

Developing Upper Elementary and Middle School Writers

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Session Goals

1. Introduce the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
Practice Guides *Teaching Elementary School Students to Become Effective Writers* and *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively*
2. Review the recommendations in the practice guides and their evidence levels
3. Share examples of activities that help to implement the recommendations in the classroom

The Development of IES Practice Guides

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) publishes practice guides in education to bring the best available evidence and expertise to bear on current challenges in education.

Authors of practice guides combine their expertise with the findings of rigorous research, when available, to develop specific recommendations for addressing these challenges.

The authors rate the strength of the research evidence supporting each of their recommendations.

Developing the IES Practice Guides *Teaching Elementary School Students to Become Effective Writers* and *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively*

These practice guides present evidence-based recommendations for helping students in elementary and secondary schools develop effective writing skills. Each recommendation includes specific, actionable guidance for educators on implementing practices in their classrooms. The guides also summarize and rate the evidence supporting each recommendation, describe examples to use in class, and offer the panel's advice on how to overcome potential implementation obstacles. These guides are geared towards administrators and teachers in all disciplines who want to help improve their students' writing.

Authors include experts in the writing instruction field as well as other researchers and practitioners.

Recommendations from the Elementary Practice Guide and Levels of Evidence

Table 2. Recommendations and corresponding levels of evidence

Recommendation	Levels of Evidence		
	Strong Evidence	Moderate Evidence	Minimal Evidence
1. Provide daily time for students to write.			◆
2. Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes. 2a. Teach students the writing process. 2b. Teach students to write for a variety of purposes.	◆		
3. Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.		◆	
4. Create an engaged community of writers.			◆

Recommendations from the Secondary Practice Guide and Levels of Evidence

Table 1. Recommendations and corresponding levels of evidence

Recommendation	Levels of Evidence		
	Strong Evidence	Moderate Evidence	Minimal Evidence
1. Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle.	◆		
2. Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.		◆	
3. Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.			◆

Recommendation #1 – Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle.

Writing strategies are structured series of actions (mental, physical, or both) that writers undertake to achieve their goals. Writing strategies can be used to plan and set goals, draft, evaluate, revise, and edit.

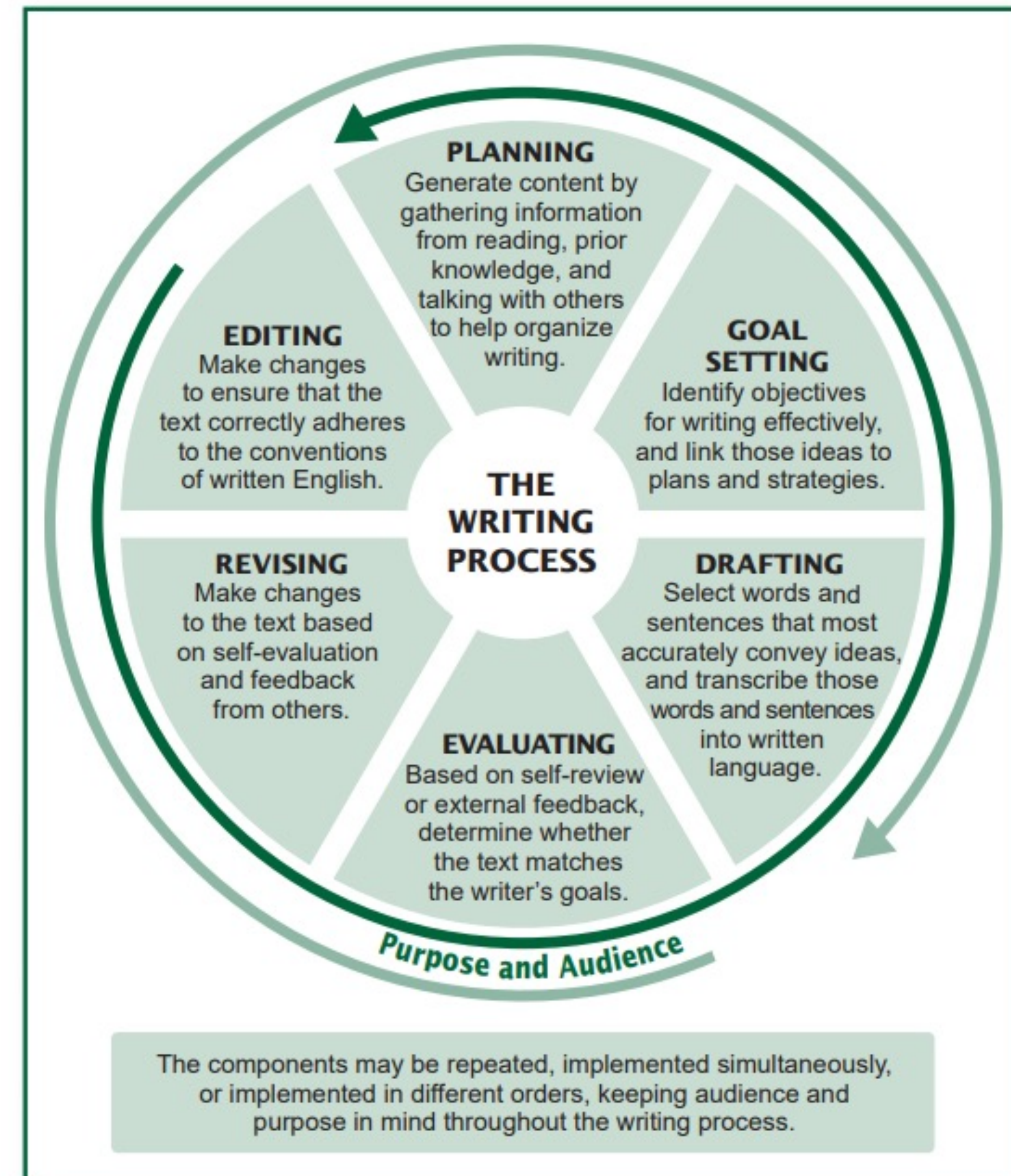
Recommendation #1 –
Explicitly teach appropriate
writing strategies using
a Model-Practice-Reflect
instructional cycle.

