Great Supplies for Your Primary Grade Writing Workshop

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Great Supplies for Your Primary Grade Writing Workshop

By Libby Duggan

The right supplies can help you launch a writing workshop and establish the kind of habits and practices that will make the workshop easy to manage all year long. You might even want to stock up before the back-to-school sales end. Here are the "must-have" supplies I have used in my primary grade workshop:

**Paper**

Young writers need a lot of paper options. Some are ready-to-fill-in-and-paper with words, while others involve unlined paper on which they can concentrate on getting the spelling of the letter(s) written right. Other young writers may need a few lines with space to draw pictures to supplement their words. Different genres or stages of writing may necessitate different papers. This is why I always keep a variety of papers in my classroom – for poetry, for example, and fancy scrapbook-like paper can be used for final publications. Avoid a range of paper choices and avoid leaving intermediates for students than a one-size-fits-all solution.

I love the handout at left that IPYW coach Mary Rodgers shared at a Summer Institute. It has thumbnail images of the types of paper IPYW professionals for their students. Two sheets are left-hand sheets to show the whole document.

**Pens**

Writing workshop teachers prefer that students use pens instead of pencils, because ink cannot be erased. This allows us to see all of the work and thinking that students have done. We also know that we can see a lot about how to teach a child to learning his/her mistakes, so we want the errors to be visible. While you might try using dry colored pens at different stages of the writing process – black for drafting and blue or red for revisions, for example.

I have found that the type of pen matters as well. Filling pens work best for young children who are still developing fine motor control. The felt tip pens are more forgiving, allowing children more control than a ballpoint or roller ball pen that slides easily across the page.

**Folders and Gallon Ziploc Bags**

I carry a large assortment of paper in my classroom, but they are writing in a lot of it! This is why it's important that students that have folders in which they can keep their writing can keep them organized. This means getting a folder for each student. In various classes, all of the required folders for different units of study, my students cleared our folders to make room for new projects. We recommend gallon Ziploc bags to help keep organized.

**Date Stampers**

Date stampers can be used to quickly mark the day each piece of work was completed. They help me track and assess students' progress. Instead of asking students to hand write the date on each page, you may want to have students use date stampers around the classroom. Students like using these, as they are more likely to remember to date their work.

**Scissors, Tape and Correction Tape**

Some writers work best at a desk while others need to sprawl out on the floor. It's a good idea to have clipboards on hand for students to use when spreading out around the classroom. This allows them to have a hard desk-like surface to work on, even if they need to get up and move around. Even though you provide a variety of paper options, there will be times when students need to cover up their thinking in the early stages of writing and make changes later on. Correction tape can also be used in the final stages of editing and making projects ready for publication. Just be sure to keep the correction tape hidden until days before final publication and celebration. You don't want to cover up her first ideas or the first stage of the writing process.

**Pens**

We know that students have an easier time of writing with pens, allowing children more control than a ballpoint or roller ball pen that slides easily across the page. In general, students like using these, as they are more likely to remember to date their work.

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**Art Supplies**

Illustrate the students' writing as much as possible. Offer the pictures in a text enhance or even add meaning to the words on the page. By providing students with markers, crayons, watercolor paints, colored pencils, etc., we help them recognize and develop the significance of their own illustrations.

**Picture Books, Magazines, Cookbooks, Board Game Directions, etc**

Last but certainly not least, young writers need access to texts that are the very thing they will be asked to write. In a primary grade writing workshop, students can be exposed to picture books, songs, songs, recipes, directions for crafts and instructions for crafts that are written in a primary grade classroom. In magazines, you can use visual non-fiction articles, poetry, for example, and fancy scrapbook-like paper can be used for final publications. Avoid a range of paper choices and avoid leaving intermediates for students than a one-size-fits-all solution.

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