CORRELATION

Step Up to Writing and the Alliance for Excellent Education's *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*

Reading Next Findings Call for Flexible, Coordinated Literacy Strategies

The report *Reading Next*, published by the Alliance for Excellent Education, identifies 15 elements of effective adolescent literacy programs aimed at improving middle and high school literacy achievement. These instructional elements and infrastructure improvements are designed to be part of a school or district's overall balanced vision for literacy *program*, rather than a piece-meal approach to reading and writing. The 15 elements are underscored by the call for explicit teaching of *strategies* by *all* teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, resource room teachers, etc. to improve student literacy. *Step Up to Writing* provides the researched-based, flexible literacy strategies to fulfill the vision and goals of any literacy program.

Since the program's inception in 1986, *Step Up to Writing* has been concerned with providing educators with proven, hands-on, multisensory writing strategies that can be applied across the content/subject areas, with diverse populations of students, and at all academic levels, to improve students' literacy achievement. Included in the *Step Up to Writing* program, are a comprehensive collection of strategies, tools, activities, and assessments designed to improve students' reading and listening comprehension as well as their writing and speaking skills.

Improving student reading comprehension has been a long-standing goal of *Step Up*, as it empowers students to meet the writing demands of middle and high school, college or university, in the workplace, and beyond. To achieve this, *Step Up* encourages teachers to use multiple approaches to teaching literacy strategies in a coordinated effort including a variety of texts, genres, and subject areas. Content-area knowledge *can be achieved* with *Step Up to Writing* strategies while, at the same time, adding elements of explicit literacy instruction by the subject-area teacher.

Literacy demands in the 21st century are changing rapidly, and students need a coordinated and strategic approach to mastering the literacy skills necessary to succeed today. *Step Up to Writing* provides the instructional strategies to improve the literacy achievement of *all* students.

The 15 Key Elements of Effective Adolescent Literacy Programs

Instructional Elements
1. Direct, explicit comprehension instruction
2. Effective, instructional principles embedded in content
3. Motivation and self-directed learning
4. Text-based collaborative learning
5. Strategic tutoring
6. Diverse texts
7. Intensive writing
8. A technology component
9. Ongoing formative assessment of students

Infrastructure Improvements
10. Extended time for literacy
11. Professional development
12. Ongoing summative assessment of students and programs
13. Teacher teams
14. Leadership
15. A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program

INSTRUCTIONAL ELEMENTS

1. Direct, explicit comprehension instruction

Possible instructional approaches include

- "**Comprehension strategies** instruction, which is instruction that explicitly gives students strategies that aid them in comprehending a wide variety of texts;
- **Comprehension monitoring and metacognition instruction**, which is instruction that teaches students to become aware of how they understand while they read;
- **Teacher modeling**, which involves the teacher reading texts aloud, making her own use of strategies and practices apparent to her students;
- **Scaffolded instruction**, which involves teachers giving high support for students practicing new skills and then slowly decreasing that support to increase student ownership and self-sufficiency;
- **Apprenticeship models**, which involve teachers engaging students in a content-centered learning relationship" (13-14).

Step Up to Writing

Research demonstrates: reading and writing are interdependent literacy skills. As students improve in one area, they will also see improvement in other areas. In *Step Up to Writing*, **scaffolded instruction** is part of the development approach; **teachers can model various reading and writing strategies** and use **guided lessons** to help students successfully work with texts and writing assignments that challenge their abilities and push them to **a higher level**. Students are given ample opportunities to independently practice **active reading skills** and **respond to what they read** in different formats.

Students are given a variety of **explicit, active reading strategies** to better comprehend all texts, both **fiction and non-fiction, written and visual,** and within **specific subject areas**. From recognizing **text structures and features** to **marking and annotating a text**, students are equipped with multisensory literacy strategies for **analyzing and evaluating texts, 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 English/language arts, to aid students identifying **main ideas** and **support details** and making **textual connections**.

Students are not only given opportunities to read **different forms and genres**, but to also practice crafting their own texts in these forms and genres. This approach enables students to **recognize grade-level words**, increase their **reading fluency**, and continue to **self-monitor and self-correct** their own reading. As students put these reading strategies into practice, the students can improve their **own metacognition skills** and **make appropriate adjustments and choose appropriate strategies** to aid their reading comprehension.

For example:
- Section 1: Writing to Improve Reading and Listening Comprehension (Responding to the text; making connections; marking the text; taking notes; marking inferences; analyzing a text; recognizing text structures including textbooks; summarizing to demonstrate comprehension; asking and answering questions; using bookmarks; and more)
- 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, categorizing vocabulary words and content-specific terminology, and developing subject-specific vocabulary)
- Section 3: Sentence Mastery (Identifying parts of speech; playing with language; analyzing sentence structures; writing with a variety of accurate and interesting sentences)

- <u>Section 4-7</u> (Recognizing and working with two kinds of writing: expository/informational and narrative; defining *fiction, non-fiction, prose, poetry, explain,* and *entertain*; understanding story structure and terminology; considering audience, purpose, and message in word choice)
- <u>Section 10: Assessment and High Standards</u> (Setting high standards for student work; using practical and effective scoring guides; tools for students to self-monitor progress; tools for teachers to monitor and track student progress; and more)