Recommendation 1a. Explicitly teach
appropriate writing strategies

1. Explicitly teach strategies for
planning and goal setting, drafting,
evaluating, revising, and editing.

Discuss strategies you use for the
components of the writing process.

**Figure 1.1. Components of the
writing process**



Recommendation #1 – Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle.

Recommendation 1a. Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies
2. Instruct students on how to choose and apply strategies appropriate for the audience and purpose.

Discuss how you help students select and apply strategies based on the writing audience and purpose.

EXAMPLE 1.3.

Questions to guide strategy selection

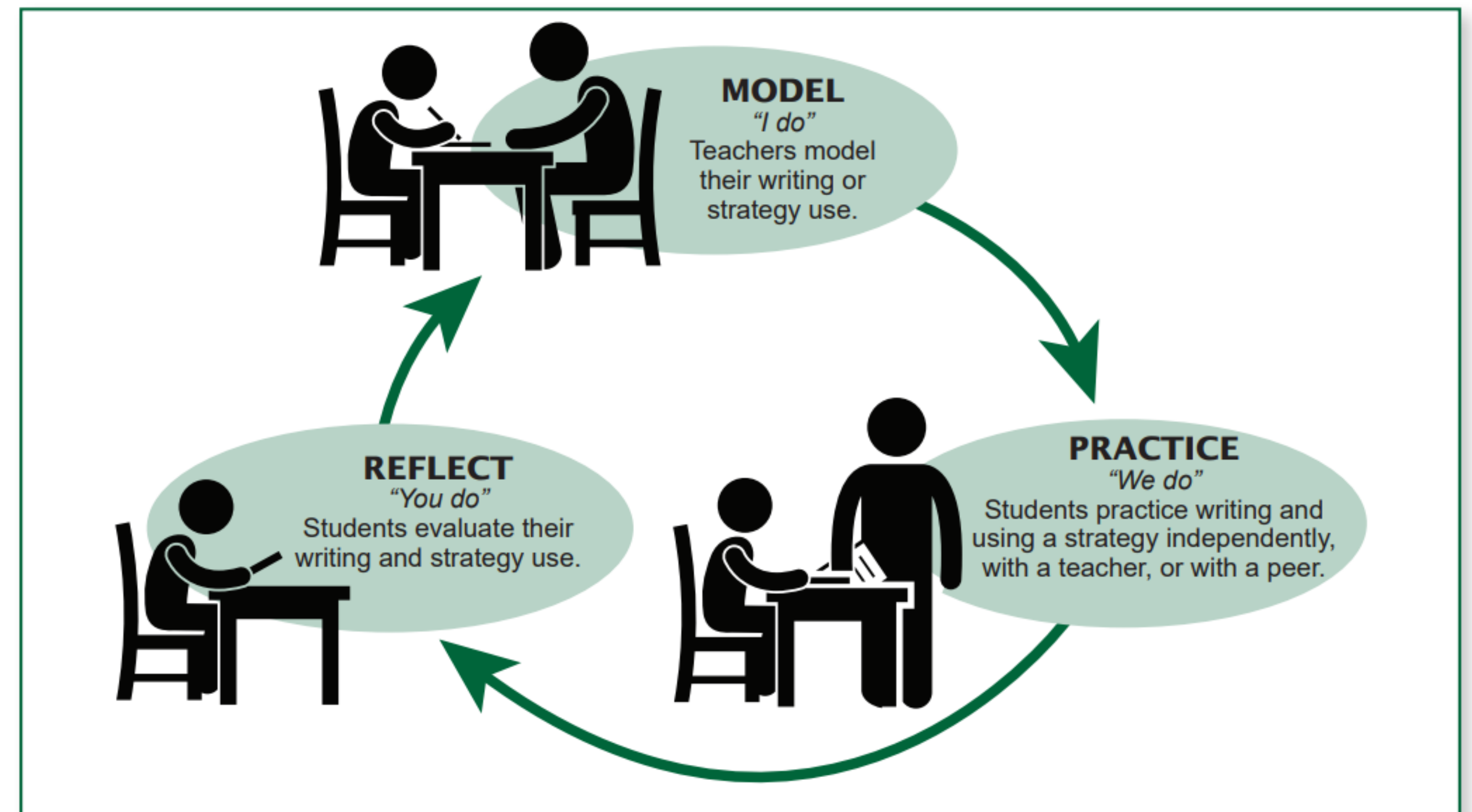
- What goals do I need to set and accomplish to write for this audience or purpose?
- What writing strategies do I know work well when writing for this audience or purpose?
- What do I know about this assignment that would help inform my strategy selection?
- When do I use this strategy? When I am planning? Drafting? Revising?

