

Las Virgenes Educators Association (LVEA)
Writer's Workshop Survey
Narrative Responses
Jan/Feb 2015

Journeys

Journeys just received the correct curriculum book in January. But regular WW still doesn't address grammar and mechanics.

Since it is the best writing program I have seen for our youngest learners (over 20 years experience working with J-K-1) I hope it will be adopted. For the older grades, I have heard the teacher frustration about needing to incorporate Step Up Lessons, so how about adopting Step Up as a resource material?

I feel this program would be much more successful at a secondary level. In a Journeys/Kinder level classroom, students need structure, guidance, modeling, and prompting; How do students practice writing without knowing writing?

Not developmentally appropriate for journeys students. We teach writing, but not with writers workshop method.

Kindergarten

While I think WW has significant benefits, it cannot stand alone. Students need to be able to write across the curriculum and about topics defined by a teacher. It is also impossible to conference with individual students in the ways defined in the book to really give the necessary individualized instruction. It is also unclear what the expectations are, as right now we are blindly following the curriculum without knowing what the end goals are.

It would be a great resource with proper and complete training.

I think that with proper training at our students level (not having first grade samples during the staff development when our kids are 2 months into kindergarten) I would have a better understanding of the possibilities for my students with writer's workshop.

I hope it doesn't get adopted.

Excellent program but we need teacher training!!! Hands on training is key for Writer's Workshop for the teachers to fully understand it and implement it successfully. Help!!!

It is difficult to implement Writer's Workshop as structured into an early grade Dual Language writing program due to students' lack of vocabulary knowledge when LA is being taught in Spanish.

My vision is for students to be writing independently.

Writer's Workshop can be used across the curriculum in conjunction with teaching other subject areas.<CR>Training for Writer's Workshop is essential for teacher's to experience the most success with this program.<CR>I've been to many teacher trainings over the years and Writer's Workshop is the best teaching I've ever experienced! The methods taught here are just really good teaching that can be used across the curriculum, and especially for writing. My kids love writer's workshop and get the idea of more than just the mechanics of writing. They get the idea of "story."

This program is extremely difficult to implement in a dual language classroom; especially in a kindergarten class. There is too much verbage, and not enough visuals. I am very uncomfortable implementing this program because I feel that my students would not understand the metacognitive process LC requires. Let me be clear: a Spanish translation of the program is NOT what I need.

We do not teach writing at Mariposa Kindergarten.

Thus far, I like using Writer's Workshop as a resource. However, in a kindergarten classroom, I feel students need more structure and guidance.

I am still familiarizing myself with Writer's Workshop, however, I feel that at the kindergarten level students need a writing program which provides more structure and organization.

I would like my emergent writers to feel confident to write and use their knowledge of letter/sounds in their writing. I feel writing has made many of my student better readers.

I think theory behind WW is extremely important, it can't be our only method of teaching writing. Although autonomy and a love for writing are important- mechanics, grammar and the ability to write on a given topic are important skills that need to be explicitly taught - not just conferred upon in a mini-session. I would like to see how other teachers (in other districts) are modifying the program to meet the needs of ELD / spec needs students. I would also like to ways in which it can be incorporated with our themes and project based learning!

I like the general model but it does take a lot of time. I think we should be open to other programs as well

It is the only program that has been tried with hundreds of students and teachers. Teachers need a lot of training, BUT this curriculum is constantly being evaluated, not just written specifically for an adoption, BUT for what is best for students to become confident writers.

First Grade

This program would be a good resource but should be used in conjunction with Step Up to Writing, which better serves the long term needs of my students. The comfort level that my students enjoyed with Step Up to Writing came from their knowledge of the basic structure of a written piece of work. They definitely need that structural component with all of their writing forever! One cannot build a strong writing program without the framework coming first. Lucy Calkin's program permits incorrect grammar and a lack of mechanics to become even more a part of my students' writing than when they first entered my class. I have never had difficulty obtaining prolific amounts of writing from my students, with appropriate writing skills being utilized as well, with Step Up to Writing.