A sampling of *Step Up to Writing*'s explicit instructional strategies to improve students' reading and listening comprehension

- *Responding to the Text*
  - Free response
  - Response starters
  - Reading notation responses
  - Sticky note responses
  - One-word responses
  - Agree-disagree responses
  - Quotation responses
  - Framed responses
  - Two-column guided responses
  - Quick sketch responses
- *Making Connections*
  - What Were You Thinking? Strategy
  - Text to Self, Text to Text, and Text to World Strategies
- *Marking the Text*
  - Highlighting and underlining
  - Mark Once Strategy
  - Circle Once, Underline Twice Strategy
  - Pick a Number Strategy
- *Taking Notes*
  - Easy two-column notes, and three- and four-column notes
  - One Idea per Paragraph Note Taking Strategy
  - Using two-column notes for character analysis
  - Research note cards
  - Developing study guides
  - Collecting and organizing facts
  - Mapping and webbing

- *Making Inferences and Analyzing the Text*
  - …with three-column notes
  - …with informal outlines
  - …with topic sentences
- *Recognizing Text Structures*
  - Using graphic organizers
  - Using text structures
- *Summarizing (to Demonstrate Comprehension)*
  - Four-step Summary Paragraphs Strategy
  - Plot line summaries
  - Summaries without words
  - Money Summaries Strategy
  - The 12-word trick
- *Asking and Answering Questions*
  - Great short answers
  - Responses to essay questions
  - Using the two-column study guide
  - Levels of questioning
- *Using and Creating Bookmarks*
  - Three-column bookmarks
  - Stick note bookmarks
  - Two-column fold bookmarks
  - Cut-apart books
- *And more!*

2. Effective instructional principles embedded in content

This instructional element has two forms:
- Applicable to **the language arts teacher**
  - Teaches techniques, such as outlining, **using content-area materials**
  - **Expand instruction** to "include approaches and texts that will facilitate not only comprehension but also learning from other texts" (15)
  - **Move beyond** just preparing students for reading and comprehending literature
- Applicable to **the subject-area teacher**
  - Provide or reinforce "instructional in the **skills and strategies that are particularly effective in their subject-area**" (15)
  - **Coordinated** with the language arts teacher or literacy coaches, as well as other subject-area teachers
  - Emphasize the "reading and writing **practices that are specific to their subjects**"
  - Use **teaching aids and devices** "that will help **at-risk students** better understand and remember" the content they are teaching (15)

Step Up to Writing

Students use **various modes of writing for learning** as they apply strategies in **all subject areas** for **all kinds of content**. Students learn to take **practical, helpful notes** that can be **personalized during a lesson, discussion, or extra reading**. Students are given various graphic organizers to collect, analyze, and study information/data.

Writing in the content areas helps **improve class discussion and peer sharing,** as well as **improve viewing and listening** skills. With *Step Up to Writing,* students realize that if they want to learn something, they must write. Expository/information writing pushes students to **clarify their thinking** and **demonstrate what they know and understand about content**.

Additionally, **embedding explicit instructional techniques in content** learning will not only **reinforce the need for strong literacy skills** in all areas, but also help students:
- Make **personal connections and interpretations of content**
- Generate thoughtful **questioning and reasoning strategies**
- **Explore and clarify ideas**
- Enhance **learning of content through the use of text structure**
- Understand the guidelines for **writing within a particular academic discipline**

For example:
- Section 1: Writing to Improve Reading and Listening Comprehension (Responding to the text; making connections; marking the text; taking notes; marking inferences; analyzing a text; recognizing text structures including textbooks; summarizing to demonstrate comprehension; asking and answering questions; using bookmarks; and more)
- 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, categorizing vocabulary words and content-specific terminology, and developing subject-specific vocabulary)
- Section 3: Sentence Mastery (Identifying parts of speech; playing with language; analyzing sentence structures; writing with a variety of accurate and interesting sentences)
- Section 4: Information/Expository Paragraphs (Two kinds of writing: information/expository vs. story/narrative; the writing process: prewriting and organization; planning with an informal outline; determining key/star ideas; paragraph elaboration with examples, evidence, etc.; effective transitions;

keys to writing introductions and conclusions; using framed paragraphs; accordion paragraphs; and more)

- Section 5: Accordion Essays and Reports (Planning essays and reports; using informal outlines for planning and organization; blocking out essays and reports; applying the writing process; using a twelve-step process for essay/report writing; using effective transitions; elaborating on ideas; keys to effective introductions and conclusions; and more)

- Section 8: Speeches (Improving speaking, listening, and discussion skills; planning, writing, and delivering organized speeches; using the writing process; asking and answering questions; impromptu speaking; developing good listening skills; participating in a discussion; and more)

- Section 9: Specific Writing Assignments (Various writing tasks, formats, and genres for use across content- and subject-areas including supporting an opinion with facts; writing to compare or contrast; responding to literature; writing to show cause and effect; writing from a different point of view with RAFTS; descriptive writing; writing letters; writing in math; writing reports on science experiments; technical writing; poetry; writing a skit; writing about the news and current events; personal writing; writing with frames; and more)