Recommendation #1 – Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle.

Recommendation 1b. Use a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle to teach writing strategies.

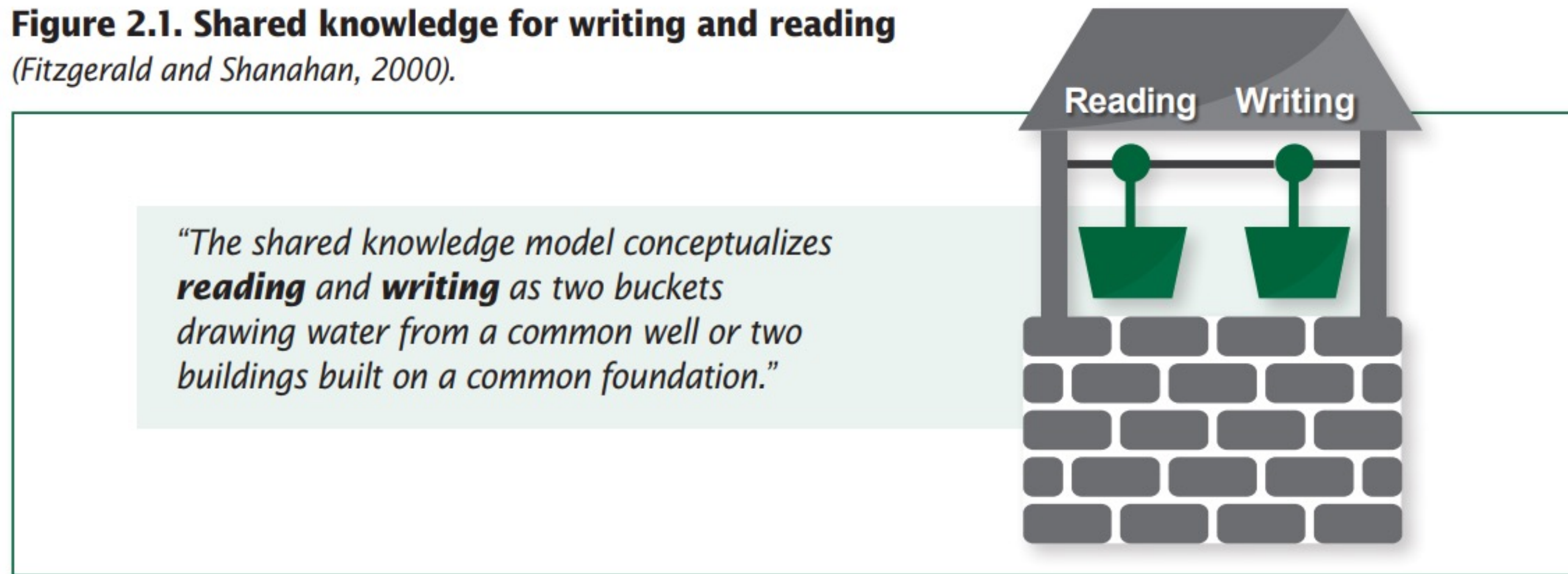
Discuss how the Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle does work or could work in your classroom.
(thinking aloud, rubrics, peer editing, color coding, text editing symbols)

Figure 1.2. The Model-Practice-Reflect cycle



Recommendation #2 – Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.

