What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

"In *Write From the Beginning*, Rebecca G. Harper clearly values teachers by answering common questions they pose and offering choices! This book will be your go-to professional text to develop a writing curriculum that meets students where they are and provides the practice needed to move them forward. Filled with practical lessons to help students learn through writing, find their voices and their stories, and persuade others, Harper has crafted a book that supports *all* students!"

—**Laura Robb**, Author of *Read Talk Write: 35 Lessons That Teach Students to Analyze Fiction and Nonfiction*

"*Write From the Beginning* is a must-read for elementary writing teachers. From anchor text recommendations and lesson ideas to quick tips and extensions, this book is a treasure trove for teachers who want to bolster students' confidence and independence in writing."

—**Julie Wright**, Educational Consultant and Author

"If you're looking for a strategy-packed resource to enhance your writing instruction, Rebecca G. Harper has you covered! *Write From the Beginning: 43 Joyful Lessons to Foster Skilled Writers Every Day* offers adaptable lessons to suit the developmental stages and abilities of your students. Organized by instructional goals, each chapter provides engaging techniques, student samples, and practical tips to support your teaching. Whether you're focusing on storytelling, descriptive writing, research, voice, or persuasive writing, you will find that this book provides the tools and inspiration to nurture capable, confident writers."

—**Maria Walther**, Literacy Consultant and Author of *The Ramped-Up Read Aloud*, *Shake Up Shared Reading*, and *More Ramped-Up Read Alouds*

"Harper's tone throughout the book is encouraging, and her passion for writing is evident. The extensions are clearly written, making them easy to follow, with a list of materials and step-by-step instructions for implementing the writing activities. The book is filled with examples of children's writing, recommended children's literature for each writing type, and clearly outlined extensions that teachers can apply in their classrooms. It is a valuable resource for both new and experienced teachers!"

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"Rebecca G. Harper's *Write From the Beginning* is a gift to the profession. One of the challenges of becoming a good writing teacher is developing a well-rounded repertoire of writing lessons. Rebecca's book will be an invaluable resource for teachers, with truly joyful lessons on teaching children how to write texts in a wide variety of genres in which they elaborate beautifully and bring their own unique voices into their writing."

—**Carl Anderson**, K–12 Writing Consultant, Author of *Teaching Fantasy Writing: Lessons That Inspire Student Engagement and Creativity, Grades K–6* and Coauthor of *How to Become a Better Writing Teacher* (with Matt Glover)

Write From the Beginning, Grades K–5

Dedication

For my best friend from way back, Will C. Franklin, AKA Chill Will.

Thanks for being there for me from the beginning and forever. I love you to infinity and beyond.

Write From the Beginning, Grades K–5

43 Joyful Lessons to Foster Skilled Writers Every Day

Rebecca G. Harper

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I write these acknowledgments, I am sitting in an airport after dropping off my oldest daughter, Amelia, for her freshman year at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. Talk about time flying. And while I made it through the move-in day without being a complete mess, I did cry at the ticket counter to a random American Airlines attendant. Thank you, whoever you are, for recognizing that this momma needed a minute.

It is altogether fitting that these acknowledgments begin with thanks to my three children. Amelia, Macy Belle, and Vin—you remain my three best and brightest accomplishments. I hope you three know that the title I wear most proudly is Mom. While you are each at different stages and places in your lives, know that no matter where you are, when you need me, I will be there.

Amelia—Do your thing in Nashville. Study hard. Stay strong. Swim fast. Leave the bar early. And call your mother.

Macy Belle—Thank you for always bringing the laughs, the best stories, and the brightest smile wherever you go. You keep being that force of nature that knocks the world off its axis, but please, try not to fall out of your desk in class.

Vin—Thank you for the hugs, the movie nights, and for schooling me on whatever this new language is that you keep speaking. I won't be the last woman you love, but I was the first. No cap.

I will love you three forever.

