Creating Writing Opportunities for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

PowerPoint Slides to be used in conjunction with the Facilitator’s Guide
Recommended citation:

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Introduction

The Issue at Hand

- Writing - the generation or creation of information by an individual such as making a useful mark, composing to a scribe, or creating a product to share with others.
Introduction, continued

• Two elements within writing:
  – the process of thinking of the ideas or generating the information and
  – the task of making the marks or symbols on the paper.

• Both of these elements pose problems when considering how students with significant cognitive disabilities will participate in writing.
Introduction, continued

• What is writing? Look at the following examples and see if you would consider what the student was doing in each as writing or not.
Introduction, continued

1. Saul is placing pictures that have been given to him by his teacher in a sequence using a jig that is labeled

\[
\text{subject} \quad + \quad \text{verb} \quad + \quad \text{adjective/adverb}
\]

When he has completed a sequence, he places a block or marker at the end to signify the end of his thought or idea. The pictures are labeled on the back with an S, V, or A that will be faded over time.
2. Alicia is identifying pictures that match a written sentence that the teacher reads to her. She points to the correct picture after the teacher reads the sentence and says, “You pick the matching picture.” There is a picture above each sentence but this picture doesn’t correspond with any of the choices provided to Alicia to promote her generalization of the same idea (e.g., “We are going to the beach.” and two different pictures of the beach are used - one in the stimulus and one in the two choices presented to Alicia).
3. Manny is marking his answers when presented with three choice options on a worksheet using a bingo stamper. The stamper makes a red circle over his choice. He does this independently.
Introduction, continued

• So, which is writing? Saul is generating ideas and building sentences using picture supports - which is writing. Alicia is responding to a sentence read to her- which is listening comprehension and is not writing. Manny is making a purposeful mark- which is writing

• This session will provide ideas and strategies to support students in their writing.
Session Goal and Objectives

• The goal of the session is to define what is writing and outline ideas that contribute to understanding about how to teach both the physical aspects of writing as well as the process of writing to students with significant cognitive disabilities (SWSCD).
Session Objectives

1. Define traditional writing.
2. Identify the essence or focal information of writing standards.
3. Recognize how writing can be accommodated and modified for SWSCD.
4. Apply understandings to classroom contexts (given scenarios) by selecting options to increase writing experiences and opportunities for SWSCD.
Background

• This module outlines both the typical stages of writing for children in the production of symbols as well as the process of writing that is best practice for students in generating information.

• It is important to consider both the production of purposeful markings to represent information AND students’ composition of their own thoughts and ideas.
Background, continued

• The use of assistive technology plays a critical role in the production of writing; but it can be as important in the process of writing, e.g., using a computer to help spelling and grammar, be it in email or a research paper.

• Purposeful teaching of how to use and communicate with low and high tech supports will more likely accommodate students and allow them to participate in meaningful writing experiences.
Background, continued

• Research guides technology use and instructional strategies for teaching writing to students with high incidence disabilities.
  – For example, Englert et al. (2009) found that students with learning disabilities had more difficulty using expository writing strategies than their nondisabled peers

• But there is little research directly related to writing and the use of technology and no research related to the use of strategies to support writing with SWSCD.
Content Standards

• Let’s look at the extended standards within a few states that explicitly target the inclusion of the content of writing within the curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

• South Dakota has explicit writing extended content standards for students in grades K-12 that include how students functioning at various abilities could access the content:
Content Standards, continued


• Table 1 (in Facilitator’s Guide) illustrates the different expectations at several grade levels.

• These types of content standards help delineate and prioritize the instructional efforts of teachers for students.
Content Standards, continued

• While North Carolina may not have extended content standards dedicated solely to writing at this time, there are standards in English Language Arts (http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards/extended/) that address the writing expectations for students.
Content Standards, continued

• For example, “Demonstrate writing behaviors” in the Kindergarten extended standards is illustrated by identifying ways students can make a purposeful mark.

