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Writing Unit Template

The writing unit template below represents a rhythm and flow for writing units that works in a variety of classes and content areas.

As always, your context is specific to you and your students. This isn't meant to be prescriptive; it's meant to provide a broad pattern of lessons you can follow to get from the beginning of a writing project to the end by providing balance and support.

Regular Rhythms of a Writing Unit:

WAGOLL-Study

WAGOLLs (What a Good One Looks Like) are pieces of professional writing that guide and inspire student writing. That is: they provide an aspirational vision for the kind of writing that students are creating themselves, and it can also teach discrete writing moves students can replicate in their own writing and transfer to future writing projects.

When we first look at a WAGOLL, we are just trying to get a vision for the kind of writing we will be making. In subsequent WAGOLL study, we are noticing writing moves we want to borrow for our own writing.

Idea-Generation

The time and space we give for the process of coming up with ideas for a piece of writing.

Flash Draft

A super-fast early download of ideas onto paper / a doc to outrun the writing censor in our brains and overcome the fear of a first draft. Flash drafts are bad writing, and that's great! We get our bad writing out of the way early so that we have time to make it good!

Mini-Lesson

A 10-15 minute bit of direct instruction on a single writing skill that students can immediately practice.

Time to Write

Dedicated time during the class period to practice writing skills with the teacher in the room for support and feedback.

Work Days

Class periods without any agenda other than writing and conferring. No mini-lesson. No activities. Just time to write and get writing done

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A Template for a Writing Unit

This unit template uses a five-day week as its foundation; few of us actually teach in a five-day week where we see students daily. Thus, this is really aspirational. You'll adjust to fit your school's class schedule.

But here's what I want to point out: a writing unit does not take an entire 9 weeks. Neither students nor teachers can maintain focus and momentum on a writing project for that long. Few of us will successfully keep our writing unit to the three weeks suggested below, but 3-4 weeks is a worthy goal.

In each unit, choose a handful (5-8 skills) you want to teach and want students to practice. That's it. Then, you assess them on those 5-8 skills.

WAGOLL-Study, Part I Idea-Generation Activity	Idea-Generation Activity	Flash Draft	WAGOLL-Study, Part II	Mini-Lesson Time to Write
Mini-Lesson Time to Write	Mini-Lesson Time to Write	Mini-Lesson Time to Write	Work Day	Mini-Lesson Time to Write
Mini-Lesson Time to Write	Work Day	Work Day		

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