These past few months have been a whirlwind, and in some cases a tornado, with life swirling around me, uprooting items and completely changing the landscape of my life. I heard someone once say that the only one who likes a change is a baby, and I am pretty sure that is the God's honest truth. Regardless, change is inevitable, and I am most grateful for those who stand by me no matter the circumstances. There are so many people who have been in my corner from jump and whose kindness I will never forget.

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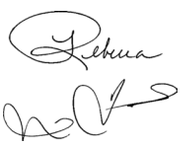
And lastly, to that local author who helped me find my wings—you changed my life. That I can call. #78

With a full and grateful heart,



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Rebecca G. Harper is a professor of language and literacy in the College of Education and Human Development at Augusta University where she teaches courses in literacy, qualitative research, and curriculum, and serves as the EdD program director. Her research focuses on writing and critical literacy and the ways in which authentic literacy can foster engagement, agency, and empathy in students. She is the director of the Augusta University Writing Project and the author of *Content Area Writing That Rocks (and Works)!*; *Write Now and Write On: 37 Strategies for Authentic Daily Writing in Every Content Area*; *Writing Workouts: Strategies to Build Students' Writing Skills, Stamina, and Success*; and *Literacy Practices in Sports and Coaching: Developing Literacy Competencies in Interdisciplinary Environments*.

Chapter 1

IN THE BEGINNING, WE WRITE

My kindergarten students can't read yet; they aren't ready to write.

My students struggle with spelling.

They have a hard time coming up with their own ideas.

If they tell you their story it's great, but if you ask them to write that all down? Forget it.

Trying to stay on topic is a struggle.

Whenever I model writing, everybody in class copies my example. If I write my story about my dog, Frisky, then everybody in the class writes about ***their*** *dog named Frisky.*

So many of my students don't know how to organize their ideas. They just put everything in one big paragraph.

I have trouble getting my students to write a sentence, much less a paragraph.

Does any of this sound familiar to you? These are some of the comments and concerns I hear from teachers across the country when they talk about their students and writing. In fact, I bet some of you wondered if I have been lurking outside your classroom because these remarks describe the students sitting in your classroom right now. The fact is these are not unusual concerns. They are rather common and even transcend grade levels and content areas.

At this point you may be asking yourself, so why does this happen? Most often this is because students simply lack confidence and do not have a significant amount of experience with independent writing. Getting better at any skill requires practice to gain experience, but many of our students just don't have the needed background. It's almost like applying for a job to gain experience for a specific career, but the job that would give you the needed experience requires experience in order to get hired. Kind of silly, right? Yet how many of us as teachers have standard sets that assume students walk in the door with base line understandings despite the fact that they are all coming from different backgrounds with different literacy experiences. This is especially true for young learners with writing, but it is also evident with middle and secondary students.

The reality is that while many of our students may come to us with limited academic writing experiences, they often have alternative literacy experiences from their home and family lives that can be leveraged in the classroom. Upon examination, you may find that students in your class are proficient in storytelling, singing songs and rhymes, artistic representations, and more. Finding ways to celebrate literacies like these can help bridge the gaps between home and academic literacies. In fact, remember that our youngest students who may not actively be reading words yet, are reading the world. Like Freire and Macedo (1987) say, "before we read the word, we read the world" (p. 35). That's why, despite the fact that many of our students might not be able to identify letter sound relationships and subsequently decode words, they are already reading their worlds, acquiring home literacies, and learning how we use words to communicate our thoughts and ideas in multiple settings. Plus, research indicates that home literacy practices have a direct effect on students' development of reading, language, and writing skills (e.g., Burgess et al., 2002; Puranik et al., 2018; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Sénéchal et al., 1998) and there is emerging evidence that a child's home literacy practices have a direct impact on their emerging writing skills (Aram & Levin, 2001; Puranik et al., 2018; Skibbe et al., 2013).

Let's reflect back on those initial concerns that began this chapter. Of course, each of those items are valid and are certainly not unusual in the classroom setting, especially the elementary setting.

My kindergarten students can't read yet; they aren't ready to write: While some of our students are not reading alphanumeric texts yet or may be striving readers, they can still take part in writings that focus on pictorial images by orally telling stories that can be transcribed by an adult.

