

K-4 Writing Committee Recommendation
March 1, 2016

It is the recommendation of the current District 90 K-4 Writing Committee that we adopt the Lucy Calkins Units of Study in Writing published by Heinemann Publishing. The recommendation for this adoption follows the August 17, 2015 recommendation for a trial use of these materials during the 2015-2016 school year (please see attached document from August 17, 2015).

The trial use of these materials during this school year provided teachers with an opportunity to use the materials in an increasingly more frequent manner. It allowed our teachers opportunity to become familiar with the tools and resources. Most importantly the teachers were guided by both job embedded and workshop models of professional development and learning throughout the 2015-2016 school year.

The materials will be made available to interested parents for their review. The Lucy Calkins Units of Study materials have been vetted and agreed upon as high quality, aligned and cohesive resources that integrate practices and resources needed. They address the goals of the Common Core State Standards, which indicate that students need to learn to write argument, informational and narrative pieces. The Units of Study provide teachers with assessments, exemplars of high quality work and models for instruction in a workshop setting. Upon this final step in the process, we would propose that these material be adopted for K-4 use beginning in the 2016-2017 school year.

K-4 Writing Committee Update and Recommendations August 17, 2015

The District 90 Writing Committee conducted a careful re-examination of the Common Core State Standards related to student writing. This included an examination of the critical practices in the area of teaching writing along with current materials and resources. The Kindergarten through Grade Four representatives on the committee acknowledged a need for more cohesive practices and resources in the area of writing instruction.

The committee members, one per grade level, then worked collaboratively with their grade level teams, re-examining the standards, discussing practices and instructional needs. The committee members recommended shared assessments and exemplars of high quality student work. In addition the committee agreed that professional development and collaborative focus on writing instruction would improve student writing outcomes.

Following these months of committee work and grade level meetings, in May 2015, the committee surveyed the entire K-4 teaching staff about needs. The teachers acknowledged a need for cohesive resources, shared best practices and professional development. As part of this survey almost 100% of the teachers requested an opportunity to utilize Common Core aligned instructional materials that would exemplify the Common Core, allow for implementation of the writing workshop model and provide tools in the areas of shared assessment and shared practices. The committee examined a variety of tools and materials. They then recommended the Lucy Calkins Units of Study. The committee identified these materials as high quality, aligned and cohesive resources that integrated the practices and the resources needed. The Lucy Calkins Units of Study in Writing is published by Heinemann Publishing. The instructional materials provide direct guidance on units for instruction. The cost per building is Lincoln-\$3095 and Willard-\$3289. These program addresses student writing across the curriculum based on the belief that children need to write routinely over extended time frames. Students need to learn to write argument, informational and narrative pieces. Using a workshop model, the materials support the teachers work in providing opportunities that can both enrich and support individual student writing needs. The program links directly the use of digital resources. The program is linked to the Common Core State Standards in Speaking and Listening as well. The Calkins Units of Study provide teachers with assessments, exemplars of high quality student work and models for instruction in a workshop setting.

Although teachers unanimously requested these materials, they expressed concern about their readiness to implement a new program at the start of the school year. The committee requested additional time for learning and implementing this new program. The members of the K-4 Writing Committee will address all K-4 teachers on August 20 as part of Institute Day. Additional dates have been identified for key professional development activities during the course of the school year. The instructional coaches along with members of the K-4 Writing Committee will be supporting colleagues and providing both formal and informal professional

development in implementing these instructional materials. It is anticipated that the committee will recommend these materials for adoption by the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

Research Base

UNITS OF STUDY in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing

A COMMON CORE WORKSHOP CURRICULUM

LUCY CALKINS *with* COLLEAGUES *from the*
TEACHERS COLLEGE READING AND WRITING PROJECT

The *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* series grows out of decades of think tanks and in-school research and practice that began in New York City Schools and that has spread throughout the country and world. This work, spearheaded by the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), has included developing, piloting, revising, and implementing state-of-the-art curriculum in teaching writing. The TCRWP writing workshop model that has evolved over time from this continual process of research in what works when it comes to writing instruction is the foundation of the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* series.

The hundreds of thousands of teachers who used an earlier, very different edition of this series have spread the word that the writing workshop has given their children unbelievable power not only as writers but also as thinkers, learners, and readers. School districts are finding that when teachers receive the education they deserve in the teaching of writing, those teachers are able to provide students with clear, sequenced, vibrant writing instruction (along with opportunities to write daily for their own important purposes), and this makes a dramatic difference in young people's abilities to write. Powerful writing instruction produces visible and immediate results.

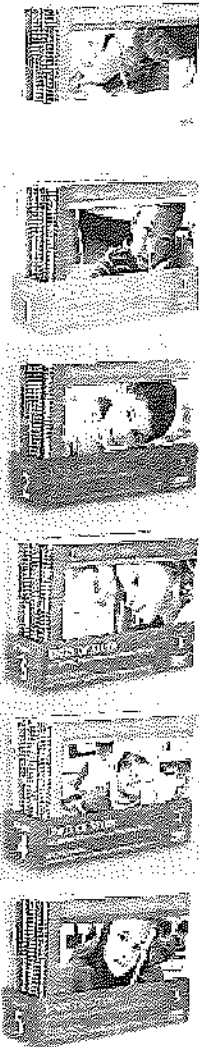
It is TCRWP's belief that there is not a single string of sequenced

lessons that applies to every possible classroom. Instruction must be responsive to the individual needs of the writers in each class. On the other hand, the Project does believe in strong models of excellent instruction for teachers. The sample curriculum offered in *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* by Lucy Calkins and Colleagues, published by Heinemann, is just such a model.

The curriculum in the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* series is grounded in the TCRWP's work in schools and is intended to be tailored and adapted to specific children and classrooms. The assessment system that is part of the series offers methods and recommendations for tailoring the units based on what teachers learn about their students through on-demand performance assessments, thus assuring a student-centered curriculum.

The *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* series—in fact, all of the pursuits of the Project—are based on a handful of fundamental, research-based principles.

Learn more at
UnitsofStudy.com



Research Principle 1

There are fundamental qualities of all good writing, and students write well when they learn these qualities as well as the specific qualities of different genres, or types, of writing.

The foundation of the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* series lies in the understanding that writing is a lifelong process during which we continually lift the level of our writing skills and outgrow ourselves as writers. Students learn that all writing has essential traits to which they must attend when developing a piece. Writers learn various ways to find topics they wish to write about. They learn to make purposeful decisions about the structure and organization of a piece. They learn a repertoire of methods for elaborating. They learn to craft their pieces using literary language and devices and to employ the conventions of written language (Anderson 2005; Calkins 1994; Elbow 1989; Graves 1994; Wood Ray 1999).

Trait-based writing instruction has been shown to raise student performance on standardized writing tests (Janner, Kozol, Nelson & Salsberry 2000). Most states have adopted some form of writing assessment on their annual tests (Spandel 2001). By teaching students ways to structure their writing in accordance with the type of writing they are producing and in ways that affect their reader, to elaborate using a wide repertoire of strategies, to use literary language and devices to make artful pieces of writing, and to use the conventions of written language, the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* series strengthens the skills of young, apprentice writers and prepares them for academic success. As writers build their knowledge of the qualities of good writing, they become critical readers of their writing and begin to set goals for themselves as writers, using feedback from their peers and teacher as well as self-assessments to lift the level of their writing (Anderson 2005; Graves 1994).

