Lucy Calkins
with Colleagues from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project

UNITS OF STUDY
in Argument, Information, and Narrative Writing

A COMMON CORE WORKSHOP CURRICULUM

- A proven, systematic K–8 workshop curriculum
- Common Core–aligned learning progressions
- Responsive, data-based instruction

by the foremost authorities in writing instruction
The Common Core State Standards have set the bar to a height that no one teacher, no single year of teaching, can attain. Young writers grow as oak trees do, over years, making it imperative that schools provide an aligned, coherent system to support their progress in argument, information, and narrative writing. The good news is that as schools hear the rallying cry of the Common Core and move to develop schoolwide coherent approaches to teaching writing, they needn’t invent curriculum on their own. Many of the Reading and Writing Project’s ideas on teaching writing have been, from the start, a part of the Common Core, but the Common Core also issued new challenges—ones that the Reading and Writing Project began working toward when the Common Core was just a whiff of a draft. This sequence of Common Core State Standards-aligned units in argument, information, and narrative writing, then, bears the stamp of both the Common Core and thirty-five years of research and development.

—Lucy Calkins
Components Overview

Three Units of Study per Grade Level

The Unit Books
- Are organized around the three types of writing mandated by the Common Core—argument, information, and narrative writing
- Lay out six weeks of instruction (16–18 sessions) in each unit
- Include all of the teaching points, minilessons, conferences, and small-group work needed to teach a comprehensive workshop curriculum
- Model Lucy and her colleagues’ carefully crafted teaching moves and language

Units of Study Overview and Contents  pages 4–5
Units of Study by Genre:
- The Progression of Opinion/Argument Writing  pages 6
- The Progression of Information Writing  page 7
- The Progression of Narrative Writing  page 8
Units of Study Session Structure  page 9

Professional and Classroom Support

Writing Pathways
Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades 6–8
- Is organized around a learning progression across argument, information, and narrative writing
- Includes benchmark student texts, writing checklists, learning progressions, and rubrics  pages 10–15

If... Then... Curriculum
Assessment-Based Instruction, Grades 6–8
- Offers nine alternate units of study per level
- Presents if-then conferring scenarios that support targeted instruction and differentiation  pages 16–17

The Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROMs
provide unit-specific print resources to support your teaching throughout the year  pages 18–19

A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop, Grades 6–8 crystallizes the essential principles, methods, and structures of effective writing workshop instruction  page 20

See also
Implementation and Professional Development Options  page 21
Answers to Frequently Asked Questions  pages 22–23
Lucy Calkins and her colleagues from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project have extended their best-selling writing workshop curriculum to the middle school grades. Like Units of Study for Grades K–5, the middle school series not only provides a coherent, systematic curriculum in the three types of writing mandated by the Common Core—opinion/argument, information, and narrative writing—it also reflects the latest research on data-based, responsive instruction.

For more than 35 years, Lucy Calkins and her colleagues at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project have led the field of literacy instruction. With Lucy as Director, this think tank of more than sixty teacher-leaders pilot, research, revise, deepen, and extend curriculum for literacy instruction until results show that young people are far more engaged and proficient. This cycle of continuous improvement, field-testing and improving methods across scores of years and thousands of schools, has resulted in methods that are extraordinarily powerful—leading to stunning growth in young people as writers and readers.

Years ago, when they were just a glimmer of an idea, Lucy and her colleagues turned their attention to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), an educational initiative that has become the most sweeping call for reform that the K–12 world has seen to date. Her co-authored book Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement has become the authority on interpreting the CCSS for teachers, reaching more than 300,000 educators, fueling discussions in staff rooms throughout the nation about using the CCSS to ratchet up the quality of instruction in our schools.

Now, Lucy and her colleagues bring their two areas of deep expertise together in this new K–8 writing curriculum, Units of Study in Opinion/Argument, Information, and Narrative Writing.

Writing returns as one of the essentials of education

One of the most striking features of the Common Core State Standards is that the standards place a tremendous emphasis on writing. In effect, the standards refocus the nation on students’ proficiency as writers. NCLB, the last large-scale reform movement in literacy, called for an emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Writing was nowhere in the picture. In the Common Core State Standards, in contrast, writing is treated as an equal partner with reading, and more than this, writing is assumed to be the vehicle through which a great deal of the critical thinking, reading work, and reading assessment will occur. The CCSS, then, return writing to its place as one of the essentials of education. This of course is music to the ears of writing instructors and literacy coordinators across the country, including Lucy and her colleagues.

While the original units of study series taught the three writing types highlighted by the CCSS—opinion/argument, information, and narrative writing—the new series gives added rigor to narrative and information writing, and new research and emphasis on argument writing. In this series each grade level offers at least one highly developed unit of study devoted to each type of writing. And within each unit of study, students
cycle through each writing genre several times. This repeated practice is important if students are going to become highly skilled at a type of writing and meet CCSS expectations.

The process approach to writing instruction
The Common Core writing standards fully embrace the process approach to writing instruction. Writing standard 5 describes the writing process, and standard 10 describes the need to write routinely as part of that process. Both standards are an integral part of attaining all the other writing standards as well. The grade-level specifics of anchor standard 5 are nearly the same across the grades. Always, this standard says that students should be able to “develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, [and] editing” with expectations for revision and independence increasing with age.

Since process is a guiding principle in the writing workshop and a hallmark of Lucy’s own research on writing instruction, it’s no surprise that this new series is organized around the process approach to writing instruction and regularly engages students in planning and drafting a piece, then revising and editing their work, and finally publishing their writing for their peers to read.

Clear, measurable benchmarks
The standards are not a curriculum; rather, they are a set of competencies with clear, measurable benchmarks. Taking these benchmarks to heart, the new series offers an assessment system that includes a learning progression, grade-by-grade teacher and student checklists, and formative and summative performance assessments.

Throughout the series student work is scored against an established learning progression and an accompanying set of sample student texts in each genre that have been benchmarked to represent each level of the learning progression. These learning progressions and performance assessments are instructional tools that help teachers and students gauge where students are in their writing development and identify ways to move forward. The assessment system that undergirds this curriculum is meant as an instructional tool. By making progress in writing as transparent, concrete, and obtainable as possible, the Units of Study assessment system helps students set goals and assess their own work.