Figure 2.1. Shared knowledge for writing and reading
(Fitzgerald and Shanahan, 2000).



How do you integrate reading and writing instruction in your classroom?

Recommendation #2 – Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.

Because reading and writing share four types of cognitive processes and knowledge (see Figure 2.1), integrating reading and writing can also help students develop:⁵³

1. *Meta-knowledge*, which involves understanding the reading and writing processes in relation to goals and purposes. For example, when reading or writing an editorial, a student understands which reading and writing strategies align with this format.
2. *Domain knowledge*, which is about the substance and content that is revealed from reading and writing.
3. Important *text features*, which include text format, organization, and genre, as well as spelling and **syntactical combinations** that are accepted in a particular language or culture.
4. *Procedural knowledge*, which includes integrating complex processes to write compositions and using strategies for accessing information when reading text.

Recommendation #2 – Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.

1. Teach students to understand that both writers and readers use similar strategies, knowledge, and skills to create meaning.

Ask students to respond to something they have read using **cognitive-strategy sentence starters**. These tools help students structure their thinking and writing, and focus on key features. Cognitive-strategy sentence starters help students write by modeling:

- what writers might say to themselves inside their heads when composing,
- what readers think when annotating texts they are reading, and
- how writers generate ideas for texts they are writing.

Using cognitive-strategy sentence starters to generate or respond to texts ⁶⁵	
Strategy to practice	Sentence starter
Revising meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At first, I thought . . . , but now, I think . . .• My latest thought about this is . . .• I’m getting a different picture here because . . .
Reflecting and relating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The big idea is . . .• A conclusion I’m drawing is . . .• The most important message is . . .
Evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This could be more effective if . . .
Analyzing author’s craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A strong or impactful sentence for me is . . .• This word/phrase stands out for me because . . .• I like how the author uses ___ to show . . .

Recommendation #2 – Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.

2. Use a variety of written exemplars to highlight the key features of texts.

Exemplar texts are examples that clearly illustrate specific features of effective writing for students.

Use exemplars to teach students the key features of effective writing so they can use them in their own writing. Exemplar texts, whether published or created by teachers or peers, can clearly illustrate specific features of effective writing. These features include

strong ideation; organization and structure; word choice, grammar, punctuation, and spelling; use of literary devices; sentences meeting the writers’ intentions; voice, including tone, mood, and style; and correct use of conventions. Example 2.5 lists some text types and their important features.

How do you use exemplar texts in your classroom?

EXAMPLE 2.5.	
Key features of exemplars for different text types	
Types of texts	Features
Argumentative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A proposition (the major premise of the argument)• Claims on which the proposition is built• Supporting evidence (facts and/or opinion)• Well supported generalization (not fallacious reasoning)• Incorporation of anticipated objections• Strong closure
Descriptive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Description of the person, place, object, or event• Use of descriptive and figurative language to help readers visualize the person, place, object, or event• Qualities or characteristics may be listed or arranged in a particular order• Concrete details (sight, taste, touch, smell, sound, and movement) to bring the subject to life

Recommendation #2 – Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.