The conventions of written language thread throughout each of the units. Writers learn conventions that they can then practice in the pieces they are writing, and they learn how using those conventions can help them better convey their meaning to their reader (Atwell 1998; Calkins 1994; Graves 1983; Weaver 1997). Research has shown that to be effective, the conventions of writing must be taught within the context of a writer's own writing (Anderson 2005; Hillocks 1986; Weaver 1997; Wilde 2007).

Research Principle 2

Using a writing process to teach the complex task of writing increases student achievement.

Approximately three decades ago, a flurry of books and articles called for a writing revolution. Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, James Moffett, Ken Macrorie, and a series of edited volumes titled *Writers at Work* combined to popularize the message that when writers write, they do not sit down with a quill pen and immediately produce graceful, compelling prose. Instead, writers work through a *process of writing*, a process that contains recursive stages.

Different people use different terms when describing those stages. For example, some use the term prewriting and others rehearsal, but either way, widespread agreement has emerged that writers spend time preparing for writing. This stage involves living a "writerly life": collecting material for writing, weighing alternative plans for how a piece of writing might go, talking about one's topic, and reading texts that resemble the text one hopes to write. Rehearsal can also involve research.

Writers also draft. Early drafts are like playing in clay more than inscribing in marble; a writer might try alternative leads, explore different voices for a text, or freewrite, keeping her eyes glued on the subject and trying to capture the contours of it in tentative form. Writers shift back and forth between drafting and revising. Revision means, quite literally, "to see again." During revision, a writer pulls back from a draft to reread and rethink, What is it I really want to say? What structure might best bring readers along to (and through) my content? Writers revise to discover and convey



meaning and to use everything at their disposal to make that reading clear and potent to readers. Revision may involve rewriting an introduction, reconsidering the validity of one's evidence, and elaborating on important sections while deleting unimportant ones. Revision usually involves anticipating a reader's response. A writer may ask, What do I want my readers to think early on when they begin reading? Later? What do I want them to feel and do in response? Revision usually involves at least a second and often a third draft, since revisions that are bound by the contours of a first draft are held to the original structure, pace, and voice.

Finally, writers edit, which involves smoothing out, linking, tightening, clarifying, fact checking, and correcting. During editing, writers think about spelling, punctuation, and word choice, yes, but writers also think about fact checking, language, and clarity. All of that sounds like a very long and arduous process, but there are times when a text is written quickly—say, in an hour or in half an hour. Even when writing quickly, writers still tend to go through abbreviated versions of each of these steps of the writing process.

Just as professional writers have a process for developing their work, young, apprentice writers also benefit from a clear process through which to develop their writing (Atwell 1998; Calkins 1994; Elbow 1981; Fletcher 1993; Graves 1994; Murray 1984). Research shows that using a writing process for instruction in the complex task of writing increases student achievement (Hillocks 1986; Holdzkom, Reed, Porter & Rubin 1982; Keech & Thomas 1979).

Each unit in *Units of Study* cycles children through the writing process multiple times. Children have opportunities to plan for and rehearse writing, to flash-draft, and to reread their rough draft, thinking, How can I make this even better? Feedback from a reader can help a writer imagine ways to improve the draft. And studying mentor texts to figure out what the author did that the writer too could try in her own writing helps the writer revise. A writer will always write with the conventions that are easily under his control, but once a text is almost ready for readers, the writer will want to edit it, taking extra care to make the text more clear and more correct. Often the writer will use outside assistance—from a partner or a teacher—to edit. Finally, writers publish their work to share with a community—either their class, their school community, or a community outside their school. In most units, children cycle through this process again, this time with more independence.

Research Principle 3

Students benefit from teaching that offers direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice.

We know that writers benefit most from predictable and simple structures in the writing workshop (Calkins 1994; Graves 1994; Short, Harste & Burke 1996). Writing improves in a palpable, dramatic fashion when children are given explicit instruction and lots of time to write, clear goals, and powerful feedback. When teachers explicitly teach the qualities, habits, and strategies of effective writing, that writing becomes better, and

the improvement is evident within days and weeks, not just months.

The *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* workshop model has three basic structures: the minilesson, independent writing time with conferring and small-group work, and the share sessions at the end of writing time. These structures support the basis of the writing instruction—providing direct instruction, guided practice as students begin trying their hand at the new learning, and independent implementation of the strategies (Vygotsky 1978).

The minilesson offers students direct instruction on an explicit strategy for writing. The specific strategy for each day is selected by teachers based on what their assessments have revealed that writers need. During the minilesson, teachers demonstrate the process that writers often use to do the type of writing being studied and they scaffold students to practice the steps of the process. This is a quick, guided practice for students in which they can receive immediate feedback from both their classmates and their teacher. The minilesson is short, usually around ten minutes long (Calkins 1994; Fletcher 1993; Graves 1994).

Students then move onto independent writing, which constitutes the bulk of time in the writing workshop. Students independently draw on a repertoire of strategies they've been taught. During this time, the teacher meets individually with students for a writing conference or meets with three to six students for small-group work. Conferences and small-group work provide students with individualized instruction based on each student's need. Students receive direct instruction, feedback, and guided practice during these sessions (Atwell 1989; Anderson 2000, 2005; Calkins 1994; Graves 1994).

The share session at the end of class provides students with an opportunity to share and support work in progress. Students may share their writing with a partner or small group and get feedback. The teacher may use the share time to teach an additional lesson that builds on or further develops the strategy introduced during the minilesson, or a new strategy. The class may come together to look at a piece of writing from a professional writer and read it together to gather ideas for what they themselves might try in their own pieces. Or, the students may use a self-assessment to check in with themselves as opinion, information, or narrative writers, setting goals for how to lift the level of their writing. Ultimately, the share session is a time for writers to come together to share their writing, explore possibilities, and set goals for how they will improve as writers (Calkins 1994).

Research Principle 4

To write well, writers need ample time to write every day, with clear expectations for stamina and volume.

Just as learners become skilled at playing an instrument or swimming or playing tennis or reading by doing those things, writing, too, is learned through practice. John Guthrie's study (2004) illustrates that fourth-graders who read at the second-grade level spend a half-hour a day reading, and fourth-graders who read at the eighth-grade level spend four and a half hours a day reading. Success in writing, like success in reading or tennis or swimming, directly relates to the amount of writing and rewriting a person does. This means that day after day, children need to write. They need to write for long stretches of time—for something like thirty or forty minutes of each day's writing workshop. And it means that volume and stamina matter.

Writers need to write frequently and in many different genres to gain independent control of what they are learning about effective writing. Writers need frequent opportunities to practice their craft, learning how to think and write in many genres for many purposes (Atwell 1989; Calkins 1994; Fletcher 1993; Graves 1983, 1994). TCRWP's *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* series provides for extended daily writing practice in various genres. During this time, students work independently on their writing, putting into practice all the strategies they are learning about effective writing. Students also receive additional instruction during this time, either in one-on-one conferences or in small groups, to specifically tailor the teaching to the individual needs of each writer (Anderson 2005; Calkins 1994).

Research Principle 5

A successful curriculum provides differentiated instruction for students of all ability levels and support for English language learners.

Whereas twenty years ago 95% of jobs were low-skilled, today those jobs only constitute 10% of our entire economy (Darling-Hammond et al 2008). Children who leave school today without strong literacy skills will no longer find a job waiting for them.