Progressively sophisticated learning pathways across units and grades
The standards clearly describe the progression of skill development that is expected to occur across grades in a spiraling writing curriculum. The standards map out a clear writing progression, with students being expected, each year, to produce work that stands on the shoulders of the preceding year.

In the Units of Study series this progression occurs across units and grades. The cohesion across units means that skills that are introduced in one unit are then recalled, developed, and added to in following units of study. For example, after students write persuasive speeches, they study another kind of persuasive writing—petitions—and ask, “How many of the strategies that we learned when writing persuasive speeches are also applicable when writing petitions?” This inquiry leads students to plunge into the work of writing petitions without needing an elaborate introduction. Likewise, in this spiraling curriculum, student learning moves steadily along, practicing and extending skills in each type of writing each year. See pages 6–8 of this brochure for a detailed map of the K–8 learning progressions for each type of writing.

The Common Core State Standards call for high levels of writing proficiency. Meeting these standards requires a planned, sequential, explicit writing program with instruction that gives students repeated opportunities to practice each kind of writing, supported by assessment-informed feedback at frequent intervals. The tools in these units of study can be the bedrock of such a writing program.
Sixth-grade writing begins with *Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories*. This unit helps students draw on their lives, learning strategies to generate meaningful story ideas, manage pace, elaborate on important scenes, and deepen insights. This unit especially emphasizes the importance of setting goals, practicing strategically, and aiming for high productivity. In Unit 2, *The Literary Essay: From Character to Compare/Contrast*, sixth graders learn ways essayists generate ideas based on close readings of a text, learning strategies essayists use to gather, analyze, and explain evidence from the text to support their claims. In Unit 3, *Research-Based Information Writing: Books, Websites, and Presentations*, students begin by exploring the broad topic of teen activism in order to teach their readers about a topic, using increasingly sophisticated ways to draw on and structure information to explain a position or make a call to action.
Seventh graders relish their growing sense of control over their own lives and their sense of agency. In this first unit of the year, *Writing Realistic Fiction: Symbolism, Syntax, and Truth*, students write engaging short fiction. They lift the sophistication of their writing through attention to individual scenes, symbols, and writing techniques they’ve discovered from close readings of powerful short fiction. Next, in Unit 2, *Writing About Reading: From Reader’s Notebooks to Companion Books*, students learn to analyze the craft and structure of the authors they admire and to write for real audiences about why that craft matters. Finally, in Unit 3, *The Art of Argument: Research-Based Essays*, students learn to write essays that build convincing, nuanced arguments, balancing evidence and analysis to persuade readers to shift their beliefs or take action.

Eighth grade is the year your writers will tackle writing for social activism and writing to illuminate complexity. In their first unit of study, *Investigative Journalism*, students learn to use sharp observations of life to write news and investigative articles about meaningful topics, crafting vivid narratives and elaborating multiple perspectives. They’ll write to shine a light on issues in their community and to actively stir their readers to take action. Then in Unit 2, *The Literary Essay: Analyzing Craft and Theme*, students return to literary essays, writing arguments and counterarguments about themes in texts, supporting their positions with details of plot, character, and author’s craft. Eighth graders conclude with Unit 3, *Position Papers: Research and Argument*. In this unit students learn to compose principled arguments by drawing on evidence, contextualizing their positions, and addressing multiple perspectives.

For additional information and sample sessions visit [www.UnitsofStudy.com](http://www.UnitsofStudy.com)
If you read the Common Core’s opinion/argument writing standards horizontally, setting the descriptors for each skill from one grade alongside those for the next grade and noting the new work that is added at each subsequent grade, you’ll come to understand the trajectory along which writers can travel. This trajectory was used when designing the opinion/argument writing units found in this series (the information and narrative trajectories were used for the information and narrative units).

1. **Persuasive Writing of All Kinds**: Students craft petitions, letters, and signs that rally people to address problems in their class, then school, then world.

2. **Writing About Reading**: Students write letters and essays sharing their opinions about characters, scenes, or whole books using examples from the texts.

3. **Changing the World**: Students persuade people about causes they believe in, using evidence, crafting techniques, and attention to audience.

4. **Writing Reviews**: Students create interesting, convincing reviews that present and rank their favorite toys, television shows, books, and more.

5. **Shaping Texts**: Students write memoirs that combine essay and narrative structures to convey significant insights and personal themes.

6. **The Art of Argument**: Students learn to write essays that build convincing, nuanced arguments, balancing evidence and analysis to persuade readers to shift their beliefs or take action.

7. **Boxes and Bullets**: Students build arguments about topics they know well, using logical structures and carefully arranged ideas and evidence.

8. **The Literary Essay**: Students write arguments and counterarguments about themes in texts, supporting their positions with details of plot, character, and author’s craft.
UNITS OF STUDY BY GENRE: Information Writing Units

Building on increasingly complex nonfiction content and sources, the information writing units will help you teach students how to examine and convey domain-specific vocabulary and ideas clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of cross-curricular content. The trajectory of these units will take students from procedural how-to texts and nonfiction chapter books to lab reports, research-based essays, and position papers.

1. **Launching the Writing Workshop**
   - Students teach readers about topics they know well: their family and their playground.

2. **Lab Reports and Science Books**
   - Students write procedural texts, descriptions, and analyses about experiments, then use that information to write science-based information books.

3. **The Art of Information Writing**
   - Students write chapter books about topics on which they are experts, employing a variety of structures and substructures.

4. **Bringing History to Life**
   - Students write research reports in which they use research skills to learn about and then elaborate on a central topic.

5. **The Lens of History**
   - Students write through historical lenses and from primary sources, using varied writing structures to build focused research reports.

6. **Research-Based Information Writing**
   - Students learn ways to research and write informational essays, books, and digital presentations or websites to teach their readers about a topic, using increasingly sophisticated ways to draw on and structure information to explain a position or make a call to action.

