



# IGNITE *to* WRITE

## THE How to Teach Writing CONFERENCE

  
VIRTUAL  
& *Interactive*

June 26-27

## PROGRAM GUIDE

### WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Conference schedule
- Secret Site instructions
- Session descriptions
- Coach's Corner sign-up link
- Graduate-level credit information
- Presenter biographies
- Recommended resources
- More PD opportunities



## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

(In Eastern Time)

### DAY ONE | JUNE 26

9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Opening & Keynote
10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.	Breakout sessions
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Breakout sessions
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Lunch break
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Breakout sessions
3:15 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.	Breakout sessions

### DAY TWO | JUNE 27

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Breakout sessions
10:15 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.	Breakout sessions
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Breakout sessions
12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Lunch break
1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.	Breakout sessions
2:45 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.	Conference Closing

**T**hank you for attending Ignite to Write! Throughout the conference, our team of presenters will share some of Smekens Education's best strategies for teaching writing. Our goal is to offer a diverse mix of topics and sessions so that you gain the strategies and motivation you need to light up your writing instruction.

Inside this guide, you will find a host of important information, including the itinerary and session descriptions. As you are choosing sessions, consider whether you want to immerse in a single strand of writing topics or if you want to explore a variety of topics from multiple strands.

## THIS & THAT

### CONFERENCE INTERACTION

One of the perks of the Ignite to Write virtual conference is that attendees have the opportunity to interact in real time with session presenters and other attendees by using the chat function. Take advantage of this opportunity to ask questions, share ideas, and collaborate with other educators!

### SESSION RECORDINGS

A huge benefit of attending the virtual conference is that you have access to video recordings of every session until June 27, 2026! If you registered before the Early Bird deadline, you have an additional year of access.

### CONTENT SHARING

Only educators who paid to attend Ignite to Write are allowed to access the conference video recordings and materials. Each attendee has been provided a personalized, traceable link, and the sharing of that link is prohibited. A violation of this policy will result in immediate revocation of access to Ignite to Write sessions, including the Ignite to Write Secret Site.

## OPENING & KEYNOTE | 9:00 - 10:30 A.M.

### Be the spark for every writer

Rekindle your enthusiasm for teaching writing during this powerful keynote led by Kristina Smekens. With a focus on whole-class mini-lessons, Kristina will provide instructional techniques to teach essential writing skills explicitly and effectively at all levels.

Kristina will share practical strategies and writing practices that ignite your motivation to teach writing and fuel your students' confidence in attempting it. The keynote will spark the start of your conference and get you ready for all the sessions to follow.



# Recommended sessions **BY GRADE LEVEL**

Need some help choosing your sessions?  
Scan the QR codes to get a complete list of recommended  
sessions for each respective grade level:

**KINDERGARTEN**



**GRADE 1**



**GRADE 2**



**GRADE 3**



**GRADE 4**



**GRADE 5**



**GRADE 6**



**GRADES 7-8**



**GRADES 9-12**





**JUNE 26**

**Opening & Keynote**

**Be the spark for every writer**  
 Kristina Smekens • 9:00-10:30 a.m.

SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3	SESSION 4
<b>10:45 - 11:45 a.m.</b> Juggle language foundations & writing standards in PK-2 Grades PK-2/ML 1-2 Introduce the 6 Traits to students Grades K-12/ML All Levels Elevate narrative writing for test success Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 Deepen math understanding through writing Grades 2-12/ML Levels 3-5 Improve thinking to impact written responses Grades K-12/ML All Levels Utilize the perfect pair—Canva & Google Grades K-12/ML All Levels	<b>12:00 - 1:00 p.m.</b> Kick-start your writing with 6 key lessons Grades K-12/ML All Levels Design PK-2 writing units that meet the standards Grades PK-2/ML Levels 1-2 Align conventions within writing units Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 Determine note-worthy text details Grades 4-12/ML Levels 3-5 Target short constructed-response writing Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 Implement AI in dyslexia interventions Grades 2-12/ML Levels 3-5	<b>2:00 - 3:00 p.m.</b> Provide focused & efficient writer feedback Grades K-12/ML All Levels Factor in 4 principles when planning units in grades 3-12 Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 Blend core knowledge with writing instruction Grades K-6/ML Levels 1-5 Develop ideas for stronger writing Grades K-12/ML All Levels Master evidence-based responses Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5	<b>3:15 - 4:15 p.m.</b> Develop a flexible writing rubric for grades 3-12 Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 Build a PK-2 rubric that grows with your students Grades PK-2/ML Levels 1-2 Scaffold a yearlong writing curriculum Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 Target teamwork & communication in collaborative writing projects Grades 4-12/ML Levels 3-5 Crack the compare-contrast code Grades 4-12/ML Levels 3-5 Use AI to strengthen study skills Grades K-12/ML All Levels

- Write across subjects
- Plan powerful units
- Meet writer needs
- Deliver writing lessons
- Conquer state assessments
- Embrace Edtech

*Session strands:*



**JUNE 27**

Meet writer needs

Plan powerful units

Write across subjects

Deliver writing lessons

Conquer state assessments

Embrace Edtech

SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3	SESSION 4
<p><b>9:00 - 10:00 a.m.</b></p> <p>Write about &amp; beyond texts read in PK-2 PK-2/ML Levels 1-2</p> <p>Propel students from basic persuasives to sophisticated arguments Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5</p> <p>Write with the <b>WOW!</b> factor Grades 2-12/ML Levels 3-5</p> <p>Teach convention skills in 3 steps Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5</p> <p>Create a reading &amp; writing calendar for test prep Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5</p>	<p><b>10:15 - 11:15 a.m.</b></p> <p>Foster perseverance &amp; resilience with writing Grades K-12/ML All Levels</p> <p>Blend text evidence &amp; explanations Grades 4-12/ML Levels 3-5</p> <p>Make mini-lesson magic Grades K-12/ML All Levels</p> <p>Synthesize ideas before writing Grades 4-12/ML Levels 3-5</p> <p>Supercharge your Canva skills with simple hacks Grades K-12/ML All Levels</p>	<p><b>11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.</b></p> <p>Teach opinion, informative, &amp; narrative writing skills in PK-2 Grades PK-2/ML Levels 1-2</p> <p>Demonstrate comprehension via succinct summary writing Grades 2-12/ML Levels 3-5</p> <p>Craft engaging beginnings &amp; powerful endings Grades K-12/ML All Levels</p> <p>Dissect author moves within literary analyses Grades 6-12/ML Levels 4-5</p> <p>Modernize classroom collaboration from Post-Its to Padlet Grades K-12/ML All Levels</p>	<p><b>1:30 - 2:30 p.m.</b></p> <p>Revitalize the writing process Grades K-12/ML All Levels</p> <p>Target essential skills in informative writing Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5</p> <p>Improve basic sentence conventions Grades PK-2/ML Levels 1-2</p> <p>Decode &amp; design writing prompts Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5</p> <p>Enhance teaching &amp; learning with AI tools Grades K-12/ML All Levels</p>

**Conference Closing**

Kristina Smekens • 2:45 - 3:15 p.m.

