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## ABSTRACT

In this inquiry study, teachers will learn about or refine their understanding of the components of Reading and Writing Workshop. They will begin by living as writers themselves and then explore how to create supportive contexts for the learners in their classrooms. Video footage from a number of classrooms will serve as a series of possibilities as each teacher reconsiders his/her own teaching. A wealth of strategies is included to weave into each teacher's literacy curriculum. Lists 17 professional reading resources selections. (NKA)



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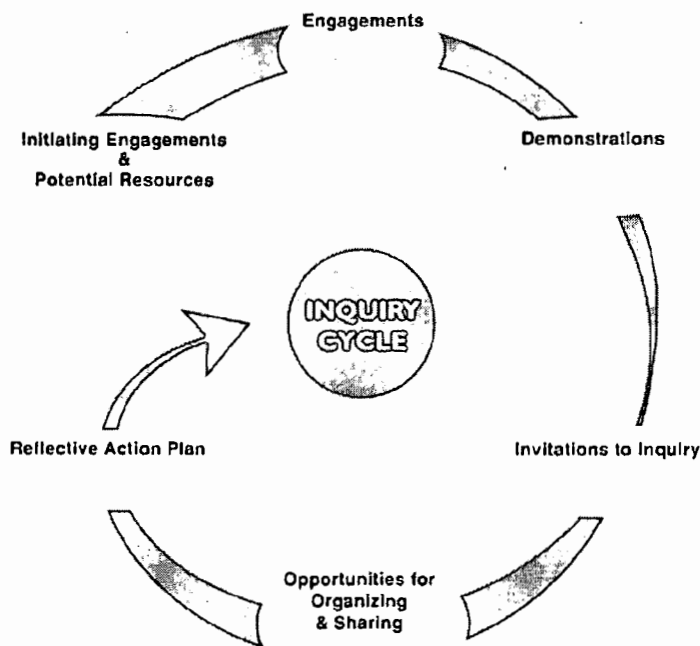
# Inquiry Study into Understanding and Supporting Writers

*As a result of this program, my beliefs about teaching reading and writing will never be the same.*

*I see the art of teaching reading and writing with new and knowledgeable eyes!*

*Participants in the South Carolina Reading Initiative*

In this Inquiry Study, you will learn about or refine your understanding of the components of Reading and Writing Workshop. We will begin by living as writers ourselves and then explore how to create supportive contexts for the learners in our classrooms. Video footage from a number of classrooms will serve as a series of possibilities as you reconsider your own teaching. A wealth of strategies is included to weave into your literacy curriculum.



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Amy Donnelly, Janet Files, Heidi Mills & Diane Stephens  
Spring 2000

Understanding and Supporting Writers

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## LANGUAGE & LEARNING CONCEPTS

The following is a list of learning concepts that will be explored in the study. You are encouraged to add additional concepts that reflect constructivist, inquiry-based learning, as it is not meant to represent an exhaustive list.

- Literacy learners are shaped by their literate histories.
- Classroom literacy environments represent teachers' beliefs about literacy and can encourage or discourage students' interactions and collaborations.
- Reflecting together on current habits and attitudes toward literacy in light of past experiences provides rich insights into the qualities of literate experiences and social relationships teachers create for their own students to become successful and engaged readers.
- Choice is a key element of successful literacy learning.
- Literacy is social.
- Shared reading and shared responsibility in reading instruction decrease risk and encourage the use of supportive strategies for all readers.
- Interactive writing highlights what children know and promotes risk-taking for young writers.
- Guided reading offers reading support to small groups of readers in order to make the more sophisticated, meaning-making strategies of reading explicit and to support individual efforts to comprehend and decipher text in the process of actually reading.
- Authors benefit from a vehicle to share their writing and to receive recognition for their accomplishments.
- Explicit information about language cueing systems is demonstrated during shared reading, providing students opportunities to make, confirm, and revise predictions about text.
- The quantity and types of books that children read are important to their growth as readers and writers.
- Responsive teaching: Theoretically-based reflection enables teachers to document and assess the teaching-learning cycle in action.
- Reading, writing and assessment are inextricably linked.
- Literacy learning is an active and open process of constructing meaning.
- Writers learn to write by reading other writers.
- It is beneficial to keep track of preferences and progress as a reader.
- Readers enter and reenter texts with different perspectives to create meaning and satisfying experiences with reading regardless of age.
- Both as readers and writers, learners need to develop a sense for how particular kinds of texts or genres are structured.
- As readers read a variety of genres they begin to understand the nature and conventions of each style of writing; reading in a variety of genres enhances readers' flexibility as writers.