7. **Writing About Reading**
   - Students intensify their engagement with reading by writing innovative, reflective companion books that explain, develop, and extend ideas about books they love.

8. **Position Papers**
   - Students will learn ways writers explain complex issues and compose arguments by drawing on evidence, contextualizing their positions, and addressing multiple perspectives.
Building on the skills and understanding from the previous years, the narrative writing units engage students in writing about real and imagined experiences and events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. The trajectory of these units will take students from small-moment events and fictional chapter books to contemporary fairy tales, personal memoirs, and investigative journalism.

In **From Scenes to Series** students use all they know about writing narratives to create their own series of fictional chapter books.

In **Small Moments** students craft lots of small-moment books, writing in ways that bring their characters to life.

In **Lessons from the Masters** students learn to study published texts to learn writing techniques to try in their own narratives.

In **The Arc of Story** students develop fictional characters with motivations and struggles and write these characters into carefully structured stories.

In **Shaping Texts** students write memoirs that combine essay and narrative structures to convey significant insights and personal themes.

In **Narrative Craft** students write personal narratives, making purposeful choices about the techniques, structures, and language they use to convey their meaning.

In **Investigative Journalism** students learn to use sharp observations of life to write news and investigative articles about meaningful topics, crafting vivid narratives and elaborating multiple perspectives.

In **Writing Realistic Fiction** students write engaging short fiction, creating action-filled plots and believable characters and crafting nuanced, memorable scenes.

In **Personal Narrative** students write true stories, learning strategies to generate meaningful story ideas, manage pace, elaborate on important scenes, and deepen insights.

In **Crafting True Stories** students write personal narratives using the complete writing process, including drafts and revision.

In **Once Upon a Time** students first adapt and then write their own fairy tales, learning to use cohesive details, point of view, and story structure.

In **Launching the Writing Workshop** students tell stories from their lives as best they can, through drawing, labeling, and writing.

In **Writing for Readers** students focus on getting more letters and words onto every page, editing their work, and using increasingly conventional spelling.

In **Writing for Readers** students focus on getting more letters and words onto every page, editing their work, and using increasingly conventional spelling.
Predictable 5-Step Session Structure

The shared structures and language of the Units of Study series will help bring coherence and continuity to your school’s elementary and middle school writing instruction. While each unit of study reflects the varied developmental needs of K–8 students, the series’ carefully integrated spiraling curriculum is unified by predictable structures and systems that promise consistent research-based writing instruction across the grades.

1. The PRELUDE describes the thinking behind the session and explains its place in the larger curriculum.
2. Brief MINILESSONS inspire and rally students to apply the strategy or concept to be learned.
3. CONFERencing AND SMALL-GROUP WORK provides tips and ideas for making the most of one-to-one conferences and small-group strategies.
4. During writing time, MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING either extends what students are working on or corrects the course of their work.
5. In the SHARE the teacher brings the children back together in order to make a closing point and offer an observation or celebrate some great work.

Regular session features include:
- Correlations to the Common Core ELA Standards
- Step-by-step teaching moves and language
- Lucy’s point-of-use coaching commentary
- Student writing samples
- Lesson artifacts
Learning Progression for Argument Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>Grade 9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRUCTURE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The writer explained the topic/concept and staked out a position that can be supported by a variety of trustworthy sources. Each part of the text then builds her argument and supports it.</td>
<td>The writer laid out a well-supported argument and made it clear that this argument is part of a broader conversation about a topic/concept. He anticipated positions on the topic or text, disagreed with his own position, but kept his position makes sense.</td>
<td>The writer laid out an argument about a topic/text and made it clear why his particular argument is important and valid. He stayed fair to those who might disagree with her by describing how her position is one of several and making it clear where his position stands in relation to others.</td>
<td>The writer presented an argument, offering context, honoring other points of view, and indicating the conditions under which the position holds true.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The writer determined readers in his argument then to understand the back story he gave the back story in a way that helped see his point. He made it clear to readers what his strategy was and forecasted the parts of the argument.</td>
<td>After hooking her readers, the writer provided specific context for her own as well as another's position(s), introduced her position, and oriented readers to the overall line of argument she would develop.</td>
<td>The writer demonstrated the significance of the argument and may have offered hints of upcoming parts of the essay. The writer presented needed background information to show the complexity of the issue. In addition to introducing the overall line of development the argument will take, the writer distinguished that argument from others.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ARGUMENT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The writer told readers her opinion and ideas on a text or topic and helped them understand his reasons.</td>
<td>The writer made a claim about a topic or a text and tried to support her reasons.</td>
<td>The writer made a claim or thesis on a topic or text, supported it with reasons, and provided a variety of evidence for each reason.</td>
<td>The writer presented an argument, offering context, honoring other points of view, and indicating the conditions under which the position holds true.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lead</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The writer wrote a beginning in which she not only set readers up to expect that this would be a piece of opinion writing, but also tried to hook them into caring about her opinion.</td>
<td>The writer wrote a few sentences to hook his readers, perhaps by asking a question, explaining why the topic mattered, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information. The writer stated his claim.</td>
<td>The writer wrote an introduction that led to a claim or thesis and got his readers to care about his opinion. The writer got his readers to care by not only including a clear fact or juicy question, but also by telling readers what was significant in or around the topic. The writer wanted to find the precise words to state his claim; he let readers know the reasons he would develop later.</td>
<td>The writer used transitions to clarify the relationship between claims, reasons, and evidence, and help the reader follow the logic in the argument. The writer also used transitions to make clear the relationship of courses to each other and to the claim, such as “where it may be true that...” and “nevertheless, there are times when...” and others into this area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transitions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The writer connected his ideas and reasons with his examples using words such as “for example,” “in particular,” and “in addition to, also,” and another to show what she wanted to shift from saying reasons to giving evidence and in addition to, also, and another to show what she wanted to make a new point.</td>
<td>The writer used words and phrases to glue parts of her piece together. She used phrases such as “for example,” “another example,” “what’s more,” and “in addition to” to show when she wanted to shift from saying reasons to giving evidence and in addition to, also, and another to show what she wanted to make a new point.</td>
<td>The writer used transition words and phrases to connect evidence back to her reasons using phrases such as “this shows that...” The writer helped readers follow her thinking with phrases such as another reason and the most important reason. She used phrases such as “consequently” and “because of” to show what happened. The writer used words such as “specifically,” and “in particular” to be more precise.</td>
<td>The writer used transitions to link the parts of the argument and to help them note how parts of the text relate back to earlier parts. He used phrases such as “as we’ve seen earlier,” “as stated earlier,” “as a whole,” “this is significant because,” the evidence points to and by doing this...</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ending</strong></td>
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<td>The writer worked on an ending, perhaps a thought or comment related to his opinion. The writer wrote an ending for his piece in which he restated and reflected on his claim, perhaps suggesting an action or response based on what he had written.</td>
<td>The writer worked on a conclusion in which he connected back to and highlighted what the text was mainly about, not just the preceding paragraph.</td>
<td>The writer demonstrated the significance of her argument for stakeholders in the conclusion, the writer described the importance of her argument for stakeholders in the conclusion, the writer described the importance of her argument for stakeholders in the conclusion, the writer described the importance of her argument for stakeholders in the conclusion, the writer described the importance of her argument for stakeholders in the conclusion, the writer described the importance of her argument for stakeholders in the conclusion, the writer described the importance of her argument for stakeholders in the conclusion, the writer described the importance of her argument for stakeholders in the conclusion, the writer described the importance of her argument for stakeholders in the conclusion.</td>
<td>In the concluding section, the writer may have clarified the conditions under which the position holds true, discussed possible applications or consequences, and/or offered possible solutions.</td>
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</table>