## MEET OUR GUEST PRESENTER



# Adam Sparks

**Co-founder and  
CEO of Short Answer**

Adam taught social studies and English in Nebraska, Chicago, and China for 7 years and holds a master's in Learning Design and Technology from Stanford. His work focuses on improving K-12 formative assessment through peer feedback.

**Adam will be presenting TWO sessions during the virtual conference:**

### **A Bot & A Hard Place: Writing Instruction for the Age of AI**

**June 26 | 2:00 p.m. ET**

(1:00 p.m. CT, 12:00 p.m. MT, 11:00 a.m. PT)

**Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5**

Explore a 5-point framework to adjust writing instruction and assessment in the AI era. Learn how AI tools work and how to implement practical policies and classroom strategies for integrating AI tools effectively into your classroom.

### **Writing Across the Curriculum: An Intro to Short Answer**

**June 27 | 11:30 a.m. ET**

(10:30 a.m. CT, 9:30 a.m. MT, 8:30 a.m. PT)

**Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5**

Explore research-based strategies for embedding writing in every subject. Learn how to embed writing practice, build writing stamina, and support literacy across the curriculum—as you discover Short Answer as a powerful tool for implementation.

## THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSOR



# Short Answer



Learn more at  
[myshortanswer.com](https://myshortanswer.com)



## Write better together.

Build better K-12 writers through social, engaging writing activities for any subject.

# Powerful sessions to BUILD BETTER WRITERS

## JUNE 26

**9:00 a.m. ET** (8:00 a.m. CT, 7:00 a.m. MT, 6:00 a.m. PT) Conference Opening & Keynote with Kristina Smekens

**10:45 a.m. ET** (9:45 a.m. CT, 8:45 a.m. MT, 7:45 a.m. PT)

### Juggle language foundations & writing standards in PK-2

**Presenter:** Kristi McCullough | Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2  
Learn how to effectively integrate writing standards into your literacy instruction alongside foundational skills. Discover a variety of curriculum resources and scheduling options to ensure both areas are covered daily.

### Introduce the 6 Traits to students

**Presenter:** Holly Sluyter | Grades K-12, ML All Levels  
Discover engaging techniques to introduce the 6 Traits to your students using mentor texts, song lyrics, and visual icons. By establishing a shared understanding of these essential elements at the beginning of the year, you can create a strong foundation for writing instruction that will benefit students throughout the year.

### Elevate narrative writing for test success

**Presenter:** Courtney Gordon | Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5  
Focus on the must-have elements of narrative writing: a problem and a solution. Learn effective techniques to help students integrate these components into every story—even ones they must compose based on texts provided.

### Deepen math understanding through writing

**Presenter:** Rachel Remenschneider | Grades 2-12, ML Levels 3-5  
Weave writing practices into math instruction to enhance critical thinking and analysis. Learn innovative mini-lessons that focus on articulating thought processes rather than merely solving problems, empowering students to strengthen their writing skills and deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts.

### Improve thinking to impact written responses

**Presenter:** Didi Harris | Grades K-12, ML All Levels  
Boost students' written responses through the power of inference. Follow a straightforward 5-step process to clarify this essential skill. Help your students answer text-dependent questions and support their ideas with strong evidence.

### Utilize the perfect pair—Canva & Google

**Presenter:** Nadine Gilkison | Grades K-12, ML All Levels  
Unlock the potential of Canva and Google in your classroom. Create dynamic, visually engaging materials in Canva and integrate them effortlessly into Google apps. Discover how this perfect pairing can support your teaching with free, easy-to-use templates and ready-to-implement resources.



### Coach's Corner Available each day



The Coach's Corner offers a dedicated space to process ideas, ask questions, and receive personalized support during the conference. Whether you're mapping out your first steps or fine-tuning an existing plan, instructional coach Bridget Longmeier is available for live one-on-one Zoom sessions on June 26-27—just for you or your staff.

Meet with Bridget to gain encouragement, checklists, planning tools, lesson ideas, and real classroom examples. The goal is simple: to help you turn what you're learning at Ignite to Write into a clear, practical plan for implementation.

**SCHEDULE A  
15-MINUTE  
LIVE COACHING  
SESSION:**



**AI Strategies** embedded throughout the conference!

Meet writer needs

Plan powerful units

Write across subjects

Deliver writing lessons

Conquer state assessments

Embrace Edtech

**12:00 p.m. ET** (11:00 a.m. CT, 10:00 a.m. MT, 9:00 a.m. PT)

## Kick-start your writing with 6 key lessons

*Presenter: Didi Harris | Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Learn the essential lessons to teach writers at the beginning of the year to launch a daily writing time that blends instruction, practice, and feedback. Discover how to boost student engagement, tackle obstacles, and nurture independent writers with routines that keep the momentum going.

## Design PK-2 writing units that meet the standards

*Presenter: Kristina Smekens | Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2*

Learn how to transition young writers from drawing and labeling to writing complete sentences. After initially teaching sentence-level skills through whole-class writing, you must gradually guide students toward applying these writing skills when independently expressing their own ideas.

## Align conventions within writing units

*Presenter: Kristi McCullough | Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Examine the reasons why students who succeed in workbooks and quizzes struggle to apply conventions in their own writing. Learn how to integrate grammar instruction into writing units to improve students' application of conventions in their own authentic, first-draft writing.

## Determine note-worthy text details

*Presenter: Courtney Gordon | Grades 4-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Teach students to annotate their thinking in ways that go beyond the basics of colored highlighters and graphic organizers. Discover strategies for helping students determine which details are important, empowering them to become more active and engaged readers.

## Target short constructed-response writing

*Presenter: Rachel Remenschneider | Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Discover the key components of effective short constructed responses, including inferential thinking and the use of textual evidence. Learn practical lesson ideas that cater to writers who will face state assessments, helping them develop the necessary writing skills to excel in this important format.

## Implement AI in dyslexia interventions

*Presenters: Nadine & Makenzie Gilkison | Grades 2-12, ML 3-5*

Discover how AI can empower both teachers and students in navigating the challenges of dyslexia. This essential session features a student's candid story, highlighting the transformative role AI has played in her educational journey and offering actionable strategies for educators.

**2:00 p.m. ET** (1:00 p.m. CT, 12:00 p.m. MT, 11:00 a.m. PT)

## Provide focused & efficient writer feedback

*Presenter: Shona Lansdell | Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Students grow as writers when they are given feedback that is prompt, purposeful, precise, and personal. Discover ways to improve the efficiency and efficacy of your writer conferences. Learn a 4-step process to offer targeted guidance, track progress, and foster meaningful teacher-student interactions.

## Factor in 4 principles when planning units in grades 3-12

*Presenter: Kristina Smekens | Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Honor 4 instructional shifts when designing effective writing units for grades 3-12. Discover ways to teach new writing skills at a manageable pace, design meaningful writing tasks, and prepare students for an end-of-unit assessment that reveals their authentic and independent writing abilities.

## Blend core knowledge with writing instruction

*Presenter: Kristi McCullough | Grades K-6, ML Levels 1-5*

Discover how to fit writing instruction into a robust elementary schedule. Learn how to develop both writing skills and content understanding, achieving better student outcomes.

