**Professional Book Discussion Guide**

**Book Title:** *Keys to Early Writing*

**Summary of Book:** *This is the training book used during professional development for “Keys to Early Writing” – there are nine modules that are aligned with the topics covered in professional development. Module 1 provides background knowledge about beginning writing instruction, including the role of transcription skills (spelling, handwriting) to support fluent writing. Module 2 reviews teaching principles, including: gradual release of responsibility, systematic and differentiated instruction that includes scaffolding, oral language as a foundation for writing, use of mentor text as models for writing. A writing lesson routine is also introduced. Module 3 focuses on engaging a community of writers, including providing a supportive writing environment, teachers and writers, and the importance of peer collaboration. Module 4 addresses the stages in the writing process. Module 5 focuses on drawing, labeling and list writing as first writing steps. Modules 6 and 7 present instructional practices for helping students write quality sentences and paragraphs. Module 8 addresses the structure of the three types of writing. Module 9 offers suggestions for introducing students to the skills needed to write from sources.*

**Chapter 1: Writing Basics**

* Identify the five components (strands) that make up *The Writing Rope*. Then think about students you know who have difficulty writing – which strand(s) most likely present difficulty for these students?
* List at least two things that stand out to you about writing development in grades K-2.
* Summarize the roles that spelling and handwriting have related to written composing. Do you think difficulty with these transcription skills contributes to writing difficulty for some of your students?

**Chapter 2: Teaching Principles**

* Explain in your own words the *Gradual Release of Responsibility* model and how *I, We, You* is used to represent the model.
* Describe what is meant by scaffolding.
* Review the chart of examples of keys to literacy scaffolds that are listed by stages in the writing process. Then list examples of scaffolds you have given students to support writing.
* Summarize the role that oral language plays in learning to write.
* Do you think the *Keys to Early Writing* lesson routine (Launch, Explore, Land) might be a model you can use to plan your writing instruction lessons? Why or why not?
* Why do you think it’s helpful to provide time to “celebrate” the writers in your classroom? What are some activities you can use?
* Make a list of examples of quick writes and longer writing tasks (as described in the chapter) that you assign your students.
* Why is it important to give students a choice about what they write about?
* Generate at least one writing task for your students that includes an authentic audience.
* Identify one writing skill or technique that you would like to share with students, and then identify two examples of mentor text that can serve as models of this skill or technique.

**Chapter 3: Engage a Community of Writers**

* List at least 3 details that stand out to you related to creating a writing environment.
* Do you agree with this quote related to students seeing teachers as writers: “Children need to be introduced to the various ways in which we use writing to communicate in society and to gain practice using writing as a form of communication. An important instructional goal for developing writers is to learn that writing is similar to speaking because both offer ways to communicate with others. They benefit from opportunities to see how adults use writing and to practice these forms.” Describe some ways that students see you as a writer.
* List instructional practices that you already use related to: opportunities for peer collaboration and different types of conferencing.
* Do you think you can use the Collaboration Guidelines chart with students? If not, how might you adapt it for your classroom?

**Chapter 4: The Writing Process**

* Do you already explicitly teach the stages of the writing process? If so, what labels do you use to describe each stage?
* Can you use ***T****he* ***P****rocess* ***W****riting* ***R****outine (****T****hink and* ***P****lan,* ***W****rite,* ***R****evise)* terminology in your classroom? If not, how could you adapt it for your classroom?
* Give some examples of student collaboration at the THINK and PLAN, WRITE, and REVISE stages.
* Summarize how the ability to revise changes as students move from kindergarten through grade 3.
* Describe the suggestions provided in the chapter for providing feedback to students about their drawings and writing.
* In your own words, explain why it is important to teach students to always be aware of the audience, task and purpose of a writing assignment.
* Do you think you might use the feedback checklists or rubrics at the end of the chapter? Why or why not?

**Chapter 5: First Steps – Drawing, Labels, Lists**

* Explain why drawing can be considered a form of composing.
* Do you provide illustration study or explicit instruction for how to draw to your students? Describe what you already do as well as some of the suggestions provided in the chapter.
* Review the spelling and word-writing developmental sequence. At what stage are most of your students?
* Using the suggestions and examples in the chapter, select some writing samples of your students who use “invented spelling” and explain what their writing shows about the phonics knowledge.
* Generate at least 2 writing tasks you might assign that involve students labeling or making lists.

**Chapter 6: Syntax, Sentences**

* What is your experience related to this quote: “One by one, sentences (spoken or written) communicate ideas that add up to make meaning. Efficient processing of sentence structure is necessary for comprehension as well as for communicating information and ideas. If students cannot write good sentences by the time they leave grade 3, they will have difficulty meeting writing expectations in later grades.”
* What is *syntactic awareness*? How does having good syntactic awareness help students write?
* Can you use the suggestions provided for teaching sentence basics (two sentence parts) and the four types of sentences? If not, how could you adapt them so you could?
* Generate a *sentence scramble* activity for your students.
* Generate a *sentence elaboration* activity using “W” questions for your students.
* Generate a *sentence elaboration* activity using expansion of a kernel sentence for your students.
* Generate a *sentence combining* activity for your students.

**Chapter 7: Paragraph Writing**

* Describe the paragraph writing ability of your students, including the knowledge of paragraph structure.
* Can you use any of the three activities suggested to build paragraph skills? If not, how could you adapt them so you could?
* Do you think two-column notes might be a helpful scaffold for your students to plan before they write one or more paragraphs? How might you introduce them to your students?
* Do you teach your students patterns of organization? How about the transition words and phrases related to each pattern?
* Do your students use grade-appropriate transition words and phrases when they speak and write? Can you use the list of transitions in your classroom? If not, how could you adapt it so you could?
* Can you use the *paragraph writing templates* with your students? If not, how could you adapt them so you could?

**Chapter 8: Three Types of Writing**

* How would you explain the difference to your students between informational, opinion, and narrative text?
* What is the difference between *text features* and *text structures*?
* Review the Common Core standards for the three types of writing. Then answer these questions in the book:
  + What do you notice about the *introduction* requirements for all three types of writing as students move from kindergarten into grade 2?
  + What do you notice about the *conclusion* requirements for all three types of writing as students move from kindergarten into grade 2?
  + What do you notice about the difference in *body development*, regardless of grade, between opinion, informational, and narrative writing?
* Summarize the benefits of showing mentor, model text.
* Generate an informational or opinion writing task for you students. Also generate a topic web that you might use to help students plan the structure of their writing piece.

**Chapter 8: Writing from Sources**

* Describe any writing (or drawing) from sources tasks you ask your students to complete. The source can be audio, visual, or text.
* Review the Common Core writing and reading standards related to writing from sources. What do you notice about the expectations for students as they move from kindergarten through grade 3?
* Generate a writing task for your students that is similar to the examples provided in the chapter. What are the sources that you will use? Which scaffolds will you use?
* Review the examples of classroom writing prompts. Based on a read aloud or something that students are reading, generate a related writing prompt.

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