The vertical alignment of these writing skills helps educational communities establish a coherent curriculum of foundational skills teachers can build on as students progress from grade to grade.
### ARGUMENT: LEARNING PROGRESSION, 3–9 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRUCTURE</strong></td>
<td><strong>Elaboration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The writer wrote several reasons or examples why readers should agree with his opinion and wrote at least several sentences about each reason. The writer organized his information so that each part of his writing was mostly about one thing.</td>
<td>The writer not only named her reasons to support her opinion, but also wrote more about each one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>The writer not only named her reasons to support her opinion, but also wrote more about each one.</td>
<td>The writer gave reasons to support his opinion and he chose the reasons to convince his readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>The writer gave reasons to support his opinion. He chose the reasons to convince his readers. The writer included examples and information to support his reasons, perhaps from a text, his knowledge, or his life.</td>
<td>The writer gave reasons to support his opinion that were parallel and did not overlap. He put them in an order that he thought would be most convincing. The writer included evidence such as facts, examples, quotations, micro-stories, and information to support his claim.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>The writer made deliberate word choices to convince his readers, perhaps by explaining words that made readers think or feel in certain ways. If it felt right to do so, the writer cited details and facts to help make her argument persuasive. She used figurative language to draw readers into her line of thought. The writer made choices about what was best to include or not include in her points. The writer used a convincing tone.</td>
<td>The writer made deliberate word choices to convince her readers. The writer explained terms to her audience and defined these when appropriate. The writer included domain-specific, technical vocabulary relevant to her argument and explained what she meant. The writer consistently used comparisons, analogies, vivid examples, anecdotes, or other rhetorical devices to help readers understand each position. The writer made sure all of her analysis led readers to follow her line of argument.</td>
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### ARGUMENT: LEARNING PROGRESSION, 6–8

The **Writing Pathways** assessment system is organized around three learning progressions, one for each of the three types of writing. Each progression describes development in the same three main aspects of writing: **structure**, **development**, and **language conventions**. Within the category of structure, the progressions lay out the development for the overall piece, the lead, transitions, the ending, and organization. Within development, the progressions describe both elaboration and craft. The final category, language conventions, is divided into spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. Each category and subcategory is laid out in a pathway that maps the way the skill might develop with your students from grade 3 through grade 9.
In her conclusion, the writer suggested that argumentative writing is important and valid. She restated the important points and offered a final insight or implication for readers to consider. The writer reinforced and built the overall argument. The transitions ended strengthened the argument by linking the different parts of the piece together to help readers understand the different parts of her piece fit together to explain and support her argument.

Overall

The writer developed the argument with logical reasoning and convincing evidence, acknowledging the limitations of the position and citing—where appropriate—sources. The writer used transitions to clarify the relationship between claims, reasons, and evidence, and help the reader follow the logic in the argument. The writer also used transitions to make clear the relationship of sources to each other and to the claim, such as while it may be true that… nevertheless, there are times when… certain circumstances when…, and others echoed this idea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitions</th>
<th>Grade 6 (1 POINT)</th>
<th>Grade 7 (2 POINTS)</th>
<th>Grade 8 (3 POINTS)</th>
<th>Grade 9 (4 POINTS)</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-level</td>
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The writer used transitions to help readers understand how the different parts of her piece fit together to explain and support her argument. The transitions help readers follow from part to part and make it clear when she is stating a claim or counterclaim, giving a reason, or offering or analyzing evidence. These transitions include terms such as the text states, as this means, another reason, some people may say, but, nevertheless, and on the other hand.

In his conclusion, the writer reinforced and built on the main point(s) in a way that made the entire text a cohesive whole. The conclusion reinforced how the support for his claim outweighed the counterclaim(s), restated the main points, responded to counterclaim(s), restated the implications, questions, or other points and offered a final way that made the entire piece fit together to help readers understand how the different parts of her piece fit together to explain and support her argument. The transitions ended strengthened the argument by linking the different parts of the piece together to help readers understand how the different parts of her piece fit together to explain and support her argument.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
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<th>Grade 8 (3 POINTS)</th>
<th>Grade 9 (4 POINTS)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-level</td>
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</table>

The writer wrote an introduction to interest readers and help them understand and care about a topic or text. She thought backward between the piece and the introduction to make sure that the introduction fit with the whole. Not only did the writer clearly state her claim, she also told her readers how her text would unfold.

In the concluding section, the writer may have clarified the conditions under which the position holds true, discussed possible applications or consequences, and/or offered possible solutions.