## Develop ideas for stronger writing

*Presenter: Didi Harris | Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Implement effective strategies that target the essential trait of ideas. Discover how to teach students to develop topics, add rich details, and incorporate compelling evidence. With a focus on ideas, increase not only the length of their writing but improve the overall quality, too.

## Master evidence-based responses

*Presenter: Courtney Gordon | Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Help students overcome evidence-based response errors with targeted strategies. Explore common pitfalls like insufficient support and irrelevant information, while learning to adapt to modern testing formats. Leave with lesson ideas to help students provide strong textual evidence across diverse question types.

**Plus a special session by Adam Sparks:**

## A Bot & A Hard Place: Writing Instruction for the Age of AI

*Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

# JUNE 26

**3:15 p.m. ET** (2:15 p.m. CT, 1:15 p.m. MT, 12:15 p.m. PT)

## Develop a flexible writing rubric for grades 3-12

**Presenter:** Didi Harris | *Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Incorporate a single, kid-friendly 6-Traits rubric that adapts to any type of writing and grows with your students. Learn how to score for individual traits, assign value, and convert scores to grades using an online rubric calculator—complete with personalized feedback for each student.

## Build a PK-2 rubric that grows with your students

**Presenter:** Holly Sluyter | *Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2*

Create a simplistic rubric that meets the wide range of developing writers in your primary classroom. Discover ways to co-create the rubric with students and guide them in using it to self-assess and improve their writing skills.

## Scaffold a yearlong writing curriculum

**Presenter:** Rachel Remenschneider | *Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Craft engaging mini-units targeting persuasive/argumentative, informative, and narrative writing. Create a cumulative spiral of skills to give students ample opportunities to practice and perfect each writing mode.

## Target teamwork & communication in collaborative writing projects

**Presenter:** Kristina Smekens | *Grades 4-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Redefine “group work” to emphasize the process over the product with tasks that make members dependent on one another. Unlock the potential of collaborative writing activities to empower all students, including ML and hesitant writers.

## Crack the compare-contrast code

**Presenter:** Shona Lansdell | *Grades 4-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Gain strategies for organizing ideas, finding evidence, and crafting insightful comparisons between two different texts. Transform your students into comparative thinking champions who can produce well-developed, evidence-backed extended responses that stand out.

## Use AI to strengthen study skills

**Presenter:** Nadine Gilkison | *Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Empower students to make the most of AI to enhance their study routines. Learn from students’ real-world experiences using ChatGPT, Magic School Student, and other AI tools. Explore classroom strategies to integrate AI, making learning more engaging, effective, and future-ready.

Meet writer needs

Plan powerful units

Write across subjects

Deliver writing lessons

Conquer state assessments

Embrace Edtech

## SECRET SITE

As an Ignite to Write attendee, you gain lifetime access to the private conference website that contains hundreds of digital resources, including session handouts, lessons, videos, photos, whiteboard documents, and more. (All 40+ sessions are included!)

**To access the Secret Site for this conference, follow these steps:**

1. Log in to the “Access” members-only website using this URL: [access.smekenseducation.com](https://access.smekenseducation.com)

If it’s your first time visiting Access, simply activate your account by resetting your password.

2. After successful login, click on the orange box labeled “Digital Resources & Secret Sites”

3. Click on “Ignite to Write Secret Site.”



## SESSION RECORDINGS

After the conference concludes, session recordings will be available on the Smekens Access website. All 40+ sessions will be open for viewing by July 1. To view session videos, visit the Access website and click the blue box labeled “My PD Sessions,” and then click on the folder labeled “Ignite to Write.” Session recordings will be accessible until June 27, 2026 (or June 27, 2027 if you registered by the Early Bird deadline).

## COMPLETION CERTIFICATES

You will be emailed downloadable completion certificates for every session you attend during the live virtual conference or session recording you view after the conference.



## GRADUATE-LEVEL CREDIT

For an additional fee of \$62 per credit/unit, Ignite to Write attendees are eligible to pursue 1-4 graduate-level university semester credit units from the University of the Pacific, Center for Professional Development and Continuing Education. Please check with your district to determine course acceptability.

**9:00 a.m. ET** (8:00 a.m. CT, 7:00 a.m. MT, 6:00 a.m. PT)

## Write about & beyond texts read in PK-2

*Presenter: Kristina Smekens | Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2*

Equip young readers to express their opinions, retell stories, and relay information comprehended from texts. Learn how to implement writing instruction during the reading block to strengthen these practices.

## Propel students from basic persuasives to sophisticated arguments

*Presenter: Didi Harris | Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Explore the nuances between persuasive and argumentative writing. Learn lesson ideas relevant for both genres, including how to infer reasons from texts and support them with strong evidence.

## Write with the WOW! factor

*Presenter: Courtney Gordon | Grades 2-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Discover proven writing strategies to elevate style and leave a lasting impression. Learn how to refine students' selection of words, choice of voice, and mastery of sentence fluency through targeted mini-lesson instruction and engaging writing tasks.

## Teach convention skills in 3 steps

*Presenter: Kristi McCullough | Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Transform grammar instruction by focusing on 1 skill in 3 phases of instruction: 1) Notice and Name it, 2) Try it, 3) Apply it. Experience a structured path to mastery of grade-level grammar skills through the gradual release of responsibility.

## Create a reading & writing calendar for test prep

*Presenter: Shona Lansdell | Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Develop a comprehensive reading and writing calendar to prepare students for read-write tests given in the spring. Align composition and comprehension strategies across both semesters, ensuring seamless integration of writing about reading instruction and practice. This session builds on the mini-unit spiral calendar for a cohesive approach.

**10:15 a.m. ET** (9:15 a.m. CT, 8:15 a.m. MT, 7:15 a.m. PT)

## Foster perseverance & resilience with writing

*Presenter: Shona Lansdell | Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Foster resilience in young writers by providing mini-lessons that acknowledge the challenges of learning how to write. Encourage perseverance and independent decision-making through writing tasks that empower students to overcome obstacles and develop strong writer habits.

## Blend text evidence & explanations

*Presenter: Kristina Smekens | Grades 4-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Challenge students to combine author evidence and individual explanations when responding to text-based prompts. Discover engaging strategies to transform details gathered from the text into unique expressions, including paraphrasing, citing quotes, and reworking sentence structures.

## Make mini-lesson magic

*Presenter: Holly Sluyter | Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Experience the transformative impact of a 4-step mini-lesson that delivers focused, Tier 1 writing instruction in just 15 minutes. Build on ideas from the keynote and observe video lessons that maximize student engagement and kick-start the gradual release of responsibility.

## Synthesize ideas before writing

*Presenter: Courtney Gordon | Grades 4-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Empower students to refine their synthesis skills by teaching them how to extract, organize, and combine details from various sources. Equip them to present their findings cohesively, demonstrating both understanding and analytical ability in their writing practices.

## Supercharge your Canva skills with simple hacks

*Presenter: Nadine Gilkison | Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Boost your Canva skills with effective hacks. Learn to navigate Canva's features, from easy animations to collaborative tools that streamline your workflow. This session is designed for those ready to enhance their design game, creating engaging materials that captivate students and enrich learning.