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### NCTE Reading Initiative

- Successful reading and writing involve the creation of a text world in which meaning is organized and unified. Flexible and generative structures support writers in focusing on the more global aspects of constructing texts, which creates structures more supportive than traditional methods.
- Authors adapt and change story elements and structures to create new meaning.
- Multiple opportunities to interpret texts highlight multiple interpretations.
- Reading in everyday situations involves talk, questions and shared interpretation.
- Social exchanges during literacy events give readers altered stances on the text's developing meaning and help learners focus their thinking in new ways.
- When readers have opportunities to talk as they read, their in-process strategies, personal connections, responses, and overall evolving meaning construction are influenced.
- Ambiguous texts help groups of readers make predictions that are not obvious
- The more we "reenter" a text through different perspectives, the more meaning we can create and the more satisfying our engagement with reading no matter what our age.
- Proficient readers who are able to gain the greatest meaning from text show such characteristics as: a capacity for sustained focused attention; a willingness to suspend closure and entertain multiple interpretations; a tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty leading to a willingness to reread and reread again; and a willingness to change one's mind and appreciate alternative interpretations and visions.
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## FOCUSING QUESTIONS

These are questions that we, as authors of this study, generated to focus the experiences provided in this inquiry study. Everyone in your Reading Initiative group is invited to add questions throughout the study, and throughout the year.

- How is the development of reading supported by the development of writing?
- How do teachers organize reading/writing workshops?
- How can we use published authors in the process of learning to write?
- What are effective assessment tools to track students' preferences and progress as readers?
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## NCTE Reading Initiative

### TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS TOPIC

In addition to asking the questions that came to mind when we considered teachers as active inquirers of their own practice, we generated an initial list of words and phrases related to research and inquiry. You might elect to begin your own list—graffiti-style—on a large piece of butcher paper that can be added to over time. You are also invited to add terms to those below. This list helps frame the territory of our work.

|                               |                                 |                     |                  |                            |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Shared Reading                | Think-aloud                     | Interactive Writing | Reading Workshop | Workshop Learning          |
| Self-Selected Reading         | SSR or Sustained Silent Reading | Talk – written down | Reading Profile  | Reading Interest Inventory |
| Recording/Documenting Devices | Voice                           | Read-aloud          | Writing to learn | Readers' Theatre           |
| Responsive Teaching Cycle     | Writing Workshop                | Guided Reading      | genre            | Author's Chair             |
| Author's Circle               |                                 |                     |                  |                            |
|                               |                                 |                     |                  |                            |
|                               |                                 |                     |                  |                            |

### READING INITIATIVE LEARNING STRANDS

The Reading Initiative professional development experience could be envisioned as a complex tapestry of beliefs, engagements, readings, questions, and reflections. Each engagement is woven onto a foundation provided by the following strands.

| Personal Literacy as part of a Cultural Community   | Knowledge Base   | Close Observation  | Supportive Literacy Contexts   | Professional Culture   |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Focused observations and analysis by each participant of his/her own literacy processes and theories, including the forces that impact those theories | The concepts and experiences explored and supported by professional reading. | Focused observations and analysis of students as literacy learners | Exploration and development of contexts that support and encourage readers and writers | Exploration and development of procedures and contexts that encourage collegiality |



# Understanding and Supporting Writers

## An Overview of the Study

### Initiating Engagements

*Shared experiences that help participants reflect on their personal experiences and knowledge—getting those out into the class conversation—as the group predicts the direction of the study.*

*The consultant facilitates several or all of these experiences to get the study underway.*

### I1

#### Collecting What We Know

As a group, participants contribute to four ongoing collections: 1) questions they have about the language study; 2) at least five resources for a group-created text set, including books, journals, articles in the popular press, writing developmental continua; 3) creating a graffiti board collection of all related words and phrases, i.e., workshop learning, authors chair; and 4) a list: What possible ways could we study the reading-writing connection? and What is the best way to set up classrooms?