I find it difficult to navigate through the Units of Study, they writing is dense and wordy. I am trying to work it into my writing curriculum at least twice a week but it takes a lot of prep on my part. I do not find that my students understand the basic grammar conventions or structure is focused on enough.

I would like specific training on the portions of the program that are expected to teach mechanics. If they are sufficient, I see myself consistently using it in future years.

I feel that having it as one resource could be helpful because some students respond well to it. For others it is too open ended. The grammatical side of writing, especially in first grade is not easily being addressed.

I like the fact that students are writing more creatively. With "Step Up" I felt that student writing was very scripted. I would have liked "Step Up" to have more scripted lessons, like Lucy Calkins. That being said, I think that the Calkins program is expecting too much from 1st graders. Having 1st grade students write an informational book with a table of contents seems ridiculous. These young students don't have enough background information about subjects to write a "how-to" or "teaching" book. I have read many of my students stories that have false information because they don't know better.

To use it as part of my writing curriculum. I enjoy the freedom it give students to be creative.

I would like more training and opportunities to work on the program with other first grade teachers. I think the books are too wordy and that we can modify the mini lessons to meet our needs.

There would need to be much more training, and the current rubric would need to be simplified. Please continue to use Writer's Workshop ONLY as a resource.

I feel that implementation is only successful for the students who began their writing development using the writers workshop model in K-1. It is unrealistic to have an older student use writers workshop successfully without the building blocks in place.

It's very hard to implement with the little training given. Truly, every teacher needs the week training in NYC to understand the program. I don't think teachers will successfully use this program unless better trained. It's too overwhelming by itself, but coupled with all the new CC standards...ridiculous that we purchased this program right now. There is already too much on our plates!

I like using it, but am not fluent or trained well enough. Jennifer has been amazing this year, but there is so much new, and pilots..<CR>so I have not been able to give it my 110%.

I think it is great in the primary grades, but have heard upper grades teachers do not like it as much. Keep for primary, adopt something else for upper?

I would like to be able to use Writer's Workshop but also other methods at times to target specific skills.

No vision

It should be used as a supplemental program only.

Lucy Calkins Units of Study do not fit the Spanish Language Arts Writer's Workshop model and can NOT be used successfully in the dual immersion program.

LC's writer's workshop requires tons of time to implement. (prepping, teaching, evaluating...) It requires intensive training to be successful. The teacher manuals are ridiculous! It was designed to be used with small class sizes of 20 or less students. It is a time where I have to keep reminding students to stay on task and be productive. It is impossible to do conferences or even work with a small group of students. Several students do not write anything the entire writing time. Students are developing poor writing habits that will be difficult to reteach or change. Math, reading, and writing mechanics have received less instruction time because of writers workshop. The students like writers workshop because they see it as a time to draw, talk, and play with their neighbors. The students who write well do well with any other writing program. It is very disappointing to have been FORCED to teach writing workshop. Reading to and teaching first graders how to read should be the number one priority.

I have seen progress in student samples from schools that have been using the program for several years and have had A LOT of training and hands on workshops/staff development from individuals from the Teacher's College. However, I feel that my students' writing has suffered this year and that they are not prepared for the goals of second grade writing (what they have been in the past). I believe that in primary, the program and guidance from the teachers needs to be more structured and hands on. I prefer the Step Up to Writing program that we have used in years past.

I would like this to be used more as a creative writing resource.

I envision it as a strong part of the curriculum, but should be supplemented with more systematic instruction on mechanics and grammar.

I think it is a great program, especially for the primary students. My first graders love to write. I think that teachers need more training and there needs to be a place to share things that are created by teachers.

Second Grade

Let's have it available as a resource.

I like how it works and feel it could be a good program but I have not had nearly enough time or training. Also not being able to use it across subjects is a big problem sine I don't see what can be cut to give me more time in the day to teach writing every day for an hour. The district needs to provide more guidance and support before I can feel comfortable implementing.