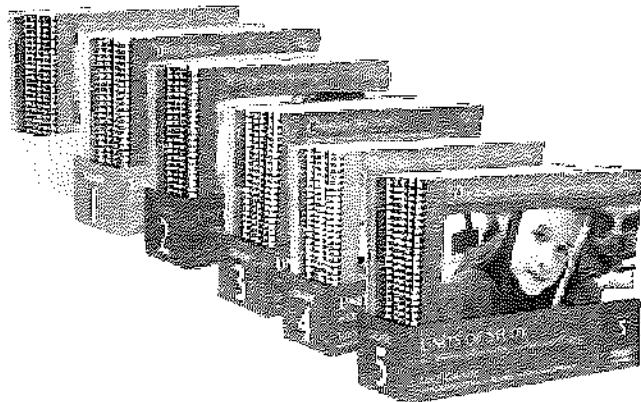
In years past, one approach to supporting struggling writers was to slow down instruction, remove parts of the curriculum, or teach an alternate curriculum. Allington and Walmsey (1995) found that these practices resulted in compounding the delays; as the curriculum was slowed or less was taught, students fell even further behind.

The workshop model in the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* series is, by definition, always individualized. The child chooses what she will write about, chooses the words she will use, chooses the people and places and topics and opinions that will be brought forth in the texts, chooses meanings that are vibrantly important to her, and chooses the level of vocabulary and of sentence and text structures. Therefore, the instruction teachers provide is necessarily differentiated.

In addition, the workshop classroom is organized in such clear, predictable, consistent ways that children quickly become comfortable participating in their ongoing structures. When teachers follow these routines day after day, students can focus their energies on trying to figure out how to do their work rather than on worrying over what they will be expected to do. The predictability of the workshop provides tremendous reassurance to a child who is just learning English, and this is amplified if workshop structures repeat themselves across other subjects.

As students begin to write and think about their own stories, information texts, and persuasive essays, they will be given the opportunity over and over again to learn new vocabulary, use new language structures, and work on expressing their thoughts in a highly contextualized and pertinent situation. That is to say, they will be learning about language in a culturally relevant and high-interest activity and writing about material that comes from their own lives and experiences. The curriculum suggests many ways to teach each skill as well as many ways to offer repetition if needed (Calkins 1994; Graves 1994; Wood Ray 1999).

The assessment system that is a part of the *Units of Study* series also provides teachers with concrete tools, benchmark samples, and rubrics to further differentiate the instruction they provide their particular students. Teachers may opt to begin the year with an on-demand assessment for opinion, information, and narrative writing that will provide them with the necessary data to identify the particular strengths of a student writer and to place her on a learning progression for each type of writing. By looking ahead to the qualities of writing expected at the next level of the learning progression, teachers can make an individual learning plan for that student. Teachers can teach qualities of writing in whole-group minilessons, small-group strategy sessions, or individual conferences. The teacher can tailor teaching to the specific, individual needs of all the students in the class (Anderson 2000; Calkins 1994; Graves 1994).



Research Principle 6

Writing and reading are joined processes, and students learn best when writing and reading instruction are coordinated.

Any effective writing curriculum acknowledges that it is important for writers to be immersed in powerful writing—literature and other kinds of texts. Children learn to write from being immersed in and affected by texts that other authors have written.

Children especially need opportunities to read as writers. Students learn to mentor themselves by studying the writing of others, not only developing a sense of what it is they are trying to make, but also learning the traditions of that particular kind of text. Poets leave white space, how-to writers record steps, storytellers convey the passage of time. All writers care that the sound of their words matches the tone of their meaning. All writers care that they choose precisely right words. By studying texts that resemble those they are trying to make, children learn the tools of their trade. They look closely at the writing of published authors they admire in order to learn ways to develop meaning, to structure their piece, to find craft moves they can try in their own writing, and to study the ways other authors use conventions of written language that they, too, can try (Anderson 2000, 2005; Calkins 1994; Murray 1990).

Throughout most of the units in the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* series, the reading and writing work is directly correlated. Ongoing, built-in book study provides exemplary texts on which students model their own writing. In reading, students learn to make meaning from published authors' writing; in writing, students learn to write so as to convey meaning to their readers. For example, if students are learning in reading to stop after dialogue and notice what that dialogue reveals about the character who says it, then in writing students will learn to reveal their characters' traits by crafting dialogue that reveals those traits. In short, students learn to implement in their own writing the same things that they are learning to interpret in their reading.

Research Principle 7

Children need clear goals and frequent feedback. They need to hear ways their writing is getting better and to know what their next steps might be.

Research by John Hattie and others (2008) has shown that to support learners' progress, it is crucial to encourage them to work toward crystal clear goals and to give them feedback that shows them what they are doing well and ways they are progressing, as well as letting them know next steps. This is especially true when the feedback is part of a whole system of learning that includes learners working toward goals that are ambitious and yet within grasp.

Effective feedback is not interchangeable with praise; it is not the same as instruction; it is not the same as a grade or score. While each of these may be a part of it, feedback is much more.

Effective feedback includes an understanding of what the learner has done and what the learner is trying to do or could do, a sort of renaming of the situation the learner finds herself in, including some of her history in this work. It is a particular response to exactly the work the learner has done. Effective feedback also includes an outside perspective—a reader's point of view, for example, or a teacher's point of view. Constructive feedback may include suggestions for the learner of strategies to try, obstacles to remove, or a baby step to aim for toward the larger, more distant goal.

The *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* series provides the structures, guidelines, and examples that enable teachers to provide this type of effective, differentiated feedback.

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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

How is the new series different from the original series?

- ◆ **Aligned with the CCSS:** The biggest difference between this series and the original series is that the new series takes up the challenges of the CCSS for writing. At each grade level, at least one unit of study is devoted to each of the three types of writing mandated by the Common Core—*opinion/argument writing*, *information writing*, and *narrative writing*. These units also address the new CCSS emphasis on close reading, on text-based questioning, and on reading to learn writing moves.
- ◆ **Grade specific:** Another significant difference between this series and the original series is that the units of study are now grade specific and therefore more developmentally focused.
- ◆ **Reflects current research and experience:** Over the past decade, the research done by TCRWP, as well as the work of Danielson, Marzano, Webb, Wiggins, and Hattie, has coalesced into new understandings of effective practice. These units of study reflect and model these new insights, especially the benefits of tightly integrating instruction with detailed learning progressions, crystal-clear goals, and responsive assessment-based feedback.

How do the curriculum calendars by the TCRWP relate to the new Units of Study series?

Like the curriculum calendars provided by the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, the new Units of Study series provides grade-specific yearlong curricular plans for writing workshops that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Unlike the curricular plans that offer a concise overview of the units with their related teaching points, this new series provides all the teaching moves and language needed to teach each unit, including all of the professional support, teaching tools, and assessments needed to implement a rigorous and responsive writing workshop.

Do you need further professional development to implement this series?

No. In addition to offering curricular support, the Units of Study series also includes embedded professional development. Through its regular coaching tips and detailed descriptions of carefully crafted teaching moves and language, essential aspects of the teaching are underscored and explained at every turn in every session. The goal of these units is to help you watch thoughtful, reflective teaching in ways that enable you to extrapolate guidelines and methods, so that on another day you'll feel ready to invent your own teaching. The professional development embedded in this series can be enhanced, of course, when you share the experience with other concerned professionals, whether they are your own professional learning

community or other professional development providers such as the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University (tc.readingandwritingproject.com).

How does the Units of Study series support teacher professional development?

Select components and features were designed to support teacher professional development.

