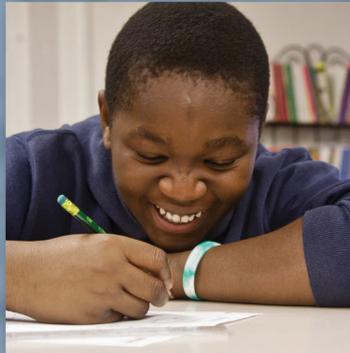


# Study Guide



# Writing Clubs

Fostering Choice, Collaboration, and  
Community in the Writing Classroom



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Writing Clubs

" . . . a recent survey of CEOs determined that the number one skill they look for in future employees is the ability to collaborate (Palmisano 2010)." —page 1

Consider your current classroom practices. How often do you provide meaningful opportunities for collaboration? Do these opportunities exist equally across content areas?

As noted in Chapter 1, state and local standards most often specifically mention collaborative and communication skills. Which standards or curriculum guidelines in your state, district, or school closely align with collaboration as a necessary tool for success?

On page 4, Lisa and Patty recall the work of Donald Murray, who is often considered the founder of the writing workshop. He emphasizes the need for choice and collaboration so that our work with students can more closely resemble the work of real writers. Consider your current work with students: How much choice do you provide? How much opportunity is there for collaboration?

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you see writing clubs fitting within your current method of teaching writing across the year?
2. Do standalone clubs or complement study clubs resonate more with you?
3. What rewards and/or challenges do you anticipate?
4. Which models of teaching and learning described in Chapter 1 have you experienced? Reflect on the pros and cons of each.

### PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

Note the schedules for workshops with and without clubs on page 6. How do these types of time frames match your current practice? What might you need to adapt?

**QUOTES TO CONSIDER**

*“Writing can be a lonely endeavor. Even in workshop classrooms where students are surrounded by their peers, writing is generally completed alone. One way to combat the isolation of writing is through writing clubs.” —page 4*

*“In classrooms that use clubs as an instructional approach, the teacher is not the only expert in the classroom; instead, she advocates for peer-to-peer learning by harnessing each student’s expertise. Students are taught to look to their peers for help and as mentors.” —page 4*

# Chapter 2

## Launching Writing Clubs

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Consider the ideas for building community on pages 20–23.
  - a. What read-alouds have you used to successfully build community?
  - b. Do any of the suggestions for building community through writing resonate with you? What might you try?
2. As you do this work with students, remember to model the writing process yourself. Consider creating your own six-word memoir, a Humans of New York-style piece, or a heart map.
  - a. If these strategies won't work well for your grade level or your specific students, what might you try instead? Reflect on what you gain as a writer through these pieces that can help inform your teaching.
3. Reflect on pages 24–26 by considering how the book suggests we use student strengths as an entry point for providing feedback, and for surfacing how students can support each other in partnerships.
  - a. How might this strength-based model increase engagement and achievement?
  - b. How might this strength-based philosophy influence other subjects you teach?
4. Read the description of Lisa teaching a mentor text to help students read like writers on pages 29–32.
  - a. How does this type of teaching connect to strategies you have already used with students?
  - b. What might you try with your students based on what you read here?
5. On pages 33–37, Lisa provides an opportunity for students to provide feedback on her piece as practice before they work with partnerships and writing clubs.
  - a. How do you envision this kind of strategy working in your classroom?

**PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE**

This chapter has many practical ideas for moving from theory to practice using writing clubs. Considering your students, create a plan for moving from building a community of writers, to forming partnerships, and then to forming clubs.