My students struggle with spelling: Students who may not be the best spellers can still be excellent writers. In fact, I know plenty of brilliant teachers who aren't the best spellers!

Being a good speller does not make you a good writer and correspondingly, being a poor speller does not make you a bad one. Instead, we look for ways to address this through a variety of instructional strategies. One way might include active utilization of the print that is posted in the classroom. Many times, students don't pay attention to all the words that are posted in their classrooms and if they simply looked around,

they could find some of the words they need help with. Another simple strategy is to use a substitute you know how to spell. If you can't spell melancholy but you can spell gloomy, use gloomy! One of my favorite stories about finding a substitute word goes back a couple of decades to my mother's third-grade classroom. She had a parent who had written a medical excuse and after crossing out multiple incorrect spellings of the word *diarrhea*, the parent had written: "Please excuse Sam. He had the runs." ☺

My students have a hard time coming up with their own ideas: While some students may profess that they don't know what to write or can't think of a good topic, using quality mentor texts, video clips, images, props, and digital tools to help students think of possibilities that they might consider writing about. In particular, children's literature offers numerous opportunities for story ideas that can emerge not only from the story itself, but from the discussions after. Plus, when we use books that focus on everyday activities, like a trip to grandma's (*Saturdays and Teacakes*), the barbershop (*Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*), and family traditions (*We Had a Picnic This Sunday Past*), students can begin to see that their everyday activities are worth writing about too! With this in mind, this book offers a myriad of writing strategies that build on a variety of mentor texts. When we use these types of texts as models, we are able to get more bang for our buck. Not only do we provide students with a possible topic idea, but we also can expose them to a variety of genres, which can lead to big payouts in the classroom and on assessment days.

If they tell you their story it's great, but if you ask them to write that all down? Forget it: Emerging writers often meet with more challenges when writing than those who are proficient and have had a lot of practice. Think about what many of our writers have to navigate as they think about writing their ideas down in print. They are not simply considering what they might include in their story, but rather they are considering what words they should use, where punctuation might go, when they need to capitalize letters, and how should they spell a particular word. That's a lot of deliberation that deals mainly with the structure and format of writing and not necessarily the overarching idea or gist of the story they are telling. Plus, the reality for many of us is that talking about our ideas is a little easier than writing them down. For me personally, I can say a lot more in less time and with greater ease. Have any of you readers ever taken an online class with a discussion board? Then you probably know what I am talking about! Or, have you ever gotten a text or email and decided that it would be easier to call or swing down to someone's classroom instead of writing your response? Then you kind of have an idea of why some of your students might want to choose to tell you about their story rather than write it down.

Trying to stay on topic is a struggle: Once beginning writers connect with an idea, staying on topic and writing their thoughts down in an organized fashion can sometimes be a challenge. In fact, these are skills that come along with additional experience. For some writers, if there is a somewhat related detail connected to their story, they think it relates and is on topic. For example, if a student is writing about an important figure in their life—grandma—who often takes them to Walmart, then Walmart seems like a relevant detail. Now all of a

sudden you find yourself reading about the time grandma took them to Walmart and bought them a hot wheels set and how she hit the buggy corral with her Buick. Try explaining to a second grader why Walmart isn't really important to the story! In my experience, it can sometimes be difficult for students to identify in their own writings what might be off topic or may need to be reorganized, which gives us all the more reason to find strategies and tactics that can help build this crucial skill. Later we will discuss ways to address this through the use of sticky notes, paint strips, and index card sorts which can make organization and on topic writing much more attainable for your students.

Whenever I model writing everybody in class copies my example. If I write my story about my dog, Frisky, then everybody in the class writes about *their* dog named Frisky: Building strong students writers means lots of teacher writing as well. We know how important instructional modeling is for our students to see the process and product of writing, but when they copy our exemplar or even our "Don't do this" sample it can be incredibly frustrating. Part of the copying can sometimes occur simply because our students don't feel confident enough to write their own compositions. The more often students are given opportunities to write, the more their proficiency and confidence can improve. What if we made certain that students had opportunities to practice their writing skills on a daily basis? Then it's possible that they wouldn't need to copy the teacher's example because they have their own ideas. Plus, if they are writing about items that are unique to their own lives, there's less of a need to copy.