- ◆ The *Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop* provides the professional understandings needed to launch and implement an effective writing workshop. In addition to describing proven management tips and strategies, this guide also provides a thumbnail history to writing process instruction.
- ◆ The **teaching moves** and **language** described in each session model best practices that have been carefully crafted and honed over time.
- ◆ The **coaching commentary** that runs down the right side of the pages describes why Lucy and her colleagues did what they did or what else they could have done in order to help teachers extrapolate guidelines and methods so on another day teachers feel ready to invent their own teaching.
- ◆ The units of study are organized around a **gradual release of responsibility framework for teachers**. First, the unit books explicitly model the entire teaching process. Then, the alternate units provide concise scaffolds that support guided practice. And finally, a special chapter on how to design your own homegrown units encourages collaborative and independent practice.

How does the teaching language support instruction, since it is not a script?

The books are written in a way that gives you the chance to listen in on and observe the unit being taught with students just the age of your students. It is almost as if you are invited into a classroom to watch and listen as Lucy and the coauthors work with youngsters. You can listen as they convene the class of children into the meeting area for a ten-minute minilesson, channeling them to sit beside partners and calling for their attention, and you'll hear how they talk about and demonstrate the strategies and skills of effective writing. Of course, you'll also overhear the jokes and stories they use to draw them in and the directions they give to send them off to do their work. Then, too, you'll hear the ways they confer and lead small groups to support the work they do during that day's workshop. You'll also see how the share sessions go, and get examples of the kind of work students may do at that point in the unit.

Is this curriculum effective if I teach it in isolation or should all the teachers in my school follow this curriculum?

Students will always benefit from the instruction provided by an impassioned teacher who applies best practices in writing instruction so, yes, if you are a lone champion of writing in your school, you and your students will benefit from this series. But your influence on one class of writers will be multiplied ten-fold if students receive instruction each year that builds on prior years, that makes sense to students, and that holds them accountable to transferring and applying their skills.

If you are truly going to bring all of your students to the ambitious standards of the Common Core, there needs to be vertical alignment in the curriculum so that people who teach at any one grade level can count on students entering their classrooms with some foundational skills that can then be built upon. The days of each teacher functioning as a Lone Ranger in the teaching of writing are at an end. Imagine how impractical it would be if each third grade teacher decided whether or not to teach multiplication: Fourth grade teachers who received students from several different third grades would find that half the class had never learned anything but addition, and the other half was chomping at the bit to study long division! Until the release of the Common Core State Standards, many educators didn't realize that writing skills, too, need to develop incrementally, with the work that students do at one grade level standing on the shoulders of prior learning.

If a school or district adopts the complete Units of Study series, will the provided units of study be enough to sustain children's growth and teachers' instruction across all the grades from now on?

The answer to this is no, no matter which curriculum or program a teacher or school or district adopts. These units of study were never intended to replace all the professional reading and study that teachers have been doing for all these years—as no curriculum should! You and your colleagues will absolutely need to continue to read other professional books, and you will need to continue to author your own ideas as well.

But yes, this new grade-by-grade series does provide the *backbone* to a K–5, (and eventually K–8), approach to the teaching of writing that will bring coherence and continuity to your schoolwide or districtwide writing curriculum. And yes, there are enough units and alternate unit to serve teachers and children across a year.

These books absolutely support a spiraling curriculum in which student learning moves steadily along, practicing and extending skills in each type of writing each year. For example, the developmental progression in opinion/argument writing begins in kindergarten, where students argue for Best in Show from their collection of planes or trains. Over the years, students' persuasive writing skills grow so by fifth grade, students are writing position papers, participating in debates and panel presentations, and tailoring their writing to specific, real-world audiences.



How much time should I devote to a single unit of study? If my children do not write particularly well, or if I am new to the teaching of writing, should I extend the time frame?

These units are designed to support a 6-week unit of study. If you or your children are new to writing workshop, then oftentimes you should expect to progress more quickly, not more slowly, through a unit of study. That is, when your children are skilled and experienced writers, they'll be able to spend more time revising and improving their draft, but if they are less experienced (or if you are), they'll probably stay closer to the pathway in these units of study.

There are however, additional and alternate units provided in the *If...Then... Curriculum* books for every grade level. In these books, there are suggestions for units that can become precursors to the detailed units provided, as well as units to augment skills in these units, extending the practice children undertake to develop expertise. There are also suggestions for conferring with individuals and small groups of children who may have particular goals or struggles with any given unit; these suggestions can help these youngsters work at full capacity and yet still keep pace with the rest of the class.

I understand the first three units of study per grade—information, opinion/argument, and narrative—but what is the fourth unit book?

In every grade, in addition to a book that supports each of the three types of writing that are mandated by the CCSS, there is a fourth book. At third grade, for example, this allows for a second narrative unit, this time on adapting fairy tales; in fourth grade, this allows for a second book under the opinion umbrella—a book on writing essays about literature; in fifth grade, this allows for a memoir unit in which some students elect to structure their writing as a narrative, others, as an essay, letting the form follow meaning. In the Primary grades, this fourth unit allows for extra attention to conventions in kindergarten (in the unit *Writing for Readers*), time for fiction with first-graders, and a unit on poetry in second grade. In addition, in every grade, there is a book with suggested alternate and additional units, including a possible outline and set of teaching points for each potential unit.

Will the Units of Study series help me differentiate instruction and provide individual feedback?

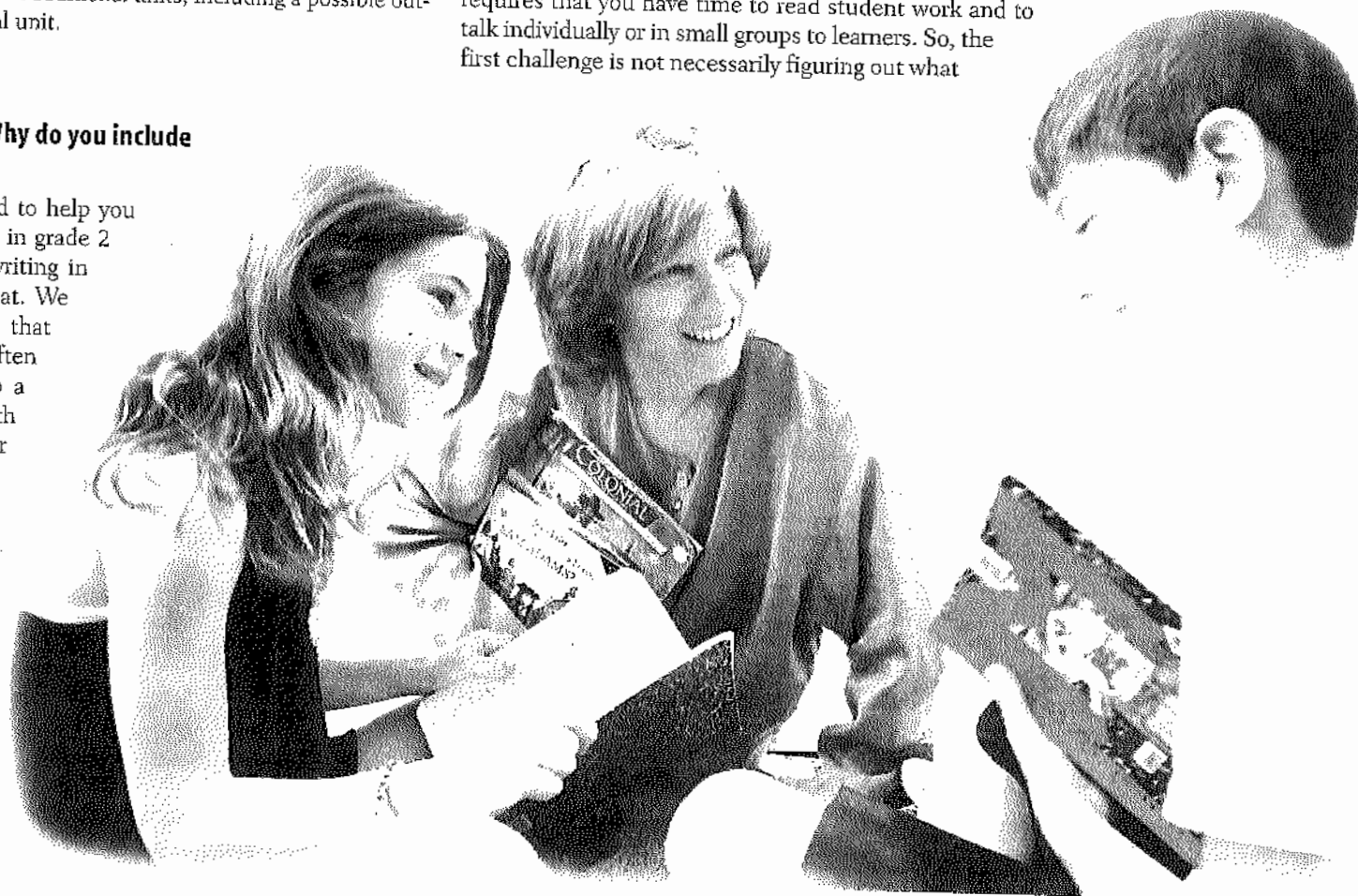
Instruction in this series is built on the belief that one of the methods of teaching that accelerates a learner's progress more than almost anything is the provision of feedback. If learners receive feedback that contains both acknowledgement of what that learner has begun to do that really works and suggestions for next steps toward an ambitious but accessible goal, then learners progress in dramatic ways. In writing instruction, one-to-one conferences and small-group instruction provide crucial opportunities for you to offer strong, individualized feedback and instruction.