### I2

#### Read Aloud Titles

The provided booklist contains titles that highlight the writing process. When responding to the books, consider how each helps us to better understand the role of reading in life, mentors in literacy learning, and the ways in which we use literacy inside and outside of school.

### I3

#### REVISIT Literacy Time Lines

Readers/participants brainstorm significant positive and negative events and create literacy histories to reflect on current habits and attitudes. The experience helps participants develop insights into the impact and qualities of literacy experiences.

### I4

#### REVISIT The Reading/Writing Connection through an Inquiry Study of World War II

This video provides a demonstration and invitation for participants to articulate an initial personal theory of literacy. The video shows how reading, writing, and assessment are woven together across the curriculum.

### Potential Resources

*Multiple and varied sources of information that provide alternative perspectives and create opportunities for complex connections.*

*All participants in the study group contribute resources to a collective text set. NCTE provides key articles and video footage. Consultant reads all articles in planning the study.*

### Creating a Text Set

Participants each contribute at least five resources for a group-created text set, including books, journals, articles in the popular press, pamphlets, etc.

### Professional Reading

Optional: Schedule part of each meeting to read from the evolving text set, providing an opportunity to seek information to inform the group's questions.



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### Engagements

*Opportunities to test out and explore multiple perspectives on the language process.*

*These experiences might be facilitated by the consultant or by a group leader in the consultant's absence. Some experiences are lived outside of the study group time.*

#### E1

##### Learning from Van Gogh

Read in pairs "The Room in Which Van Gogh Lived" by C. Rylant, which emphasizes the importance of reading other authors when learning to write, as well as the importance of choice.

#### E3

##### REVISIT Setting Up a Literacy Environment

Participants view a video of Elcna Castro's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom and create or revise their own classroom structures so they are support student interactions and collaborations.

#### E2

##### Cloning an Author

A predictable poem or patterned-text book is selected and copied as a shared writing; writers then develop individual pieces using personal topics or themes.

#### E4

##### Supporting and Celebrating Authors

After living a writing experience themselves through the Family Literacy Story Workshop, participants ways they would use an Author's Chair in their classrooms, providing a vehicle for writers to share accomplishments.

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### Demonstrations

*Examination of language concepts and the learning process. Build from learners' questions and help to generate new insights.*

*Demonstrations are led by the consultant and help build new knowledge and understandings. They generally follow the preceding group and individual experiences.*

The video demonstrations in this inquiry study, taken together, highlight a range of reading and writing engagements that make up "Reading / Writing Workshop." Video clips can be viewed across several meetings, with an invitation to participants to work in or refine one engagement at a time in their own classrooms. The Responsive Teaching Cycle can be used with several or many of the clips.

#### D2

##### REVISIT Talking on Paper

"Written Conversation: 1st and 5<sup>th</sup> Graders" and "Letter Writing Exchange with Jossie" are viewed to initiate discussions of writing conventions and supporting the reading of young learners. Highlights concepts like printed words are talk written down and young writers' knowledge of sound/letter relationships.

#### D4

##### Writing Workshop Launched with a Great Book

Participants observe how a teacher supports student choice and different developmental writing levels during writing workshop.

#### D1

##### Writing Workshop in Action

Participants view the video and discuss students' strengths and needs as authors, looking for commonalities and differences in interpretations of these students' writings. The *Three Pluses and a Wish* form is introduced.

#### D3

##### Interactive Writing

After viewing the video, participants discuss how interactive writing is used with an entire class, similar to shared reading.

#### D5

##### REVISIT Touring a Transition-First-Grade

Participants document ways in which literacy learning opportunities are structured for students.



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**D6**  
**REVISIT Teacher Beliefs at the Heart of Curriculum**  
Connections are made with the Kindergarten teacher's classroom engagements and those of R1 participants'.

**D7**  
**Strategy Sharing Session**  
Children share strategies that have worked for them during writing workshop that day. Participants create a "what matters about writing" list based on their observations.