So many of my students don't know how to organize their ideas. They just put everything in one big paragraph: Frequent opportunities for writing can aid writers in developing well-organized, comprehensive, and thorough compositions. Expounding upon and idea or explaining thoughts and ideas can make the difference between an effective piece of writing and one that falls flat. To do this, writers need practice and specific strategies that they can use. This might include adding descriptive details, incorporating evidence for support, or answering questions that might be posed about a topic. Rest assured that we will talk about some instructional strategies that can help get your students writing more and expanding on their thoughts and ideas.

I have trouble getting my students to write a sentence, much less a paragraph: While some of our students might struggle with writing extended pieces, every extended piece of writing begins with a sentence, and each sentence begins with one word. When I work with students of all ages, I always tell them that we can work with whatever they put on the paper. We can revise, we can re-write, and we can change, but if there is not anything written on the paper, we can't work with nothing. Many of the writing strategies listed in this book focus on simple starts that can be extended into more thorough writings, but they all start with words that become sentences and move into extended compositions.

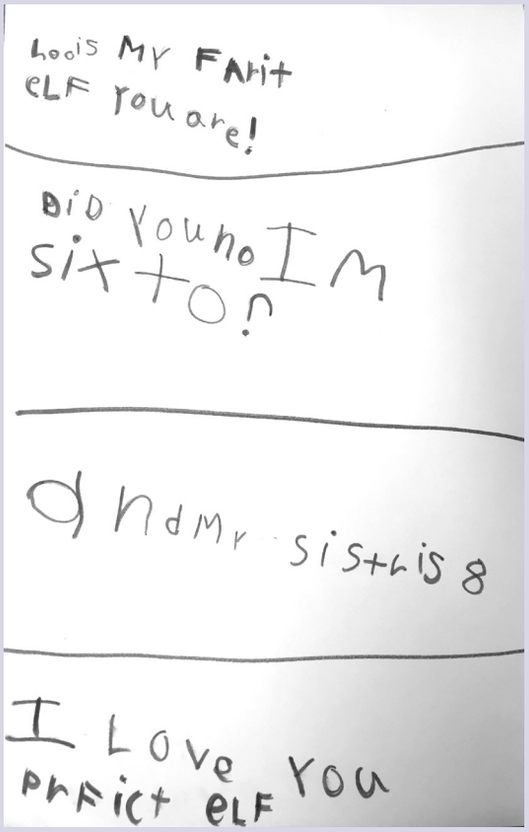
As you can see, there are ways in which to address writing concerns so that our students meet the instructional standards their grade level requires, but also help them become more confident and experienced writers. There's no quick fix or remedy that

is one size fits all, but with strategic instructional planning, we can work on managing these concerns. Providing students with the space and place to practice their writing skills, along with feedback and reflection within a community of writers can propel students to success. This book aims to do just that.

Universal Lessons From a Kindergarten Classroom

One of the best parts, I think, of working with young students when it comes to writing, is the fact that many haven't developed strong feelings of disdain toward writing. In fact, several years ago when I conducted a study in my middle daughter's kindergarten class, almost all of the students indicated that they loved to write *and* they held a strong understanding of the interconnectedness of reading and writing. Hearing the words, "We write to read," was almost like a class mantra in that kindergarten class. In working with these young children, it became apparent that they held at least a rudimentary understanding of writing and its overall purpose and process as a vehicle for communication and expression.

