

Overview of Science-Writing Group Meetings

After working with hundreds of teachers in Seattle Public Schools and other districts, we know that as students' notebook entries show increasing growth in students' scientific thinking, content understanding, and expository writing skills, students and teachers are excited to continue learning more. We also know that taking the time both to learn and to teach science writing in this way sometimes can feel overwhelming to teachers. Building a productive community of practitioners who can support each other during the process is important to everyone's ongoing success.

This overview describes a plan for science-writing group meetings that can help you and other teachers gradually learn to implement the approach to science writing that is explained in *Writing in Science in Action*.

In this first year, you will work together to implement some basic elements of this approach. The meetings last two hours and work best when they can be held on a monthly basis so there is time for participants to implement strategies with their students in between each session. One of the group members serves as the meeting facilitator and follows detailed guidelines (see Facilitator's Guidelines for each meeting and Facilitator's Notes in this section of the website), which helps make the meetings beneficial for each member of the group. (Some groups choose to have participants take turns facilitating the meetings.)

Before the first meeting, you will:

1. Read the Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Writing in Science in Action*.

During each of the eight meetings, you will:

1. View and discuss a different video episode of a DVD that shows science and science-writing lessons in elementary classrooms. Each video episode:
 - *illustrates the general pedagogical framework for this type of instruction, and*
 - *highlights specific strategies and tools that are effective with elementary students who have different levels of academic skills.*
2. Discuss, and sometimes practice writing, different forms of scientific writing (e.g., observations, comparisons, conclusions), and plan how to teach these forms of writing to your students.
3. Critique students' science notebook entries to assess what the writing reflects about the students' learning of the Three Key Elements of this approach to science writing in the context of inquiry-based science:
 - *Science content (e.g., understanding of concepts and principles of science)*
 - *Scientific thinking (e.g., recognizing evidence that supports statements; distinguishing observations from inferences)*
 - *Scientific skills (e.g., making scientific observations; planning and conducting controlled investigations or experiments)*

4. Refer to notes about the samples to supplement your own knowledge of assessment in terms of the Three Key Elements.
5. Continually reflect on your own implementation of specific strategies and tools explained in *Writing in Science in Action*.

In the weeks between each meeting, you will:

1. Read sections of *Writing in Science in Action*, as mentioned at the end of each meeting, to give you additional information about specific strategies and tools you will be using in the next weeks of instruction.
2. Implement strategies that you and your colleagues had agreed to work on during those weeks.
3. Write in your own science notebook.
 - *When teachers write a notebook entry during their planning, they can anticipate issues students will have in writing that entry. Then teachers can alter their plan as needed to provide more effective instruction.*
 - *If you have a document camera, you can model how to make entries in your notebook. For example, you can model how to make a data table on a page in your notebook as you and the students discuss how to set up an effective table.*

For each meeting, you will bring:

1. *Writing in Science in Action*
2. Your own science notebook
3. Anything else that is listed at the end of each set of group-meeting guidelines

Note: Most of the figures and some of the sample notebook entries you will be discussing in the meetings are in *Writing in Science in Action*, as noted in each meeting's guidelines. Some material is found only on the website:

- *The Guidelines for Science-Writing Group Meetings section includes the facilitator's resources; the participants' guidelines, which consist of the guiding questions for each part of the meeting; and a list of group norms.*
- *The Student Notebook Entries: Pre-kindergarten Through Fifth Grade section includes most of the notebook entries and annotations that you will be discussing during the meetings.*

Your group will need to decide whether you want to download these materials and bring copies of them to the meeting, or use them on computers.

At the end of the last meeting, you will:

1. Choose what you want to work on in the second year. The list of possibilities includes next steps that teachers typically want to take after they have been implementing this approach for a while.