**11:30 a.m. ET** (10:30 a.m. CT, 9:30 a.m. MT, 8:30 a.m. PT)

## Teach opinion, informative, & narrative writing skills in PK-2

**Presenter:** Holly Sluyter | *Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2*  
Guide students through the stages of writing—drawing, labeling, listing, and sentence writing—while building skills in opinion, informative, and narrative writing. Learn how to teach these writing modes within the stages of development.

## Demonstrate comprehension via succinct summary writing

**Presenter:** Rachel Remenschneider | *Grades 2-12, ML Levels 3-5*  
Learn how to guide students through a scaffold of comprehensive summary-writing strategies. This session will feature authentic student examples and interactive activities to demonstrate 10 different summary-writing products.

## Craft engaging beginnings & powerful endings

**Presenter:** Kristi McCullough | *Grades K-12, ML All Levels*  
Discover strategies for writing captivating openings and strong conclusions at every level. Analyze student work to uncover successful examples and gain practical tools for writing beginnings and endings that complement a strong middle in all modes and genres.

## Dissect author moves within literary analyses

**Presenter:** Kristina Smekens | *Grades 6-12, ML Levels 4-5*  
Explore the art of analyzing a text through the author's lens in ways that go beyond identifying plot elements and literary devices. Learn concrete strategies for guiding students to investigate an author's craft, literary techniques, and structural choices, uncovering the underlying intentions and purpose behind the work.

## Modernize classroom collaboration from Post-Its to Padlet

**Presenter:** Nadine Gilkison | *Grades K-12, ML All Levels*  
Upgrade your classroom collaboration by swapping Post-Its for Padlet. Explore how this digital tool supports real-time idea sharing, AI audio features in 40+ languages, and media moderation. Learn to set it up and create engaging, interactive lessons that boost student participation.

**Plus a special session by Adam Sparks:**

## Writing Across the Curriculum: An Intro to Short Answer

*Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

**1:30 p.m. ET** (12:30 p.m. CT, 11:30 a.m. MT, 10:30 a.m. PT)

## Revitalize the writing process

**Presenter:** Rachel Remenschneider | *Grades K-12, ML All Levels*  
Streamline the steps of the traditional writing process to accommodate one-sitting first drafts. Explore a fresh perspective on peer and self-revision techniques that better reflect today's real-world writing situations.

## Target essential skills in informative writing

**Presenter:** Holly Sluyter | *Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*  
Unlock key writing strategies to enhance informative tasks. Master how to help students gather and organize information from sources, develop a clear topic/thesis, and present captivating facts and expert quotes, making every informative writing unit dynamic and effective.

## Improve basic sentence conventions

**Presenter:** Courtney Gordon | *Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2*  
Build solid sentence foundations using engaging, practical writing strategies. Teach students key conventions like word spacing, punctuation, and expanding fragments into sentences. Explore creative ways to guide them in self-editing, ensuring their writing practices become more clear, more coherent, and more impactful.

## Decode & design writing prompts

**Presenter:** Kristi McCullough | *Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*  
Dive deep into the academic vocabulary and structures that form the backbone of effective writing prompts. Learn how to help students decode any prompt with ease and gain the knowledge to craft your own engaging writing prompts in response to texts.

## Enhance teaching & learning with AI tools

**Presenter:** Nadine Gilkison | *Grades K-12, ML All Levels*  
Discover innovative strategies to harness AI technology in your classroom. Explore AI detectors, practical applications, and student-friendly chatbots. Leave with actionable insights and creative ideas to enhance teaching and learning in today's AI-driven landscape.

**2:45 p.m. ET**

(1:45 p.m. CT, 12:45 p.m. MT, 11:45 a.m. PT)

Conference Closing with Kristina Smekens

# MEET *your* GUIDES



## **Kristina Smekens** | Keynote Speaker + Session Presenter

A celebrated educator, author, and literacy consultant, Kristina Smekens has built a reputation for using enthusiasm, humor, and common sense to equip K-12 educators with simple and effective strategies for teaching reading and writing.

As president and lead consultant for Smekens Education, Kristina is constantly developing new strategies to help teachers meet the demands of today's College and Career-Ready Standards. She shares those strategies with teachers across the United States and beyond through on-site professional development, seminars, and an always-growing pool of print, digital, and video resources.

## SESSION PRESENTERS



### **Nadine Gilkison**

*Director of Technology Integration at Franklin Township Community Schools*

Even though she's a tech guru now, Nadine never forgets what it means to be a classroom teacher.

Driven by her desire to learn and grow as an educator, she went from the classroom to the role of district technology coordinator and has presented at national conferences to support teachers as they seek best-practice strategies for AI and beyond.



### **Bridget Longmeier**

*Smekens Remote Coach*

Bridget loves to learn, grow, and help others.

That's why she's so motivated to come alongside teachers as they execute best-practice instruction in reading and writing. Bridget's career as an elementary teacher, literacy coach, and Reading Recovery-trained practitioner has equipped her with the skills to help new and experienced educators alike.



### **Courtney Gordon**

*Smekens Literacy Consultant*

Known both for her enthusiasm and expertise, Courtney is a dynamic personality who makes friends fast and serves as a trusted guide to teachers across the K-12 spectrum. With 15 years of experience

as a Smekens literacy consultant, Courtney has the expertise to support teachers at every level of implementation.



### **Kristi McCullough**

*Smekens Literacy Consultant*

Teachers love the authentic, "from-the-trenches" insight that Kristi McCullough offers during her professional development sessions. Her rich experiences as a teacher, professor, coach, author, and literacy consultant allow Kristi to offer practical, classroom-tested support to educators from all grade levels.



### **Didi Harris**

*Smekens Literacy Consultant*

Didi's background in education runs the gamut from classroom teacher to interventionist to reading specialist. She brings a smile and positivity to every professional development setting and loves the

opportunity to get back in the classroom to model mini-lessons. She listens closely to teachers' struggle points and then provides practical strategies to meet those needs.



### **Rachel Remenschneider**

*Smekens Literacy Consultant*

Rachel lifts up teachers by helping them to recognize what they are doing well and then providing the encouragement and strategies they need to do even better. Her experience

implementing best-practice literacy strategies, along with her background as an academic and ML instructional coach, allows her to support educators who serve diverse populations.



### **Shona Lansdell**

*Smekens Literacy Consultant*

Don't be fooled by Shona Lansdell's soft-spoken demeanor. This professional development dynamo packs a punch with crowds of all sizes as she motivates educators to apply best-practice literacy

strategies. Always approachable and empathetic, Shona taps into her 25 years of experience as a teacher, coach, and school leader to offer practical and realistic guidance to teachers.



### **Holly Sluyter**

*Smekens Literacy Consultant*

Holly brings a plethora of skills to the table with a background as an ABA Therapist and classroom teacher. With nearly a decade of experience in urban and suburban classrooms, she has had rich experiences

with diverse learners. Her focus on student success spills over into her work as a Smekens literacy consultant. She wants teachers to be the best that they can be so that their students can also succeed.