• “Practice writing strategies, conventions, editing, and grammar to create a legible product” in second grade is illustrated by having students sequence words or pictures and words into simple sentences.
Content Standards, continued

• “Use technology to create or produce a product” at fifth grade is illustrated multiple ways including writing and printing sentences using a computer and using picture symbols to produce a sentence.
Content Standards, continued

• Extended content standards should be considered in conjunction with student needs. To be able to address the content in a progressive format, it is important to consider the steps to follow in the physical production of writing strokes.
Stages of Writing

• Stages - a way to follow the development of the physical aspects of students to make a mark given a writing utensil.

• Typically developing students:
  – tend to draw and scribble before they make letter-like shapes.
  – These shapes tend to transition into actual letters which may or may not be in any type of sequence at first (e.g., writing the letters of their name or simply writing random letters).
Stages of Writing, continued

– Students are taught to make upper and lowercase letters.
– Once they can physically make the letters, students move to the process of writing (generating information, typically with inventive spelling at first).
– More examples can be found at http://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00922/chapter6.pdf (Gentry, 2006).
Stages of Writing, continued

• If students are unable to physically make a mark, teachers must assess the need for assistive technology and other physical or occupational supports that may be necessary.
Types of Writing

• Many types of writing exist, each with its own purpose.

• Some of the most common are persuasive, descriptive, narrative, & expository writing.
  – Persuasive writing convinces the reader of something - a belief or opinion related to the topic.
  – Descriptive writing provides the reader with a picture of a topic so the reader can visualize the information.
Types of Writing, continued

– Narrative writing tells the reader a story.
– Expository writing provides factual information to explain or define the topic

• An important aspect to approach any type of writing is the strategy or strategies used within instruction. One strategy or model to teaching writing will be described next. Information about other strategies can be found in the references and in the Facilitator’s Guide.
Trait-based Strategies for Writing

• One approach or strategy to teach writing is using a trait-based model.

• Intended to provide teachers and students with the characteristics or content necessary to develop good writing as well as the evaluative information to work together to understand and recognize what good writing looks like.
Trait-based Strategies for Writing, continued

- There are six anchor features or traits within trait-based writing and one additional feature.
- Teachers can focus on one or more traits at a time depending upon the needs of the student until the entire writing product has addressed each trait.
Trait-based Strategies for Writing, continued

– Trait one, content and ideas, concentrates on the use of cohesive ideas as well as irony, metaphors, or personification within a student’s writing. Students are encouraged to use clear, unique, interesting thoughts.

– Trait two, information and organization addresses the use of a logical sequence and an engaging lead.

– Trait three, grammar and mechanics, includes the correct use of spelling, spacing, and subject/verb agreement.
Trait-based Strategies for Writing, continued

– Trait four, sentence fluency, addresses sentence flow and rhythm within the student’s writing.

– Trait five, word choice and clarity, focuses on the words selected by the student for nouns, verbs, and modifiers.

– Trait six, voice, deals with writing to your audience, the use of tone, and writing with personality and energy.
Trait-based Strategies for Writing, continued

– Trait seven, presentation, addresses neatness, use of graphics, and overall appearance of the paper.

• The use of trait-based writing is one strategy to address the development of a student’s writing regardless of the type of writing. Understanding the content of each trait may help better delineate what happens within the process of writing.
Process of Writing

• While the process of writing has been revised over time, the foundation has been well delineated in the published literature.

• There are typically five steps in the process of writing, detailed in the following slide show, which is also available at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/bw/background/#6.

• The content used is from http://www.umass.edu/nursing/sites/nursing/files/stages_of_writing.pdf (University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2006).
Process of Writing
5 Steps

1. Prewriting
2. Drafting
3. Revising
4. Editing/proof reading
5. Final draft
Prewriting (Preparing to write)

- Read, think, free-write in a journal format
- Identify purpose and audience
- Research, take notes, gather information
- Brainstorm with a peer group
- Organize thinking and plan
Drafting (Putting thoughts on paper)

- Focus on content
- Compose freely, without concern for mechanics
Revising (Taking another look)

• Maintain focus on content vs. mechanics
• Share draft with peer group
• Invite discussion, accept response and helpful input from peers
• Add to, delete from, rearrange and revise first draft
Editing/Proofreading