**QUOTES TO CONSIDER**

*“To enhance our students’ ability to offer feedback, we ask students to listen to a piece and notice when they have a question, want to know more, or wish the writer had used a certain writing strategy.”* —page 33

*“When teaching kids to offer suggestions to others, we make it clear that they are not allowed to comment on things such as spelling, grammar, and punctuation. They are not editors—we want feedback on content, not conventions.”* —page 37

# Chapter 3

## Process Clubs

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. On page 42, Lisa and Patty list what they believe to be true about the writing process.
  - a. Create your own list, borrowing from, revising, and adding to the list provided in the book.
  - b. How will your beliefs impact your creation of writing clubs? Are there any shifts you will need to make in your thinking to more fully support writing clubs?
2. On page 44, the authors describe their practice percentage rule and outline choices students make.
  - a. As you consider these ideas, reflect on what you will keep the same during your writing workshop, and what you might need to change in order to help students develop the level of independence described here.
3. Read the list of possible lesson prompts to consider on pages 46–51.
  - a. Consider your current work with your students, or choose a writing unit of study you want to focus on.
  - b. Review the lesson prompts and decide which ones will help you the most as you support your students while they develop independent writing processes.
4. On pages 53–54, you will find a list of questions students have about how writing clubs will be formed.
  - a. How do these questions inform the way teachers and students form their clubs?
  - b. As you continue to read the description of the initial club formations, what thoughts do you have as a teacher?
  - c. Will this type of procedure work in your classroom? If not, how might you adjust what you read here?
5. Consider the four learning opportunities described on pages 59–60.
  - a. How might these ideas motivate your students? Do you see opportunities in any of these ideas for helping to create more independence and agency in your writers?

6. Study the calendar of lessons on pages 61–64.
  - a. As you plan a unit, when do you see your complement clubs starting within the unit?
  - b. When do you see the learning opportunities fitting in?

### **PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE**

If you are using this study guide with a group of teachers while you read and implement ideas in the book, commit to starting writing clubs prior to the next meeting. Also, commit to trying one of the learning opportunities listed on pages 59 and 60. Be ready to share successes, questions, and challenges at the next meeting.

If you are reading this book independently, reflect on how your work with developing clubs is going, and reflect with your students on the impact of the learning opportunities described on pages 59 and 60. If you wish to collaborate with other educators, search [#WritingClubs](#) on Twitter and Facebook!

### **QUOTES TO CONSIDER**

*“The writing process is the heartbeat of writing. If there is anything we want students to take away from their year with us, it is the writing process.”* —page 41

# Chapter 4

## Craft Clubs: Studying Mentor Texts Together

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In preparing for this club, you will need to gather mentor texts students can use in order to emulate craft moves. A list of suggested mentor texts can be found on pages 68 and 69. Keeping with Lisa and Patty’s belief that “less is more”
  - a. which books in the list do you know, and which might you use,
  - b. are there other mentor texts you have used successfully, and
  - c. as you select mentor texts for a personal narrative or memoir unit, are you ensuring that your students’ identities are represented in the texts you provide?
2. How will you determine which crafts to emphasize during the lessons in this unit? As Lisa and Patty recommend on pages 75–77, consider students’ strengths and needs and the requirements of the genre you are studying.
3. Refer to the sample sequence of lessons for a nonfiction unit on pages 78–80. Reflect on how the specific ideas might inform your work with a particular unit of study. Consider the following questions:
  - a. Based on genre, what mentor texts will you use, and how will you organize them? (e.g., Do you need to provide multiple copies of certain texts?)
  - b. How will you guide student inquiry as they examine mentor texts for specific craft moves?
  - c. Based on students’ needs and the genre, which craft moves do you plan to emphasize?
  - d. How will you form clubs?
  - e. How often do you plan to use clubs during the unit?

### **PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE**

Pages 70–75 describe ideas for how to prepare and launch craft clubs. Reflect on how each of these elements of the launch might work in your classroom. What do you envision working? What might you need to adapt or add?