Name: ________________________ Date: ________________
### Structure (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>1.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>2.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>3.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 9</th>
<th>4 P</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The writer organized her argument into sections. She arranged reasons and evidence purposefully, leading readers from one claim or reason to another. The order of the sections and the internal structure of each section the writer used made sense.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer purposely arranged parts of her piece to suit her purpose and to lead readers from one claim, counterclaim, reason, or piece of evidence to another.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer organized claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence into sections and clarified how sections are connected.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer created a logical and compelling structure for the argument so that each part builds on a prior section, and the whole</td>
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</table>

### Elaboration*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>1.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>2.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>3.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 9</th>
<th>4 P</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writer included and arranged a variety of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions. The writer used trusted sources and information from experts and gave the sources credit. The writer worked to explain how the reasons and evidence she gave supported her claim(s) and strengthened her argument. To do this, she may have referred to earlier parts of her text, summarized background information, raised questions, or highlighted possible implications.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer chose her words carefully to support her argument and to have an effect on her reader. The writer worked to include concrete details, comparisons, and/or images to convey her ideas, build her argument, and keep her reader engaged. When necessary, the writer explained terms to readers, providing definitions, context clues, or parenthetical explanations. The writer made her piece sound serious.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer used words purposefully to affect meaning and tone. The writer chose precise words and used metaphors, images, or comparisons to explain what he meant.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer intended to affect his reader in particular ways—to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and chose language to do that. The writer consistently used Elaboration and Craft*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Spelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>1.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>2.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>3.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 9</th>
<th>4 P</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writer used resources to be sure the words in her writing were spelled correctly, including returning to sources to check spellings.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer used resources to be sure the words in her writing were spelled correctly, including returning to sources to check spellings.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer used accurate spelling of technical words and defined these when necessary.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer matched the spelling of technical words and defined these when necessary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Development (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>1.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>2.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>3.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 9</th>
<th>4 P</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Craft*</td>
<td>The writer chose her words carefully to support her argument and to have an effect on her reader. The writer worked to include concrete details, comparisons, and/or images to convey her ideas, build her argument, and keep her reader engaged. When necessary, the writer explained terms to readers, providing definitions, context clues, or parenthetical explanations. The writer made her piece sound serious.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer used words purposefully to affect meaning and tone. The writer chose precise words and used metaphors, images, or comparisons to explain what he meant.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer intended to affect his reader in particular ways—to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and chose language to do that. The writer consistently used Elaboration and Craft*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Punctuation and Sentence Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>1.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>2.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>3.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 9</th>
<th>4 P</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writer used punctuation such as dashes, colons, parentheses, and semicolons to help her include or connect information in some of her sentences. The writer punctuated quotes and citations accurately.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer varied the tone appropriately within sentences and when citing sources, including commas, dashes, parentheses, colons, and semicolons.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer varied his tone to match the different purposes. The writer included sentences that shift when needed (as in when moving from a citation back to his own writing), deciding between active and passive voice when appropriate. The writer used internal punctuation effectively, including the use of ellipses to accurately insert excerpts from sources.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer intended to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and chose language to do that. In addition to using other literary devices, the writer may have used adverbs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Language Conventions (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>1.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>2.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>3.5 P</th>
<th>Grade 9</th>
<th>4 P</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writer used accurate spelling, including cited text and spelled material in citations correctly. He spelled material in according to sources, and spelled material in citations accurately.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer used accurate spelling, including cited text and spelled material in according to sources, and spelled material in citations accurately.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer used accurate spelling, including cited text and spelled material in according to sources, and spelled material in citations accurately.</td>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>The writer used accurate spelling, including cited text and spelled material in according to sources, and spelled material in citations accurately.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TOTAL:

Teachers, we created these rubrics so you will have your own place to pull together scores of student work. You can use these assessments immediately after giving the on-demand and after self-assessment and setting goals. Scoring Guide

1. In each row, circle the descriptor in the column that matches the student work. Scores in the columns can be used for self-assessment and setting goals.
2. Total the number of points and then track students’ progress by seeing when the total points increase.
3. If you want to translate this score into a grade, you can use the provided table to score each student on a scale of 0–4.

For additional information and sample sessions, visit www.UnitsofStudy.com
The units teach students CCSS grade-appropriate skills for both their own grade level and for the upcoming grade. That is, the eighth-grade argument writing unit supports both the eighth- and the ninth-grade standards.

Based on a grade-specific portion of the learning progressions, these crystal clear student checklists spell out the genre-specific benchmarks students should be working toward and help students set goals and assess their own work.
Dear Administration and Members of the PTA,

Imagine that you were told that you could no longer do what you love to do because someone thought it might be too dangerous. How would you feel? Recently, the students at our school were told that we could no longer play football on the school grounds. Every day we gather before school and after to play football but now we are told that this is no longer allowed. This is an unfair decision for many reasons. Football is an important source of physical fitness and it teaches us important life lessons. In addition, it’s an inexpensive and inclusive game that many of us are passionate about. Denying us the chance to play it is taking away an important part of our interests. I am writing this letter to ask you to please remove the ban and allow us to play football on the school grounds again.

First, you should consider that by taking away the chance to play football before and after school, you are taking away an opportunity for us to be healthier. America is facing a big problem—its youth are unhealthy. In the article “Couch Culture: Only a Quarter of U.S. Youth Get Recommended Exercise” by Alexandra Sifferlin it says that one out of every three children in the U.S. is overweight or obese (2014). The article refers to scientific studies done by the National Center for Health Statistics in which researchers found that only about 24.8% of youth surveyed in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)’s National Youth Fitness Survey gets the amount of physical fitness that the U.S. government has recommended. That means that most kids in America are not getting enough physical fitness and they are in danger of growing up to become adults who are sick with diseases like cancer, diabetes, and heart trouble. Playing football is one way that we could stay much more active. Football offers lots of exercise for many muscle groups. Kimberly Nunley (2013) wrote a blog for Livestrong.com about the main muscles used to play football and she claims, “Football is a sport that requires strength and power in nearly every muscle throughout the body.” That means every single muscle is getting used and getting exercise when you play football! Plus, there are other physical benefits, too. According to another article “5 Mental and Physical Benefits of Playing Football,” Schienbaum (2013) says that football teaches agility, hand-eye coordination, builds muscle, and requires strategy. He also argues that these benefits of football will help players to do better when they play other sports and off the field. Football is not like games like baseball or kickball where players spend a lot of time waiting around for it to be your turn. Stopping us from playing on the grounds is cutting off a major form of exercise and physical fitness for lots of students.