- Section 10: Assessment and High Standards (Setting high standards and clear expectations; neat paper rules; checklists for revision; revising "to be" verbs; peer review; editing with CUPS – capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling; analyzing a paragraph; quick checks for self-evaluations; practical, effective assessment and scoring guides; using models to discuss quality writing; establishing *below basic, basic, proficient,* and *advanced* writing standards; and more)

3.   Motivation and self-directed learning

This instructional element addresses the need to **promote greater student engagement and motivation**.
- **Decrease students "tuning out"**
- **Build student choice** into the school day (e.g. texts, topics, subjects, etc.)
- **Increase student self-regulation**

Step Up to Writing

Step Up to Writing promotes **student choice in reading and writing topics**, offering teachers and students a variety of options for creating and completing writing assignments. By allowing students the opportunity to choose their **own texts, subjects of interest, and topics for research or writing**, classroom teachers can help engage and motivate learners. Choice of texts, topics, and subjects for study ensures that students find reading and writing tasks relevant to themselves and their interests.

As students practice *Step Up* strategies through teacher modeling and guided practice, they build their **skills and confidence in choosing and applying appropriate literacy strategies**, pushing them to become **independent** and successful readers and writers.

All of the *Step Up* assignments and activities offer teachers the **choice to suggest topics in guided lessons** that **connect directly to content** or as a way to **promote independent practice.** Once students have learned and mastered a few strategies, they are more **willing and able to choose their own topics for writing** and the **appropriate strategies** for successfully completing the assignment. Additionally, students become more comfortable **choosing different writing formats** ranging from expository/informational essays to letter writing to poetry, to **successfully complete writing tasks**, **demonstrate what they have learned**, **clarify thinking**, and more.

For example:
- Section 9: Specific Writing Assignments (Various writing tasks, formats, and genres for use across content- and subject-areas including supporting an opinion with facts; writing to compare or contrast; responding to literature; writing to show cause and effect; writing from a different point of view with

RAFTS; descriptive writing; writing letters; writing in math; writing reports on science experiments; technical writing; poetry; writing a skit; writing about the news and current events; personal writing; writing with frames; and more)

4. Text-based collaborative learning

This instructional element means that "when students **work in small groups**, they should not simply discuss a topic, but *interact with each other around a text*" (17).

Step Up to Writing

Whether a teacher decides to use a **book club or literature circle model** for reading, or chooses create another **collaborative literacy** activity such as **peer review groups**, the *Step Up to Writing* strategies for analyzing and discussing writing will aid students as they **interact with a variety of texts – fiction and nonfiction, written and visua**l.

Teachers can model multiple reading and writing strategies designed to improve students' **understanding of a text's structure and substance** and **enhance their interaction with the content**. The strategies are useful for **all types of texts** including textbooks, literature and poetry, technical writing, historical reports, scientific analysis, students' own writing, etc. Students are given many opportunities to read a variety of genres and forms and also write their own texts.

As teachers provide scaffolding for engagement, students **develop a repertoire of *Step Up* strategies** which are useful for both collaboration and independent practice of key literacy skills such as

- **Analyzing, evaluating, and critiquing** texts – fiction, non-fiction, written, or visual
- Reviewing, discussing, and improving **students' own writing**
- **Comparing and contrasting** elements of texts such as organizational structure, argument, characters, themes, etc.
- **Synthesizing information** found in multiple texts
- Identifying **main ideas** and **supporting details**
- **Restating or summarizing information** by determining main ideas and supporting details
- **Negotiating meaning(s)**
- **Generating questions** to understand context
- Engaging at different **levels of questioning**
- **Questioning the author's** purpose, audience, meaning, etc.
- Using **graphic features** such as titles, subheadings, photos, illustrations, charts, and tables
- Using **organizational features** such as sequence, description, problem-solution, compare/contrast, cause/effect, main idea/detail, chronological order, or classification
- Relating **new information to prior knowledge and experience**
- **Evaluating information critically**
- **Analyzing the logic and use of evidence** in author's argument
- **Drawing conclusions** based on facts and inferences

For example:
- Section 1: Writing to Improve Reading and Listening Comprehension (Responding to the text; making connections; marking the text; taking notes; marking inferences; analyzing a text; recognizing text structures including textbooks; summarizing to demonstrate comprehension; asking and answering questions; using bookmarks; and more)
- Section 4-7 (Recognizing and working with two kinds of writing: expository/informational and story/narrative; defining *fiction, non-fiction, prose, poetry, explain,* and *entertain*; understanding organizational structures; understanding story structure and terminology; considering audience,

purpose, and message in word choice; recognizing the personal narrative pattern; sharing and publishing student writing)
- Section 8: Speeches (Improving speaking, listening, and discussion skills; asking and answering questions; impromptu speaking; good listening skills; participating in a discussion; and more)
- Section 10: Assessment and High Standards (Setting high standards for student work; participating in effective peer review; using practical and effective scoring guides; using models for analyzing writing; editing with CUPS – capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling; tools for students to self-monitor progress; tools for teachers to monitor and track student progress; and more)

5. Strategic tutoring

Some students may require or benefit from **"intense, individualized instruction"** including **students who struggle** with decoding or reading fluency, as well as students who **require short-term or focused assistance**. Students may need help acquiring **"critical curriculum knowledge,"** and, therefore, need a ***strategic*** approach. Similarly, students need to be **taught "how to learn" curriculum** information and knowledge (18).