### **SPECIAL GUEST** **Makenzie Gilkison**

Makenzie Gilkison is a freshman at Greenfield Central High School and a passionate advocate for neurodiversity and inclusive education. Diagnosed with dyslexia, she has spent the past three years sharing her personal journey with K-8 students across Central Indiana.

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



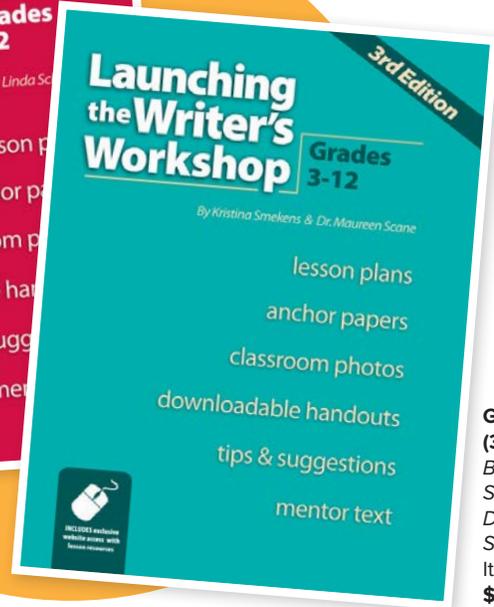
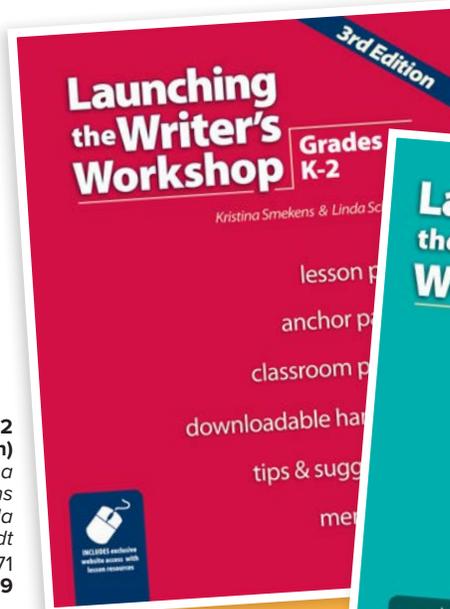
Use code "IGNITE" at checkout to get **15% off** your purchase!

## Launching the Writer's Workshop

This resource targets the heart of what every teacher wants for the initial weeks of school and beyond:

1. Strategies to establish the writer's workshop environment through routines, procedures, and expectations.
2. Methods to define the ingredients of "good" writing so everyone is using a common language.
3. Foundation-building mini-lesson ideas that teach students how to craft stronger writing.

**Grades K-2  
(3rd Edition)**  
By Kristina Smekens & Linda Schmidt  
Item #18671  
**\$27.99**



**Grades 3-12  
(3rd Edition)**  
By Kristina Smekens & Dr. Maureen Scane  
Item #18688  
**\$27.99**

### Each lesson includes:

- A purpose and rationale for the lesson.
- A list of resources and teacher preparation required before delivering the lesson.
- A detailed description of the lesson execution.
- Suggestions for utilizing writing samples or mentor text to support the lesson.
- Follow-up activities that relate to the initial lesson.
- A link to the digital resources containing writing samples, handout templates, Google Docs, videoed lessons, and more.

- Over 100 mini-lessons
- New Smekens strategies
- Digital downloads
- And much more!



### Lifetime access to digital resources!



Learn more about Launching the Writer's Workshop on our website.

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

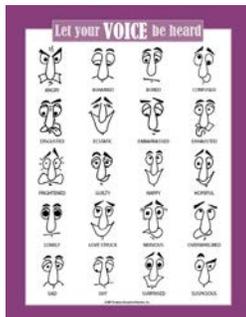


Use code "IGNITE" at checkout to get **15% off** your purchase!

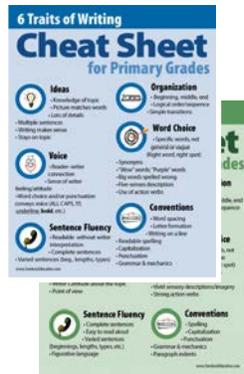
## 6 TRAITS OF WRITING RESOURCES



Visit [www.SmekensEducation.com](http://www.SmekensEducation.com) to download the 6-Traits Smekens icons for FREE. Once you're at the Smekens website, simply type "Introduce the 6 Traits" in the search box. Then select the first article. Or scan this QR code with your mobile device.



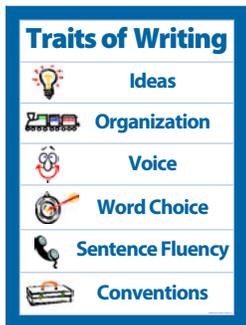
**Let Your VOICE Be Heard Poster**  
Item #108 **\$2.99**  
This 18" x 24" classroom poster includes 20 facial expressions to remind students to utilize voice in their writing.



**6-Traits Cheat Sheet**  
Item #103 **\$0.99**  
If you are working to implement the 6 Traits within your classroom or school building, then your first goal should be to know the traits yourself. The 6-Traits Cheat Sheet is the size of a small postcard and includes foundational writing skills per trait. Primary skills are listed on one side (blue) and upper grades on the other (green).

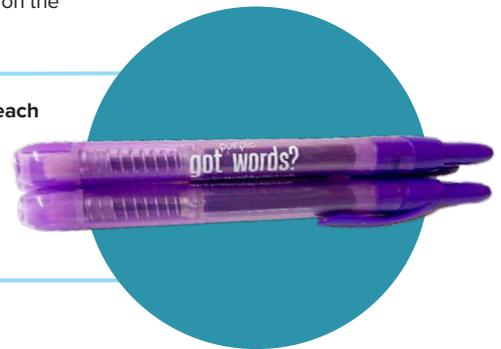


**Bright Ideas Light Bulb**  
Item #177 **\$3.99**  
Use this handy squeezable light bulb as an icon trigger for your mini-lessons on the trait of ideas. Approximately 4" tall.



**Traits of Writing Poster**  
Item #117 **\$2.99**  
This 18" x 24" classroom poster lists the 6 Traits of Writing and associates each one with a graphic icon that depicts its role in writing. The graphic icons are the same ones that appear on all other Smekens Education 6-Traits products.

**Purple Highlighter** Item #112 **\$2.99 each**  
This hard-to-find tool is great for identifying strong word choice in student writing. Instead of writing "wow word" over and over, simply highlight those words that grab your attention.



### 6-Traits Bookmarks

The 6-Traits student bookmark for both the primary and upper grades keeps the traits in front of kids with a consistent set of graphic icons to represent each trait. The back side includes an age-appropriate set of "memory joggers" for each trait.



