

## The Writing Rope: A K-12 Instructional Framework

*The Writing Rope* (Sedita, 2019) is an instructional framework for teaching writing across all grades that identifies five components, or categories, of writing skills that students must learn in order to become skilled writers: 1) Critical Thinking, 2) Syntax, 3) Text Structure, 4) Writing Craft, and 5) Transcription.

Figure 1-1 is a graphic representation of *The Writing Rope* Figure that lists the five components. The components (i.e., strands) in the rope are explained in the left column of Figure 1-2 with descriptions of how each strand is addressed in *Keys to Early Writing* for teaching students in primary grades.

**Figure 1-1**

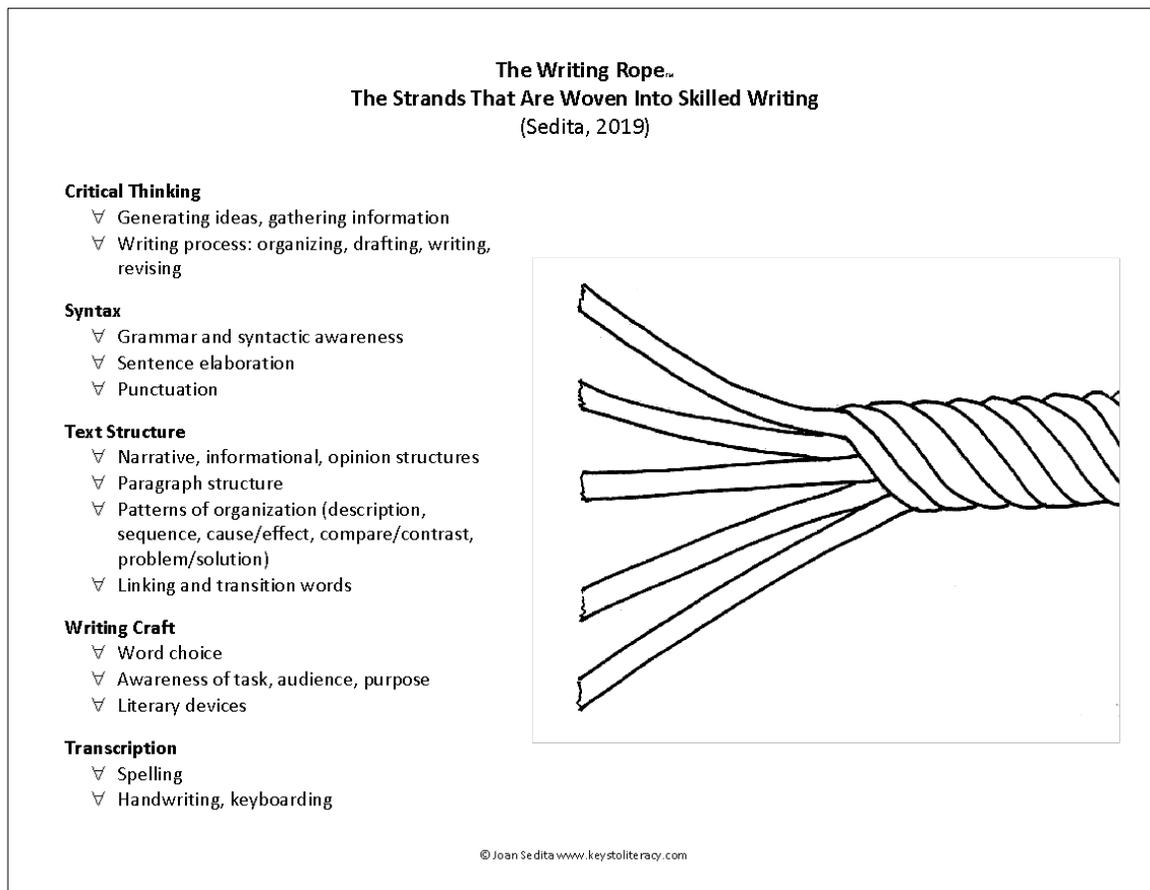


Figure 1-2

## The Writing Rope™

<b>The Critical Thinking Strand</b>	
<p>This strand draws significantly on critical thinking and executive function skills, as well as the ability to develop background knowledge about a writing topic. Students engage in critical thinking as they think about what they want to communicate through their writing. If they are composing an informational or opinion piece, they may need to tap into comprehension skills to gather information from sources.</p> <p>This strand also includes awareness of the <i>writing process</i> (i.e., thinking, planning, drafting, writing, revising). For the thinking stage, students benefit from explicit instruction for brainstorming strategies and skills for gathering information from written and multi-media sources, such as note taking. They also need to learn planning strategies for organizing their thoughts, including the use of prewriting graphic organizers. Students need to be metacognitive and purposeful about working recursively through the stages of the writing process, and they benefit from explicit instruction in revising and editing strategies.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Application to Primary Grades</b></p> <p>Critical thinking for writing focuses on responding to text that is read or heard during read aloud. Writing is used to reinforce learning anything that is <i>read, said, or done</i> in all subjects throughout the school day. It is also about young students making choices about what they want to say.</p> <p>The basic stages in the writing process can be introduced to young children and highlighted whenever students compose using drawings or words.</p> <p>This part of the rope is addressed in Chapters 4 and 9. Chapter 4 specifically addresses the writing process.</p>
<b>The Syntax Strand</b>	
<p>Individual sentences communicate ideas that add up to make meaning. Efficient processing of sentence structure is necessary for listening and reading comprehension, as well as for communicating information and ideas in writing. <i>Syntax</i> is the study and understanding of grammar: the system and arrangement of words, phrases and clauses that make up a sentence. Students develop syntactic awareness as they learn the correct use and relationship of words in sentences. This begins with exposure to standard English by listening to people talk, and reading or listening to written text. Students benefit from explicit instruction focused on building sentence skills, including activities such as sentence elaboration and sentence combining.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Application to Primary Grades</b></p> <p>Young children benefit from explicit instruction about basic sentence structure, including the parts of a sentence and how to expand their sentences through sentence elaboration practice. They also benefit from activities that develop syntactic awareness including sentence anagrams and sentence combining.</p> <p>This part of the rope is addressed specifically in Chapter 6.</p>

<b>The Text Structure Strand</b>	