For example, during my time in that classroom, my daughter Macy Belle produced this writing:



If you notice, she only uses exciting punctuation (exclamation points and question marks), and she draws a line after each sentence. Now as a mother, I am proud of her emerging literacy skills, but as a literacy educator? Holy smokes! This writing sample is beyond intriguing. Why does she only use certain punctuation, and why are there lines dividing her paper? Upon asking her the impetus for the dividing lines, she responded, "So you'll know I'm done talkin' about what I'm talkin' about." Mic drop, Macy Belle. In all seriousness, that writing sample and her explanation showed me that she has a basic and rudimentary understanding of organization AND that sentences should be complete thoughts, hence the lines after each one. Thus, this writing sample represents an emergent understanding of the function of writing. Now, she thinks I kept that writing sample because of the fact that she wrote it, and that is partially true. However, to be honest, no matter what kindergartener authored that sample, I would be just as intrigued simply because it provides me with some needed insight into how young writers think and process information. It also offers some insight into how the student is beginning to conceptualize literacy concepts, which can aid educators in their future planning and instruction.

Yet this was not the only interesting tidbit that came from my visits in that classroom. I also observed students who were articulating their own questions based on the content presented in class, developing inquiry projects that required significant communication and research, and were responding to their classmates' writings on a regular basis. Plus, they were taking part in literacy engagements that utilized multiple skills across disciplines. Each day the teacher posted some type of answer on a piece of paper and students were encouraged to write a question that matched that answer. For example, on one occasion, the posted answer was seven. Students wrote a variety of questions that could have seven as the answer. Some of the questions/queries students wrote included these:

- How many days are in a week?
- How many dogs do I have?
- What is the number between six and eight?
- How many dwarves were there in Snow White?
- What is Ms. Clifford's room number?

This was just another example of how students in that class were taking part in daily writing and communication that was helping them build their literacy skills. Another example was the unit students completed on fairy tales and their research project based on *The Three Little Pigs*. After reading multiple versions of this story, students worked in groups to build their own houses which they later tested for structural integrity in a science experiment using a hair dryer. Here's how that went down.

Students worked in groups to build houses out of different materials such as Lego, aluminum foil, toilet paper tubes, and more. Once their houses were built, each student voted on which house they believed couldn't be blown down. This information was recorded using tally marks on the whiteboard. Students also displayed their houses in

the hallways with paper ballots and other students, teachers, and family members cast their votes as well. On the experiment day, the teacher brought in her hair dryer and they tested their hypotheses by attempting to "blow the houses down." They increased the "wind speed" by turning the hair dryer on different speeds and recorded their observations on the board. Once they completed their experiment, they compared their results to their hypotheses.

Photo by Alysha Krier Mooney

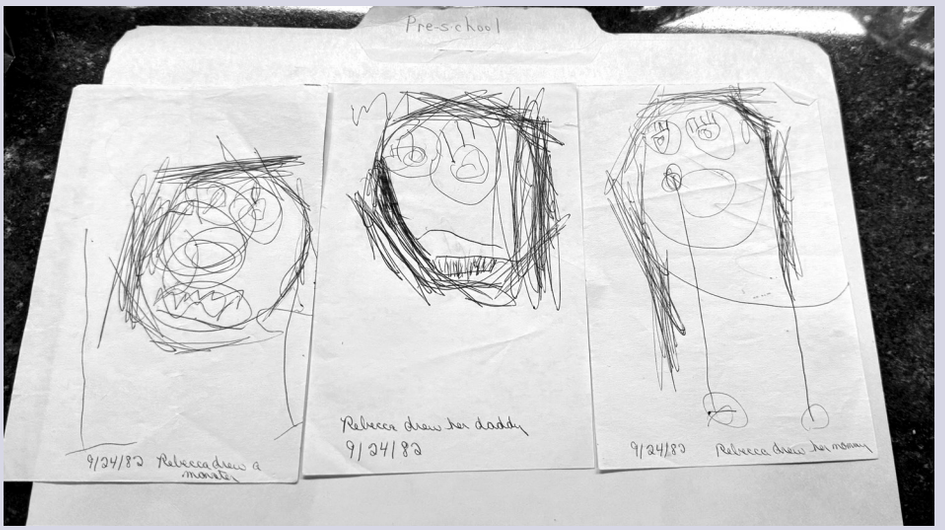
Talk about engagement! These five- and six-year-olds were invested in this project! After completing the experience, each one wrote about their thoughts and then shared how they might adjust their builds if they were to do this again. Mind you, this started with a fairy tale that many of the students had already heard before, but they took it to the next level with these reading and writing extension activities that also crossed multiple content areas. In this one project, the teacher was able to assess reading and writing skills, math concepts, and science content. Plus, the students were actively involved in the entire learning process and were guiding the learning. One student even asked if the temperature could affect the outcome as well. (Remember, some hair dryers have high heat and a cold blast button.) We (the adults) had not even considered that as a variable!