• Share revised draft with peer group
• Invite correction of grammar, spelling, punctuation, usage
• Incorporate corrections in final draft
Final draft

• Share the product with peer group (dramatizations, small group reports, individual oral presentations, etc.)
• Invite evaluation by peer group
• Submit for final evaluation by teacher
Process of Writing, continued

• For the population of students with severe cognitive disabilities it may be unreasonable to expect students to follow all five steps in generating information.
• Teachers need to prioritize which, if not all, of the steps are necessary for students to participate in the writing process.
Process of Writing, continued

• Be ready to recognize:
  – the opportunity for students to participate in more steps within the process as mastery occurs; and
  – the need to consider strategies to allow students to participate in steps that may not follow a traditional method, such as using assistive technology supports to allow a student who is non-verbal to share a draft with a peer group.
Range of Writing Experiences

• Writing instruction to students with severe disabilities is a recent focus within literacy instruction.

• For writing to be fully accessible, traditional views of writing may need to be expanded to include assistive technology, stamps, or pictures to develop a permanent product.
Range of Writing Experiences, continued

• Most writing instruction has been functional in nature; students learned to write for a specific purpose such as making lists, addressing envelopes, or writing checks.

• Writing for functional purposes can be easily modified for students who lack the gross and/or fine motor skills to perform traditional writing. Examples:
1. A student wishing to label papers or objects can use a name stamp. These are inexpensive and can be purchased from any office supplies store. If the student is unable to maintain a grasp on the stamp, try attaching a Velcro strap that will attach to the stamp and wrap around the student’s hand.
2. Lists such as a shopping list can be created using picture symbols or photos.

www.pdclipart.org
3. Envelopes can be addressed by creating a template that shows where the person’s name goes, the house number, street name, city, state, and zip code. The specific information can be typed by another person, if needed, and then glued onto the envelope. Preprinted return address labels can also be used.
Range of Writing Experiences, continued

• In addition to functional activities, students also need the opportunity to learn to express ideas.

• Expressive writing may range from composing a poem to express personal thoughts or opinions to composing a nonfictional piece.
Range of Writing Experiences, continued

• Writing will not always take the form of sentences and paragraphs.
• Early elementary writing activities in the general education classroom often involve the use of graphic organizers.
• Students just learning to write require a narrow focus. Short sentences or one word responses are best.
Range of Writing Experiences, continued

• This type of descriptive writing could be completed in a diverse general education classroom with minimal modifications.

• Supports for this activity may include pre-typed words for the student to choose from and then either copy or paste on picture symbols or photographs.
Range of Writing Experiences, continued

• After ideas are generated, students are paired with peers to complete the activity.
• For example, a student with a disability chooses descriptive words relating to a narrow topic such as “a week at the beach” or “my garden”.
• Then works with a peer to select which descriptive words go into each sentence (I am growing red tomatoes in my garden.).
This descriptive worksheet (Cooper, 2010) from Scholastic is very common in kindergarten through 2nd grade. Students are encouraged to express thoughts and ideas in multiple ways.
Getting Ready to Write

• The first element of writing, the process of thinking of the ideas or generating the information to be written, begins with prewriting activities.

• Watch the slide show at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/bw/lib/media/slides02/SlideShow.html to learn more about prewriting activities (a copy of the slides follows).
Choosing a topic

- Students are often allowed to choose the topic that they will write about. Choosing a topic that has personal relevance is easier to generate ideas about.
  - Students may choose to write something they know about such as a sport or hobby.
  - Students may choose to write about an observation or experience, for example a trip to the hospital or the food in the school cafeteria.
  - Students may choose to write about a person they know.
Once a topic has been chosen, students will complete *prewriting activities*

- **Brainstorming:** students create a random list about a topic.
- **Teacher** often provides a prompt to get the students thinking. For example: What do you like best about the summer?
- **Instead of creating** a random list, teachers may ask students to create a more organized list.
- **Mapping** focuses on one theme and uses a graphic organizer.
- **Graphic organizers** lend themselves easily to accommodations that may be needed for students with disabilities.
Sample Mapping Activity

This map accommodates for students with a range of ability levels. Some students use complete sentences, some fewer word, some can write the word when given words to choose from, others may use a picture to represent an idea.

