

Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement

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The Standard's Emphasis on the Writing Process

Writing standard 5 describes the writing process, and standard 10 describes the need to write routinely as part of that process. Both standards will be an integral part of students being able to work toward all the other writing standards as well. The grade level specifics of anchor standard 5 are almost the same across all 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 increasing with age and with expectations for independence increasing as well. Anchor standard 10 calls for students to “write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two). These are not low expectations!

Let's start by noting that the standards call for students to write often. “Write routinely” means to make writing a habit. Even noted writers describe how they have to push themselves to ensure that they write every day. Novelist Margaret Atwood, who has published dozens of fiction and nonfiction books, and has received almost every known award for her writing, claims: “The fact is the blank pages inspire me with terror. What will I put on them? Will it be good enough? Will I have to throw it out? The trick is to sit at the desk anyway, every day” (Murray 1990). It is not surprising that the standards emphasize writing often. Writing is like any other practice—playing piano, running, knitting. The more opportunity you have for practice, the better you get.

The image of a routine for writing is not just about sitting down to write, however. A writing routine involves understanding what it means to work at your writing. Writing anchor 5 states that writers “will develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.” The CCSS are closely aligned, then, with the practices researched by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Don Murray, documented in *A Writer Teaches Writing* (2003). Murray described how journalists learn, even when writing to deadline, to revise on the run, to try out different leads and endings, and to consider, and reconsider each word, comma, sentence structure in order to convey precise meaning: they know that writing is a process.

Volume is also related to rate, and the standards are very specific about the expectations for production. Fourth graders are expected to produce a minimum of one typed page in a sitting, and fifth graders, a minimum of two typed pages in a sitting. That level of production requires practice. As you begin to write, you'll find that for every day you do it, the sheer discipline of moving your pen across the page, you will become faster and more fluent.