For my grade level it is not practical. 2nd grade developmental level requires structure and clear guidelines for grammar, punctuation, and format. Writers Workshop does not meet this criteria without massive amounts of supplementation.

In a perfect world, the entire program would be trashed in favor of a more direct instructional program where children can learn foundational skills and see teacher modeling before being let loose on their own.

There have been too many "new" implementations this year. I do not like the focus on narrative then shift to information then shift again with the bends. I would rather see a more cohesive progression that builds off of knowledge rather than jumping from one to the other. I also feel like there

is not enough time to implement everything this program is asking along with all other demands of the school day.

This has taken way too much time to figure out. The program is not user/teacher friendly. The kids like the initial lessons but it is very mundane and there is NO time to edit or give proper modeling.

I'm concerned that some teachers will use Writer's Workshop at our school and others won't. This will make it challenging to see growth with the student's writing each year. If I choose to use it and the grades before me do not, the children will be lacking previous skills that should have been taught.

I like it and feel it instills excitement. It is too early for me to fully comment. One concern: it is not green- there is a lot of pages of paper used in organizing writing.

This is hard to say as I am having a lot of trouble fitting it in with all the other curriculum. We need a program that is more integrated.

This program is too difficult (teachers guide too wordy) for the teachers to use. It is hard to find out what the objective we are to be teaching. I like the booklet ideas but feel it does not give the children the tools they need to write. I am a fan of "Step Up To Writing" for the basics and can see the children could branch out into something like a Lucy's Calkins program. However the new program has to be more user friendly, teach more skills than Lucy Calkins Units of Studies.

I see it as a good resource to encourage creativity in writers and I like the use of model texts to encourage students to use more descriptive language and more advanced writing techniques; however, I still prefer the structure that step up to writing provides for emerging writers.

I believe this is the wrong time to introduce a new curriculum on top of CCSS and piloting new math. We need a lot more training to be good teachers with the writer's workshop.

Not easy to pick up and teach (manuals are very wordy), not trained enough to take advantage of all it's components, DO like that it covers all forms of required writing (vs. Step Up).

Writers workshop seems ideal in a traditional classroom setting. Being in a specialized Dual Language Program makes it extremely to implement Writers Workshop when students have yet to develop the language and vocabulary necessary to make this an ideal writing tool.

I like the how writers workshop allows for more creativity and independent writing.

Third Grade

Pick and choose what makes sense and fits into the day. I am not happy with the difficult rubrics. They are not user friendly.

I will use it as a resource, but there is no way I can do the full program and have the hours needed to teach math, Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science.

Enhance student writing and encourage more freedom for students.

Trying to increase the amount of time my students spend writing. Include it as part of the Daily 5 Rotation (which has a block specifically set aside for Work on Writing) Would love it if there were effort grades for writing in elementary, not letter grades.

It should be used as one resource, not exclusively. The teacher books are not user friendly.

No more than a resource to accompany a more structured writing program. If it is curriculum I would need a lot more training. Looked good in training but does not look the same in my classroom. Also need more time in the day to implement it 4-5 days a week. I was very satisfied with Step up to Writing and had many children become very good writers.

Research shows this program does not work for most students. It feels as if this program is being forced on us regardless of teacher consideration.

It should be used as a resource only for teachers who want to continue with it. I don't understand how it gained so much momentum before being piloted and adopted. I am concerned that conventions of writing are lacking.

Supplemental at best

Let's find a better program.

I love using it in my classroom and the effect it has on the students and their writing and my enjoyment in teaching writing. I do think teachers will need ongoing training and support to do it justice but would love to see Writer's Workshop as our LV writing curriculum. Teachers will need to supplement the explicit teaching of spelling and grammar on their own and reinforce with and during the conference portion of the program.

The Units of Study books can be used as a resource; there are some very valid ideas buried deep within the verbosity of the author, but I have neither the time nor the desire to sift through this to find them. Not teacher friendly, and therefore, not very helpful to me. Instruction is vague and touchy-feely, rather than focused.