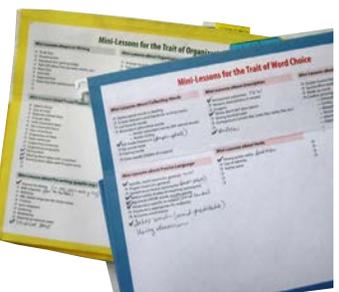
**K-2 writers (blue)**  
Item #101  
**3-12 writers (green)**  
Item #102  
**\$5.99 for a set of 30**

### Conventions Tool Belt

Item #197 **\$8.99**  
Wear the Conventions Tool Belt to encourage students to use the tools and rules that will improve their writing. Fill the multiple pockets with real writer items like an editing checklist, an eraser, a pocket dictionary, a spaceman tool, a fluency phone, etc.

### K-12 Conventions Booklet

Item #138 **\$6.99**  
This staple-bound booklet includes all of the K-12 conventions skills required by the language arts college and career-ready standards. It provides the 10 common purposes that conventions serve in all types of writing and breaks the skills down by grade level. Adjacent to each skill is a description of the purpose it serves in writing and examples are included to the right of each skill.



### Writing Mini-Lesson Labels

Item #150 **\$6.99/set**  
A set of Writing Mini-Lesson Labels includes 6 oversized labels, one per trait. The sticker serves as a table of contents to a hanging file folder. As you find ideas and strategies for different writing skills, you can check off the skills on the labels. You'll have a handy checklist of what you have and what you need. Product consists of six 11" x 8.5" full-sheet, pre-printed labels.

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



Use code "IGNITE" at checkout to get **15% off** your purchase!

## TRAIT TRACKERS

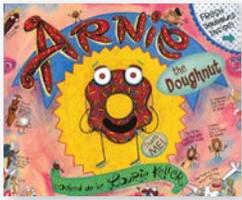
*Tracking the 6 Traits in 20 Popular Children's Books*

Item #116 **\$15.99**

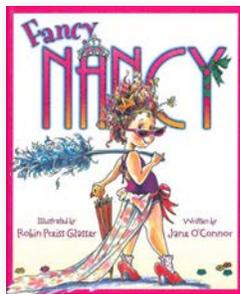
This resource by Kristina Smekens makes it easy to use picture books as mentor text by "tracking" when and how the 6 Traits appear in 20 popular titles. Each bookmark-sized card offers a page-by-page citation of the 6 Traits in action.



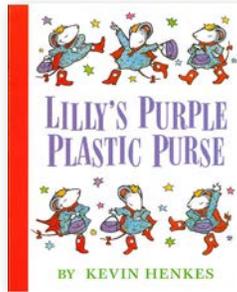
Track the Traits in these popular titles:



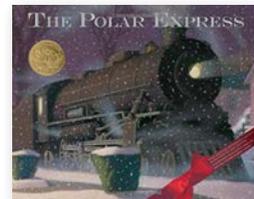
**Arnie the Doughnut**  
Item #79473 **\$9.99**



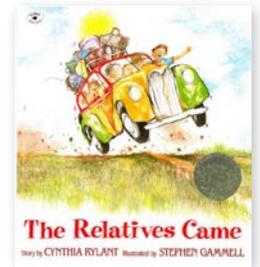
**Fancy Nancy**  
Item #542092 **\$19.99**



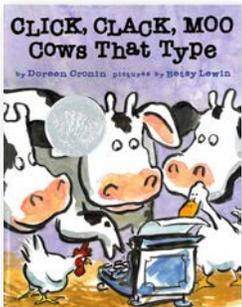
**Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse**  
Item #128975 **\$19.99**



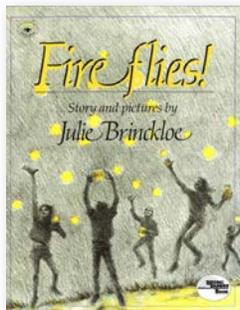
**The Polar Express**  
Item #580145 **\$21.99**



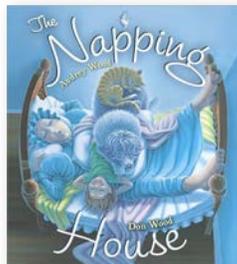
**The Relatives Came**  
Item #717383 **\$8.99**



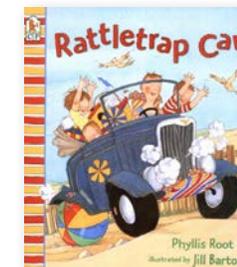
**Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type**  
Item #832130 **\$17.99**



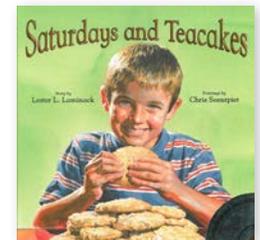
**Fireflies!**  
Item #710551 **\$8.99**



**The Napping House**  
Item #567088 **\$19.99**



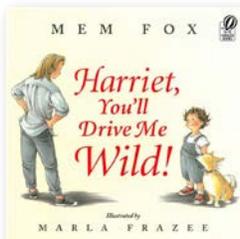
**Rattletrap Car**  
Item #620073 **\$8.99**



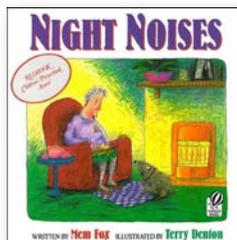
**Saturdays and Teacakes**  
Item #453030 **\$17.99**



**Come On, Rain!**  
Item #331258 **\$18.99**



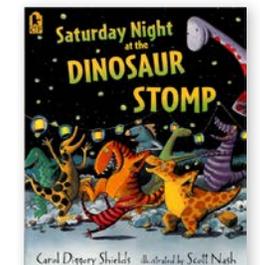
**Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild!**  
Item #45982 **\$9.99**



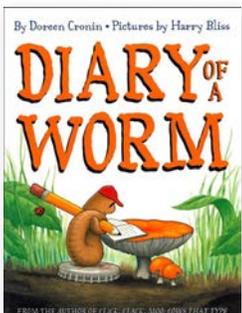
**Night Noises**  
Item #574215 **\$9.99**



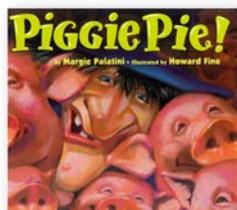
**The Recess Queen**  
Item #206372 **\$18.99**



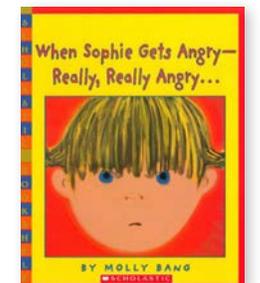
**Saturday Night at the Dinosaur Stomp**  
Item #638870 **\$8.99**



**Diary of a Worm**  
Item #1506 **\$18.99**



**Piggie Pie!**  
Item #866184 **\$9.99**

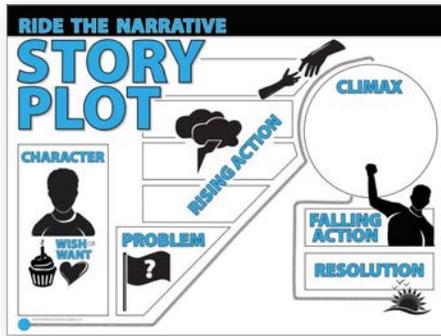


**When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry**  
Item #598453 **\$7.99**

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

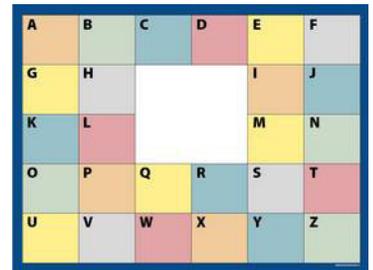


Use code "IGNITE" at checkout to get **15% off** your purchase!



