

A lightbulb with a pencil inside, emitting flames and rays of light. The background is light blue with faint icons of lightbulbs, pencils, and laptops.

IGNITE *to* WRITE

THE How to Teach Writing CONFERENCE

A yellow sunburst icon above the text.

FRENCH LICK
Indiana

June 17-18

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

DAY ONE | JUNE 17

7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	Registration & breakfast
8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Opening & Keynote
9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.	Breakout sessions
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Breakout sessions
12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.	Catered lunch
1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	Breakout sessions
2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Breakout sessions

DAY TWO | JUNE 18

7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Catered breakfast
8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Breakout sessions
9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.	Breakout sessions
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Breakout sessions
12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.	Catered lunch
1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	Breakout sessions
2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Conference Closing

Thank 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.

JOIN IN THE FUN!

SPIRIT DAYS

Get ready to add some flair to your conference experience with our two themed dress-up days!

Day 1 – School Spirit Day: Kick things off by repping your school with pride. Wear a T-shirt, hoodie, or colors that showcase where you're from.

Day 2 – Bright Ideas Day: Let your outfit shine as brightly as your teaching ideas! Think neons, bold patterns, and anything that radiates energy.

We'll be on the lookout for creativity—prizes will go to those who bring the most spirit!

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEST

Throughout the conference—during sessions, lunch, free time, or hallway fun—capture your favorite moments and post them to Facebook or Instagram (stories count, too!).

Each time you tag [@smekensed](#), you'll earn an entry into our social media contest. The more you post, the better your chances to win! One lucky winner will be drawn during the closing session on Wednesday and will score a prize pack loaded with Smekens swag, including the following:

- Amazon gift card
- Stanley insulated lunch box
- "I've Been Smekened" sweatshirt & tumbler
- Simple Modern tote bag with a fuzzy blanket
- Neon dry-erase board
- And more surprises!

OPENING & KEYNOTE | 8:00 - 9:30 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 17

Opening & Keynote
Hoosier Ballroom

Be the spark for every writer
Kristina Smekens • 8:00-9:30 a.m.

SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3	SESSION 4
<p>9:45 - 10:45 a.m.</p> <p>Juggle language foundations & writing standards in PK-2 Grades PK-2/ML Levels 1-2 • Rm. 205</p> <p>Introduce the 6 Traits to students Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 203</p> <p>Elevate narrative writing for test success Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 207</p> <p>Deepen math understanding through writing Grades 2-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 206</p> <p>Improve thinking to impact written responses Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 204</p> <p>Utilize the perfect pair—Canva & Google Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 202</p>	<p>11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.</p> <p>Kick-start your writing with 6 key lessons Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 204</p> <p>Design PK-2 writing units that meet the standards Grades PK-2/ML Levels 1-2 • Rm. 209</p> <p>Align conventions within writing units Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 205</p> <p>Determine note-worthy text details Grades 4-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 207</p> <p>Target short constructed-response writing Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 206</p> <p>Implement AI in dyslexia interventions Grades 2-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 202</p>	<p>1:15 - 2:15 p.m.</p> <p>Provide focused & efficient writer feedback Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 201</p> <p>Factor in 4 principles when planning units in grades 3-12 Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 209</p> <p>Blend core knowledge with writing instruction Grades K-6/ML Levels 1-5 • Rm. 205</p> <p>Develop ideas for stronger writing Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 204</p> <p>Master evidence-based responses Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 207</p>	<p>2:30 - 3:30 p.m.</p> <p>Develop a flexible writing rubric for grades 3-12 Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 204</p> <p>Build a PK-2 rubric that grows with your students Grades PK-2/ML Levels 1-2 • Rm. 203</p> <p>Scaffold a yearlong writing curriculum Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 206</p> <p>Target teamwork & communication in collaborative writing projects Grades 4-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 209</p> <p>Crack the compare-contrast code Grades 4-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 201</p> <p>Use AI to strengthen study skills Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 202</p>

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

Session strands:



JUNE 18

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>8:30 - 9:30 a.m.</p> <p>Write about & beyond texts read in PK-2 PK-2/ML Levels 1-2 • Rm. 209</p> <p>Propel students from basic persuasives to sophisticated arguments Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 204</p> <p>Write with the WOW! factor Grades 2-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 207</p> <p>Teach convention skills in 3 steps Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 205</p> <p>Create a reading & writing calendar for test prep Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 201</p>	<p>9:45 - 10:45 a.m.</p> <p>Foster perseverance & resilience with writing Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 201</p> <p>Boost achievement with the Science of Writing Grades K-12 • Rm. 204</p> <p>Blend text evidence & explanations Grades 4-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 209</p> <p>Make mini-lesson magic Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 203</p> <p>Synthesize ideas before writing Grades 4-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 207</p> <p>Supercharge your Canva skills with simple hacks Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 202</p>	<p>11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.</p> <p>Teach opinion, informative, & narrative writing skills in PK-2 Grades PK-2/ML Levels 1-2 • Rm. 203</p> <p>Demonstrate comprehension via succinct summary writing Grades 2-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 206</p> <p>Craft engaging beginnings & powerful endings Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 205</p> <p>Dissect author moves within literary analyses Grades 6-12/ML Levels 4-5 • Rm. 209</p> <p>Modernize classroom collaboration from Post-Its to Padlet Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 202</p>	<p>1:15 - 2:15 p.m.</p> <p>Revitalize the writing process Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 206</p> <p>Target essential skills in informative writing Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 203</p> <p>Boost achievement with the Science of Writing Grades K-12 • Rm. 204</p> <p>Improve basic sentence conventions Grades PK-2/ML Levels 1-2 • Rm. 207</p> <p>Decode & design writing prompts Grades 3-12/ML Levels 3-5 • Rm. 205</p> <p>Enhance teaching & learning with AI tools Grades K-12/ML All Levels • Rm. 202</p>

Conference Closing

Hoosier Ballroom

Kristina Smekens • 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.



FRENCH LICK RESORT EVENT CENTER



Hoosier Ballroom (208) — Keynote & Meals
 Windsor Ballroom (200) — Laugh Lounge Comedy Night

BREAKOUT ROOMS

- Reagan (209) — Kristina Smekens
- Ford (207) — Courtney Gordon
- Nixon (205) — Kristi McCullough
- Johnson (206) — Rachel Remenschneider
- Eisenhower (204) — Didi Harris
- Roosevelt (202) — Nadine Gilkison
- Kennedy (203) — Holly Sluyter
- Truman (201) — Shona Lansdell

 Coach's Corner
  Restrooms

Powerful sessions to BUILD BETTER WRITERS

JUNE 17

8:00 a.m. Conference Opening & Keynote with Kristina Smekens | *Hoosier Ballroom*

9:45 a.m.

Juggle language foundations & writing standards in PK-2

Kristi McCullough | Room 205 | 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

Holly Sluyter | Room 203 | 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

Courtney Gordon | Room 207 | 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

Rachel Remenschneider | Room 206 | 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

Didi Harris | Room 204 | 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

Nadine Gilkison | Room 202 | 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 on-site coaching sessions on June 17-18—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
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

11:00 a.m.

Kick-start your writing with 6 key lessons

Didi Harris | Room 204 | 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

Kristina Smekens | Room 209 | 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

Kristi McCullough | Room 205 | 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

Courtney Gordon | Room 207 | 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

Rachel Remenschneider | Room 206 | 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

Nadine & Makenzie Gilkison | Room 202 | 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.

1:15 p.m.

Provide focused & efficient writer feedback

Shona Lansdell | Room 201 | 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

Kristina Smekens | Room 209 | 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

Kristi McCullough | Room 205 | 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

Didi Harris | Room 204 | 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

Courtney Gordon | Room 207 | 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.

JUNE 17

2:30 p.m.

Develop a flexible writing rubric for grades 3-12

Didi Harris | Room 204 | 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

Holly Sluyter | Room 203 | 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

Rachel Remenschneider | Room 206 | 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

Kristina Smekens | Room 209 | 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

Shona Lansdell | Room 201 | 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

Nadine Gilkison | Room 202 | 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.

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

Attendees who registered by the Early Bird deadline will get one year of access to session recordings after the conference. All 40+ sessions will be open for viewing on the Smekens Access site by July 1.

Educators who registered after April 15 can purchase one year of access to all session recordings for \$100. Visit the registration desk for more information.

COMPLETION CERTIFICATES

After the end of the conference, every attendee will be given a completion certificate reflecting 10 hours of teacher professional development.



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.