Summer brings ___ days.

hot free snowy

No school

I like to go on vacation with my family

Sleeping late

Summer brings ___ days.

Ice cream

pool
• Prewriting strategies are used in kindergarten through high school.
• By late elementary school students consider the purpose of the writings as well as the intended audience.
• By high school students use more complex graphic organizers, use time management, and keep records of writing such as daily journals.
Getting Ready to Write, continued

- Prewriting activities are crucial for students with disabilities
- Should precede any of the types of writing that will be reviewed in this module.
Establishing a Purpose

It is also important to establish the purpose of our writing. For the purposes of this module, four types of writing will be reviewed:

– Persuasive
– Narrative
– Descriptive
– Expository
Persuasive Writing

• The goal of persuasive writing is to convince someone to accept your point of view.

• Persuasive writing involves stating your opinion and backing it up with facts or supporting details.

• Students begin persuasive writing in early elementary school.
  – A letter
  – An advertisement
  – An essay
  – A speech
Persuasive Writing, continued

• Persuasive writing may occur in **multiple content areas**. For example:
  – Writing to convince athletes not to use steroids for health class.
  – Writing to convince students that global warming is a real issue in science class.
  – Writing to convince the chorus teacher to allow a certain type of music in the upcoming concert.
Persuasive Writing, continued

• Students with disabilities can use graphic organizers with prompts and response options to create persuasive writing.

• Some examples of graphic organizers that can assist with persuasive writing:
  – Look at Persuasive Graphic Organizer 1: if a student can write short sentences they can complete this graphic organizer with minimal assistance. Spelling and grammar are not important here. We are concerned with getting the ideas represented on paper.
Persuasive Writing, continued

– Look at Persuasive Graphic Organizer 2, a book review: This graphic organizer shows how the focus can be narrowed for students with disabilities.

– Instead of open ended questions, specific response options are provided. *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry is a book commonly read in the 6th grade. Middle school is also when students are learning to back up their opinions with facts from the story.
Persuasive Writing, continued

– In this graphic organizer, students are asked why a character was their favorite and then asked to back up their reason with a fact from the story.

– All of this is achieved by giving limited response options to the students. Students who use this organizer may also benefit from pictures symbols or photos being added to the text. With these added supports, most students with significant disabilities could participate in this activity.
Persuasive Writing, continued

– Look at Persuasive Writing Template 1, a persuasive writing activity that includes picture support.

– This writing template uses photos paired with text for the response options.

– Since most of these statements are somewhat abstract, object representations cannot be used. Photos are the most concrete option.

– Notice also that the distracters are non-plausible. As students get more familiar with this activity and/or more familiar with the content, you may make the distracters more difficult.
Descriptive Writing

- Descriptive writing portrays a person, place, or thing so that the reader can visualize what the writer is talking about.
- The idea is to show rather than tell.
- Descriptive writing is often a part of other types of writing, especially narrative writing.
- An effective way to teach descriptive writing is by modeling.
Descriptive Writing, continued

• Pick an object that could be brought to class such as these strawberries and a bowl. Using the bowl of strawberries, model descriptive writing by listing the descriptive words that help students visualize the bowl of strawberries. Add photos to support each descriptive word.
  – red
  – green leaves on top
  – soft
  – shaped like a heart
  – bumpy
  – juicy
Descriptive Writing, continued

• After modeling, pick a second object and describe the object together.

• Emphasize to students that they should use their senses. Describe how the objects look, feel, smell, sound, and, if appropriate, taste.

• Allowing student to engage with an object will help them describe it.

• In early grades students are often asked to describe themselves.
Descriptive Writing, continued

- Look at Descriptive Writing example 1, another descriptive writing activity. Students respond using written words, picture symbols, or photos.

- For students with significant disabilities this descriptive activity may be too lengthy to complete at one time but could be completed over a few months.

