

DOINGWHATWORKS

 **VIDEO**
5:37 min

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Writing in Everything We Do

Eagle View Elementary School, Virginia
April 2012

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

Practice **DAILY TIME**

- Highlights**
- » Fifth-grade students write personal letters to third-grade students to explain the concepts of perimeter, area, and volume.
 - » Students are encouraged to use illustrations and real-world examples in their letters.
 - » Working with partners helps students think aloud about the examples that they would like to use.

About the Site **Eagle View Elementary School
Fairfax, Virginia**

Demographics


- » 38% Asian
- » 27% White
- » 15% Hispanic
- » 14% Black
- » 6% Other
- » 21% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- » 30% English Language Learners
- » 13% Special Education

Eagle View Elementary School, in Fairfax, Virginia, integrates writing into the daily curriculum of all subject areas. The teachers emphasize writing's importance in communication and learning. Eagle View teachers:


- » Provide daily writing time through Writer's Workshop;
- » Teach the writing process and writing for a variety of purposes;
- » Develop students' foundational writing skills, such as spelling, handwriting, text structure, and sentence construction; and
- » Build an engaged community of writers.


Full Transcript





Lindsay Bowers:  **00:03** My name is Lindsay Bowers. I teach fifth grade at Eagle View Elementary in Fairfax, Virginia.


I make sure that my students have time to write every day by including writing in just about everything we do. I use writing in all content areas across the curriculum.


Bowers (to class)  **00:19** We are going to write personal letters. You guys are going to be paired up with the students in Ms. Costello's class. And one of these students, the student that you get, has trouble with one of the three things: Either they don't get area, they don't get perimeter, or they don't get volume. So you are going to write a letter helping them out with *What is area?*, *What is perimeter?*, *What is volume?*


Bowers  **00:42** In our math lesson today, our big focuses were perimeter, area, and volume, and these are things that we have been working on for a while. But the general concepts of these three things for fifth graders are still a little bit difficult. It's hard for them to really explain what perimeter is, and area, and volume. They can point out, "Oh, this is volume, this is perimeter," but being able to explain it in words is when they've really kind of mastered the concept.


 **01:08** So today what we did was we wrote letters to third graders, third graders that needed help with these things. There is a standard where the third graders, they do need to understand perimeter and area, and we included volume for some of the higher-level-thinking third graders that understand area and perimeter.


Bowers (to class)  **01:25** So what I want you guys to do before you begin your letter, I want to make sure that we have a good idea of a real-world example that we want to use. Now we had a couple that we did, and you guys all talked about them. I would like us to try to stay away from the ones that we did as a group, and I want you guys to come up with your own, okay? Now in these letters, it is okay to include some pictures to help them understand, but definitely some real-world examples and explain what perimeter is, what area is, what volume is.


Bowers  **02:01** They had to draw a picture, write a real-world example, and then explain it. And what that was, was it helped them plan out what they were going to write in their letter. So while that part seemed like the big math focus, what it really did was help them plan for their writing. So now they know what the real-world example is that they want to include in their writing piece, and they know the kind of explanation that they want to put in their writing piece for the third grader. And that's where they started asking the questions of "Should I use dimension in my explanation? Or should I try to find a different word?" So that was definitely the planned piece of the writing. It definitely looked a little bit different than a typical plan for a story.

Student 1 (to other student)  **02:50** For the garden...I did for the side 14 feet, and the other side 32 feet. And what I did was I multiplied it and I got 448 feet. I'm going to try to write it differently so they understand.

Bowers  **03:08** After about 15 minutes of writing, 15-20 minutes of writing, I had the students stop. And it didn't matter where they were, all I wanted to do was kind of share out the different pieces that they had, and if anybody is willing to share, that's good. So a couple students were willing to share, and I think it's important for students to hear their peers' writing, because they have ideas that maybe they didn't think of.

Student 2 (to class)  **03:32** I'm going to help you understand volume a little better. Volume is how much you can put in a 3D object. Like in a movie when you wear 3D glasses, the screen pops out and you feel like you can touch it.

Bowers  **03:44** Typically, we'll spend about 10, 15, maybe 20 minutes a day focusing on a certain concept, whether it be a certain grammar concept or kind of generating big ideas or main ideas for your stories. But what we really want them to do is take it and use it in real writing. So we'll go over it as the whole class, we'll talk about it, we'll have discussions, and then they go and do it independently. And there are always the few students, a handful of students that need the extra one-on-one attention, extra small-group attention. They don't get it in the whole group, so when everybody else is going and doing it independently, I pull those students and then I'll work an extra 10, extra 15 minutes with them. And then another part where we kind of share out our writing, it gives them the opportunity to kind of be the teacher and critique other students' writing. So they'll work on it independently, and then some students will come up and they'll share. And then we'll talk about the things that they did well and the things that we can correct, whether that be the concept that we did for the day or possibly something we did in the past, or it could be something totally new that somebody just recognized today.

 **04:55** There is limited time throughout the day, so I do have to plan accordingly with writing. They do need to see writing in different forms—in social studies, in science, and in math—and recognize that writing isn't just used because the teacher wants you to write. But the big idea for having them write in math is trying to get them to

understand the concepts, and then it is kind of the double whammy of, okay, so now they understand the math concept better and they got a double dose of writing today, and it didn't necessarily seem like writing because they were doing math.

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