (Section 2) ○ Writing for formal assessments (Sections 4 thru 10) ○ Setting high expectations (Section 10) ○ Assessments, scoring guides, and rubrics (Section 10) ▪ ...Provides teachers and students with a variety of strategies, tools, activities, and guided lessons to improve reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing skills across content areas and across grade levels ▪ ...Integrates models and examples for peer and self-evaluation ▪ ...Provides various strategies for building and activating prior knowledge through reading and writing
<p>3. Teachers make connections across instruction, curriculum, and life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ...Provides teachers and students with a variety of strategies, tools, activities, and guided lessons to improve reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing skills across content areas and across grade levels ▪ ...Engages students in the reading process and promotes active reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Generate background knowledge ○ Make connections ○ Quotation / Response ○ Strategies for reading textbooks and other non-fiction texts ○ Strategies for Before, During, and After reading ▪ ...Enables students to strengthen their overall literacy skills and build historical, cultural, and social background knowledge ▪ ...Provides various strategies for building and activating prior knowledge through reading and writing such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Descriptive writing (Section 9) ○ Personal writing such as free response or journal writing (Section 9) ○ Making text connections (text to self, to text, to world) (Section 1) ○ Recognizing text structures and genres (Sections 1, and 4 thru 9) ○ Using two- and three-column notes (Sections 1, 4, 8, 9)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creating, viewing, and using study guides (Section 1) ○ Using graphic organizers and other organizational techniques (Sections 1, 2, and 4 thru 9) ○ Engaging in the writing process (e.g. brainstorming, prewriting) (Sections 4 thru 10) ○ And more! ▪ ...Builds common language, common strategies, and high expectations for all classes, subjects, and ability levels ▪ ...Works particularly well with theme-based units and lesson plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategies, tools, and activities can be applied to <i>any</i> topic or theme, in any subject/content area
<p>4. Students learn strategies for doing the work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ...Integrates sound, research-based literacy strategies throughout its program ▪ ...Provides teachers and students with a variety of strategies, tools, activities, and guided lessons to improve reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing skills across content areas and grade levels ▪ ...Teaches students active reading strategies to better comprehend all texts, both fiction and non-fiction, written and visual ▪ ...Engages students in the reading process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Generate background knowledge ○ Front-load students for success ○ Strategies for reading textbooks and other non-fiction texts ○ Strategies for Before, During, and After reading such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pre-reading activities (Section 1) ▪ Practical, effective note-taking (Section 1) ▪ Recognizing text structures (Section 1, and 4 thru 8) ▪ Making inferences (Section 1) ▪ Analyzing a text (Sections 1 and 9) ▪ Summarizing to demonstrate comprehension (Section 1) ▪ Asking and answering questions about a reading (Section 1) ▪ Responding to the text (Sections 1 and 9) ▪ Making connections to the text (e.g. analyze, compare, critique) (Sections 1 and 9) ▪ And more! ▪ ...Employs various strategies, techniques, and activities to promote reading and writing improvement including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Responding to the text (Sections 1 and 9) ○ Making connections (Sections 1, 2, and 9) ○ Marking the text and taking notes (Section 1) ○ Recognizing text structures and genres (Sections 1, and 4 thru 9)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Using graphic organizers and other organizational techniques (Sections 1, 2, and 4 thru 9)○ Summarizing (Sections 1, and 8 thru 10)○ Asking and answering questions (Sections 1, 8, 10)○ Writing-to-learn activities (Sections 1 thru 3, and 9 to 10)○ Developing vocabulary (Section 2)○ Mastering sentence writing (Section 3)○ Using the writing process (Sections 4 thru 10)○ Writing across the content areas (all Sections)○ And more!▪ ...Guides students through the entire writing process beginning with brainstorming and prewriting, and continuing with planning, organizing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing/sharing – with strong emphasis on paraphrasing▪ ... Empowers students to complete writing assignments connected to content materials and/or textbooks that they are assigned to read▪ ...Equips students with strategies and tools to plan, organize, create, and deliver successful speeches – both formal and informal – such as those found in Section 8:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Understanding components of a good speech○ Blocking out and planning a speech○ Including stories in a speech○ Making introductions○ Asking and answering questions○ Focusing on the audience○ Giving impromptu speeches, how-to speeches, persuasive speeches, book reports○ Assessing student presentations and speeches (Section 10)○ And more!▪ ...Improves students listening and discussion skills with strategies, activities, and tools such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Good listening skills (Section 8)○ Participating in a discussion (Section 8)○ Asking and answering questions (Section 8)○ And more!▪ ...Provides direct instruction in strategies and methods to apply literacy skills to specific tasks and assignments▪ ...Integrates models and examples for peer and self-evaluation▪ ...Provides opportunities for teachers to model new strategies and skills, for students to practice and develop mastery▪ ...Encourages the use of literacy strategies across subject areas and embedded within content learning
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5. Students are expected to be generative thinkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ ...Provides opportunities for students to write in a variety of genres and formats, and for a variety of purposes▪ ...Enables students to strengthen their overall literacy skills and build historical, cultural, and social background knowledge and perspective▪ ...Guides students through research, reflection, and evaluation of topics, ideas, and texts▪ ...Teaches students to explore, elaborate, and explain their ideas through writing▪ ...Encourages the use of literacy strategies across subject areas and embedded within content learning▪ ...Empowers students to share insights and information
6. Classrooms foster cognitive collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ ...Encourages students to work in small groups to collaborate on writing. Some of these strategies include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Engaging in effective discussion (Sections 1 and 8)○ Asking and answering questions (Sections 1 and 8)○ Summarizing to demonstrate comprehension (Section 1)○ Responding to the text (Sections 1 and 9)○ Making connections (Sections 1, 2, and 9)○ Using peer review and self-evaluation to improve writing (Section 10)▪ ...Integrates models and examples for peer and self-evaluation▪ ...Includes opportunities for guided lessons and teacher modeling▪ ...Provides direct instruction in strategies and methods to apply literacy skills to specific tasks and assignments

REFERENCES

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