EVENING ENTERTAINMENT

LAUGH LOUNGE COMEDY NIGHT

Windsor Ballroom | *Doors open at 7:00*

Get ready to unwind and belly-laugh your way through Tuesday evening at our Laugh Lounge Comedy Night! Join us in the for a relaxed and hilarious night designed especially for educators. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. for socializing and mingling—drink ticket in hand (good for beer, wine, a cocktail, or soda).

7:30-8:00 P.M. | “You Can’t Make This Stuff Up”

The Smekens team will kick things off with “You Can’t Make This Stuff Up”—a lighthearted storytelling session featuring real and ridiculous moments from life in schools. You’ll laugh, you’ll relate, and you’ll definitely be reminded that you’re not alone in the chaos.

8:00 - 9:00 P.M.

COMEDY SHOW BY

Andrea Caspari
from **BORED
TEACHERS**

As a longtime ELA teacher herself, Andrea gets the quirks, the kids, and the classroom moments that only teachers truly understand. She’ll deliver a full hour of teacher-approved comedy that hits hilariously close to home.

Whether you come for the stories, the stand-up, or just the good company, this is one evening you won’t want to miss!

8:30 a.m.

Write about & beyond texts read in PK-2

Kristina Smekens | Room 209 | 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

Didi Harris | Room 204 | 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

Courtney Gordon | Room 207 | 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

Kristi McCullough | Room 205 | 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

Shona Lansdell | Room 201 | 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.

9:45 a.m.

Foster perseverance & resilience with writing

Shona Lansdell | Room 201 | 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.

Boost achievement with the Science of Writing

Didi Harris | Room 204
K-12 Instructional Leaders, Coaches, Administrators
Explore key research findings from the Science of Writing to understand what developing writers need most. Learn five high-impact, evidence-based practices that build stronger, more confident writers. Walk away with practical strategies to shape a research-based writing program aligned to standards and focused on student achievement.

Blend text evidence & explanations

Kristina Smekens | Room 209 | 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

Holly Sluyter | Room 203 | 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

Courtney Gordon | Room 207 | 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

Nadine Gilkison | Room 202 | 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.

11:00 a.m.

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

Holly Sluyter | Room 203 | 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

Rachel Remenschneider | Room 206 | 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

Kristi McCullough | Room 205 | 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

Kristina Smekens | Room 209 | 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

Nadine Gilkison | Room 202 | 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.

1:15 p.m.

Revitalize the writing process

Rachel Remenschneider | Room 206 | 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

Holly Sluyter | Room 203 | 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.

Boost achievement with the Science of Writing

Didi Harris | Room 204
K-12 Instructional Leaders, Coaches, Administrators
Explore key research findings from the Science of Writing to understand what developing writers need most. Learn five high-impact, evidence-based practices that build stronger, more confident writers. Walk away with practical strategies to shape a research-based writing program aligned to standards and focused on student achievement.

Improve basic sentence conventions

Courtney Gordon | Room 207 | 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

Kristi McCullough | Room 205 | 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

Nadine Gilkison | Room 202 | 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.

2:30 p.m. Conference Closing with Kristina Smekens | *Hoosier Ballroom*

Meet writer needs

Plan powerful units

Write across subjects

Deliver writing lessons

Conquer state assessments

Embrace Edtech

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



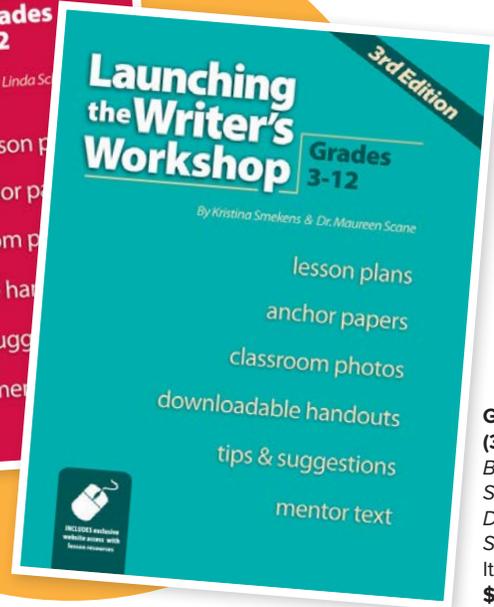
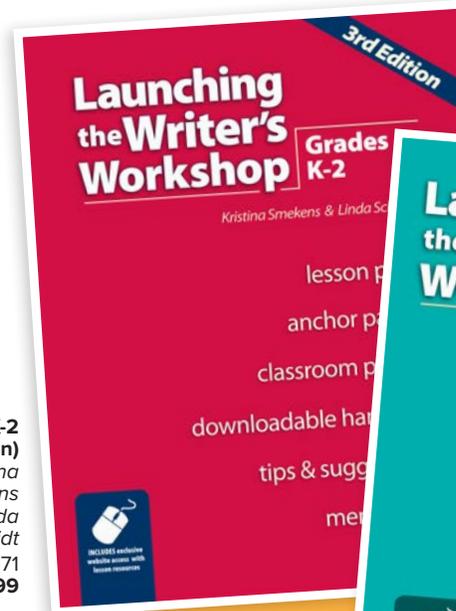
Use code "IGNITE" at checkout to get **15% off** your purchase!