This kindergarten class is a perfect example of how writing can be used for engagement, understanding, and communication. One item to note about this classroom in particular is the wide range of readiness levels in that class. Many of the students

qualified for special education services and had extensive IEPs while others were reading and writing well above grade level. Because of the collaborative nature of this project, it allowed for all learners to participate no matter their readiness level.

The Nature of Writing Development

The fact remains that even young writers, though they may not have a strong command of formal writing conventions, are still able to effectively communicate their emergent understandings of writing as communication. Plus, many are making observations about the world in which they live where they see examples of literacy. In all grades, when teachers make connections between these personal experiences and the literacy experiences in the academic classroom they can see improvement in motivation and performance. In addition to making these connections, giving students frequent opportunities to write can yield multiple benefits. When going through a box of papers my mother kept from my time in school, I noticed that there were multiple examples of my writing from early preschool on. Granted, much of what my early writings looked like were scribbles and stick figures, but they represented an important stage in early literacy. While some of the samples might be hard to decipher, they served as a method of communication and an initial piece of literacy evidence. In some instances, my contribution was that of a scribble line, with some teacher or other adult deciphering my marks and translating what those scribbles meant.



At other times, I attached letters and words to my drawings as I began to piece together letters and sounds to write messages to my parents or stories in my classes.

Even my son, Vin, who will profess, much to my heartbreak, that he doesn't like to read or write, is actually reading and writing on a regular basis both in and outside of school. I often find notes he has scribbled next to his computer that are not in any way connected to school, including:

- Minecraft maps with locations labeled
- To-do lists
- Fortnite sites and passwords
- A list of passwords he has tried when he got locked out of an account
- Notebook paper-size posters with him depicted as a 6'2" point guard
- Stories he has started (all Minecraft of Fornite based, of course)
- Birthday and Christmas lists
- Lists of his friends and their nicknames

What does this tell me? First of all it is a reminder that even at a young age, he is utilizing his writing skills to achieve his personal goals—goals that may not be directly connected to his academic ones. Second, it is another reminder of how children are making sense of the use of writing to live and function. In my time in schools across the country, I often observe children doing a significant amount of writing that has nothing to do with their academic endeavors. Frequently I watch students creating their own comics or versions of graphic stories, drawing pictures of their favorite characters, making lists of their favorite friends, and writing stories or songs that are connected to their personal interests. Finding ways to capitalize on these writing engagements that students are already completing can have numerous benefits in the classroom.

Even at a young age, many children understand that we use words and pictures to communicate. If you have ever sat with a toddler holding a book and listened to them create a story simply based on what they see from the illustrations, you know what I am talking about. Later, we'll talk about how to use wordless picture books to build strong descriptive writing lessons that can be used from the primary grades to the secondary setting.

As a young child, one of my favorite books was, and still is for that matter, *There's a Monster at the End of This Book*. My mother read that book to me so many times that I eventually memorized the words and proclaimed to my father that I could read—just listen. My dad reminded me that I was not actually reading, but rather I had just memorized the words in the book. Now, granted, there was some truth to that statement, but also some falsehoods. That memorization of the familiar story and my recall and recitation served as an important stage in learning to read. Around that same time, my sister and I had a set of cassette tape audio books that we listened to on repeat. Listening to those audio books—the ones that "dinged" when it was time to turn the page—were pivotal in both my sister and me learning to read. We used those literacy experiences at home, along with what we were learning in school, as a way of solidifying an understanding of reading and writing. Similarly, my "copying" of a familiar story in my own writing served as an important stage in learning to write. Do you remember the part in *Charlotte's Web* (1952) where E. B. White describes the barn? He explains, "The barn was very large. It was very old. It smelled of hay and it smelled of manure. It smelled of the perspiration of tired horses and the wonderful sweet breath of patient cows . . . It was the kind of barn that children like to play in.