For additional information and sample sessions, visit www.UnitsofStudy.com
In addition to the three units of study, each level provides a book of if-then curricular plans. *If... Then... Curriculum: Assessment-Based Instruction, Grades 6–8* supports targeted instruction and differentiation with nine alternative units of study for you to teach strategically before, after, or in between the core curriculum based on your students’ needs. This resource also includes *If... Then... Conferring Scenarios* that help you customize your curriculum through individual and small-group instruction.

*The quality of writing instruction will rise dramatically not only when teachers study the teaching of writing but also when teachers study their own children’s intentions and progress as writers. Strong writing is always tailored for and responsive to the writer.*

**ALTERNATE UNIT**

**Literary Essays**

*A Mini-Unit on Analyzing Complex Texts for Meaning, Craft, and Tone*

If you want a quick unit to hone students’ skills with text-based writing and support their engaged reading, then writing literary essays will give students an opportunity to explore how theme and craft are related in the stories they read. Literary essays will also strengthen students’ skills in analyzing text evidence and elaborating their thinking about complex texts.

**RATIONALE/INTRODUCTION**

Writers need to write about something they know and care a lot about, and they need to write for real reasons, such as to persuade others or discover something about themselves. To this end, a main goal of this unit is to help students deepen their relationship with books through writing as they grow insights and sharpen their analytical writing skills, including their ability to incorporate text evidence. Teaching students to write well about reading is a crucial part of any literacy curriculum. The unit described here is designed to round out the seventh-grade curriculum, because *The Literary Essay* is a full-length book in both the sixth- and eighth-grade Units of Study curricula. For seventh-grade teachers, this unit will provide a great opportunity to continue writing about reading across the year. It will challenge students beyond the work done in *Writing Realistic Fiction: Symbolism, Syntax, and Truth*, and will prepare them for *The Art of Argument: Research-Based Essays*.

To ensure full engagement in this unit, encourage your students to write about a character or theme that is meaningful to them. By asking students to write about a character or theme that is meaningful to you, they are more likely to write from a place of compliance, not compassion, and you will see the difference this makes in their analyses and writing.

It is also important to consider writing fluency—the ability of students to express their ideas clearly and support them with lots of detail, with high volume, and at an efficient rate. This unit aims to teach writers to get a quick draft of an essay going and then to further develop their argument and deepen their analysis of the text—and ultimately, to repeat this process until they become more expert at this kind of writing. In each bend of this unit, therefore, students move through the process of planning, drafting, and revising a literary essay. Considering the amount of writing that students do in high school and college, at the time of high-stakes tests such as the SAT and AP exams, and it makes good sense to support them now with expressing their ideas and supporting ideas with evidence quickly and efficiently.
### Argument Writing

#### If... Then... Conferring Scenarios

These charts will help you anticipate, spot, and teach into the challenges your writers face during the independent work portion of your writing workshop. They lay out the specific strategy you might teach and the way you might contextualize the work for your writers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and Cohesion</th>
<th>After acknowledging what the student is doing well, you might say...</th>
<th>Leave the writer with...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The introduction does not forecast the structure of the essay.</strong></td>
<td>You have learned to make a claim in your essay and to support that claim with reasons. As essayists, though, it’s important to pre-plan how our essay will go, and to let the reader know how our writing will be organized from the very beginning. This is called forecasting. Today, I want to teach you that opinion writers forecast how their writing will go. They do this by stating their claim in the introduction and then adding on, “I think this because...” Then they list the reasons that they will write about in the body of their piece.</td>
<td>Writers use the introduction to forecast how their opinion pieces will go. 1. State your claim. 2. Tell your reader why your claim is true. • <em>One reason this is true is because...</em> • <em>Another reason this is true is because...</em> • <em>A third reason this is true is because...</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Differentiating Instruction for Individuals and Small Groups: If... Then... Conferring Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If . . .</th>
<th>After acknowledging what the student is doing well, you might say . . .</th>
<th>Leave the writer with . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writer has developed a thesis that is complex and nuanced, but lacks the skills to organize an essay that supports it.</td>
<td>As a writer and a thinker, you have grown in tremendous ways. It used to be that you developed theses that were safe and easy to support (like “dogs make great friends” or “Percy is a brave character”). Now your thinking is stronger, but this brings new challenges. When a thesis is more complex, it requires a more complex structure to support it! Today I want to teach you a few organizational structures that essayists often use and show how you write “try on” different structures for size. They might try giving examples from across a text or across a period of time. They might try supporting an idea with context, evidence, and then a bit about the implications. They might support the idea by comparing and contrasting. They also might support their thesis with support from several different texts or sources. Other times, they need to make up their own structure!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**If... Then... Conferring Scenarios**

Despite the uniqueness of each child, there are particular ways they struggle and predictable ways you can help. We can use all we know about child development, learning progressions, writing craft, and grade-specific standards to anticipate and plan for the individualized instruction our students are apt to need.
The *Resources for Teaching Writing* CD-ROM for each grade provides unit-specific print resources to support your teaching throughout the year. You’ll find a rich assortment of instructional tools including learning progressions, checklists and rubrics, correlations to the CCSS, and teaching charts. Offering daily support, these resources will help you establish a structured learning environment that fosters independence and self-direction.

Student writing samples illustrate different ways various students have exemplified the standard and highlight essential features of each writing genre.

A wide range of fresh-from-the-classroom instructional charts model proven teaching artifacts that are easy to copy and customize.
**Argument Writing Checklist (continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>NOT</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>STARTING</th>
<th>TO YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>I spelled technical vocabulary and literary vocabulary accurately.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>I used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout my argument.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>I used word choices that shift when needed, [as in moving from a citation back to my own writing], dividing between active and passive voice where appropriate.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I used internal punctuation effectively, including the use of ellipses to accurately insert exceptions from sources.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The writing workshop needs to be simple and predictable enough that your youngsters can learn to carry on within it independently. The materials and teaching tools you provide students will help you establish such a predictable, structured learning environment.