- Some students may be able to verbalize or point to some of the simpler responses such as their favorite color. If so, a peer could write the answer.
Descriptive Writing, continued

• As the teacher, you will want to know the answer to as many of these questions as possible so that when you present response options you are sure to have the correct one. For a question like “The person I admire the most is…” provide a photo of a parent, a teacher, and a stranger.

• Students can also be given choices to assist them with describing themselves.
Descriptive Writing, continued

• Look at Descriptive Writing example 2, a template that offers choices,

• As students move up to secondary grades, they will begin not only to describe what they can see or feel but also a person’s characteristics.

• Students in upper grades are often asked to analyze and write about characters in a book.
Descriptive Writing, continued

• Look at Descriptive Writing template 3, another type of organizer that would be appropriate for secondary grades.

• In an inclusive setting, students with disabilities could work in groups to complete the organizer. They may only be asked to complete the physical characteristics, for example.
Narrative Writing

- Narrative writing should **tell a story**.
- This type of writing begins **as early as kindergarten** when students are asked to **draw** about an event and then write **a sentence or two** about the event. An example from a 2nd grade student is available at [http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/bw/lib/documents/narrative.pdf](http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/bw/lib/documents/narrative.pdf).
Narrative Writing, continued

• For students with disabilities this activity could be **modified** in several ways.
• First, students could work in pairs or **small groups** to complete a story about a shared event such as a field trip or a class party. All students could contribute in different ways. Instead of drawing a picture, a **photo** taken during the event could be used.
Narrative Writing, continued

- Second, the student could paste pictures together to create a scene, then select from prewritten sentences to tell the story.

- For example, ask the student to select the sentence that best tells about this photo.

1. I love to ride my bike in the summer.
2. My baseball team won the championship. I was proud.
3. My dog and I like to play ball.
Narrative Writing, continued

• If additional support is needed, add a picture to each sentence making the picture for sentence #2 the same as the photo.

• With the photo above out on the student’s desk, ask the student to look at the picture. Describe what is in the picture. Ask the student to select the sentence that best tells about this photo.

• Present the following response options for the student to choose from:
1. I love to ride my bike in the summer.

2. My baseball team won the championship. I was proud.

3. My dog and I like to play ball.
Narrative Writing, continued

Throughout all grades it is appropriate for students to use personal experiences as a basis for stories. Personal relevance will make these activities easier for students with disabilities.

Narrative writing may take the form of:

- A short story
- A poem
- An autobiography
- A biography
Narrative Writing, continued

• Narrative writing is the perfect time to explore using technology to write a story.

• A presentation program, such as PowerPoint, can be used for students with disabilities to create books about themselves or other topics.

• Students can insert personal photos or photos from the Internet. Text can be created in large font and spell checked on the computer.
Narrative Writing, continued

- Students can then have the computer read the book aloud or have it read by a peer.
- Play the slide show at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/bw/lib/media/slides03/SlideShow.html to see a short book created using PowerPoint (a copy of the slides follows).
My Summer Vacation

By: Christian Lee
Hawaii
My family and I went on vacation to Hawaii.

It took a long time to get there.

It was a beautiful place.
Banyon Tree

We saw a giant tree that covered a whole park.
Waterfall

We saw waterfalls. I wanted to swim but I couldn’t.
Road to Hana

We drove up and around a great big mountain. It was scary.
Rainbow

My brother took lots of pictures. He took this one of a rainbow.
Time to go home!

We had fun in Hawaii.

We flew back home on the airplane. It did not take as long to get home!
Another important skill in writing and in literacy in general is sequencing.

In order to tell a story, students must have a clear understanding of the order of events.

As a prewriting activity, students can practice sequencing by putting the photographs in the order that they occur.
Expository Writing

• Expository writing is used to explain, or inform the reader about a topic.
• Students with disabilities are often exposed to expository text when learning daily living skills such as cooking or doing laundry.
• Follows a logical sequential order.
• Generally nonfiction pieces, expository writing may take the form of:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper or magazine articles</th>
<th>Travel Guides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newsletters</td>
<td>Research Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text books</td>
<td>Manuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Expository Writing, continued