Step Up to Writing
Step Up to Writing is a **collaborative program** that helps students develop the **skill and confidence** necessary to communicate effectively in a **variety of situations**, for a **variety of audiences**, and for a **variety of purposes**. Students learn, practice, and apply numerous processes and strategies; they are expected to be able to use these processes and strategies in **all content areas** – subjects they study each day. In addition, students collaborate with peers – explaining and helping each other.

With the *Step Up* strategies, students learn to **explain what they do**; they learn **how to learn new content**; they learn to **share what they know**. Students are empowered to complete a variety of reading and writing tasks individually or in small groups.

Teachers across **all content areas** can choose and model the specific *Step Up* strategies to address individual students' needs in **acquiring "critical curriculum knowledge"** while also improving students' literacy skills.

For example:
- Section 1: Writing to Improve Reading and Listening Comprehension (Responding to the text; making connections; marking the text; taking notes; marking inferences; analyzing a text; recognizing text structures including textbooks; summarizing to demonstrate comprehension; asking and answering questions; using bookmarks; and more)
- 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, categorizing vocabulary words and content-specific terminology, and developing subject-specific vocabulary)
- Section 3: Sentence Mastery (Identifying parts of speech; playing with language; analyzing sentence structures; writing with a variety of accurate and interesting sentences)
- Section 4-7 (Recognizing and working with two kinds of writing: expository/informational and story/narrative; defining *fiction, non-fiction, prose, poetry, explain,* and *entertain*; understanding organizational structures; understanding story structure and terminology; considering audience, purpose, and message in word choice; recognizing the personal narrative pattern; sharing and publishing student writing)
- Section 8: Speeches (Improving speaking, listening, and discussion skills; planning, drafting, and delivering an effective speech or presentation; asking and answering questions; impromptu speaking; good listening skills; participating in a discussion; and more)
- Section 9: Specific writing assignments (Strategies for specific writing tasks across content- and subject-areas including supporting an opinion with facts; writing to compare or contrast; responding to literature; writing to show cause and effect; writing from a different point of view with RAFTS;

descriptive writing; writing letters; writing in math; writing reports on science experiments; technical writing; poetry; writing a skit; writing about the news and current events; personal writing; and more)
  ▪ Section 10: Assessment and High Standards (Setting high standards for student work; participating in effective peer review; using practical and effective scoring guides; using models for analyzing writing; editing with CUPS – capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling; tools for students to self-monitor progress; tools for teachers to monitor and track student progress; and more)

6. Diverse texts

This instructional element involves "providing students with **diverse texts** that present a **wide range of topics** at a **variety of reading levels**" (18).
  ▪ **Reading AND writing**
  ▪ **Subject-area AND language arts teachers**

Step Up to Writing

As with writing for a variety of purposes, reading across content areas for various purposes enables students to strengthen their **overall literacy skills** and interact with a variety of texts. With *Step Up to Writing* students are taught **active reading strategies** to **improve their comprehension** of **diverse texts** – **fiction and non-fiction**, **written and visual**, and within **specific subject areas**. Students are not only given opportunities to read **different forms and genres**, but to also practice **crafting their own texts** in these forms and genres.

In *Step Up to Writing*, **teachers can model various reading and writing strategies** and use **guided lessons** to help students successfully work with texts and writing assignments that **challenge their abilities** and push them to **a higher level**. Students are given ample opportunities to independently practice **active reading skills** and **respond to what they read** in different formats.

Opportunities to develop these skills may be offered most frequently in the **English/Language Arts classroom** but should be **reinforced in other content areas** using **fiction and nonfiction** that supports the content being learned.

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 (Developing and using a strong vocabulary across content areas)
  ▪ Sections 4 and 5: Expository/Informational Writing (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: Story, Narrative, and Personal Narrative Writing (Recognizing and composing story and narrative structures; sequencing events; creating and developing characters; showing, not telling; writing 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 and genres including persuasive writing; supporting opinion with fact; compare/contrast; cause/effect; technical writing; science reports; writing in math; descriptive writing; responding to literature; personal writing; and more)

7. Intensive writing

Successful literacy programs **MUST include helping students improve their writing skills and confidence**. Research supports the notion that **"writing instruction also improves reading comprehension (19)**.
- Writing skills reinforce reading comprehension
- Students **learn to read like a writer, write like a reader**
- Writing instruction must be **connected to the writing tasks students perform** in high school and beyond
- Literacy programs should **increase the amount of writing students complete**
- Literacy programs should **increase the quality of writing instruction and assignments**

Step Up to Writing

Students are taught that the **writing process** begins with generating ideas and **moves through many stages** until a final polished draft is ready to be shared; students learn that **some writing tasks must be completed in a limited amount of time while others may take several days or even weeks**; students use a **flexible eight-step writing process** that guides students through **prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, editing, writing a final copy, proofreading, and sharing/publishing**. Students learn to "tailor" the writing process for a variety of writing tasks; they use strategies and tools to help them as they learn.