**Common Core Standards Aligning with Grade 8 Unit 2: The Literary Essay**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Speaking &amp; Listening</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>W.8.1, W.8.3.a, W.8.4, W.8.6, W.8.5.a, W.8.10</td>
<td>RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4</td>
<td>SL.8.1, SL.8.2</td>
<td>L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>W.8.1.a.c, W.8.3.b, W.8.9.a</td>
<td>RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4</td>
<td>SL.8.1, SL.8.4</td>
<td>L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>W.8.1, W.8.5</td>
<td>RL.8.10</td>
<td>SL.8.1</td>
<td>L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Genre-specific checklists** support self-assessment and goal setting, as well as writing rehearsal, revision, and editing.
A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop, Grades 6–8

My goal is to help you watch this teaching in ways that enable you to extrapolate guidelines and methods, so that on another day you’ll invent your own teaching.”

Select chapters offer practical strategies on how to teach the writing process in a way that taps into the developmental and social needs of adolescent writers.

Chapter 4

Middle School Writers and the Writing Process

When I was an eighth-grader, my teacher taught writing by assigning us topics and telling us the expected page length. We wrote at home, bringing our completed stories, book reports, and narratives to school a few days after they were assigned. After a bit, my teacher would read the papers back, each with a grade and some red marks in the margins that noted grammatical mistakes. I expect many of us were

A THUMBNAIL HISTORY OF WRITING PROCESS

INSTRUCTION

Approximately three decades ago a flurry of books and articles calling for a “writing revolution” (Elbow, 1981; Murry, 1977; Kramsch, 1981; and a series of edited volumes titled Writer at Work) combined to popularize the message that when writers write, they do not sit down with a quill pen and immediately produce graceful, compelling prose. Instead, writers work through a process of writing, a process that contains recursive stages. During these stages, writers work through a process of writing, a process that 

Chapter 6

Structures and Management Systems

TO TEACH WRITING, you need to establish the structures and expectations that ensure that all students will continue working throughout the writing workshop on their own important writing projects. Otherwise, your entire attention will be focused on keeping kids working—and you therefore won’t be able to devote yourself to the all-important work of assessing, coaching, scaffolding, and teaching. But teaching young people to work hard with independence is no small feat!

You can start by recognizing that you need to take care to train your students that writing is not one of them. Your students are likely to plan their writing, give it their best, and for holding every learner accountable to doing his or her best? 

A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop, Grades 6–8

In this guide, Lucy details the structures and rituals that characterize a productive, well-managed writing workshop where students work with engagement and tenacity.
Implementation and Professional Development Options

In addition to offering curricular support, the Units of Study series also includes embedded professional development. Through its regular coaching tips and detailed descriptions of carefully crafted teaching moves and language, essential aspects of the teaching are underscored and explained at every turn in every section. The professional development embedded in this series can be further enhanced through online, on-site, and off-site opportunities. Also, visit www.unitsofstudy.com.

➤ Online from TCRWP

Implementation Webinar: A trained consultant can help you unpack your new Units of Study. Whether you want to jump in and start teaching or first explore the workshop’s guiding principles and practices, this webinar will help you get started your way.
For additional information visit unitsofstudy.com

Classroom Videos: More than 50 live-from-the-classroom videos let you eavesdrop on Lucy and her colleagues as they teach opinion/argument, information, and narrative writing. These clips model the Common Core minilessons, conferences, and shares you will engage in as you teach these units of study.
View these videos at vimeo.com/tcrwp/albums

Study Guide: A step-by-step guide offers professional learning communities a collegial platform to explore the series’ features and components and plan their next steps.
Visit unitsofstudy.com to download your copy today

Resources: The Project posts important and useful resources throughout the year, along with examples of writing that students at every grade level, K–8, did during last year’s units of study instruction.
Visit readingandwritingproject.com/resources.html

Twitter Chats and Book Talks: On Wednesdays from 7:30–8:30 PM EST join Lucy and her colleagues for live chat sessions on topics supporting literacy instruction.
Follow them at @tcrwp or search #TCRWP or #TCRWP Coaching
Visit readingandwritingproject.com for full support

➤ On-Site

Implementation Support for Units of Study from TCRWP staff developers
Invite one of Lucy’s colleagues to come to your school for a professional development day. The sessions will help teachers unpack the series’ components, grasp the big picture of leading effective workshop teaching, and gain an understanding of how to integrate assessment into the curriculum.

Large group: $3500–$5000/day, all inclusive for 50–150 people
Small group: $3000–$3500/day, all inclusive
Webinar: free for individuals and groups of any size

For additional information, contact:
Judith Chin, TCRWP Coordinator of Strategic Development at
Judith.chin@readingandwritingproject.com or call 212.678.3327

Multi-Day Training with one cohort of educators
Invite a TCRWP staff developer to work in your school or district with a cohort of educators for several days. For each area of staff development in which you choose to focus, the Project provides resources such as curriculum maps, curriculum calendars, and planning templates.

Small group: $2000–$2500/day, plus travel expenses

Multi-Day Institute for 40–300 educators
Host a “homegrown institute” for reading or writing instruction, reading instruction, or content literacy instruction. Tailored to your district’s needs, the instruction and materials are specialized for K–2, 3–5, or 6–8 sections of up to 25 participants each.

Institute: $2000–$2500/day per staff developer, plus travel expenses. 4–5 days. Calculate one staff developer/25 participants/day

For additional information, contact:
Kathy Neville, Executive Administrator at Kathy@readingandwritingproject.com or call 917.484.1482

➤ Off-Site

Multi-Day Institutes at Teachers College
Visit Teachers College for a series of institutes lead by world-renowned teacher-educators and other all-stars in the field of literacy and learning. Institutes include small- and large-group sections that are designed to help teachers, coaches, and administrators establish and sustain vibrant and vigorous models of best practice.

