

 **AUDIO**  
4:32 min

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## Writing Every Day in Every Class

Alisha Bollinger  
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**Topic** TEACHING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EFFECTIVE WRITERS

**Practice** DAILY TIME

- Highlights**
- » It is important that students learn and practice every day. Daily practice time is beneficial to both struggling and advanced writers.
  - » In reading classes, students can respond in writing to the texts that they read. Writing can be integrated into all subject areas, including social studies, math, and science.
  - » In one school, students researched types of energy and wrote about their research. Students were motivated to write because these were topics they learned about in science class and that they found meaningful.

### About the Interviewee

Alisha A. Bollinger received her B.A. from Benedictine College and her M.Ed. from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. She has 10 years of experience as an elementary teacher and special education teacher. Ms. Bollinger has served as a mentor for new teachers, a staff development facilitator, and a curriculum leader, in addition to participating in professional learning communities. She also has worked on both building- and districtwide teams to develop writing curricula and has worked as a teacher leader in the implementation of those plans. Ms. Bollinger currently teaches fourth grade at Norris Elementary School in Firth, Nebraska.

## Full Transcript



**00:05** My name is Alisha Bollinger. I'm a fourth-grade teacher at Norris Elementary School in Firth, Nebraska.

**00:11** In the Practice Guide we suggest that teachers find a way to incorporate an hour of writing instruction every day. And that seems like a lot at first glance, but really we're asking teachers to do a half an hour of instruction, where they teach a variety of different strategies related to being an effective writer, and then to find time for half an hour for students to practice those strategies during the school day. And that can be stretched throughout the school day into other subject areas.


**00:40** Students need daily practice to improve on the skills that we're teaching them but also to gain confidence in their own writing. And it takes time to teach students all the skills they need to be effective writers.


**00:54** One suggestion is to teach your writing skills and strategies early in the day and then take opportunities throughout the rest of the day to reinforce those concepts. There are so many ways that teachers can incorporate writing into other parts of the school day.


**01:12** One easy way to do that is in reading class. Having students respond to what they're reading; give their opinions or evaluate what they're reading and write about that.


**01:22** In a social studies class, you might ask students to create a journal as though they were a historical character from the timeframe that you're studying. You might ask them to write an opinion about a current event that's happening or an event that's happened in history.


**01:38** In science there are great opportunities to teach students about descriptive writing—doing science experiments and then asking them to write and describe what they observe.

 **01:50** Even in math—a subject that we don’t always think about having a lot of opportunities to write—we can ask students to write about the process that they used to solve a problem. Or we can allow them to research the subjects that they’re learning about there in math. And in all of those ways we can reinforce the skills that we’re teaching them in the writing classroom.

 **02:10** One of my favorite experiences teaching writing throughout the curriculum came from teaching writing as a part of my science curriculum. We were studying the different types of energy, so we were studying wind energy and hydroelectric power and nuclear energy and talking with the students about that. And then we asked students to research one of those and then come back and write an opinion piece about the type of energy they had researched: What were the pros, what were the cons? It was something where my teammates and I had sat down and looked at, this would be a nice place to reinforce what we were teaching in writing about opinion writing. But it was wonderful to see, once the students got started with it, how excited they were to write about something that they were learning about in the science classroom.

 **02:58** I think integrating our writing instruction into other areas helps students build skills because it’s building upon other things that they’re learning and things that they see a value in. So when they’re writing, they’re writing about something that is important to them or they’re writing about something that they’re being held accountable for in another subject area, and we have the opportunity not only to reinforce a writing skill but also to reinforce that science or social studies concept or to reinforce what they’re reading.

 **03:31** Sometimes teachers are unsure of how to incorporate writing into other subject areas, and one of the first places that I would encourage them to start is look at the opportunities that are already there. In a textbook it may ask questions that ask students to write about what they’re learning. Have them answer that question that asks, “Please explain how you found your answer” in math, and make them use the written language to show that explanation.

 **03:58** It's important for every student, whether they be a student who's struggling with writing or a student who's already very proficient at writing, to have that opportunity to practice every day. That daily practice allows them to improve on their writing. And even for our strongest writers, we want them to continue to improve. And for those struggling writers, it gives them a much-needed way of building their confidence and building their skill levels.

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