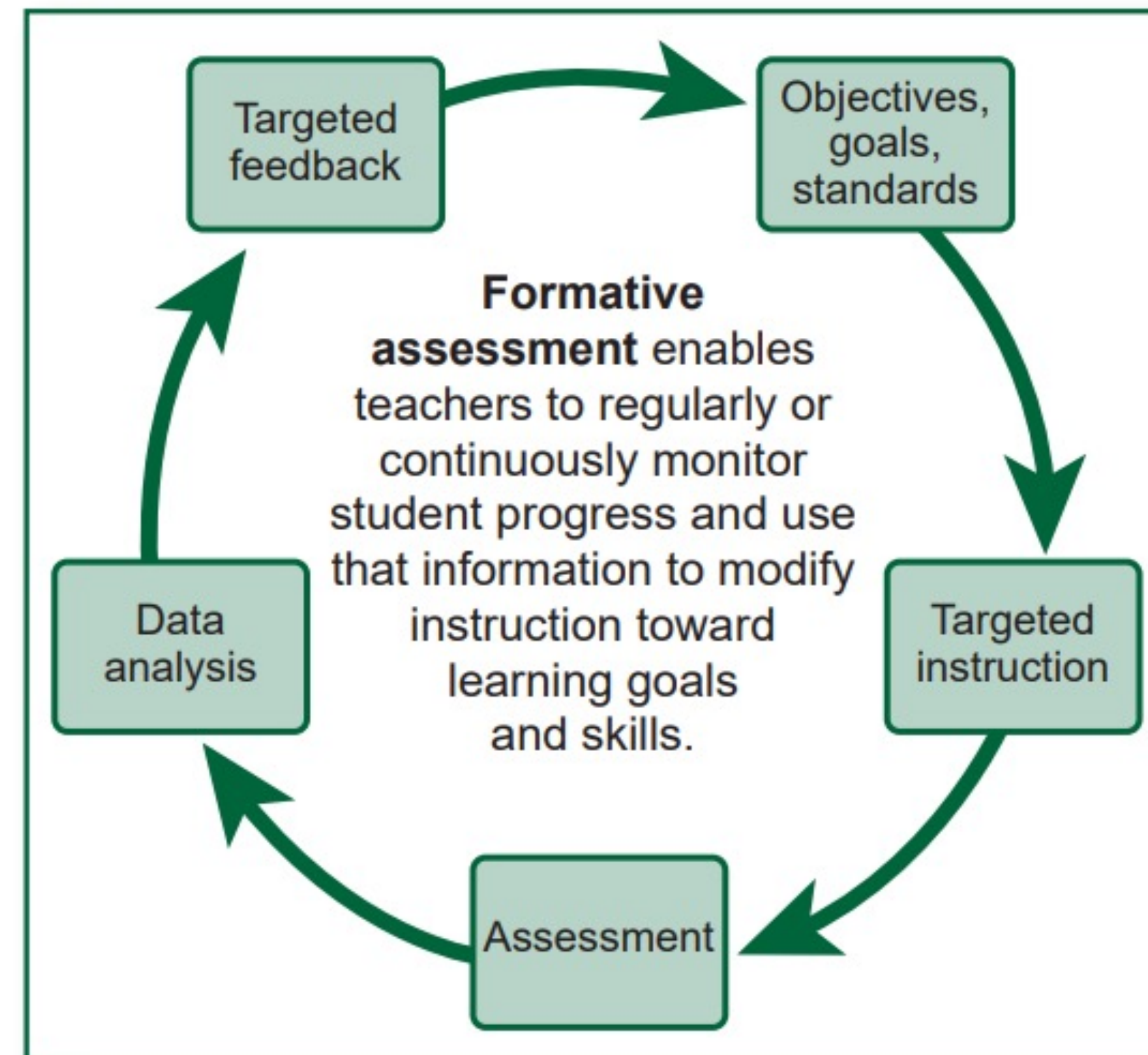
2. Use a variety of written exemplars to highlight the key features of texts.

Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A setting• An introduction of characters• A problem or goal• An attempt to solve the problem—often multiple unsuccessful attempts or embedded episodes of attempts within attempts• A solution to the problem• A resolution, conclusion, and/or moral
Informational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A topic or theme (may be repeated)• Present tense to evoke a timeless or generalizing quality• Technical vocabulary• Descriptive attributes and characteristic events• Definitions or explanations of terms• Visual elements such as diagrams, tables, and charts
Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialized topic• Instructions about how to do something
Persuasive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main point or argument• Motivation and arguments for key points (including need, significance, and benefits)• Supporting evidence
Reflective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A concrete occasion or anecdote in the beginning• Reflection of the universal significance of the occasion or anecdote• A process of discovery• A lesson about human nature in the conclusion• Rich concrete details and sensory description
Expressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First person with informal language (i.e., contractions, slang)• Often has dialogue• Chronological organization• Lots of description with extensive use of adjectives• Feelings are described in detail• Active verbs

How do you teach the different types of texts students read and write? (Text structure and organization, text features)

Recommendation #3: Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.

Figure 3.1. The formative assessment cycle



Recommendation #3: Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.

1. Assess students' strengths and areas for improvement before teaching a new strategy or skill.

On-demand writing prompts

Choose a Topic and Complete the Handout

One topic:

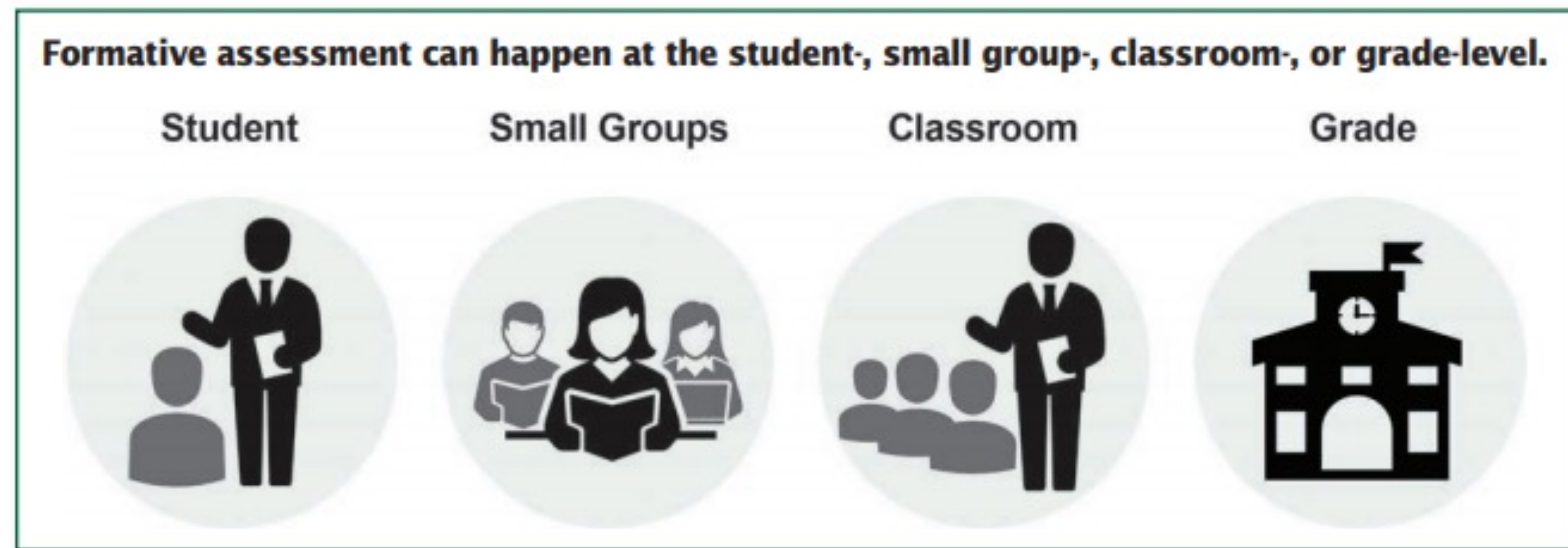
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Purpose	Possible Writing Topics
Express and Reflect	
Inform and Explain	
Evaluate and Judge	
Inquire and Explore	
Analyze and Interpret	
Take a Stand/Propose a Solution	

Recommendation #3: Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.

2. Analyze student writing to tailor instruction and target feedback.

Figure 3.2. Tailoring instruction at different levels



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Takeaways on scoring – involving the whole team:

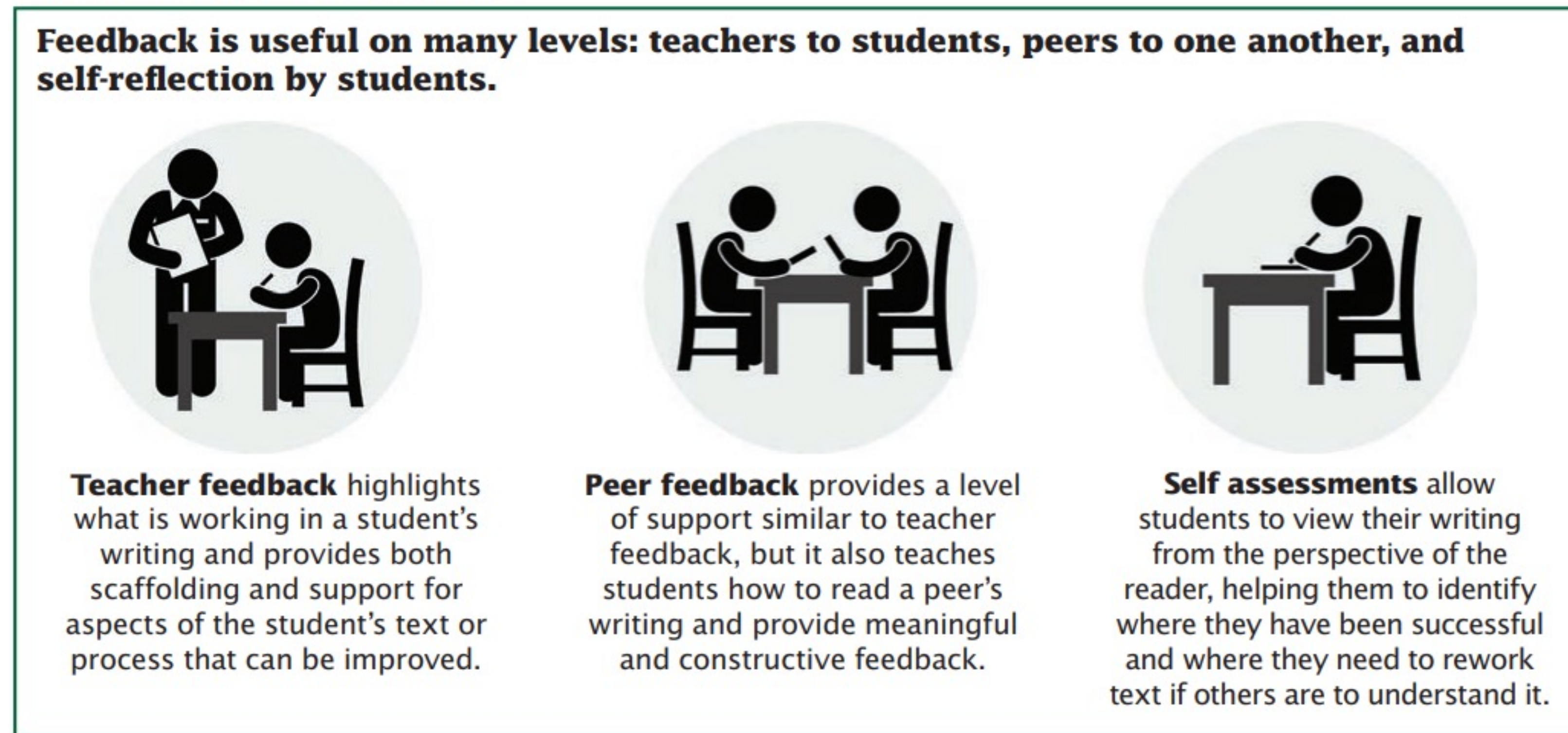
- Use or develop rubrics across teacher teams, teach students how to self-assess, and teach to the highest score on the rubric.
- Establish practice/anchor sets and provide a mini-training so that others can also recognize papers that score at all levels (focus on developing the “lines” between rubric points.) Occasionally, pull a sample of student responses and evaluate them together to avoid “scoring drift.”
- Provide plenty of time for students to write and provide them with feedback so they can continually improve the quality of their writing.