Institutes for The Teaching of Reading and for The Teaching of Writing. Half of the day in large-group sections, half in small, interactive sections.
Cost: $750 per person.

Institutes for Literacy Coaches. One institute focuses on the Common Core’s call to accelerate writing development; one focuses on reading instruction.
Cost: $775 per person.

Mini-Institute for Content Area Literacy Instruction.
This 4-day institute helps participants lead literacy-rich instruction in science (K–2) and social studies (3–8). Keynotes from literacy leaders and small-group sections with grade-level colleagues.
Cost: $625 per person.

For additional information, contact
Lisa Cazzola, Project Coordinator at lisa@readingandwritingproject.com or call 212.678.3195

For registrations and applications go to readingandwritingproject.com/institutes.html

For additional information and sample sessions, visit www.UnitsofStudy.com
How is the Units of Study 6–8 series like the Units of Study K–5 series?

Building on the empowering features of the elementary series, these middle school units of study continue to include:

- Step-by-step advice on efficient and effective teaching, describing in detail Lucy and her colleagues’ minilessons, conferences, small-group strategy sessions, shares, and more;

- Detailed management techniques, classroom structures, and instructional frameworks that characterize effective writing workshops;

- A gradual release of responsibility model of teaching that begins with an explicit explanation and demonstration, followed by guided practice and then time for independent work; and

- Embedded teacher professional development that enables teachers to extrapolate and adjust their teaching to meet the needs of their particular school and their particular students.

As with the instruction in grades K–5, the grades 6, 7, and 8 series adheres to the high expectations of the CCSS and offers:

- Sequential, ambitious work in opinion/argument, information, and narrative writing that builds in complexity as students progress from grade to grade;

- Opportunities for repeated writing practice as students write several pieces of each kind of writing, each time increasing their expectations; and

- A responsive process approach to writing instruction. As the foremost authority in the process approach to writing instruction, Lucy offers unparalleled insight into how this approach needs to be adapted to meet students’ developmental needs and the inherent characteristics of each genre.

How does the Units of Study 6–8 series address the unique demands of middle school writing instruction?

As part of a coherent K–8 writing curriculum, Units of Study in Argument, Information, and Narrative Writing offers unique features and instructional practices that address the shifting academic and developmental needs of adolescent students and middle school classrooms. The grade 6, 7, and 8 series provides:

- Topics of interest to adolescents such as crafting digital presentations, writing fiction, or trying their hand at investigative journalism;

- Units of study that support the increasingly rigorous ELA curriculum by involving students in literary essays, close reading, and text-dependent writing;

- Three core units and nine alternate if-then units that address the increasingly diverse learning needs of the students on ever-expanding class rosters

- Peer and self-assessment opportunities that tap into adolescents’ desire for relationships and responsibility; and

- Regular homework options as students write more and more on their own.

Does the Units of Study series support a strong reading and writing connection?

We believe that a classroom full of wonderful writers is one in which teachers read aloud several times a day and the students, too, are engaged readers. Although children benefit from rich classroom and school libraries full of a great variety of texts, in order to learn to write well, they especially need to read texts that resemble those they are trying to write. And they need not only graze these texts but also study some of them incredibly closely, revisiting them time and again to learn yet more and more and more. The same text can be used to teach leads, semicolons, character development, showing-not-telling, lists, pronoun agreement, and a dozen other things.
Throughout the K–8 Units of Study series, carefully selected mentor texts model effective writing techniques, encourage students to read as writers, and provide background knowledge. Because the mentor texts at the elementary levels incorporate detailed pictures and graphics and are oftentimes shared as read-alouds and because the excerpts taught in a lesson use a large proportion of a book, core texts are also provided in trade book packs.

How does the Units of Study series support teacher professional development?

Select components and features are designed to support teacher professional development.

- The Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop provides the professional understanding needed to launch and implement an effective writing workshop. In addition to describing proven management tips and strategies, this guide also provides a thumbnail history of writing process instruction.

- The teaching moves and language described in each session model best practices that have been carefully crafted and honed over time.

- The coaching commentary that runs down the right side of the pages describes why Lucy and her colleagues did what they did or what else they could have done in order to help teachers extrapolate guidelines and methods so on another day teachers feel ready to invent their own teaching.

- The units of study are organized around a gradual release of responsibility framework for teachers. First, the unit books explicitly model the entire teaching process. Then, the alternate units provide concise scaffolds that support guided practice. And finally, a special chapter on how to design your own homegrown units encourages collaborative and independent practice.

How does the Units of Study K–8 assessment system monitor student progress and guide instruction?

The work of Danielson, Marzano, Webb, Wiggins, and Hattie have established that in order to accelerate students’ progress it is important to provide them with clear goals as well as with responsive, assessment-based feedback. Progress is accelerated when teachers and students alike track writing progress up a vertical ladder of skill development in each type of writing. Building on this understanding, the Units of Study assessment system makes writing concrete and obtainable, helping students set goals and assess their own work.

Throughout the series student work is scored against established learning progressions in each kind of writing. These learning progressions and performance assessments inform instruction and learning, helping teachers and students monitor writing development and identify ways to move forward, step by step. The Common Core State Standards are not a curriculum; rather, they are a set of competencies with clear measurable benchmarks. Taking these benchmarks to heart, the Units of Study assessment system includes:

- Learning progressions for each kind of writing that map the specific benchmarks students will master as they move through each developmental stage;

- Self-assessment checklists for students for each kind of writing;

- Teacher rubrics for assessing writing development for each kind of writing;

- Student writing samples for each stage of the progression;

- A benchmark piece of each kind of writing that shows how one piece of writing could develop according to the CCSS learning progressions;

- On-demand writing prompts that support schoolwide assessment; and

- Formative performance assessments for teachers to use at the end of each unit.

For more on the series’ learning progressions and performance assessments see the Writing Pathways book described on pages 10–15 of this brochure.
# Grades K-5 Components Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s Guide &amp; CD-ROM</th>
<th>Four Units of Study</th>
<th>Writing Pathways</th>
<th>If...Then... Curriculum</th>
<th>Trade Book Packs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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