- Choosing when craft clubs will happen
- Teaching points to consider
- Self-assessment
- Launching clubs

### **QUOTES TO CONSIDER**

*“Like all writers, studying mentor texts and emulating craft moves from other authors makes your writing better and also makes you a better writer.”* —page 68

*“As we consider all the things we know about good writing, and all the things we could teach students about crafting writing, we realize we must teach a few key qualities. Among these qualities is a hierarchy—not all traits are created equal.”* —page 71 (See the hierarchy on page 72)

*“If there is a secret to writing, we believe it is elaboration.”* —page 77

*“We believe exposing students to new authors and books is one of the most important jobs of any literacy teacher.”* —page 81

# Chapter 5

## Digital Clubs

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. On pages 83–85, Lisa and Patty note how technology can increase engagement and motivation in the classroom, but they also stress the importance of thoughtful application of technology. After reading these first few pages, reflect on the following questions:
  - a. Consider how you have added technology to your teaching in the past; have any of these experiences been more “language arts and crafts” (page 85) than a meaningful, integrated learning opportunity?
  - b. Identify experiences that were the most authentic to you while teaching technology. Think of an example beyond just “doing” technology. What made these experiences more authentic?
2. On page 85, the SAMR model is briefly described. Read more deeply about this model by accessing the provided link, or go to another resource that provides details and examples of each of the four elements: substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition.
3. As you consider your past experiences with technology and teaching, are there any trends you notice regarding the models you use most often?
4. Use the ideas from pages 88–90 to consider how your own work with students may go.
  - a. What can you adopt? What might you need to adapt?
5. On pages 86–87, you will find materials you will need to make this type of unit successful. As you read over these pages, are there resources you currently have that will support a digital writing unit? Are there resources you need?
6. On pages 93–94, you will find key lessons for various units, with possible digital extensions for these lessons.
  - a. Which lessons do you think you might be able to implement into one of your current or upcoming units?
  - b. Can you think of other digital extensions not listed here?

**PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE**

Study the sample unit on pages 95–98. When do you plan to incorporate technology lessons into your teaching? When and how will you implement digital clubs into your unit?

**QUOTES TO CONSIDER**

*“ . . . integrating technology into teaching is fraught with the risk that it will be used in ineffective or inauthentic ways. In other words, we don’t want to do technology for technology’s sake.”* —page 84

*“We have seen the advantage of adding digital clubs to units of study: increased engagement, authentic collaboration, and a new level of interest in the work due to a wider audience.”*  
—page 85

*“Once we teach students a few basics, we step aside and encourage them to teach us. When it comes to using technology, we can’t think of a better time to let our students lead the way.”* —page 92

# Chapter 6

## Genre Clubs: Writing Our Favorite Kinds of Writing

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What genres do you think will be most engaging for your students to produce?
2. What choices will you provide during the Genre Club unit? (See a suggested list on page 103.)
3. Review the suggested Teaching Points to Consider on page 105. What might you adopt from these suggested lessons? What might you adapt or add?
4. As you read pages 105–110, consider how you might adopt or adapt ideas from the chapter in each of these areas:
  - a. Launching clubs
  - b. Forming clubs
  - c. Narrowing genre choices (see page 109)
  - d. Collecting enough books and/or texts
5. As you read through the lesson suggestions on pages 110–118, how might your teaching go? Consider your students' experiences as writers as you reflect on how you might support them in each of these stages:
  - a. Reading like a writer
  - b. Writing try-its
  - c. Using mentor text to find ideas (page 114)
  - d. Using mentor texts to differentiate between what specific genres must have and might have (page 115)
  - e. Celebrating

### PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

Consider Patty's launch from her own fourth-grade classroom, and the reasons that led her to want to create more collaboration, choice, and voice in her writing workshop. Are you experiencing some of those same moments and reflections from your own teaching?

Study the sample unit on pages 119–122. Based on what you know about your students, what successes do you anticipate? What challenges might you encounter? Are there any adaptations you will need to consider before you begin?