With *Step Up to Writing,* students are encouraged to work **independently, in pairs, and in small groups** throughout the writing process. Beginning with brainstorming and prewriting strategies through sharing their writing with their peers, students have **multiple opportunities to work collaboratively** on their writing. As students become more confident in their own writing skills, they are **motivated** to collaborate with another, have **strategies and methods to share**, and understand how to give **constructive feedback**.

In addition to improving writing skills, students also learn skills in *Step Up to Writing* that help **communicate appropriately in one-on-one situations** and **group settings** – as well to be a **valuable participant in discussions** inside and outside the classroom; this includes **asking and answering questions**; **paraphrasing**, **retelling** and **summarizing**; and engaging in **valuable and effective discussions**.
- Reviewing writing in **peer review**
- Engaging in **purposeful and meaningful dialogue**
- Demonstrating **respect for the viewpoints of others**
- **Asking relevant questions** and **responding to questions**
- **Initiating new ideas** on relevant topics

For example:
- Section 4: Information/expository Paragraphs (The writing process: prewriting and organization; planning with an informal outline; accordion paragraphs; the organization game; using colored paper strips for informal outlines; determining key/star ideas with the Thinking Game; using framed paragraphs)
- Section 5: Accordion Essays and Reports (Planning essays and reports; using informal outlines for planning and organization; blocking out essays and reports; applying the writing process; using a twelve-step process for essay/report writing; accordion races)
- Section 6: Story and Narrative Writing (Prewriting and planning; prewriting with story maps; using the quick sketch; making quick notes; Alphabet Soup activity; creating Thumbprint Stories as a prewriting activity; using part of a picture to stimulate story ideas; using stickers for brainstorming; music, poetry, and art as a brainstorming option; reviewing current news stories or issues; using ideas from different content areas; planning and developing characters; applying the writing process; six steps for planning and writing a story/narrative; sequencing events; and much more)

- Section 7: Personal Narrative (Tools for describing experiences and sharing insights; recognizing the personal narrative pattern; working through the writing process; and more)
- Section 8: Speeches (Recognizing components of a good speech; speech planning; using an informal outline; blocking out a speech; Train of Thought activity; including stories/anecdotes; participating in a discussion; developing good listening skills; and more)
- Section 9: Specific Writing Assignments (Various writing tasks, formats, and genres for use across content- and subject-areas including supporting an opinion with facts; writing to compare or contrast; responding to literature; writing to show cause and effect; writing from a different point of view with RAFTS; descriptive writing; writing letters; writing in math; writing reports on science experiments; technical writing; poetry; writing a skit; writing about the news and current events; personal writing; writing with frames; and more)
- Section 10: Assessment and High Standards (Setting high standards and clear expectations; neat paper rules; checklists for revision; revising "to be" verbs; peer review; editing with CUPS – capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling; analyzing a paragraph; quick checks for self-evaluations; practical, effective assessment and scoring guides; using models to discuss quality writing; establishing *below basic, basic, proficient,* and *advanced* writing standards; and more)

8. A technology component

This instructional element involves using technology as a **"facilitator of literacy and a medium of literacy"** (19). Technology is used as **an instructional tool** as well as **a text or instructional topic**.

Step Up to Writing

Students are encouraged to **incorporate technology throughout the writing process** as they present writing that effectively conveys a message to their audience. This includes using technology as a means of **planning, drafting, revising, editing,** and **publishing** writing; or crafting **visual narratives and visual aids** to accompany writing or speeches.

Additionally, students are given a variety of **explicit, active reading strategies** to better comprehend *all* texts:

- **Fiction** and **non-fiction,**
- **Written** and **visual** (such as **technology- or media-based texts**)**,** and
- **Specific subject/content areas**.

For example:

- Sections 1-10 (*Step Up to Writing* includes customizable CD tools for use in the classroom, as overhead transparencies, in computer/writing labs, and with computer projectors; strategies for planning, organizing, and developing ideas during the drafting process include graphic organizers, two-column notes, and webbing/mapping; encourages the use of the computer to draft paragraphs, essays, and reports; conducting peer review; self-evaluating writing; monitoring student progress; editing with CUPS – capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling; using a checklist for revision; implementing practical and effective scoring guides)

9. Ongoing formative assessment of students

This instructional element is included here because "the best instructional improvements are formed by ongoing assessment of student strengths and needs" (19). Not only do students require the **many informal assessments that happen on nearly a daily basis** in the classroom, but they also require **summative and/or *formative* assessments** where **data is colleted to help inform instructional practices and strategies**.

Step Up to Writing

Step Up to Writing has **proven effective** for helping students **prepare for and succeed** on both **formal and informal assessments, formative and summative assessments, and other high-stakes assessment** (whether given at the state, district, or school level). Classroom teachers are equipped with strategies for teaching students various literacy strategies that **students can apply to classroom assignments**, **mandatory tests** and **assessments**, other **content area/subject activities**, and beyond the academic environment.