**Ride the Story Plot Poster**  
Item #207 \$2.99

Well-written narratives all have the same story shape—that of an airplane or roller coaster ride. After some initial information about main character(s) and setting, the story takes off when the problem/conflict is identified. As the story progresses, the problem gets worse, and the action escalates to its climax. From that high point, the final details fall quickly into place, and the story ends smoothly. Use this 24" x 18" poster to depict the story structure.



**ABC Poster**  
Item #105 \$2.99

This colorful poster includes each letter of the alphabet and space for a topic, title, or concept in the center. It is an excellent tool for generating details before writing, targeting specific details, and reviewing content-area material before a test. Teachers love to laminate this 24" x 18" poster for easy write-on/wipe-off functionality.



Argumentative Item #128  
\$2.99 each



Persuasive Item #160  
\$2.99 each



Informative Item #158  
\$2.99 each



Narrative Item #159  
\$2.99 each



Item #229



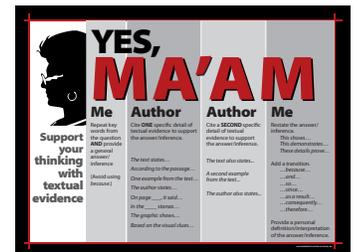
Item #232



Item #230

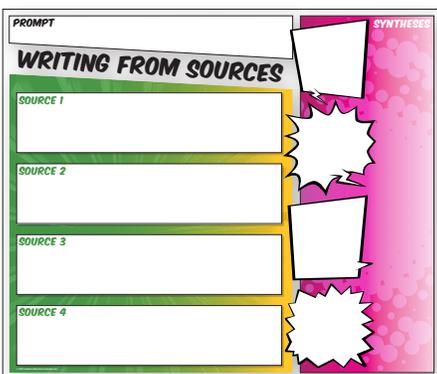


Item #231



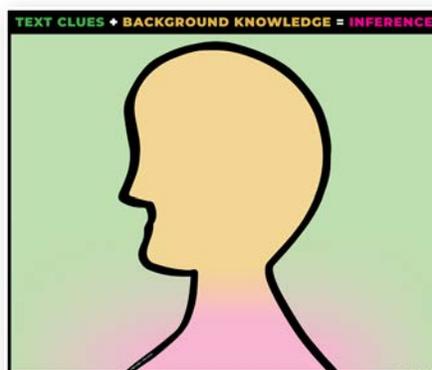
**Yes, MA'AM Poster**  
Item #184 \$2.99

Provide students a visual reminder for constructed-response writing with a 24" x 18" Yes, MA'AM poster. Each letter of the acronym stands for part of the typical response (M=Me, A=Author, A=Author, M=Me). Students simply follow the formula to build a successful, short-constructed response.



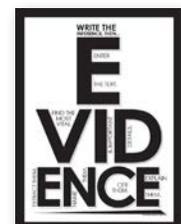
**Writing From Sources Poster**  
Item #218 \$5.99

Synthesizing ideas across sources requires two separate steps, and this poster accounts for both. STEP 1: Collect relevant textual details on sticky notes while keeping source-specific information organized. STEP 2: Read through all of the details and group similar ones to generate new and bigger thoughts; note these syntheses within the ba-bam bubbles to the right. This oversized poster (32" x 27") has room for all the thinking.



**Inference Poster**  
Item #233 \$5.99

Color-coded to match the *Reading Voice* (green) and the *Thinking Voice* (yellow), this poster will help students understand how to take text clues (green), add background knowledge (yellow), and make an inference (pink) about their reading. Use sticky notes with this oversized (32" x 27") poster during your whole-class comprehension mini-lessons to demonstrate how individual text details cause reader thoughts. Consider laminating it to increase its durability.



**Evidence Poster**  
Item #203 \$2.99

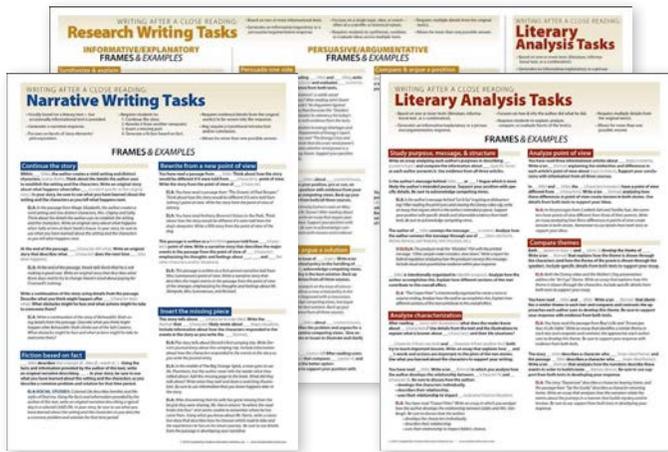
This 18" x 24" poster spells out the citing-evidence procedure. Using the

E.V.I.D.E.N.C.E. acronym, students will: **E**nter the text looking for the most **V**ital **I**nformation and **D**etails. They will **E**xtract them, **N**ame them, **C**ite them, and then **E**xplain them within their written responses.

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



Use code "IGNITE" at checkout to get **15% off** your purchase!



## Writing-About-Reading Frames

Item #198 \$4.99 each

After reading literature or informational text, it's common to have students generate a written response. These complex tasks are presented as an extended-response writing and follow a predictable structure. The Writing-About-Reading Frames include over two dozen typical prompts seen on standardized assessments. Organized by Narrative Writing, Literary Analysis, and Research Writing, teachers can plug in any title, author, concept, or plot information to generate a persuasive, argumentative, informative, or narrative prompt.



## Serving Up Synthesis Set

Item #196 \$6.99

The synthesizing process is like baking a cake. Readers have to add multiple ingredients (additional thoughts) to the powdered cake mix (the original text) in order to produce a cake (achieve a new understanding or realization). Teach this process explicitly.

- 1) Introduce the six "ingredients" to consider when reading any text—*background knowledge*, *setting/context*, *emotional reaction*, *other viewpoints*, *genre considerations*, *lingering questions*. Represent each type of thought with a labeled spoon.
- 2) Read a powerful excerpt/text.
- 3) Holding up one spoon at a time, ask questions from the color-coordinated recipe cards.
- 4) Using the seventh recipe card, show students how to add up their thoughts, thinking beyond the text's meaning and considering why it matters. The seventh recipe card includes "baking-time" questions to help students achieve a culminating synthesis.