And the whole thing was owned by Fern's Uncle, Mr. Homer L. Zuckerman" (p. 13). As a young writer, borrowing those sentence starters and craft from White helped me craft a narrative about my childhood home. As a middle grades teacher, one of my favorite quick write activities asked students to borrow a line from a poem, excerpt of literature, or song lyric and use that line as inspiration for a new writing. Many of my seventh- and eighth-grade students wrote beautiful responses that were inspired by lines in other works of literature.

Working With Developing Writers

In *Writing Workouts* (Harper, 2023), I discussed how many students have not been trained for writing instruction, which can result in several hurdles when approaching writing tasks. I compared this type of training to athletic training and workout regimens, as there are several parallels that can be drawn. If someone wants to get better at running, they run—simple as that. Correspondingly, specific training principles are employed to run a marathon, which are different from the training required to run a 5K. Different types of physical activities require different training plans and teaching writers is no different. While I argued for more specific and strategic training in *Writing Workouts*, I have to wonder, what if we started our students' school experiences with writing from the onset? What if instead of proclaiming that our youngest students aren't ready to write, what if we walked in with the assumption that they are in fact ready? Now I know that many of our youngest students come into our classrooms and may not know the alphabet or any letter–sound relationships, but there are numerous ways in which students *can* write that don't require them to initially know this material. Instead, they can use pictorial descriptions and orally develop and create stories that can be transcribed. Starting students early on with daily writing and drawing opportunities can build a strong foundation for the upper grades where reading and writing demands are more significant. If we begin early by showing students how to claim their identities as writers and show them how to have success in writing, as they progress to more difficult and complex literacy tasks this can aid them in building their self-confidence and writing proficiency. Plus, when we show students that writing takes on a variety of formats (infographics, graphic novels, pictorial representations, multi-paragraph compositions, etc.) it is much more likely for students to see that they are, in fact, writers. When we define writing as having a specific structure, with a format that appears a certain way, many students, if they are not proficient in that particular structure, assume that they are not writers. By exposing students to a variety of reading and writing engagements, we can begin to cast the net wider, thus helping more students call themselves writers. And this notion is not simply beneficial for students, but teachers as well. When teachers embrace the idea that writing is fluid, takes multiple forms and structures, and is utilized for a variety of purposes, teaching writing can also become more accessible.

Another important item to note is our young children's' proficiency in digital literacies. Remember, most of the students in your classroom have grown up with access to a digital device or other piece of technology. They have only known smartphones

and probably are unaware that just two short decades ago, phones were simply used for calling people. Not surfing the web. Not updating your socials. Just phone calls. Today's students are frequently using the internet for more than just school research. They are using digital entities for socialization, gaming, communication, and more. Yet, how often do we lean into those literacies especially in the elementary setting? My son Vin is frequently using the internet to locate the best videos that offer tutorials for any one of the multiple video games he plays, and he is frequently utilizing the chat feature to communicate with his friends. When someone's microphone was broken last week, his friends Face Timed so they could communicate and they shared directives in the chat room. In addition, when he joined in on a game after his friends, he was able to get up to speed on their communications by reading the chat transcript and summarized the entire conversation he missed. Plus, I watched him scroll through the transcript and re-read some of the conversations when his friends started talking about something that he had missed. While this is something I observed at home, I would be willing to bet that this is not exclusive to my home. In fact, research indicates that many students are utilizing digital platforms for multiple means of communication (Kumpulainen et al., 2020; Marsh et al., 2017). Thus, utilizing these platforms that students may already have a strong proficiency can also help students build their confidence in writing.