Of course, providing feedback and instruction to students requires that you have time to read student work and to talk individually or in small groups to learners. So, the first challenge is not necessarily figuring out what

Poetry writing isn't included in the CCSS. Why do you include poetry units in this Units of Study series?

This new Units of Study series was designed to help you meet and exceed the CCSS. The poetry unit in grade 2 and the alternate units of study in poetry writing in grades K, 1, 3, 4, and 5 will help you do that. We included these units because we believe that poetry is important. We think students often develop a voice in poetry, that they develop a closer relationship with language and with literary devices, that they build intense mentor relationships with published writers, and that these gifts will be to the good in all their writing endeavors.

While poetry writing is not mandated by the Common Core writing standards, the study of poetry will help you address the competencies listed in the standards. Poetry provides short manageable texts that are ideally suited for close reading analysis. Compact and precise, poems will also encourage students to focus on understanding words and phrases, their relationships, their nuances, and on acquiring new vocabulary.



to say in a conference or a small group, it is figuring out how to scaffold and build student independence so that responsive teaching is even possible.

These units of study will help you establish the consistent routines that will encourage your students to work independently and it will provide you with the assessment tools you'll need to monitor your students' learning and the proven strategies you'll need for effective conferences and small-group instruction.

Why does this writing curriculum include a trade book pack?

We believe that a classroom full of wonderful writers is one in which teachers read aloud several times a day and the students, too, are engaged readers. Although children benefit from rich classroom and school libraries full of a great variety of texts, in order to learn to write well, they especially need to read texts that resemble those they are trying to write. And they need not only graze these texts but also study some of them incredibly closely, revisiting them time and again to learn yet more and more and more. The same text can be used to teach leads, semicolons, character development, showing-not-telling, lists, pronoun agreement, and a dozen other things. The Units of study Trade Book Packs offer carefully selected mentor texts that will support your writing instruction. The Trade Book Packs also offer grade-appropriate content from which students can draw in the information writing units.

How does the transference of learning across units and across grades work?

Across all of the units, there is a continual emphasis on transference. For example, after students write persuasive speeches, they study another kind of persuasive writing—petitions—and ask, “How many of the strategies that we learned when writing persuasive speeches are applicable also when writing petitions?” This inquiry leads students to plunge right into the work of writing petitions without needing an elaborate introduction. The very design of the Common Core emphasizes the fact that students will be able to reach high-level expectations when the skills are developed and extended and built upon as students proceed up the grades. In this series, the cohesion across units means that skills that are introduced in one grade level are then recalled, developed, and added to in later units of study.

This development occurs within a type of writing and also across the full gamut of kinds of writing. That is, the Standards' expectations for one type of writing at a grade level are echoed in other types of writing. If students are expected to end their essays by referring back not only to the last paragraph but to their entire essay, they'll encounter parallel expectations for their endings when writing narratives and information texts. It is helpful for students if teachers say, “You know the work you have been doing to make sure that the ending of your essay relates to the whole text, not just to the last bit of it? Well, when you write fiction, there are similar expectations for your endings of those stories. Let me explain and show you what I mean.”

Is the Units of Study series research-based?

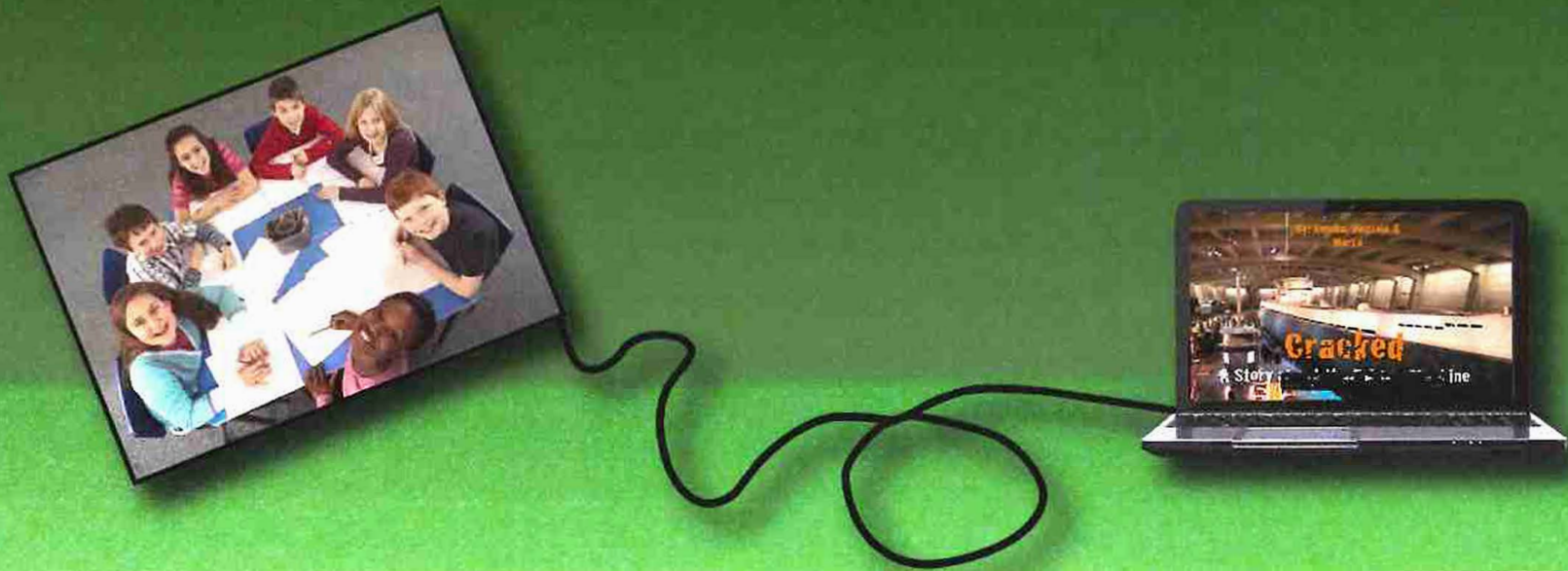
This Units of Study series grew from decades of in-school research and practice in the New York City Schools that was spearheaded by the TCRWP. Schools that work with the Project join with professional Teachers College educators in a study of the art of teaching writing. Together they study the techniques of master writers, study the individual students in a teacher's classroom, and create a curriculum to lift the level of the students' writing. The TCRWP writing workshop model that evolved from this process is the foundation of the Units of Study series. Its theory of teaching is based on fostering independent writers and lifelong learners. The Units of Study series—in fact all the pursuits of the Project—are based on a handful of fundamental, research-based principles. Download a detailed report on these research-based principles and the studies and writings that support them at UnitsofStudy.com.