Because *Step Up* provides **strategies for *all* teachers to use**, students receive instruction in literacy strategies **across the curriculum**, and they are able to more easily **build a repertoire of writing strategies that aid reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and more**. With these strategies in their "toolbox," students have **less stress and feel more confident** about assessments because they know they have the necessary skills to succeed.

Step Up to Writing also provides various **options for assessing student work** – ranging from quick-check lists to more substantial assessment and scoring guides. Similarly, tools are provided for teachers to **track student progress over time** (e.g. from the beginning of the school year or unit to the end of the year or unit) and for **students to monitor and reflect on their own** development. This information can be **easily collected** and used to **communicate with parents** during conferences, at **special education** progress sessions, during **education intervention** meetings, and more.

Administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders can also use this data as part of their larger **"continuous progress-monitoring systems"** to review students' **individual progress**, review the **efficacy** of the school's literacy program, and **inform instructional practices** and models.

For example:

- Section 10: Assessment and High Standards (Quick checks for self-evaluation including for sentences and topic sentences, for short answers, for note taking, and for speeches; practical, effective scoring guides/assessment for definitions and descriptions, information/expository writing, persuasive writing, story/narrative writing, personal narratives, and summary writing; tools for students to record and monitor progress; tools for teachers to record and monitor student progress; labels to use with scoring guides; tools for grading papers; and more.)

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

10. Extended time for literacy

Students need "**two to four hours of literacy-connected learning daily"** in order for the instructional elements to have any great affect on student literacy (20).

- **Reading AND writing effectively**
- **Language arts AND subject-area teachers**
- **Interaction with texts across content areas**

Step Up to Writing

The teaching **strategies**, **tools** for learning, **activities**, **assignments**, and **assessments** contained in *Step Up to Writing* were created following **a vision of a comprehensive literacy program implemented across content/subject-areas, grade levels, and student abilities**. As a result, teachers using *Step Up* teaching strategies and tools throughout their unit and lesson plans are including **strong, literacy-connected learning in**

their classrooms. The flexibility of the hands-on, multisensory *Step Up* literacy strategies mean that teachers – across all disciplines – can **consistently promote effective reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing skills**.

By implementing *Step Up to Writing*, classroom teachers feel **empowered to have students write more and read more**; the teachers are given the **explicit strategies** to make this possible, and the students develop the skills to raise their confidence and improve their abilities. Regardless of the specific reading or writing task, with *Step Up to Writing*, teachers can **model various reading and writing strategies** and use **guided lessons** to help students successfully work with texts and writing assignments that **challenge their abilities** and push them to a **higher level**.

For example:
- Section 1: Writing to Improve Reading and Listening Comprehension (Responding to the text; making connections between the reading and self/text/world; marking and highlighting the text; taking effective notes; making inferences and analyzing the text; paraphrasing, retelling and summarizing content; recognizing varying text structures including textbooks; asking and answering questions; collecting and organizing research; and more)
- Section 2: Vocabulary ((Mastering vocabulary; developing subject-specific vocabulary; categorizing vocabulary words and content-specific terminology; reading dictionary definitions; breaking down definitions; using correct pronunciation, developing concept maps; creating meaningful vocabulary sentences with context; and more)
- Sections 4-7: (Reading and writing two kinds of writing: information/expository and narrative structures; understanding terminology; working with expository/informational texts, stories, personal narratives, and other specific forms; recognizing narrative patterns; considering audience, purpose, and message in word choice; and more)
- Section 8: Speeches (Planning and organizing speeches and presentations; giving effective speeches; asking and answering questions; improving impromptu speaking, informational and how-to speeches, and persuasive speeches; focusing on your audience; delivering oral book reports; developing good listening skills; participating in a discussion; and more)
- Section 9: Specific Writing Activities (Various writing tasks, formats, and genres for use across content- and subject-areas including supporting an opinion with facts; writing to compare or contrast; responding to literature; writing to show cause and effect; writing from a different point of view with RAFTS; descriptive writing; writing letters; writing in math; writing reports on science experiments; technical writing; poetry; writing a skit; writing about the news and current events; personal writing; and more)
- Section 10: Assessment and High Standards (Setting high standards; improving the presentation of written work; guidelines for cursive writing; checklists for revising; conducting peer review; editing with CUPS – capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling; using quick-checks for self-evaluating writing; practical and effective scoring guides; models of written work demonstrating *below basic, basic, proficient,* and *advanced* writing; monitoring student progress; and more)

11. Professional development

Professional development in a successful literacy program is **more than the typical one-day or one-time workshop** presentation, or even the short-term focused workshop. Here, the focus is on **systematic, "ongoing, long-term professional development**, which is more likely to promote **lasting, positive changes** in teacher knowledge and practice" (20).
- Classroom teachers
- Literacy coaches
- Resource room personnel
- Librarians
- Administrators, etc.