## Revision Conferencing Cards

Item #106 \$3.99/set

Asking the right questions can cause writers to re-enter their drafts and ultimately strengthen them. The Revision Conferencing Cards provide those questions, making it easy for the teacher or a peer to direct a writer to the portions of his work that need more attention. The set of 5 cards comes with instructions that outline how to best use this valuable tool.



Spanish version available



Watch as Kristina Smekens explains how to introduce the three different voices in a reader's head.

## Comprehension Voice Signs

English: Item #130 Spanish: Item #217

\$5.99 each

Introduce the three reader "voices" to your students. Explain that all readers have these voices in their heads: *Reading Voice*, *Thinking Voice*, *Distracting Voice*. Make the reading process concrete and visible by holding up these signs while reading and thinking about texts in future lessons.



## Talk Moves Mini-Poster Set

Item #210 \$7.99

Melding thinking with others helps students' ideas gain strength and grow. Using hand signals during whole-class conversations, students communicate what they are thinking—even when they are not the ones speaking out loud. The eight *Talk Moves* within this mini-poster set include:

- I have an answer.
- I can repeat.
- I am confused.
- I agree.
- I can add on.
- I have proof.
- I disagree.
- I can clarify.

# THE X COMPREHENSION PLAYBOOK

Bolster your reading instruction with the ultimate guide to teaching reading comprehension!



<b>The Comprehension Playbook</b>			
<i>By Kristina Smekens</i>			
Kindergarten.....	Item #440	Grade 4 .....	Item #444
Grade 1.....	Item #441	Grade 5 .....	Item #445
Grade 2 .....	Item #442	Grade 6 .....	Item #446
Grade 3 .....	Item #443	Grades 7-12 .....	Item #447
<b>\$89.99 each</b>			
K-5 Bundle.....	Item #448	<b>\$149.99</b>	
K-12 Bundle .....	Item #449	<b>\$169.99</b>	

Just as an athletic coach operates from a tried-and-true book of plays, teachers need their own playbook for leading successful whole-class reading comprehension instruction. Supporting a full year of lesson concepts, *The Comprehension Playbook* provides easy-to-follow guidance on which comprehension skills to teach per grade range. The compilation of “plays” teaches students to:

- Ask & answer questions.
- Retell/Summarize literature.
- Retell/Summarize informational text.
- Track ideas across a text.
- See text organization.
- Analyze author choices.
- Compare texts and topics.
- Synthesize ideas across texts.



Order online at  
**The Literacy Store.com**  
 or call (888) 376-0448



Learn more about *The Comprehension Playbook* on our website.

# Kick-Start Writing Instruction: Routines, Strategies, & Stamina for K-5 Writers

IN-PERSON & VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS



**PRESENTER:**  
**Kristina Smekens**  
Smekens Education  
President & Lead Consultant



Great writing instruction doesn't happen by chance—it's grounded in the Science of Writing and built through intentional routines, direct instruction, and strategic feedback. This workshop equips K-5 English-language arts teachers with research-based strategies to develop confident, resilient writers while providing a step-by-step plan for launching writing instruction that fosters engagement and stamina.

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- ELA Teachers, Grades K-5
- School Administrators
- Instructional Coaches
- Curriculum Leaders

## WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:

- How to establish clear routines from day one so students stay engaged and build writing stamina—without constant teacher prompting.
- The three essential areas of writing instruction that are backed by research and assessed on state rubrics.
- Why direct instruction is critical for growing writers—and how to deliver explicit mini-lessons in writing.
- Research-based feedback strategies that guide students toward self-revision instead of relying on the teacher.
- Practical ways to carve out time for writing in a packed literacy block.

## WHAT YOU'LL TAKE AWAY:

- A step-by-step plan to kick-start genre-based writing instruction with momentum.
- A flexible framework for integrating writing with reading and language instruction.
- A clear understanding of the essential skills to prioritize in writing instruction, honoring the components of the 6 Traits of Writing and *The Writing Rope*.
- Strategies to help students persist through writing challenges instead of shutting down.
- A research-based approach that makes writing time more productive and stress-free.

## IN-PERSON

**Holiday Inn Indianapolis Airport**  
JULY 21, 2025 | 8:30 A.M.- 3:00 P.M.

## REGISTER HERE:



**COST:**  
**\$200/person**  
if you register by July 1  
(\$225 after July 1)

## ONLINE

**Virtual & Interactive Event**  
AUGUST 6, 2025 | 9:00 A.M.- 3:00 P.M. ET

## REGISTER HERE:



**COST:**  
**\$189/person**



# KEEP LEARNING

*with Smekens*



## ON-SITE CONSULTING

At Smekens Education, our consultants are committed to sharing ideas and concepts that are grounded in current education research. But what makes us unique is that we spend most of our time showing teachers how to apply the research through practical, classroom-tested strategies. Our consultants are known for leaving teachers with the tools and motivation they need to impact instruction right away.



## Customized professional learning

Our experienced team of literacy consultants start by working with administrators to nail down the specific needs. From there, we help craft a training and implementation plan that moves the school or district toward achieving its professional development goals.



## Classroom modeling

We understand that teachers are more likely to embrace new strategies if they can see them in action. That's why we view classroom modeling as an essential role for our consultants. During our on-site visits, we welcome the opportunity to model concepts and strategies with real kids in "live" classrooms.

**CALL TODAY – (888) 376-0448**

Schedule your customized professional learning from Smekens Education.



## Short courses to support K-12 writing instruction

## Yearlong PD for teaching writing

With this yearlong video series, schools can equip teachers with the tools and training they need to teach writing with confidence all year long.



The mini-series includes 11 training videos focused on writing management, instruction, and assessment. Over half include elementary and secondary versions.



Videos from the Teach Writing PD Mini-Series can be viewed anytime during the yearlong subscription.



Each of the mini-series videos lasts approximately 20 minutes and features a downloadable handout with note-taking space, discussion questions, and suggested next steps.



Participants can access the Smekens Education professional learning platform for a full year, allowing teachers to earn completion certificates after viewing individual videos.

## An entire year of writing PD

### EPISODE 1

#### **Make Time for Writing**

### EPISODE 2

#### **Plan Mini-Lessons**

### EPISODE 3

#### **Informative Writing Skills**

*(Two versions: K-5 & 6-12)*

### EPISODE 4

#### **Kid-Friendly Writing Rubrics**

*(Two versions: K-2 & 3-12)*

### EPISODE 5

#### **Persuasive/Argumentative Writing Skills**

*(Two versions: K-5 & 6-12)*

### EPISODE 6

#### **Short-Constructed Responses**

*(Two versions: K-5 & 6-12)*

### EPISODE 7

#### **Grow Rubrics & Calculate Grades**

*(Two versions: K-2 & 3-12)*

### EPISODE 8

#### **Narrative Writing Skills**

*(Two versions: K-5 & 6-12)*

### EPISODE 9

#### **Write About Topics & Texts**

*(Two versions: K-5 & 6-12)*

### EPISODE 10

#### **Mini-Unit Planning**

*(Two versions: K-5 & 6-12)*

### EPISODE 11

#### **Kick-Start Writing Instruction**

Handout included with every video!



Learn more and explore subscription options:



# ON-DEMAND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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