While this book is meant to address writing in the elementary setting, you will notice that many of the lessons can be modified and adjusted based on the skill level and developmental stage of your students. Many of the strategies can also be used to support content-area lessons not just English language arts, and the modifications, extension ideas, and suggestions for ways to abbreviate the strategy or lesson are presented in an easy-to-follow format. Student samples are included so you can see what a finished product might look like once complete.

Below are highlights from each chapter that may help you determine just where you want to start reading first. You'll notice that this book is not laid out by genre, but instead is organized based on end goals and themes. Because many strategies transcend genre, the purpose is to be able to locate lessons and strategies based on your instructional goals and plans, which might not be strictly bound by genre. Looking at the brief synopsis of the chapters below provides information on what types of engagements are included in each section. Doing this first can help ensure that the time spent is not wasted on strategies or engagements that don't fit your purpose or time availability. You may find that you dip in and out of this book as you locate strategies that best fit the goals of your instruction. Each chapter addresses big ideas in the writing world and can help you plan and guide instruction that best suit the needs of your students. With this in mind, it isn't necessary to start at the beginning and read straight through to the end. Instead, think about what your students might need or consider lessons or standards where you feel you need some additional tools for teaching and start there. Regardless of where you begin, each chapter offers unique and novel approaches for developing and nurturing your writers in multiple settings.

Chapter 2: Breaking Into Story

We all have stories and live what scholars call "storied lives" (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). While much of those stories have been saved for adults, children have a variety of experiences from which they can pull to build and tell their own stories. This section focuses on writing engagements that provide inspiration for an array of writings that celebrate the gift and expression of story. Using a variety of children's literature and authentic literacy experiences as inspiration, this section explores the importance of crafting our stories.

Chapter 3: Tell Me More

Adding rich descriptive details to writing can lift words off the page and provide readers with a picture that is vivid and true. This section focuses on the art of detail and description. Mastering the art of showing rather than telling can be one of the most enjoyable types of writing when coupled with quality mentor texts and authentic experiences. Plus, the art of description is genre fluid, meaning it can merge and easily integrate with a variety of writing types, audiences, and purposes. Yet elaboration and description are not only for descriptive and narrative writing—learning this craft can aid in the construction of argument, research writing, and constructed response writing, as well.

Chapter 4: Learning Through Writing

Whether we realize it or not, many of us conduct research on a daily basis. This is no different for children. They read books about their favorite activities, watch shows around a specific topic, and often look online to locate interesting facts about animals, sports figures, video games, and more. With this in mind, this section focuses on writings that are research based. But don't worry; these fun writing engagements are anything but your typical research report. Instead, they focus on many of the research skills our students are already employing and demonstrate how to incorporate these practices in the classroom on a regular basis.

Chapter 5: Finding Your Voice

Making your writing sing involves a symphony of individual components of craft that can help students develop well-developed and powerful pieces of writing. Often, these items are more challenging for students to take up and implement in their writing due to their somewhat nebulous and ambiguous nature. However, when these components of author's craft are coupled with quality mentor texts and examples, they can become more manageable and accessible for students. This section focuses on the subtle nuances of writing that can propel pieces to the next level. It includes ideas for teaching voice, dialogue, character development, and more.

Chapter 6: The Art of Persuasion

In the persuasive genre, writers are tasked with mastering specific writing skills in order to effectively convey their message and convince their readers. These skills often are employed in the genre of argument as well. Therefore, engaging in lessons that focus on these skills is a must. Plus, these craft ideas can aid students in crafting writings in other genres or in general responses to literature. This section focuses on lessons and strategies that can be used when teaching the persuasive genre, but also can be modified for use in other genres.

Chapter 7: The Measure of Success

While teaching developing writers is at the forefront of this book, the need to monitor and assess their learning as they progress is also important. This section focuses on different forms of assessment, suggestions for feedback, and ways in which teachers might monitor student progress, but also engage students in this process as well.

Appendix: The Rest of the Story

This appendix includes book lists, templates, materials lists, supplemental resources, tips, and other resources mentioned throughout the book. Downloadable PDFs of the appendices are available on the book's companion website: **https://companion.corwin.com/courses/writefromthebeginning**