Step Up to Writing

When a school creates **a "school-wide plan" for literacy**, teachers and administrators can work together to **identify the instructional methods or skills and topics** they want to address in **professional development**. To promote deep understanding and application of the *Step Up to Writing* methods, the program offers **practical professional development opportunities** where teachers are given hands-on instruction from highly-trained *Step Up to Writing* instructors. Teachers who attend these workshops and trainings – whether as a novice *Step Up to Writing* user or as a long-time practitioner – leave **feeling enthusiastic and with time well-spen**t.

Professional development opportunities with *Step Up to Writing* are available for **all educators and administrators** from the classroom teacher to the literacy coach, from the special education teacher to paraprofessionals, and from the librarian to specialists, paraprofessionals, counselors, or teachers. Successful implementation of the *Step Up* program focuses on **systematic, long-term professional development and regular program evaluation and reflection**.

Training opportunities with *Step Up* are **flexible, customizable, and practical**. Participants are immersed in *Step Up* **strategies, tools, and activities**; they leave workshop sessions with **teaching methods and ideas** that can be **implemented immediately** in the classroom, regardless of subject-area, student abilities, or specific unit concerns.

For example:
> Professional development opportunities with *Step Up to Writing* for literacy program development and instruction include (but are not limited to):
> - Training for **teachers and administrators**
> - Training for **district literary specialists**
> - **Specific topics of focus**
>   - Writing to improve reading comprehension
>   - Vocabulary development
>   - Sentence mastery
>   - Informational/expository paragraphs, reports, and essays
>   - Story, narrative, and personal narrative writing
>   - Speeches and presentations
>   - High standards and practical assessment
>   - Reading, writing, listening, and speaking across subject/content areas

12. Ongoing summative assessment of students and programs

This element is listed under the *infrastructure improvement* section because "of the **substantial coordination** that such assessment requires and because of its **intended audience**, which is the local school district administration, the state and federal departments of education, and others who fund and/or support the school" (20). The *summative assessment* is designed to be **used with continuous progress-monitoring systems** which allow educators and administrators to **monitor and track student progress** throughout a **school year** or **across academic years**.

Step Up to Writing

Step Up has **proven effective** for helping students **prepare for and succeed on summative, high-stakes assessment** whether given at the state, district, or school level. Classroom teachers are equipped with **strategies for teaching students various literacy strategies** that students can **apply to classroom assignments**, **mandatory tests and assessments**, other **content area/subject activities**, and **beyond** the academic environment.

By building a **repertoire of writing strategies that aid reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and more**, students have **less stress** and feel **more confident** about summative assessments because they know they have the necessary skills.

Step Up to Writing also provides **various options for assessing student work** – ranging from quick-check lists to more substantial assessment and scoring guides. Similarly, **tools** are provided for teachers to **track student progress over time** (e.g. from the beginning of the school year or unit to the end of the year or unit) and for **students to monitor and reflect on their own** development. This information can be **easily collected** and used to **communicate** with **parents** during conferences, at **special education** progress sessions, during **education intervention** meetings, and more.

Administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders can also use this data as part of their larger **"continuous progress-monitoring systems"** to review students' **individual progress**, conduct reviews of the **efficacy** of the school's literacy program, and **inform instructional practices** and models.

For example:
  ▪ Section 10: Assessment and High Standards (Quick checks for self-evaluation including for sentences and topic sentences, for short answers, for note taking, and for speeches; practical, effective scoring guides/assessment for definitions and descriptions, information/expository writing, persuasive writing, story/narrative writing, personal narratives, and summary writing; tools for students to record and monitor progress; tools for teachers to record and monitor student progress; labels to use with scoring guides; tools for grading papers; and more.)

13. Teacher teams

This element ensures that the "school structure supports **coordinated instruction and planning** in an **interdisciplinary teacher team**" (21) where teachers **regularly collaborate** to **discuss students** they have in common, to **align instruction**, to **set instructional goals**, etc.

Step Up to Writing

The teaching **strategies**, **tools** for learning, **activities**, **assignments**, and **assessments** contained in *Step Up to Writing* were created following **a vision of a comprehensive literacy program implemented across content/subject-areas, grade levels, and student abilities**. The program works best when strategies are used by *all* classroom teachers, **resource room teachers, paraprofessionals, and volunteers** working with students; this ensures **consistent strategies** are used, a **common language** for literacy is built, and common, **high expectations** are established.

Teachers are given strategies and tools to quickly and easily **create literacy-focused unit and lesson plans** as well as **build interdisciplinary units with other teachers** in the building that have a **strong literacy connection**. The **flexibility** of the **hands-on, multisensory** *Step Up* literacy strategies mean that teachers can **consistently promote effective reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing skills**.

By implementing *Step Up to Writing* strategies and collaborating with language arts teachers, **subject-area teachers feel empowered to have students write more and read more**; the teachers are given the **explicit strategies and methods of assessment** to make this possible, and the students develop the skills to raise their confidence and improve their abilities. Regardless of the specific reading or writing task, with *Step Up to Writing*, teachers can **model various reading and writing strategies** and use **guided lessons** to help students successfully work with texts and writing assignments that **challenge their abilities** and push them to a **higher level**.