Why focus school reform efforts on writing?

As this nation wakes up to the fact that the education millions of Americans received in the past simply isn't adequate for today, more and more schools are realizing that one of the most potent ways to accelerate students' progress as learners is by equipping them with first-rate skills in writing. While the teaching of writing had no place in the NCLB standards of yesterday, there has been an about-face since then, and the Common Core State Standards give equal attention to writing as to reading—and even suggest that students' abilities to read will be assessed through their abilities to write.

For teachers, parents, and students in schools that have no history teaching writing, the exemplar student writing that is showcased in Appendix B of the Common Core (and the Standards themselves that detail what all students will be expected to know and be able to do) feel like an utterly inaccessible goal. That's not a surprising response from educators who have not themselves received help teaching writing. Students need extensive opportunities to write on topics they care about; they need explicit and sequenced instruction that helps them progress along a learning continua, and they need critical feedback that helps them know next steps. It's a tall order for teachers to provide those conditions to students when teachers themselves have generally received almost no instruction in writing and often have not taken a single course in the teaching of writing.

District 90 Writing Committee Update and Recommendations



Presented to the Committee of the Whole, March 1, 2016
Kathleen Fleming, Laurie Hendrickson, Pam Moriarty

Overview

- Writing committee goals, processes, and next steps.
- Specific Recommendations for 2016-2017: K-4 Writing Adoption.
- Progress in and recommendations for grades 5–8 writing progression.

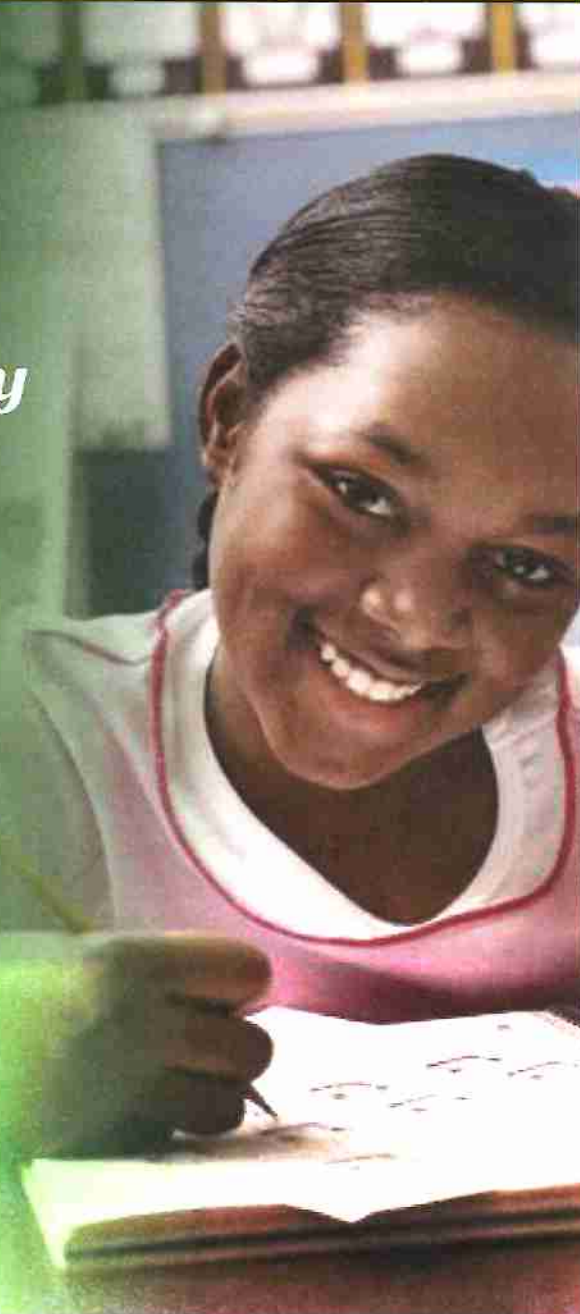


Writing Committee Goals

- Write clear (teacher- and student-friendly) outcomes based on the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards.
- Identify instructional best practices in writing.
- Develop K-8 tools including grade-level rubrics that are aligned with the outcomes, identify common language, and sample student work.
- Develop a scope and sequence and curriculum map that are horizontally- and vertically-aligned.
- Review, potentially pilot, and select K-8 tools, resources, and/or programs.
- Develop and implement professional development plans.