How do you work or could you work across disciplines or teams to ensure consistency of writing tasks and scoring?

Recommendation #3: Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.

2. Analyze student writing to tailor instruction and target feedback.

Figure 3.3. Levels of feedback⁸⁶



Recommendation #3: Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.

Strategy for Revising – RADaR process

- **Replace**
- **Add**
- **Delete and**
- **Reorder**

Gallagher, Kelly. (2011). Write Like This: Teaching Real-World Writing Through Modeling & Mentor Texts. Portland, ME. Stenhouse Publishers.

RAD and R

R	A	D and	R
REPLACE...	ADD...	Delete...	Reorder...
...words that are not specific. ...words that are overused. ...sentences that are unclear.	...new information. ...descriptive adjectives and adverbs. ...rhetorical or literary devices.	...unrelated ideas. ...sentences that sound good but create unity problems. ...unnecessary details.	...to make better sense or to flow better. ...so details support main ideas. ...to avoid “bed-to bed” writing.

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Scaffolding Revision/Editing

Marking Text for Self-Review of Student Paragraphs

Using the sample paragraph, follow the steps on the handout for scaffolding revision, marking your text as noted.

Make revisions/edits based on your close reading of the paragraph.

Share the paragraph with a partner, review, and revise again.

Persuasive Paragraph on Women's Rights

Expectations for women in the work place should be reasonable so that women can successfully manage family and work place responsibilities.¹ Although flexibility may be "officially" extended at work, including leave for birth of a child or the ability to work from home when necessary, the culture of the workplace may be such that it is² expected that a woman would not take advantage of these. For example, Marissa Mayer was recently hired as the president of Yahoo. She is pregnant and intends on taking only a brief time of leave when she has her baby. In fact, she says she will be working from home very soon afterward.³ This is unrealistic for most women and should not be the expectation. If women perform well at work, they must be assured that they will be afforded the flexibility to take care of their families.

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Recommendation #3: Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.

3. Regularly monitor students’ progress while teaching writing strategies and skills.

EXAMPLE 3.6.

A sample tracking sheet to monitor student progress over time

A teacher tracked analytic scores of one student over the course of three weeks, across multiple writing prompts. The teacher measured the student on vocabulary and syntax during a unit on *The Great Gatsby*.