Great for creative writing.

I honestly don't know. I have not had enough time to work through the program. It is so very time intensive to plan the lessons.

I would like it to be adopted with the caveat that there is a training each year for new teachers, a format/guide for teaching grammar through the writers workshop, and an outline/synopsis of each lesson. Concern: each lesson has way too much text to weed through to get to the nuts and bolts of the lesson. We need (example) Bend 1, Lesson 1 brainstorm topic ideas; lesson 2 share expert ideas, make table of contents, share table of contents.

I would like to use some lessons from the narrative book.

My vision is for teachers to be given more training on implementation and creation of grade level lessons. Uniformity across the district would be preferred.

As with any new program, there should be a layered implementation (starting in K-1 and then working its way up) as well as more training. Whatever is decided, it should be a district wide implementation and not just at one school. I see it as another resource to use for writing instruction.

Just spell out each lesson without having to read a full novel!

The idea of using a writer's workshop model to teach the styles required by the Common Core standards may be a good idea, but it does not require the exclusive use of Lucy Calkins's materials. I personally am very uncomfortable with the scripted way Lucy's lessons are presented, so I may use some of her materials, but I am strongly opposed to becoming one of her clones.

Use as a supplemental resource.

Fourth Grade

Use it if it works for you. Feels like the district jumped in with both feet because one principal felt strongly without proper research and buy in. It's glorified journal writing, lacking a lot and not anywhere near enough direction and support. Seems a seriously back door deal between the principal and district with extremely limited individual school support. Researching this online describes Lucy Caulkins as a "cult"; crazy expensive, not willing to break down resources to sell as needed by teachers, etc.

4/5 Grade teacher (it would only allow one vote) I would like for it to be an optional resource for teachers. This includes using a rubric to score district wide assessments that is non bias towards writers workshop and is easier to use.

Great at encouraging writers and writing, but it lacks specific structure. Each lesson is a tidbit of a skill, but there is no set approach/formula as to how to write. It also does not set specific times when finished products should be turned in and assessed. The rubric has criteria not specifically taught in the unit.

Between technology and CC I have to had time to read through the books and start implementing the program. One training does not appear enough.

I plan to use it with Step Up to Writing.

The most teacher unfriendly curriculum I've been forced to use in my 15+ years in lvusd. Watered down writing curriculum that produces below basic results, my students have had the unfortunate impact of this basic, dated system that takes up so much time for feeble growth and counteracts the premise of the common core "writing across the curriculum". What a waste of time for teachers and students to even believe that students will become better writer by solely watching their teacher model "what good writers do". Please halt the cult of Lucy Calkins WW. It didn't work in NY inner city, why would LVUSD even consider this pathetic overpriced garbage. Look what other premiere districts to the west are using. LVUSD is better than this.

I will probably only use the Writing Pathways portion to get my students started on the concept of writing workshops.

A resource to help students become more creative, but lacks the structure of grammar and mechanics needed.

I am enjoying using this program and feel that it has helped my teaching of writing as well as my students' perspective of writing.

I think it is amazingly beneficial and hope to see it used widely in our district. Hopefully teachers become more and more comfortable using it, even if it means starting slowly (or with fewer tasks/topics) and then progressing to teaching more. I love it!

I think it could potentially be a helpful resource but only if there is not the current pressure for it to be the only program we are using and not as often as is expected. I think it should be used alongside a more structured program.

I need more training and time to read through and digest all of the information before I can fully incorporate it into the classroom. I would highly benefit from an organized scope and sequence of the lessons.

I would like to continue to use Writer's Workshop as a resource. I am not confident that it is the best program for my students yet. I have not fully implemented the program so I cannot definitively say that it should be adopted as curriculum at this point.

The method of writing does not support teachers who are using writing as a grade and does not help students learn the correct way to use conventions in the writing process.

I like using it as a resource, but how found that we do not have the time to use it as described by Lucy Calkins. It is a bit too scripted for me.