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

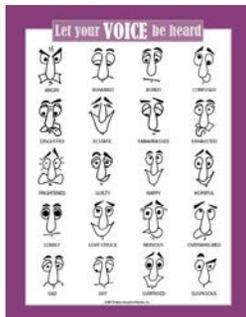


Use code "IGNITE" at checkout to get **15% off** your purchase!

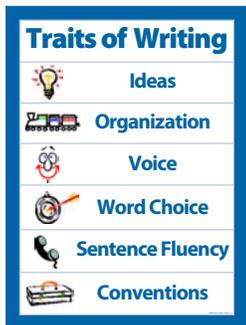
6 TRAITS OF WRITING RESOURCES



Visit www.SmekensEducation.com 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.



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



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.



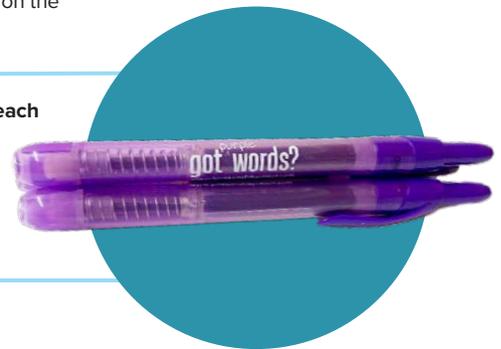
6-Traits Cheat Sheet
Item #103 **\$0.99**
If you are working to implement the 6 Traits within your classroom or school building, then your first goal should be to know the traits yourself. The 6-Traits Cheat Sheet is the size of a small postcard and includes foundational writing skills per trait. Primary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

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 —one 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

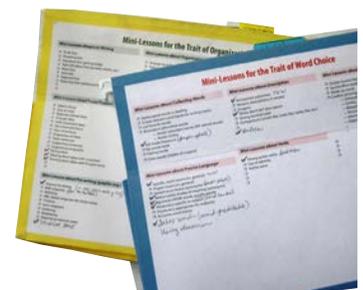
Item #197 **\$8.99**
Wear the Conventions Tool Belt to encourage students to use the tools and rules that will improve their writing. Fill the multiple pockets with real writer items like an editing checklist, an eraser, a pocket dictionary, a spaceman tool, a fluency phone, etc.

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.



**Items in the sample picture are not included.*



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

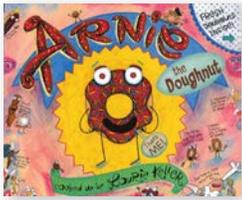
Tracking the 6 Traits in 20 Popular Children's Books

Item #116 **\$15.99**

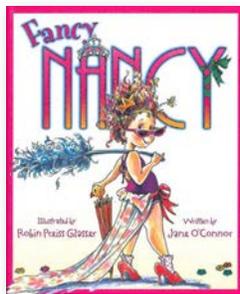
This resource by Kristina Smekens makes it easy to use picture books as mentor text by "tracking" when and how the 6 Traits appear in 20 popular titles. Each bookmark-sized card offers a page-by-page citation of the 6 Traits in action.



