lilyPD
Grab-N-Go

Continuum of Writing Choice

Students are more engaged with writing and write more successfully when they are offered choice in the kind of writing they are doing, their topic, their writing process, and even what they learn about writing.

Choice in writing can be scary – for teachers and students alike. But it's rarely a binary: no choice whatsoever versus complete free reign. Choice, like most things, lives on a continuum. Neither end of the continuum is better than the other; every stop along the continuum represents a different set of choices a teacher can make for a specific group of students in one moment in time.

How You Might Use the Continuum

- **Reflection:** When students write in your class, where does that writing typically exist on this spectrum of choice? Where is there opportunity to expand student choice in writing?
- **Planning:** Plot your current writing projects on the continuum. Where are there gaps? Where are there opportunities for greater balance? Where could you potentially offer students increased choice?
- **Alignment:** Use this as a tool for departmental or grade-level discussion to see how choice happens across courses and classrooms.

How We Define These Terms

- **Mode** - A classification of a type of writing by purpose, i.e. to persuade, to inform, to tell a story, to analyze, etc. Common modes in K-12 standards are argumentative, persuasive, narrative, and informational/expository writing. Pieces of writing within the same mode use the same essential skills, regardless of their form.
- **Genre** – The real world form these modes take. Within each mode, there are many genres. For example, a piece of persuasive writing could be an op-ed, an open letter, a letter to the editor, a political speech, or an advertisement.
- **Topic** – The core subject of a piece of writing.
- **Writing Process** – The recursive steps through which a writer gets from a blank page to a polished piece of writing.
- **Mini-Lesson** – A 10-15-minute bit of direct instruction aimed at teaching a single writing skill or strategy.

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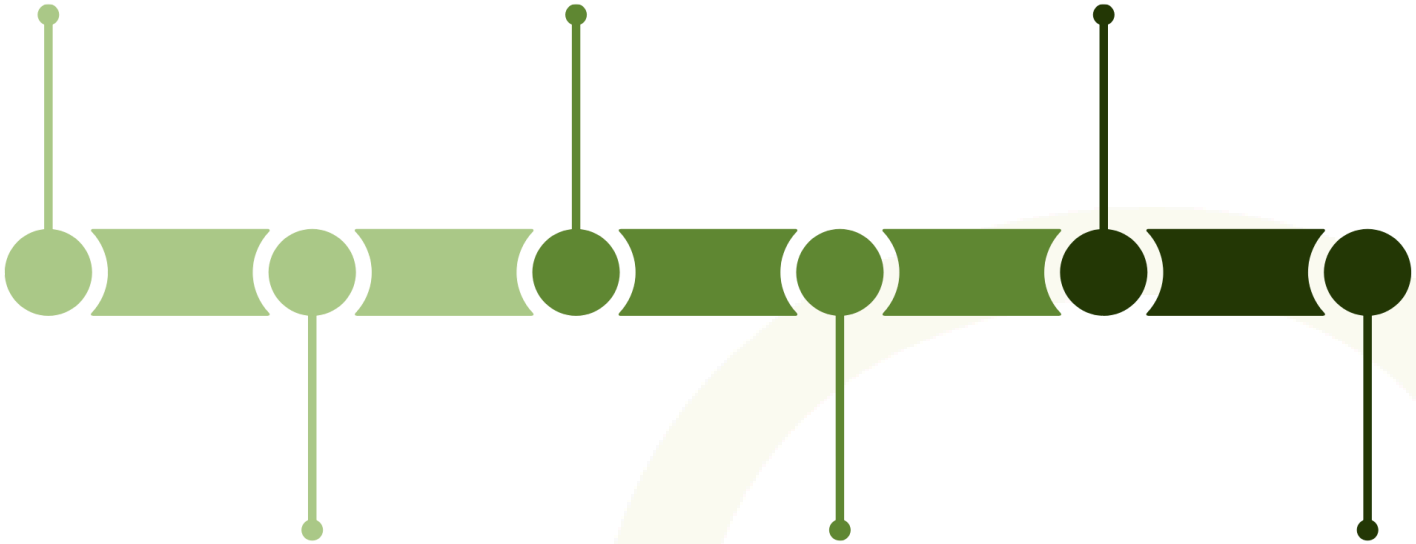
No Choice: All students write in the same mode, genre, and on the same topic. Everyone moves through the same writing process as the same time and learns the same mini-lessons.

Students Choose: Their own writing process and topic.

Teacher Leads: Mode, genre, and mini-lessons

Students Choose: Their own writing process, topic, genre, and mode.

Teacher Leads: Mini-Lessons



Students Choose: Their own writing process.

Teacher Leads: Mode, genre, topic, and mini-lessons

Students Choose: Their own writing process, topic, and genre.

Teacher Leads: Mode and mini-lessons

Full Choice: Students choose their own mode, genre, and topic. They move through an individual writing process in the way that works for them and choose the mini-lessons they wish to learn.

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