



Research and Standards

The International Reading Association has established national performance standards for English Language Arts. These include the following:

- Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts (NCTE 2008).

Research has shown that teachers of students with and without learning differences consider effective writing instruction essential. Nearly all states have established state standards in writing and test those standards. The most frequently tested genres include personal narrative, letter writing, reports, opinion essays, narratives, journals, résumés, and applications (Isaacson 2004). Effective writing instruction is needed to prepare all students for testing and for the real world. The writing instruction must be explicit and systematic. It must provide individualized support, frequent repetition, progress monitoring, and constant feedback (Tiora and Maddox 2004).

Public Law 105–17 mandates that students with special needs take part in state assessments. A study done by the National Center for Learning Disabilities shows that adaptations should be made when teaching writing to students with learning differences. The study recommends plan sheets, models of good writing, and teacher feedback (Gersten, Baker, and Edwards 2008). *Real-World Writing* follows these suggestions and guides instruction in a way that meets the needs of students with learning differences. The binder includes a lesson plan for each unit and interactive discussion of the study topic. Realistic graphics of the different writing formats encountered in day-to-day situations are presented and broken down into manageable units. Each unit includes activity sheets with clear, simple directions. The activity sheets include models, plan sheets, and step-by-step instructions for composing a writing piece. These provide practice opportunities vital for mastering writing skills. Activity pages can be completed individually or as a group. An assessment appears at the end of each unit to help the teacher gauge the students' learning. These assessments also provide an opportunity for feedback and can serve as a guide for re-teaching.

Gersten, Russell, Scott Baker, Lana Edwards. (2008). Teaching expressive writing to students with learning disabilities: A research synthesis. *National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc.* National Center for Learning Disabilities.

Isaacson, Stephen. (2004). Instruction that helps students meet state standards in writing. *Exceptionality* 12: 39–54.

National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association. (2008). Standards for the English language arts. *National Council for Teachers of English*. <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm> (accessed April 19, 2008).

Tiora, Gary, Mary E. Maddox. (2004). Instruction that helps students meet state standards in writing. *Exceptionality* 12: 19–37.