For example:

- <u>Section 1: Writing to Improve Reading and Listening Comprehension</u> (Responding to the text; making connections between the reading and self/text/world; marking and highlighting the text; taking effective notes; making inferences and analyzing the text; paraphrasing, retelling and summarizing content; recognizing varying text structures including textbooks; asking and answering questions; collecting and organizing research; and more)
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- <u>Sections 4-7: (</u>Reading and writing two kinds of writing: information/expository and narrative structures; understanding terminology; working with expository/informational texts, stories, personal narratives, and other specific forms; recognizing narrative patterns; considering audience, purpose, and message in word choice; and more)
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- <u>Section 9: Specific Writing Activities</u> (Various writing tasks, formats, and genres for use across content- and subject-areas including supporting an opinion with facts; writing to compare or contrast; responding to literature; writing to show cause and effect; writing from a different point of view with RAFTS; descriptive writing; writing letters; writing in math; writing reports on science experiments; technical writing; poetry; writing a skit; writing about the news and current events; personal writing; and more)
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- See also: *Step Up to Writing in Math* (2009) by Maureen Auman and Debbie Valette, published by Sopris West, which provides strategies and tools specific to developing literacy skills in the math classroom to improve students understanding and application of mathematics as well as to improve students reading and writing skills.
- Also available from Sopris West (www.stepuptowriting.com): Alignments between *Step Up to Writing* and national content/performance standards for science, math, and language arts.

14. Leadership

A **principal and administrative team** must establish a "clear commitment and enthusiasm" for a comprehensive and coordinated literacy program; otherwise "curricular and instructional reform" cannot succeed (21).

- Build an **informed vision** for the literacy program
- Demonstrate **commitment**
- **Participate in the school community**
- Become **an instructional leader**
- Attend **professional development sessions** (even when organized for teachers predominantly)

Teachers must "assume leadership roles and **spearhead curricular improvements**" to also help ensure the success of a literacy program (21).

Step Up to Writing

Step Up to Writing provides an approach to writing and literacy which can be **easily combined with existing literacy programs** (e.g. Six Traits) in a school to **build an comprehensive and coordinated literacy program** that focuses on a **single vision** for all learners. The **research-based strategies and tools** provided in *Step Up* ensure that **literacy instruction is grounded in effective and proven methods** aimed at improving the overall literacy skills of all students.

Principals and other school leaders can use the practical aspects of *Step Up* to build their skills as instructional leaders. **Working directly with classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and other educators**, school principals can **share proven strategies** to help all teachers improve literacy instruction in the classroom. Furthermore, the use of and the success with *Step Up* strategies **can easily be assessed as principals move from classroom to classroom**.

To **learn how *Step Up to Writing* works with other literacy programs and models**, visit www.stepuptowriting.com and download the available documents. New documents are frequently added, so be sure to check back often.

For example:
- 6+1 Traits Scoring Model
- NCTE/IRA Standards for the Language Arts
- National Academy of Sciences' National Science Education Standards
- NCTM Principles and Standards for School Mathematics
- Alliance for Education's *Double the Work*
- Alliance for Education's *Writing Next*
- Alliance for Education's *Reading Next*
- *Starting Out Right* (National Research Council)
- *Teaching Middle and High School Students to Read and Write Well: Six Features of Effective Instruction* (Judith Langer, et al: National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement)
- WriteSource
- Writing Track's *Teaching Writing: Strategies for Improving Literacy Across the Curriculum* (Diane Gess, Ed.D.)
- Voyages in English
- Thinking Maps
- Various state literacy standards
- And more

15. A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program

This element is **closely aligned with many of the previous *infrastructure improvements*** such as leadership and establishing teacher teams.
- Teachers **coordinate their instruction** to reinforce important strategies and concepts
- **Interdisciplinary teams meet** on a regular basis so reading/writing teachers can support content-area teachers
- **Implement many of the *instructional elements*** in a consistent and deliberate way
- Recognize and plan for **variation among student needs**
- **Collaborate** with out-of-school organizations and local community to support students

Step Up to Writing

Step Up to Writing provides the framework for any school's literacy goals. It encourages implementation **across content/subject areas** and **grade levels,** to **build a common language for literacy** and establish guidelines for **high expectations** that can be **consistently monitored and revised**.

Step Up to Writing provides an approach to writing and literacy which can be **easily combined with existing literacy programs** in a school to **build an comprehensive and coordinated literacy program** that focuses on a **single vision** for all learners. The **research-based strategies and tools** provided in *Step Up* ensure that **literacy instruction is grounded in effective and proven methods** aimed at improving the overall literacy skills of all students.

Strategies to **improve reading, writing, speaking, viewing, and listening** skills of *all* **students** can be easily tailored to fit any classroom setting, activity, or goal. By embedding *Step Up* strategies throughout **content instruction**, classroom teachers and other educators help **reinforce important literacy concepts and skills**.

The **successful literacy program** requires a **consistent and deliberate approach to literacy improvement,** an array of **explicit teaching strategies** like *Step Up to Writing* provides, and the **ongoing professional development** and **collaboration time** necessary to build the program.

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Biancarosa, Gina and Dr. Catherine Snow. *Reading Next: A Visions for Action and Research In Middle and High School Literacy – A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. 2nd ed. Washington DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006.