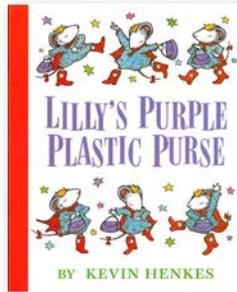
Track the Traits in these popular titles:



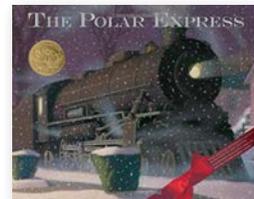
Arnie the Doughnut
Item #79473 **\$9.99**



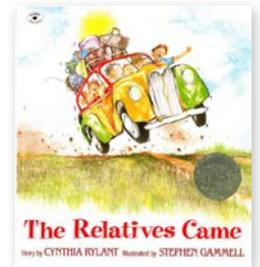
Fancy Nancy
Item #542092 **\$19.99**



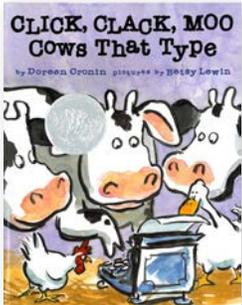
Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse
Item #128975 **\$19.99**



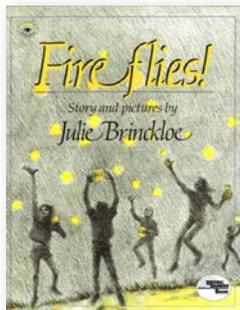
The Polar Express
Item #580145 **\$21.99**



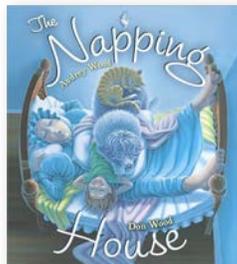
The Relatives Came
Item #717383 **\$8.99**



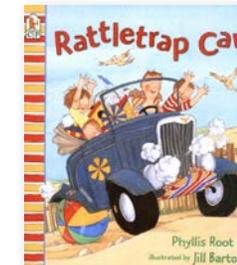
**Click, Clack, Moo:
Cows that Type**
Item #832130 **\$17.99**



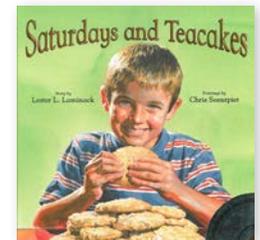
Fireflies!
Item #710551 **\$8.99**



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



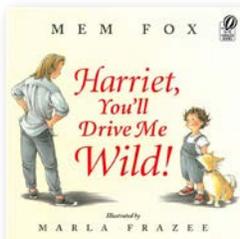
Rattletrap Car
Item #620073 **\$8.99**



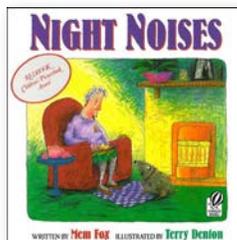
Saturdays and Teacakes
Item #453030 **\$17.99**



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



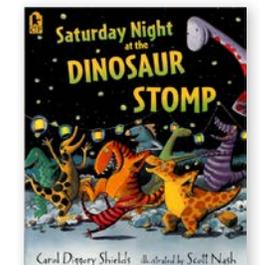
Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild!
Item #45982 **\$9.99**



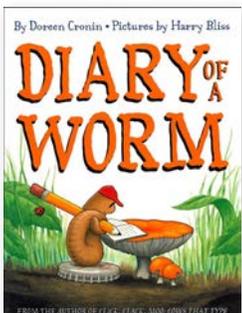
Night Noises
Item #574215 **\$9.99**



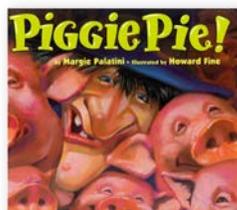
The Recess Queen
Item #206372 **\$18.99**



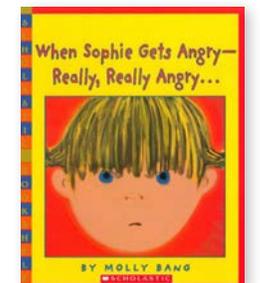
**Saturday Night at the
Dinosaur Stomp**
Item #638870 **\$8.99**



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



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

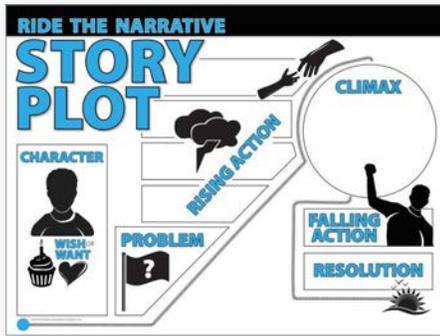


**When Sophie Gets Angry—
Really, Really Angry**
Item #598453 **\$7.99**

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



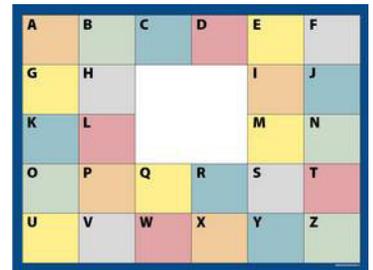
Use code "IGNITE" at checkout to get **15% off** your purchase!