• Expository texts make up the majority of text that students read and write.
• The following slide is an example of how a graphic organizer can be used with expository text.
Mountain lions are the largest member of the cat family in North America. They are carnivorous and dangerous. They are also territorial and secretive and can be hard to find.
Expository Writing, continued

• This graphic organizer demonstrates how the student can organize facts about a topic.
• This type of organizer could be used across content areas.
• The topic could be broad like “American Indian Chiefs” or narrow such as “Sitting Bull.” It could be a health topic such as healthy food choices.
• This is just one example of a graphic organizer that can be used across content areas and more explicit text.
Work-It-Across

- One strategy for providing access to general education standard is called “Work-It-Across.”
- A way of extending state standards by differentiating expectations for student achievement.
- Next is an example of a writing standard and how it can be worked across so that students at varying levels of symbolic communication levels can demonstrate learning.
**Competency Goal 4:** The learner will apply strategies and skills to create oral, written and visual texts.

4.05 Use planning strategies to generate topics and organize ideas (e.g., brainstorming, mapping, webbing, reading, discussion).

**Extended Indicator:** Participate in pre-writing activities • Write and/or participate in writing behaviors •

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>4th Grade</th>
<th>On Grade Level Expectation (Not adapted)</th>
<th>Abstract Symbolic</th>
<th>Concrete Symbolic</th>
<th>Presymbolic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Activities</strong></td>
<td>Generate ideas with students about a defined topic targeting factual and related information. Provide students with a graphic organizer (i.e., bubble map with one level of bubbles). Model how to use the organizer. Provide written words and least to most prompts during teacher input and guided if necessary.</td>
<td>Generate ideas with students about a defined topic targeting factual information. Provide students with graphic organizer (i.e., bubble map with one level of bubbles). Model how to use the organizer. Provide written words and least to most prompts during teacher input and guided if necessary.</td>
<td>Provide students with factual information from a given topic. Provide students with graphic organizer (i.e., bubble map with one level of bubbles – see Abstract symbolic for example). Model how to use the organizer. Provide picture/word choices for each bubble with a range of feasibility (choices clearly not possible to more discriminating choices depending upon student need). Provide least to most prompts during teacher input and guided practice if necessary.</td>
<td>Provide students with factual information from a given topic. Provide students with graphic organizer (i.e., bubble map with one level of bubbles – see Abstract symbolic for example). Model how to use the organizer. Provide object with Velcro/picture/word which may begin with stimulus prompt of matching picture in bubbles that can be faded over time. Provide least to most prompts during teacher input and guided practice if necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **How Student Shows Mastery** | Complete a bubble map with information describing a topic and identifying related information within the topic. | Complete a bubble map for a different familiar topic by either using provided written words or generating and writing/dictating to scribe own ideas. | Complete a bubble map for a different familiar topic by choosing from provided picture symbols paired with written words. | Complete a bubble map for a different familiar topic by choosing from provided objects paired with picture symbols or picture symbols paired with written words. |
Work-It-Across, continued

• This example is designed for the state writing standard: **Create multiple paragraph compositions** that include a central idea with supporting details and use appropriate transitions between paragraphs, as well as the extended standard: **Create a paragraph** that uses transitional words and includes a central idea with supporting details.
Work-It-Across, continued

- Move across the columns from left to right
- Each column demonstrates how the teacher can provide access to the writing standards for students who are on grade level, students who are communicating at an abstract symbolic level, a concrete symbolic level, or a beginning with symbols level.
Work-It-Across, continued

• The column labeled “On Grade Level Expectation” shows what typical students who are on grade level will be expected to do to meet this standard.

• Columns to the right note adaptations so that the representation of materials and expression are more concrete.

• Student engagement is addressed in ways such as breaking the lesson into two or more chunks.
Work-It-Across, continued

• To meet this standard, students communicating at an **Abstract Symbolic** level will focus on main idea and supporting details only.

• Requires extensive modeling: the teacher will read paragraphs about familiar topics and label the main idea and supporting details.

• The teacher will add visual cues such as highlighting the main idea in a certain color and the supporting details in another color.
Work-It-Across, continued

• After several rounds of modeling, students are asked to identify the main idea and supporting details in a new paragraph.

