

Bogard, J. M., & McMackin, M. C. (2012). *Combining Traditional And New Literacies In A 21st-Century Writing Workshop*. *Reading Teacher*, 65(5), 313-323. doi:10.1002/TRTR. 01048

An elementary school Writer's Workshop is a perfect place to examine the seven principals of Best Practice. The term "Best Practice" as it relates to teaching embodies seven distinct principles by which teachers align their instruction and philosophies. Over the past decade, the idea of Best Practice has had several other names, such as inquiry-based learning or authentic instruction. All of these philosophical platforms are primarily based on a distinct shift from traditional classroom-based, fill-in-the-blank instruction.. By placing more ownership and responsibility on the student, the student grasps core concepts and demonstrates proficiency not by retelling information on a strict timetable, but by creating, exploring, and embracing their own creativity and curiosity. Teachers assess students on a more authentic, real-world level, placed in the context of the subject matter, which is often times cross-curricular. In the example put forth by this article, a classroom transitions through the workshop, but in the end, the students present a multimedia representation of a story that would traditionally be on a sheet of wide-ruled paper.

In this article, from the Journal *Reading Teacher*, authors Bogard and McMackin recount a third grade Writer's Workshop at a school in Massachusetts. (Bogard is the teacher of the class.) In a unit delving into the world of personal narrative writing, Bogard gives her students opportunities to first listen to what a personal narrative sounds like by presenting a sampling of books of this genre. They then participated in craft exercises to generate ideas for a topic. By choosing from three graphic organizers next, the students were able to complete the planning step of the workshop, which is usually the most difficult step for third graders to accomplish.

Traditionally, in a writer's workshop, students would move from the planning phase to the first written draft. However, in this model (which closely resembles a "Best Practice" classroom), students were instructed to give a recorded oral retelling of the topic using audio recorders or a wonderful device called a Smartpen. For these students, being able to tell the story orally before writing it down facilitated a breakthrough in their writing success and confidence. It allowed them to add details that would have been left out had they been staring at a blank sheet of paper, wanting to get every word right the first time. As students transitioned to the third step of the workshop, students partnered up and listened to each other's recordings, collaborating and discussing the subject matter, and often suggesting words or ideas that could be added or omitted. After weeks of this planning and fine-tuning of the oral retelling, the students began creating storyboards that illustrated each part of their story, and were guided through how to plan each part of the iMovie that they ultimately created. These stories were shared with all of the students and parents during a "movie night" at the school. The article concludes with some ways that this model is proving to be most effective during the subsequent Poetry unit.

Being literate in the 21st century means much more than being able to comprehend and analyze written information. Students dive into real-world tasks like these because they so closely model the behavior of adults they see in everyday life. I enjoyed this article because one of the most fascinating parts of my teaching career has been the constant drive I have to help children become better writers. The Writer's Workshop model does work, but only if students are given the license to think freely, play around with words, offer and listen to constructive criticism, and know that there is a polished product waiting at the end, to showcase all of their hard work. This workshop model embraces several of the foundation principles of Best Practice,

which do not have a place in many Elementary writing classrooms, which are more error-focused and topic restricted. Students need to be given the opportunity to brainstorm, create, and become passionate about their writing. By following a Best Practices model, successful writers emerge where they would traditionally be left to create uninspired, minimally creative work.