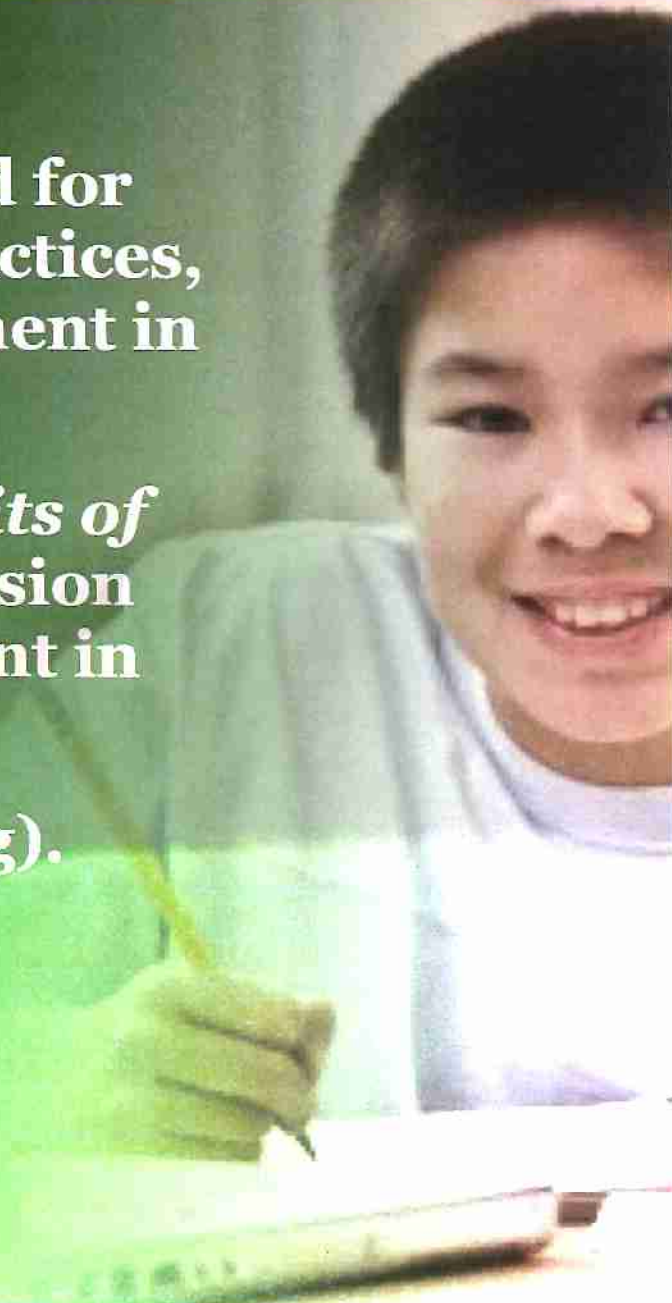
Key Components of the K-4 Process

- **Develop understanding of Writing Workshop.**
- **Guide exploration of the *Units of Study* resource.**
- **Create Vertical Learning Progression:**
 - ✓ **Writing and Language CCSS**
 - ✓ **Common Assessment Tools**
- **Collect Teacher Reflection and Feedback.**



Process Leading to Adoption

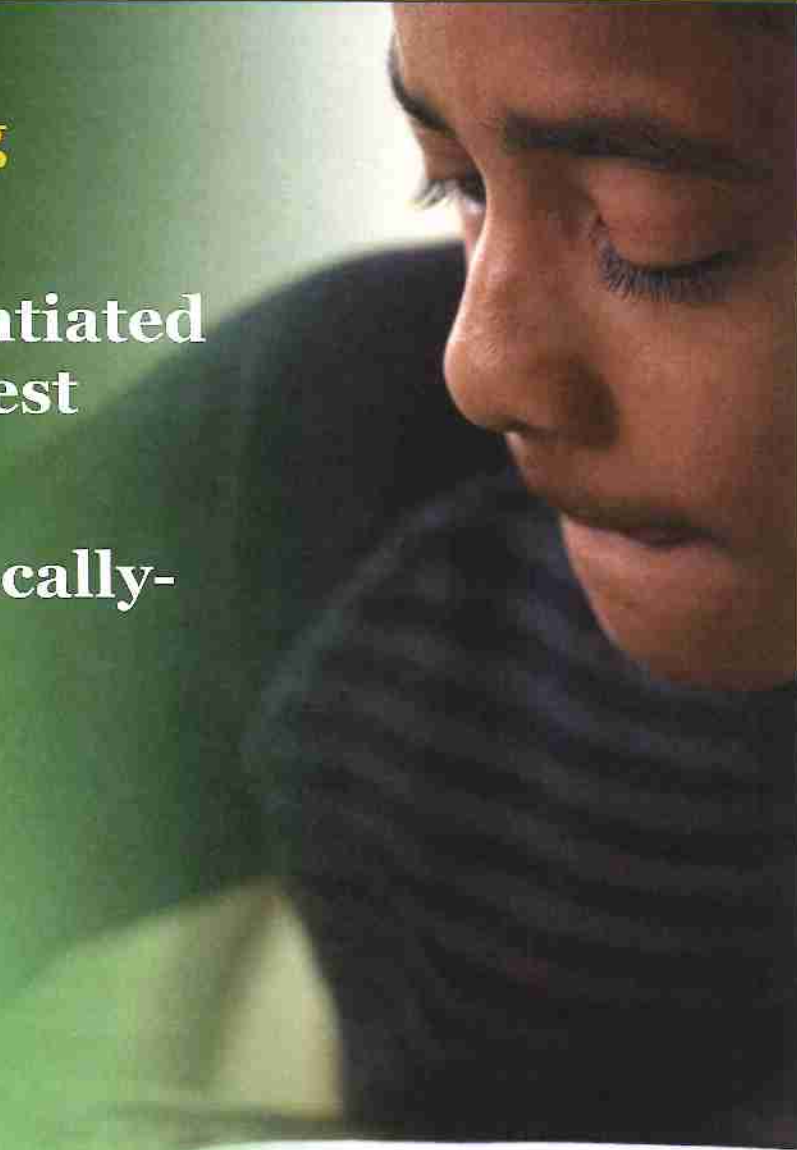
- Teachers' acknowledgement of need for cohesive resources, shared best practices, and targeted professional development in 2014-2015.
- Teachers' guided exploration of *Units of Study* program, including the provision of targeted professional development in 2015-2016.
- Parent review of materials (pending).



K-4 Recommendation for Curriculum Adoption

High-quality program with strong educational value that:

- **Allows for rigorous and differentiated implementation using shared best practices.**
- **Provides horizontally- and vertically-aligned resources:**
 - ✓ **Strategies and skills**
 - ✓ **Assessments**
 - ✓ **Exemplars of student work**
 - ✓ **Models for instruction in a workshop setting**



Grades 5–8 Progress toward Goals

u n p a c k i n g

THE STANDARDS

8.W.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

<i>Independently, I can:</i>	<i>Independently, I can:</i>	<i>With help, I can:</i>	<i>Independently, I can:</i>	<i>Independently, I can:</i>	<i>Independently, I can:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly. • Support claim(s) with clear reasons & relevant evidence, using credible sources & demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text. • Use words, phrases, & clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) & reasons (explanation of evidence). • Establish and maintain a formal style.* • Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented and answers the question "So what?". (Introduce) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically. • Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text. • Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence (explanation of evidence). • Establish and maintain a formal style.* • Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically. • Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text. • Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. • Establish and maintain a formal style.* • Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically. • Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text. • Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. • Establish and maintain a formal style.* • Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. • Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns. • Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaim(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. • Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns. • Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaim(s).