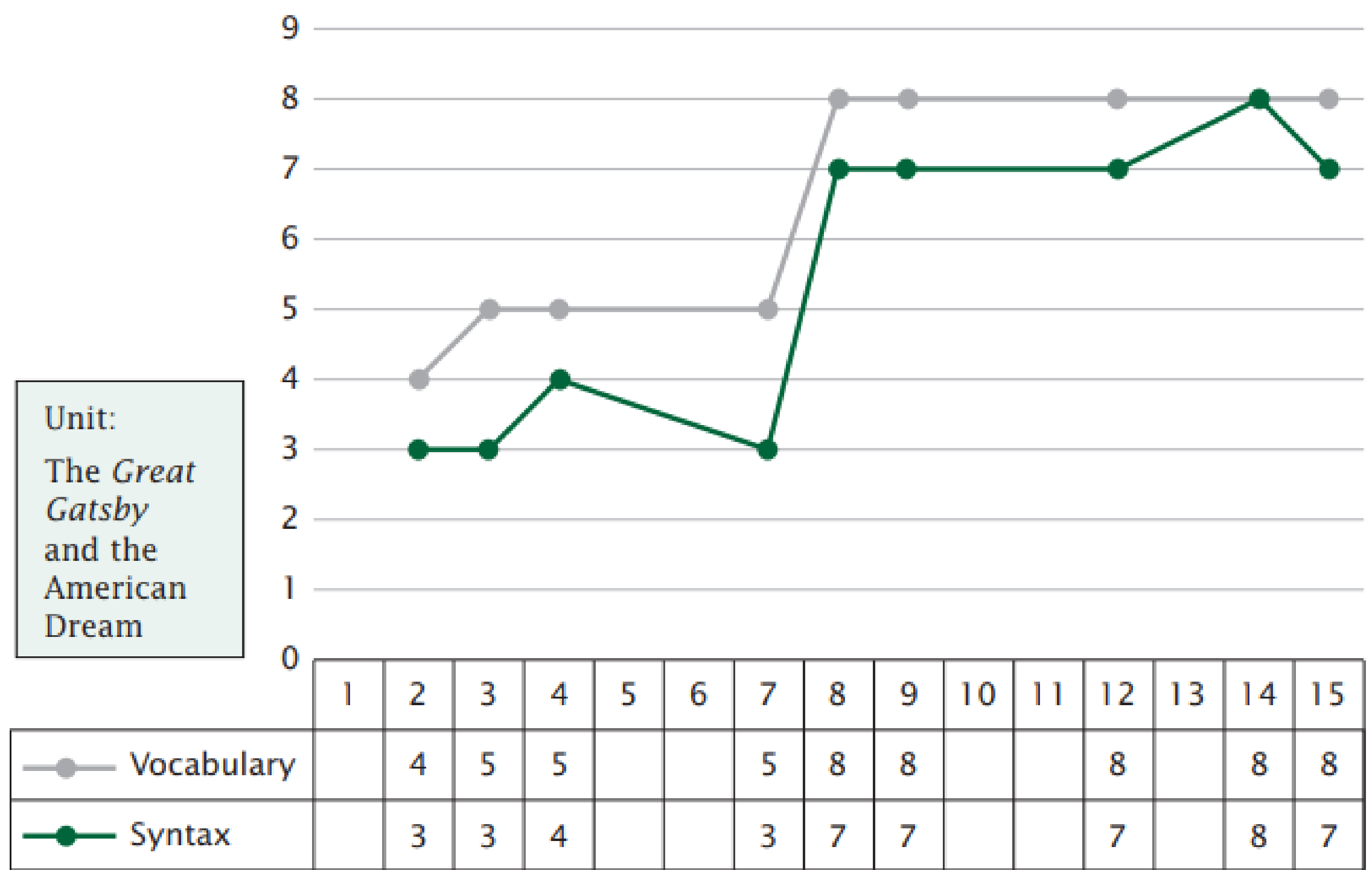
Data from Student Writing Prompts, Week 1: Vocabulary and Syntax

	Week 1					Week 2					Week 3				
	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F
Vocabulary		4	5	5											
Syntax		3	3	4											

How do you track student writing progress over time?

Using a spreadsheet, the teacher graphed the total score (on a scale of 0 to 10) to create a visual representation to monitor progress over the unit (see graph below). The data illustrate that the student was struggling with vocabulary and syntax in the first week of the unit.

Noticing this, the teacher pulled a small group of students who were all struggling with vocabulary and syntax and provided a short lesson. The teacher continued to monitor student progress during Weeks 2 and 3. The graph below shows that the student improved his or her scores on vocabulary and syntax after the small-group lesson in Week 2, maintained high scores for the remainder of the unit, and was ready to advance to the next topic at the end of Week 3.



Recap of Session Goals

1. Introduce the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
Practice Guides *Teaching Elementary School Students to Become Effective Writers* and *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively*
2. Review the recommendations in the practice guides and their evidence levels
3. Share examples of activities that help to implement the recommendations in the classroom

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