<p>Text structure is unique to written language, and awareness of several levels of text structure supports both writing and reading comprehension. Students benefit from explicit instruction in several levels of text structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Narrative, informational, and opinion text structure</u>: knowledge of the different organization structures for these three types of writing, including the use of introductions, body development, and conclusions</li> <li>● <u>Paragraph structure</u>: understanding that written paragraphs are used to <i>chunk</i> text into manageable units that are organized around a central idea and supporting details</li> <li>● <u>Patterns of organization</u>: understanding that sentences and paragraphs can be organized to convey a specific purpose including <i>description, sequence, cause and effect, compare and contrast, problem and solution</i></li> <li>● <u>Transition words or phrases</u>: ability to use words or phrases to link sentences, paragraphs or sections of text – including knowledge of transitions associated with specific patterns of organization</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Application to Primary Grades</b></p> <p>The three main types of writing (informational, narrative, opinion) can be introduced in primary grades, including basic examples of introductions and conclusions. Initially, drawings with some words are used to represent these genres, leading to paragraph writing by the end of grade 2.</p> <p>Patterns of organization, along with simple examples of associated transitions can also be introduced.</p> <p>Teachers encourage students to read like a writer to see the reciprocal relationship of text structure between reading and writing.</p> <p>Chapters 7 and 8 address these levels of text structure.</p>
<b>The Writing Craft Strand</b>	
<p>This strand addresses skills and strategies often referred to as <i>writers' craft</i> or <i>writers' moves</i>. This includes a number of techniques that writers employ that affect writing style, text structure, and choice of words. Students benefit from explicit instruction in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Word choice</u>: purposeful use of specific vocabulary, word placement and dialogue to convey meaning and create an effect on the reader</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Application to Primary Grades</b></p> <p>The concept of writers' craft can be introduced in the early grades, including basic techniques such as the use of illustrations and layout of visuals on the page, use of font type and size, organizing features such as headings and captions, and the use of dialogue and speech bubbles.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Writer’s voice</u>: the techniques and style of writing an author uses to show emotion, personality or point of view</li> <li>• <u>Literary devices</u>: understanding and use of common literary elements (e.g., plot, setting, narrative, characters, theme) and literary techniques (e.g., imagery, personification, figurative language, alliteration, allegory, irony)</li> </ul> <p>When teachers share examples of mentor text that include clear examples of how authors use techniques, students will be better able to imitate them in their own writing.</p> <p>This strand also addresses the importance of being mindful of the task, audience, and purpose when writing. Awareness of these elements will influence decisions about word choice, tone, length and style of a writing piece.</p>	<p>The concept of the <i>writer’s voice</i> can also be introduced using simple examples found in read aloud books, encouraging young children to explore their own writing styles and show their personality.</p> <p>This part of the rope is addressed in Chapter 2.</p>
<p><b>The Transcription Strand</b></p>	
<p>This strand addresses spelling and handwriting/keyboarding skills. They are basic skills that are needed to transcribe the words a writer wants to put into writing. Once students become automatic and fluent with spelling and handwriting/keyboarding, they can focus their attention on the other strands of the writing rope. If students do not develop fluency with these skills by grade 3, this will put a constraint on writing development as they move into the later grades.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Application to Primary Grades</b></p> <p>Spelling and handwriting are best taught as part of phonics instruction. <i>Keys to Early Writing</i> focuses on oral and written composing, and therefore does not provide in-depth instructional suggestions for teaching spelling and handwriting.</p> <p>The role of transcription skills is explained in chapter 1.</p>