I want to see it as a resource, but not as curriculum. It does not align with common core standards and therefore should not be seen as our district wide program. We should not be investing additional money into this program.

I would like to incorporate the freedom and choice of writer's workshop with the direct writing instruction and structure of Step Up.

This program could be useful for those students who are already competent writers. It is NOT a good program for low or average students!!

As a former first grade teacher I can see where this program can be useful in building students writing stamina. I have often felt that many students did not have writing stamina when coming into fourth grade. I did use an older version of Lucy Calkin's Writer's workshop and I thought it was effective for grades K-3. In the upper grades writing needs more structured with graphic organizers. Information put out by VCOE and other resources have been more useful. I needed to go back to these resources. I do not think we should adopt this in grades 4-5.

I have taught writers workshop in another district for about 9 years. Over time, students become significantly better writers using this program. This is especially true if it is implemented from the start of their education! I love it!

It's a return to a previous strategy that resulted in a generation reaching university and requiring remedial composition classes. Unfair to assess students district wide when they've received no regular written feedback from their teacher all year. Impossible to conference adequately with 33 students during class time.

There is not adequate time to prepare lessons with this program. Though I have tried, it is at the expense of other important subjects. Teachers need a program that is easy to use and has more structure with mini lessons that are easily implemented and ready to go. This program is so overwhelming and takes too much time.

Fifth Grade

I don't think it should be mandated across grade levels. Scripted curriculum doesn't work for all. It makes a good resource, especially for those who are uncomfortable or need a structure to work with. I feel it is too restrictive.

I feel that entirely too much focus has been spent on only one genre of writing, narrative. The resource books are so dense and are difficult to navigate. They do not connect to any units already in place and the students request more structure and support before and during the writing process rather than needing feedback for drafted work. The idea that we can conference one on one with 30+ students while being available to answer the questions and needs of the other students, ringing phones, transitions for specialists, etc is not realistic for one teacher without support.

I like the concepts, but don't follow the scripts. Students enjoy the writing workshops (on the rug, journals etc) however I deviate from L. Calkins by using laptops for final products. My challenge is that there is never enough time to write on a daily basis.

I would like to use the workshop intensively two or three times a year, for about 6 or 8 weeks.

I would like to continue working with the Units of Study, adapting the lessons to my own needs, and see if it results in improved student writing. Overall impression so far: The Units of Study are extremely cumbersome to work with. It takes HOURS to plan and wade through the units. There are some very good ideas, but they are buried in the teacher's manual.

Why spend so much time on narrative writing when it isn't part of the CCSS? Perhaps opinion is a better unit, but we aren't there yet.

There are some positives with Writer's Workshop, but the difficulties in implementation and the inability to use this cross-curricular far outweigh the positives. I am appalled that the district did not complete an analysis of writing programs that are available and present these programs to a team of teachers to review without pressure of picking Writer's Workshop.

Resource only.

Have it available as a resource, and use it in conjunction with Six Traits and Step Up To Writing.

Although there are a couple of lessons that I would keep using, for the most part, I don't believe this program improves the writing of my students and the samples of writing in the book are terrible

examples of writing. Another concern is that most of our writing deals with essay writing which is not taught in this program.

I would use this resource for students to feel comfortable writing freely and without restrictions on a daily basis.

I teach the discrete grammar and punctuation, spelling skills as an adjunct to reading , but the writing workshop is when I teach the critical thinking strategies, organization, and creative components of writing. For the most part, I've enjoyed exploring this program and have liked the way we are less "product" based and more process based.

Help support, but maybe use an alternative program for every day use. I feel there is too much reading and script and it is not "teacher friendly" and easy to navigate.

I am inspired by it as it develops our students into thinkers! I would love more training so I can better implement it .

A resource. It is not user friendly enough to be an adoption.

I will use the program along with the Step Up to Writing curriculum.

This is way too cumbersome to be adopted without significant, intensive, step by step training. It should be a resource only and not an adoption.