Grades 5–8 Progress toward Goals

l a n g u a g e

CLAIM **EVIDENCE** **REASONING**

CREATING A CULTURE OF ARGUMENT

Grades 5–8 Progress toward Goals

a l i g n m e n t

What We Teach

**Clearly
Aligned
Outcomes**

**LEARNING
OBJECTIVES**

ACTIVITIES

**Activities
to support
achievement**

How We Teach

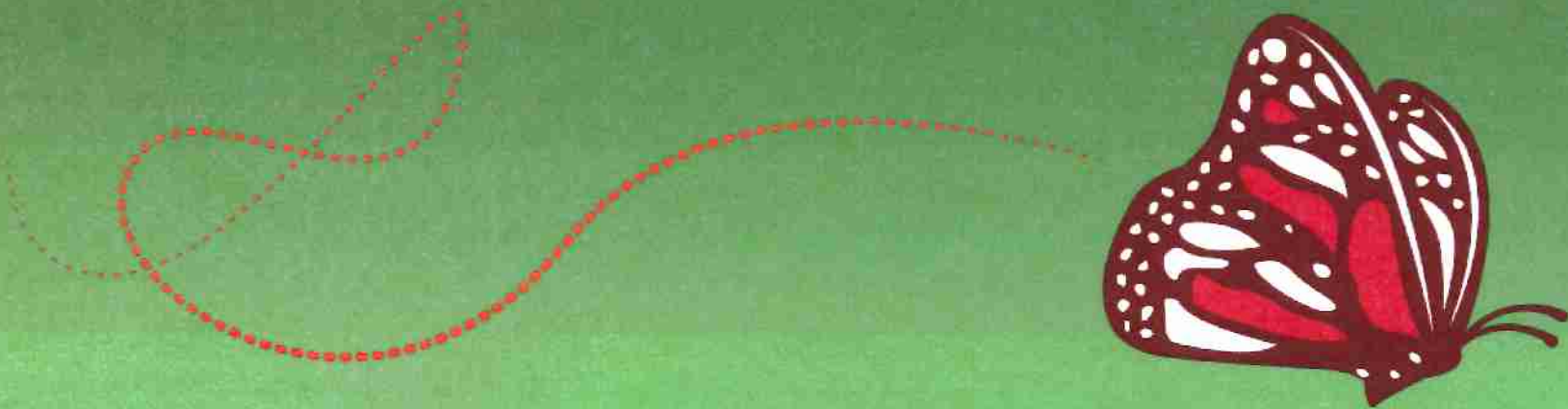
How We
Know They
Learned

**Formative
& Summative
Demonstration of
achievement**

ASSESSMENT

Grades 5–8 Progress toward Goals

t r a n s i t i o n TO HIGH SCHOOL

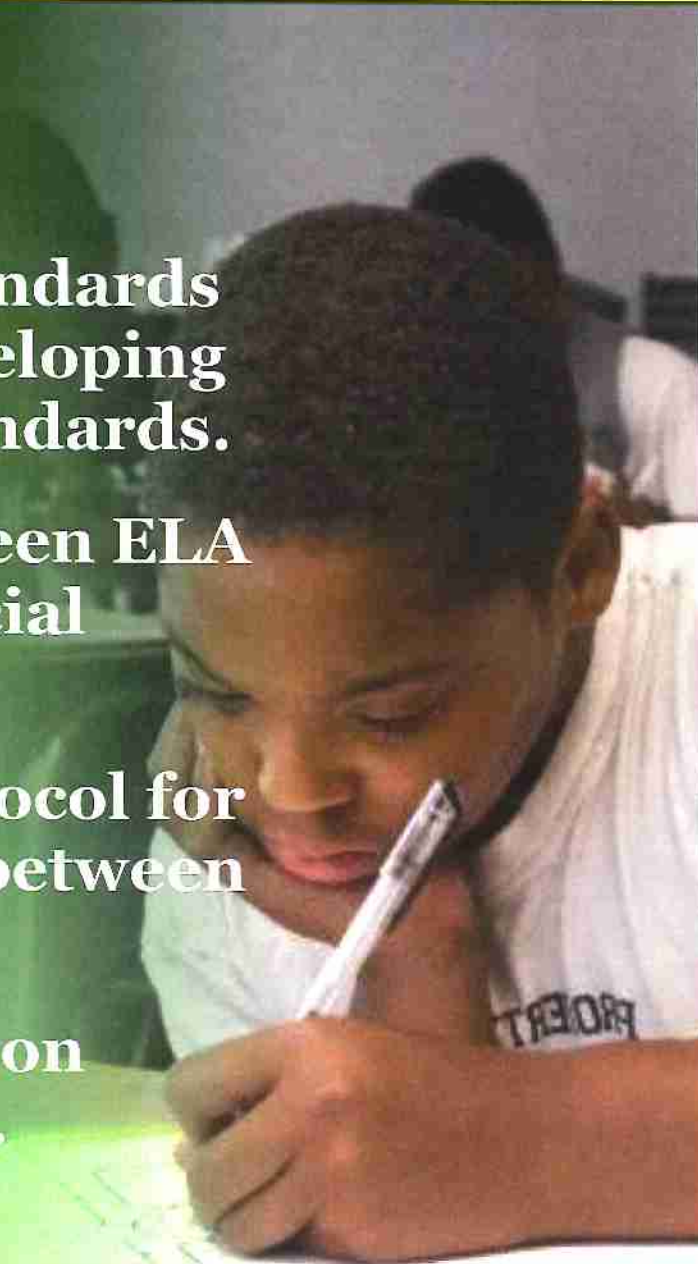


Working with OPRF on middle-to-high school articulation.

Grades 5–8 Progress toward Goals

Review

- Developed outcomes for *all* CC Standards in *all* grades—working toward developing student-friendly rubrics for all standards.
- Identified common language between ELA standards and new science and social studies standards.
- In the process of developing a protocol for norming (aligning) the standards between grade levels and departments.
- Working with OPRF English Chair on middle-to-high school articulation.

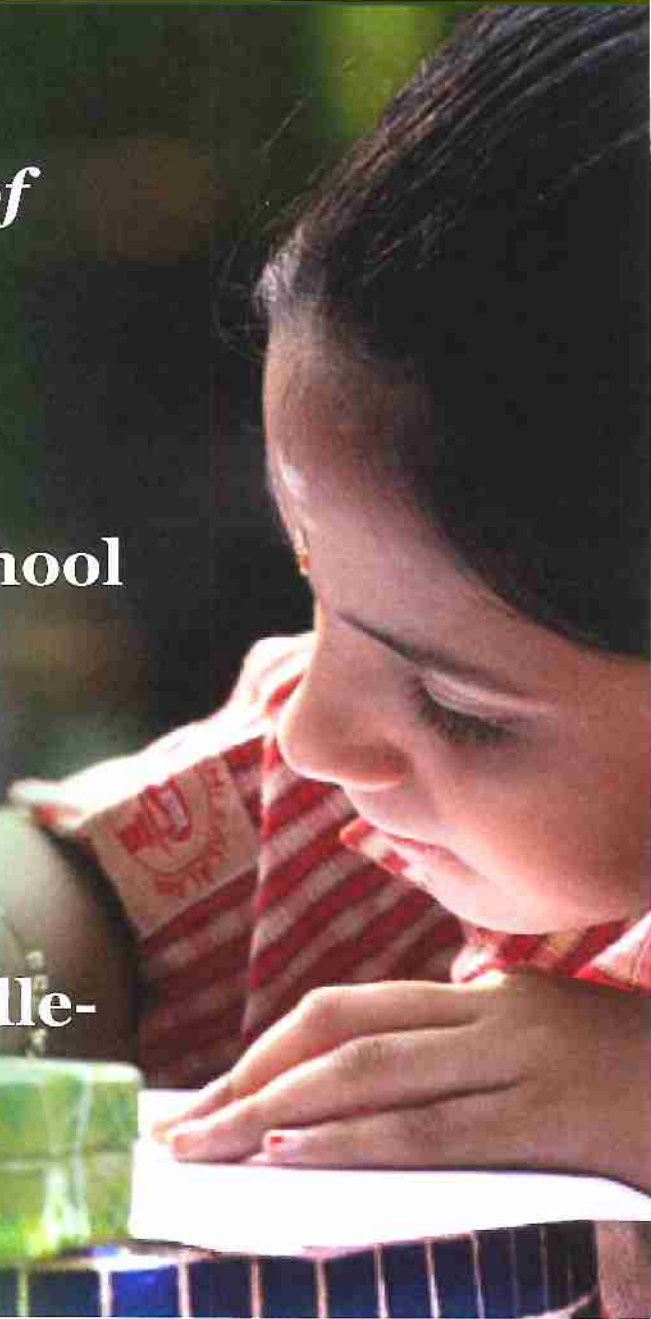


Challenges

- **Aligning our beliefs**
- **Variability of experience**
- **Time**
- **Competing demands**

Next Steps

- Recommend adoption of K-4 *Units of Study* resource.
- Continue to focus on high-quality professional development.
- Schedule release-time for middle school teachers to norm standards.
- Continue to focus on curriculum alignment—both horizontally and vertically.
- Develop and support improved middle-to-high school articulation.



Questions?

