Micro-Level Writing Toolkit

Professional Learning Community Guide

Recommended Readings:

Graham, S. (2010). Want to improve children's writing?: Don't neglect their handwriting. *American Educator,* 20-27, 40.
https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/graham.pdf

Teach Handwriting – Really!
http://www.readingrockets.org/blog/39322

Why Handwriting Still Counts
https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2007/01/18/tipsheet-vanderbilt-expert-can-comment-on-why-handwriting-still-counts-national-handwriting-day-to-be-recognized-jan-23-58766/

<u>**Materials**</u>: Professional Learning Community Guide; Webinar Viewing Guide; Webinar PowerPoint and Resource Packet

(1) Review Application Assignment (10 minutes)

- **Share updates on your "Writing Process" application.** How did things go? What worked well? What didn't work as well? (Problem-solve and share suggestions for how to "tweak" and improve instruction and family outreach).

(2) Discuss Research and Webinar

What are Some "Lessons Learned" from the Webinar? What other resources can you share that relate to this topic? (Discuss highlights from webinar and other relevant resources; 10-15 minutes)

- What are the micro-level (or foundational skills) required for writing? (Hint: See Slide #6)
- How does poor handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, and knowledge of sentence structure influence student writing? If you tried the "My Favorite Vacation Spot" simulation (writing with your nondominant hand), discuss your experience.
- Why is it important to teach handwriting? (Hint: See Slides #27-28)
- How can See the Sound/Visual Phonics be used to support spelling instruction?
- What are the characteristics of effective spelling instruction? (Hint: See Slide #45-46)
- Why is it important to explicitly teach sentence structure? (Hint: See Slide #51)
- List some examples of activities that you can use to support sentence structure instruction. (See Slides #56-70)
- List some examples of how you can support vocabulary use in writing. (See Slides #73-83)

(3) Collaboratively Plan Take-Away Application (See Planning Template; 15-20 minutes)

3a. Discuss how you can "take away" and implement an instructional idea presented in this webinar (or that you learned from the research-based reading). You may use the Collaborative Planning Template on the next page to collectively discuss/plan instructional content with your PLC.

3b. Discuss how you can develop a family outreach activity aligned with content presented in this webinar. For example, what family outreach activity can you create that aligns with the "take away" that you plan to implement in your classroom?

(4) Summarize Next Steps – Application Assignment (2-5 minutes) – Think about/discuss when and how you will implement the instruction and family outreach "take-aways" you discussed during collaborative planning.

Planning Template – Micro-level Writing

Think about how you can strategically integrate micro- and macro-level instruction. Review Slides #91-102 on the use of instructional warm-ups. Then, identify what the macro-level instruction for one of your upcoming lessons will look like (in other words, what macro-level writing will you be teaching, or what macro-level writing skills will students be practicing?). Finally, design an instructional warm-up that targets micro-level skills that will be used during that macro-level instruction.

Macro-level Instruction
What will you be teaching or will students be practicing in macro-level instruction (i.e., composition, the writing process)?:

Micro-level Instructional Warm-up
Design an instructional warm-up that can be used before your macro-level instruction to help reinforce micro-level skills:

Action Plan

Classroom Implementation
What instructional strategies or techniques will I implement for the Application Assignment?:

How will I use these strategies or techniques? (How? When? Where?. . .):

Family Outreach
What tools, resources, or instructional strategies will be included in my family outreach?:

How will I implement family outreach? (How? When? Where?. . .):

Consider the following for micro-level writing instruction:

- ☐ Dedicated instructional time is required for explicit instruction in micro-level writing.
  - o Handwriting/Keyboarding
  - o Spelling
  - o Sentence Writing
  - o Vocabulary
- ☐ Instruction emphasizes metalinguistic knowledge and promotes linguistic competence.
- ☐ There is balanced attention directed at word-, sentence-, and discourse-level writing skills.
- ☐ Instruction explicitly teaches how written words work and what words mean:
  - o What written letters, and written words, look like and how to produce them (handwriting).
  - o How written words work (e.g., how words consist of letter-sound correspondences) (spelling).
  - o How written words work within sentences (sentence structure and syntax).
  - o What words mean (vocabulary).
- ☐ Micro- and macro-level instruction is purposefully integrated in "short writing often" opportunities.
  - o Instructional Warm-ups
  - o Organizational Frames

Handwriting
- ☐ Handwriting and keyboarding is explicitly taught and included in writing instruction.
- ☐ A four-step multi-sensory procedure is used to teach handwriting:
  - o Trace (3 times)
  - o Copy
  - o Cover (from memory 3 times)
  - o Closed (eyes)
  - o Compare (circle best letters)

Spelling
- ☐ See the Sound/Visual Phonics is used to support spelling instruction.
- ☐ Spelling instruction includes:
  - o Frequent, distributed practice
  - o Word lists that illustrate a spelling pattern
  - o Tasks that require careful analysis of both speech and print
  - o Introduction of 3 to 5 irregular words each week
  - o Explanation of syllable types and syllabication
  - o Use of words in meaningful contexts
  - o Word sorting for pattern recognition
  - o Proofreading practice
- ☐ Students are taught how to spell words they frequently use when writing.
- ☐ Students learn how to generate plausible spellings for unknown words.
- ☐ Students learn how to check and correct any spelling miscues that occur.
- ☐ Teachers know and understand spelling principles and patterns.
- ☐ "Sound Walls" are used to support student spelling.

Sentence Structure and Syntax

☐ Instruction involves an understanding of the way words, phrases, and clauses interact with one another to create meaning.

☐ Grammar is taught *as it applies* to generating phrases, clauses, and sentences.

☐ Student attention focuses on the role a word plays or job a word has in a sentence.

☐ Sentence-level instruction focuses on helping students identify, expand, combine, and create:
   o Identify – traditional underlining activity - helps students identify element in pre-existing sentences. (small % of instructional and independent practice time)
   o Expand – sentence expansion – helps students expand simplistic sentences and ideas into more sophisticated ones
   o Combine – sentence combining – helps students take small, individual pieces of information and sentences and combine them into more sophisticated sentences
   o Create – sentence creating/writing – helps students apply studied element into the context of their own writing (most important skill)

☐ Items on a mechanics edit/revise checklist are be grouped into two distinct categories:
   o Elements taught in isolation (commas in a list, commas between city and state, capital at the beginning of a sentence, etc.)
   o Elements taught as sentence structure instruction takes place (comma before coordinating conjunction in compound sentence, comma after long initial prepositional phrase, etc.)

☐ Writer's Notebooks are used to organize student sentence writing resources.

Vocabulary

☐ Vocabulary is taught explicitly.

☐ Both definitional and contextual knowledge are taught.

☐ The identification and use of morphological patterns (Greek and Latin roots, base words, and frequently used affixes) is addressed in instruction.

☐ Multiple exposures of words occur in varieties and authentic contexts.

☐ Exposure to words occurs in meaningful groups to help students examine similarities and differences and build lexical networks.

☐ Specific strategies and activities for acquiring new vocabulary, such as **semantic mapping/webbing, semantic feature analysis, thinking trees, concept ladders, and focus questions** are included in instruction.