Sixth Grade

I would like to continue to use it as a supplemental resource. Until our schedules are more aligned with what Writer's Workshops experts recommend (90 minute blocks), it is difficult to implement wholly (50 min. periods are NOT conducive to the lessons)

I would like to adopt Writer's Workshop as the writing program; however 50-minute class periods where I must teach writing and reading is not near enough time to implement it properly.

I'm not very happy about the overly scripted protocol for each unit. I feel like I'm being "forced" to teach to the "test". I'm about to begin the Argument Unit, so I'm hoping my views will change.

Writer's workshop should be used as a resource only.

I'd like to see Writer's Workshop continue as a resource; and I'd like more training to use it more effectively. The guides are too wordy and therefore confusing.

Seventh Grade

It will provide more consistency between schools. It has some good ideas for mini-lessons, BUT not all lessons are clearly explained. The rubrics are unrealistic. We need a year or two of trial and error.

There are other programs out there that are more useful such as the ERWC from the Cal State Universities which are being widely used throughout the state. It would be worth it to explore other options before adopting Writer's Workshop.

The units are too long, some are awkward, and teachers should be able to choose what works best for their students and themselves in order to meet the CCSS.

It seems to be a valid crutch for implementing a concrete writing process. However, it does not seem to be a self-sufficient curricular language arts program as it lacks several topics that a 47 minute classroom can provide. If it were to be used wholly, then it would need used in conjunction with a block of 75+ minutes of language arts and writing together.

The workshop can help more teachers become confident teaching writing to the point where they are able to develop their own style.

Only use this as a resource. We also need to explore other writing programs.

Eighth Grade

For teachers who have developed a program of their own that is effective, much of the content of WW is cumbersome and repetitive. In addition, with a 50 minute middle school ELA period, we have to teach much more than just writer's workshop. The program is designed with elementary school in mind and it is very labor intensive just to adjust the units/lessons in order to make them fit in our schedule. It's a good resource to use strategically when teaching writing, but to follow the units of study in lock-step will not work. ELA teachers do not want this program forced upon us.

I began the year using Writer's Workshop, but because it is too cumbersome and time-consuming for middle school, I no longer use it. I do not believe that it is an effective writing program. My students were better prepared as writers with the methods I have used in previous years.

I see teachers using the units of study to develop fluency, thoughtfulness, and organization in student writers. I see teachers incorporating targeted teaching about punctuation and grammar as well as means to evaluate writing for grades - that would come through district teacher group meetings.

It should only be used as a resource.

I'd like to see it implemented J-8 because once we're all building on each other, we'll really see the results.

I made an attempt to use Writer's Workshop, but it is very time consuming. Everything is too scripted and I do not think the program is very effective.

Special Education

Concerns: I don't feel that I have had enough time to become familiar w/ the program... I'm implementing the best way I can using previous knowledge & what I gained at SDD, but I feel that I am

not yet doing it justice.. don't have prep time I would like... on top of multiple grade levels of math piloting. I love seeing and trying all of these new great things, but something has to fall by the wayside & this has been it. But with what little direction I have been able to give my students, even my most reluctant writers are producing stories. They are also now able to write independently for up to about 30 minutes. These are two amazing things! I never thought I would get my students to look forward to writing, or to write so much, and now many of them will choose it over something else when given the choice!!

I don't feel that writer workshop offers enough support for students during the writing process.

The program has focused so much on narratives and no other genre of writing. I feel my students were way more prepared for the rigorous writing involved in middle school last year than this year.

For the first time in my teaching career with sped students I have seen students enjoy and look forward to daily writing. I envision continuing with this program while embedding basic writing fundamentals (structure, grammar ...).

Sorry, doesn't apply to preschool

Post Survey Comments (not aligned to a specific grade)

This program/resource is wildly time consuming, gleans limited results, seriously missing direct instruction on mechanics of writing in preference of journal type writing. Extremely limited support from the District and while also piloting Math and trying to incorporate common core lessons as well, it's hard to get up each day.