### **QUOTES TO CONSIDER**

*“In genre clubs, things like comics, fan fiction, or superhero stories are legitimized and encouraged. Celebrating these often overlooked genres is akin to what Linda Gambrell (1996) calls ‘blessing the book’ in reading.”* —page 102

*“In many classrooms, a discussion of audience seems to be left until students are at the end of the writing process. As writers, however, we realize the importance of knowing your audience from the beginning.”* —page 103

*“Writers need to know it’s okay to write less-than-perfect first drafts because they will have plenty of time to go back and revise their writing later. The important thing is to have something to work on.”* —page 115

*“We have far too few celebrations in our classrooms, and celebration is key to moving struggling learners (2017, 14).”* —page 118

*“Low-stakes writing helps kids fall in love with writing, and this is important. When kids enjoy doing something, they do it more. When they do it more, they get better at it.”* —page 123

# Chapter 7

## Author Clubs: Finding a Writing Mentor

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. During this unit, your writers will spend a lot of time reading like writers, as described on page 126. Reflect on this practice so far in your classroom this year.
  - a. What successes have you and your writers found while reading like writers?
  - b. Have you encountered any challenges?
2. Read over the questions on page 127 that can support your author selections for this study, and then look through the author list on pages 128–132.
  - a. Which authors will you consider for this study?
  - b. How do you plan to get input from your writers regarding author selection? (See pages 137–140 for a specific classroom example of how this teaching may go.)
3. Teaching points for this unit are found on pages 133–135.
  - a. Which author might you use to model your own thinking in this unit?
  - b. Which teaching points might you adopt, and which ones might you adapt?
  - c. Are there any teaching points you plan to add during this unit?

### PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

As you read through one fourth-grade team’s journey starting on page 139, reflect on how your journey with your writers might go in each of these categories. Adopt, adapt, or add as you determine what your writers need.

1. Author choices
2. Incorporating lessons about writing qualities (141–143)
3. Club meetings (143–145)
4. Suggestions for life after author clubs (147)

**QUOTES TO CONSIDER**

*“You want to consider what authors your writers will study—children’s literature today provides a plethora of choices. That being said, don’t overwhelm yourself or your students with an enormous number of options.” —page 127*

*“What was important to this team, and what has always been important to us, is to choose authors that provide students with many access points and the ability to read and study texts in high volume. Therefore, although many excellent authors exist for students at this grade level, it was essential for everyone that the author wrote short and long texts in multiple genres.” —page 140*

*“Keep engagement high by continuing on this road of student autonomy. Consider what choices students have in each unit, and look to create at least three places where students can determine their course of action.” —page 147*

# Chapter 8

## Conventions Clubs

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on how you currently teach conventions in preparation for getting ready to read this chapter.
  - a. Do your students currently incorporate their knowledge of conventions while they write?
  - b. What types of editing practices do you currently use?
2. Refer to the suggested assessment on page 153. If you try this assessment, consider the following:
  - a. What do you notice about your students?
  - b. What are their strengths? What are their needs?
  - c. Does your assessment of your students' knowledge change after you cue them to self-edit for specific purposes?
  - d. As suggested on page 154, based on your state or local standards, how might you prioritize the conventions you focus on throughout the year?
3. On pages 155–162, you will find teaching moves that provide a framework for how you might set up conventions clubs in your classroom. If you decide to try this model, consider how you might adopt or adapt ideas from each of the following:
  - a. Forming clubs
  - b. Identifying mentor sentences for use in the unit (156–157)
  - c. Incorporating self-assessment (158)
  - d. Launching clubs using conventions stations (160–161)
4. Which of the 7 daily pedagogical practices on page 163 do you already incorporate into your teaching? Which ones might you add?

### PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

If you decide to try conventions clubs, use the unit on pages 165–167 to consider how your teaching might progress.

**QUOTES TO CONSIDER**

*“Well, in the wise words of one of our conventions mentors, Jeff Anderson, grammar and conventions are just as much about style as they are about correctness.” —page 150*

*“Our students will actually learn more about the rules of our language system, and when and where to use them correctly and artfully, when we allow them to learn via play and approximation.”  
—page 150*

*“It is helpful to examine student writing with colleagues and even trade writing samples to get their perspective. We often choose to ‘thin slice’ out only or two elements of conventions in any one sitting.” —page 154*

*“Keep low-stakes writing alive. This unit was grounded in lots of try-its and experimentation. Writers really flourish when they have these opportunities to work on their writing outside of publishing cycles.” —page 168*