• The teacher will then model writing about a topic by writing a main idea and supporting details.

• Students will practice in small groups.
Work-It-Across, continued

• Finally, the students will be asked to select a topic, generate a sentence that conveys the main idea and at least two supporting details. If needed, students can select a topic sentence from prewritten options.

• Students are offered several ways to create a permanent product; they may dictate to scribe, use assistive technology, or write.
Work-It-Across, continued

• Students communicating at the **Concrete Symbolic** level will receive instruction using shorter paragraphs (two sentences) and will use text supported with picture symbols.

• Students asked to independently identify the main idea and the supporting detail.
Work-It-Across, continued

• Students create their paragraph as the Abstract Symbolic students but the expectation will be a two sentence paragraph containing one main idea and one supporting detail.

• A stem sentence such as “I like ____.” may be provided.

• All text will have picture supports.
Work-It-Across, continued

• For students who are **Beginning with Symbols**, the teacher will provide instruction on the main idea and supporting details.

• But students will not be asked to identify them as they were in other levels.

• The focus is on the students’ ability to express a thought about a topic and give one reason why they think or feel the way they do.
Work-It-Across, continued

• Information will be presented in more concrete formats.
  – Example- when choosing a topic, the students may choose from two objects such as a basketball and a video controller.
  – Other information such as the sentences will have picture support when it is not realistic to represent it with an object.
Work-It-Across, continued

– The teacher will provide prewritten sentences that the students will be asked to complete.

– Rather than generating words, the students will complete the sentences by choosing from descriptors.

– The chosen descriptors are then placed into the sentence blanks using Velcro to create complete sentences and a permanent product.
Work-It-Across, continued

• By following the Work-It-Across format, teachers are able to maintain the link to the general education standard when planning for students at varying levels.
• Review the completed Work-It-Across template to ensure understanding of the differences.
• This strategy can be very effective in the planning process.
Graphic Organizers

- **Graphic organizers** are a crucial tool for students with disabilities to participate in writing activities. They:
  - Are an effective way to visually organize thoughts and ideas before starting to write.
  - Are available in a variety of formats such as charts, diagrams and timelines.
  - Can be completed in a variety of ways. To provide active engagement, allow the student to choose his or her information that is to be added to the organizer by presenting several options.
Graphic Organizers, continued

• Examples of graphic organizers can be found at
  and
Graphic Organizers, continued

- These graphic organizers can be used to teach a variety of skills across content areas. There are several that are specific to science; several that can be used to teach the main idea and supporting details, and others that can be used during prewriting such as the expository writing organizer.
Graphic Organizers, continued

• Some organizers can be complex and may need to be simplified.

• Simplifying an organizer typically will involve shortening it.
  – For example, an expository writing organizer that has a place for a topic sentence and five supporting details may be shortened to two or three details.

• It does not matter who completes the organizer, it is more important that it represents the ideas of the student(s).
Summary

• This module has provided basic knowledge about the writing process and how students with significant disabilities can participate in writing activities.

• There are creative ways for students with disabilities to participate in the writing process.
Summary, continued

• Some of the key points to remember are:
  – Use assistive technology
    • computers for spell checking
    • software such as Power Point
    • voice output devices for dictating ideas or making choices
Summary, continued

– Use and/adapt tools
  • stamps for labeling

– Simplify
  • using photos or symbols instead of written words
  • writing sentences that can be completed using single words
  • presenting choice options to students
  • using graphic organizers
Focus and Reflection Questions

• Form small groups and ask participants to share their experiences in teaching creative writing. What techniques presented here would also be used by a general education teacher? How could lessons be modified to meet the needs of mainstreamed students?
Application and Extension Activities

1. Use the pages at the end of this Facilitator’s Guide for small group discussion and possible uses in their own classrooms.

2. Using old magazines as suggested in the Preparation section of this guide, allow participants to clip pictures and write a narrative prompt for each one.
Self-Assessment

• A self-assessment with response feedback is available at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/bw/quiz/. Participants may take this assessment online to evaluate their learning about content presented in this module.
Session Evaluation

• A form for participants to evaluate the session is available in the Facilitator’s Guide.