Why fix what's not broken. Our previous writing program worked well for the elementary level. The middle school teachers praised us for sending students that were well prepared for middle school writing.

I find it outrageous that ONE principal can dictate a program based on limited knowledge and experience (she is not on the front lines teaching). Despite what her staff feels comfortable expressing to her, MANY of them are not pleased with the program.

Was an analysis done of various writing curricula? Were any teachers interviewed to determine the writing skills they need their students to have in order to be successful? Were other school districts contacted to review the status of writing curriculums? Was any type of cost analysis completed? The major concern I have for this curriculum is the lack of any emphasis or skills for the 'essay.'

I feel like kindergarten gets bullied into adopting what Lupin Hill wants. I would like to use it as a resource, but not an adoption. Also, please look at how Common Core is aligned with this program. Very confusing and frustrating to us, who are in the trenches when they don't align.

I have had a few days (7) of Writer's Workshop training. I am more comfortable implementing it although it is challenging and I still have a lot to learn. I understand that the rest of the teachers in the district may have not had the same experience or training with Writer's workshop. If I was asked to give my opinion on WW given only 1 training day (the day we had in October) I would be skeptical. What I'm

trying to say is that WE NEED TRAINERS from Teacher's College to come help us all. The program can work well if everyone is on board.

This may be good for teachers that have no clue how to teach writing, but it a slap the face and a kick back 30 years for most of us who know the craft of teaching writing.

Thank you to LVEA for supporting teachers and students.

The rubric is outrageous and it needs modification.

Thank you for asking our opinion on this subject and putting together this survey. As a teacher and a professional, I feel that with this survey you are giving us say in what we teach and will be adopting. Thank you so much!!!

While I have heard wonderful things about this program, I don't feel that it meets the needs of my students or me! The lessons are vague and very unfocussed (make a movie in your mind," "tell your story bit by bit"). Students like to write about themselves, so the Personal Narrative part is initially fun for them. They write voluminously, with little thought or organization. They are encouraged to write about "small moments," but this is a very difficult concept; they tend to give summaries of an experience. Many have trouble finding that "small moment" that might be interesting for others to read. It is more like journal writing, free writing, rather than writing with a purpose. Students at third grade benefit from graphic organizers to focus their thinking; Lucy Calkins does not endorse graphic organizers...it is more open and free, which makes it very hard to help each child create a piece that is organizationally sound and a pleasure to read. They tend to just write down their thoughts as they occur to them, and then need a conference to go back and come up with some semblance of order. With good advanced planning and the use of graphic organizers, students can still be creative, but they have a framework that helps them to not be redundant and too wordy.

My biggest complaint, though, is the Units of Study, themselves. They are far too long to read when planning a lesson. Even at the training last Fall, the trainer said "Just look at the Name the Teaching Point section" (1-2 sentences). Well, if that is all we need to know, why not have lessons that name the teaching point, then have some concrete lesson ideas that tell how to help students achieve that goal. Instead, we are given 10 pages of text to sift through, without a single helpful, concrete idea to impart to the students. I don't want philosophy in every lesson; I want things that I can use with 8 year olds to make the lesson come alive for them. I took the Units of Study home over the summer, and fell asleep every time that I tried to read them! So sorry, but this is not helpful to me.

The report card needs to be changed to reflect the writers workshop model.

Why did the district spend all this money on curriculum and 2 TOSAs if we might not adopt it? Usually we pilot materials in that situation. I'm floored. I think this should be addressed to all. While I think writers workshop is a very worthy curriculum (with an unwieldy teacher's guide), I also think purchasing all this (and 2 TOSA's) without adopting it is financially fool-hardy.

This program may be more successful in the gen ed classroom where peers can give feedback and ideas to each other. The groups we work with are not often skilled enough to help each other the way the program suggests. It lacks the structure that we need and have more success with in our sped groups.

Takes too long to read the very "wordy" manual. Students in lower grades need a more structured program to organize thoughts and paragraphs. There is a need to learn the rules of writing as they learn written expression.