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



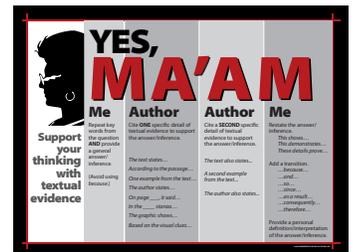
Item #232



Item #230



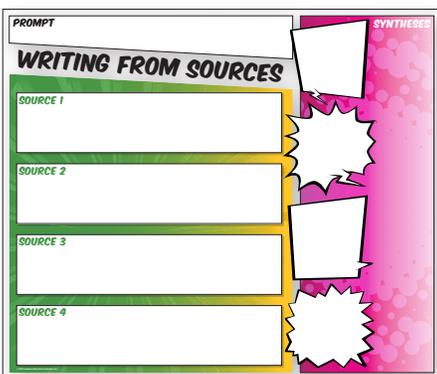
Item #231



Yes, MA'AM Poster

Item #184 \$2.99

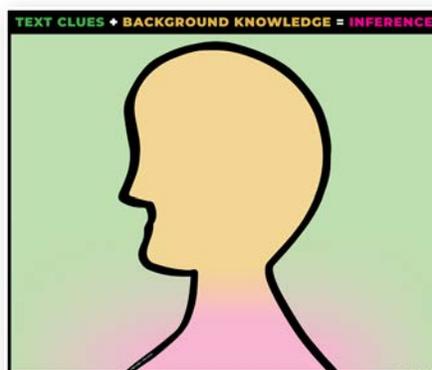
Provide students a visual reminder for constructed-response writing with a 24" x 18" Yes, MA'AM poster. Each letter of the acronym stands for part of the typical response (M=Me, A=Author, A=Author, M=Me). Students simply follow the formula to build a successful, short-constructed response.



Writing From Sources Poster

Item #218 \$5.99

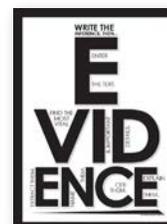
Synthesizing ideas across sources requires two separate steps, and this poster accounts for both. STEP 1: Collect relevant textual details on sticky notes while keeping source-specific information organized. STEP 2: Read through all of the details and group similar ones to generate new and bigger thoughts; 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

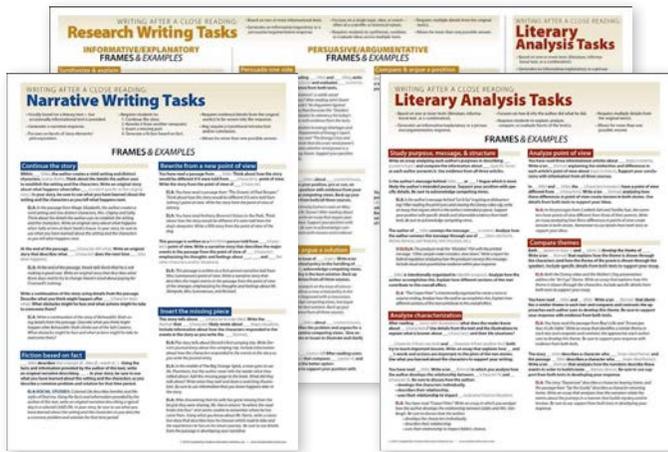
This 18" x 24" poster spells out the citing-evidence procedure. Using the

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.



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!



The Comprehension Playbook			
<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
\$89.99 each			
K-5 Bundle.....	Item #448	\$149.99	
K-12 Bundle	Item #449	\$169.99	

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

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With a subscription to webPD, the learning never stops. With on-demand access to more than 300 professional learning videos, subscribers are equipped with the strategies they need to improve literacy instruction, address emerging needs, and bolster achievement. And when the entire staff is included in the subscription, every educator in your school can learn to execute expert reading and writing instruction all year long.

**Learn more
and get a
free 7-day trial:**



WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- 300+ PD videos to help you improve your instruction
- Downloadable classroom resources to support implementation
- Articles for further reading to deepen your knowledge and application
- Personalized completion certificates for every video watched
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