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**Invitations to Inquiry**  
*Experimenting by applying questions, tools, and methods of inquiry to a specific issue.*

*Invitations to inquiry provide opportunities to conduct focused, short inquiries to further explore concepts and questions that have been raised. Participants are invited to choose or create their own inquiries as appropriate. They can be explored by individuals, small groups, or by the entire group.*

**Q1**  
**REVISIT Stories, Samples of Students' Work**  
Participants bring in samples of student's reading and writing progress to help interpret student growth and make new plans for future strategy or mini-lessons and instructional engagements.

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**Opportunities for Organizing & Sharing**  
*Public displays—charts, webs, lists, notes—or accumulating ideas, knowledge, and plans*

*These are used at different places in the study and are saved to revisit over time.*

**With I3**  
REVISIT Timelines of key literacy experiences.

**With E3**  
REVISIT "Literate classroom" designs.

**With D5**  
REVISIT Documentation of ways literacy learning opportunities are structured for students and drafts of weekly teaching schedules.

**With D6 & RA1**  
REVISIT Literacy engagements list.  
With RA1: Drafts of weekly schedules that incorporate Reading-Writing Workshop into the classroom.

**With D7**  
"What matters about writing" list.

**With RA2**  
REVISIT Questions after reviewing assessment forms.

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**Reflection/Action Plan**

*Focused plans that help learners reflect on their current experience and opinions in constructing their understanding of the unit of study and subsequent new practice.*

*An opportunity to take new action based on new knowledge, and an opportunity to reflect on future directions the group or individual learning might take.*

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**RA1**

**REVISIT Here's What a Reading/Writing Workshop Will Look Like in My Classroom**

Using the literacy engagements viewed on video as a guide, participants create drafts of weekly schedules that incorporate Reading-Writing Workshop into their classrooms.

**RA2**

**REVISIT Questions, Confusions, and Wishes for Future Reading Initiative Sessions**

Participants generate lists of questions, confusions, and wishes for future Reading Initiative sessions after reviewing assessment forms.



## Professional Reading Understanding and Supporting Writers

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## Suggested Study Group Titles

### Grades 3-5

*In the company of children.* Joanne Hindley, Stenhouse (1996).

### Grades 6-9

*In the middle—2<sup>nd</sup> edition.* Nancie Atwell, Heinemann/NCTE (1998).

## Video Clips

### **Writing-Reading Connection through a Study of World War II**

Judi Inabinet, 5th Grade  
Myrtle Beach Intermediate School  
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

### **Interactive Writing**

Donna Jarvis, Kindergarten  
Bradley Elementary School  
Columbia, South Carolina.

### **Written Conversation: First and Fifth Graders**

**Letter Writing Exchange with Jossie**  
Jean Anne Clyde.

### **Strategy Sharing Session**

Tim O'Keefe, 3rd grade  
Center for Inquiry  
Columbia, South Carolina.

### **Writing Workshop**

Tim O'Keefe, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade  
Center for Inquiry  
Columbia, South Carolina.

### **Writing Workshop Launched with Read Aloud**

Marti Hancock, Kindergarten  
Carolina Forest Elementary School  
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

### **Kindergarten Classroom Tour**

Dori Gilbert, Center for Inquiry  
Columbia, South Carolina.

### **Transition-First-Grade Classroom Tour**

Tim O'Keefe, Center for Inquiry  
Columbia, South Carolina.



## Classroom Strategies The Reading/Writing Connection

Each of the NCTE Reading Initiative Inquiry Studies includes many strategies for use in classrooms, as well as with your own learning. Sometimes, as in the Reading & Writing Connection study, we have included specific directions for a number of strategies. Other times, they are embedded in the study's engagements and professional reading. See Appendix A for a description of each of these strategies.

### Components of Reading/Writing Workshop

- Authors Circle
- Authoring Cycle Model
- Book Talks
- Jump-in Reading
- Guided Reading
- Readers' Theater
- Shared Reading
- Sustained Silent Reading
- Workshop Learning and the Teaching of Reading

### Instructional Strategies

- Getting to Know You
- Me Box Strategy
- A Literacy Time Line: Our Reading and Writing History
- Written Conversation

### Reflection Strategies

- Exit/Entrance Slips
- Focused Free-Writes

### Response Strategies

- Bookmark Strategy
- Cloning A Book
- Drama in the Classroom
- Reading Tableaux Drama
- Say Something
- Writing to Learn



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