This **English Language Arts Unit** introduces the Writer’s Notebook as a means for helping students increase their writing stamina and fluency through daily writing mini-lessons, followed by writing time, individual and small group conferences, and whole-class and peer sharing.

Since writing with a purpose – in terms of audience, venue and format – the students will have frequent opportunities to share their writing in class, either in whole-class, small group or one-on-one sharing. The peer sharing provides abundant opportunities for students to give and receive constructive criticism that will improve their own writing.

The students will develop three distinct writing samples by the end of this unit: persuasive, informational and narrative texts. While the students may work on their samples one at a time or concurrently, persuasive writing will be introduced first, followed by informational then narrative texts.

Writing in general and writing in personal notebooks in particular can be a stressful, high-risk proposition for any writer. Sharing these writings publicly only heightens the stakes. Since many of the activities in the unit involve cooperative learning, students should come to view their classroom as a place where risk-taking, cooperation and collaboration are valued and expected.

**Unit Assessment**

Teacher observation of class work, combined with evaluation of student’s Writer’s Notebook and Final Published pieces to serve as assessments of student’s understanding and use of writing strategies and tools.

**Formative:**
- Periodic Writer’s Notebook Entries
- Independent and Group Work
- Class Discussion Observations
- Daily Sharing During Writer’s Conference
- Daily Sharing from Author’s Chair

**Summative:**
- Student’s Published Works
Lesson 1: Introducing the Writer’s Notebook

Introduction
This lesson introduces students to the Writer’s Notebook, both in its physical form and the expectations for its use.

Preparation
1) Purchase student composition notebooks, one per student in with a good variety of cover designs. (Having a few extra on hand is helpful.) Purchase a larger, distinctive notebook for yourself, as well. Yes, you will be writing every day too. It’s important that students see their teacher as a writer.
2) Gather together several mementos from your personal life, the more diverse the better (e.g., an old photograph, a special piece of jewelry, a small souvenir, a pet’s collar, worn piece of cloth, something from your childhood, etc.).
3) Make copies of the attached Writer’s Notebook insert sheets and trim to fit neatly in the students’ notebooks.

GLCEs
W.PR.04.02 apply a variety of pre-writing strategies for both narrative and informational writing (e.g., graphic organizers such as maps, webs, Venn diagrams) in order to generate, sequence, and structure ideas (e.g., plot, setting, conflicts/resolutions, definition/description, or chronological sequence).
W.PS.04.01 exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message (e.g., in narrative text: strong verbs, figurative language, sensory images; in informational text: precision, established importance, transitions).
W.AT.04.01 be enthusiastic about writing and learning to write.
L.CN.04.01 ask substantive questions of the speaker that will provide additional elaboration and details.
L.CN.04.02 listen to or view critically while demonstrating appropriate social skills of audience behaviors (e.g., eye contact, attentive, supportive) in small and large group settings.

Engagement (10 minutes)
Gather together at the classroom “meeting place” or “reading circle”. Ask the students if any of them collect anything. Select several children to share with the class what they collect. Then say, “I collect things too.” Then bring your mementos one by one and say, “Let’s see if you can tell what I collect.” Explain each item and its significance to you. Guide students with your answers until they understand that you collect important memories or happenings that have enriched your life.

Exploration (20 minutes)
Explain that today as a class, you all will become collectors of special or interesting moments or thoughts and that you will be capturing them in a new “Writer’s Notebook.” Bring out the box of notebooks and randomly select one student at a time to look through the lot and select one that “calls to them.” (Once everyone has selected and a few notebooks remain, anyone who wants to reselect from the remaining lot may trade in for a different cover style. It’s important that the students feel comfortable with their choice.)
Give the students a few minutes to handle and look through their new Writer’s Notebooks. Often different brands have unique tables or information on the inside front and back covers. Kids will enjoy comparing their treasures.

**Explanation (20 minutes)**

Explain that we divide the writing in our notebooks in two ways. The section that starts from front to back will be for daily writing entries, whether adding new material or revising and editing current entries. The second section starts from back to front. This is where we will either write or paste in writing, revising and editing strategies that we can use to improve our writing.

Explain that we will be collecting things to write in our notebooks every day, both in school and at home. Explain that writing every day helps exercise our writing “muscles” so we can build our writing stamina and fluency. Be sure to check for understanding of the words “stamina” (doing something for a long time) and “fluency” (doing something easily and well). Tell them we are “literary athletes” in training!

Distribute a stapled packet of Writer’s Notebook Inserts to each student. Then say, “These are some ideas of what you might collect in your Writer’s Notebook. I have glued mine to the inside front cover of my Notebook so I will always have them with me.” Show your Writer’s Notebook with the inserts affixed to the inside front cover.

Review the Writer’s Notebook Insert packet together. The first page has suggestions for the kinds of writing the students could collect. Have each student read one item. Be sure to ask for examples of each so everyone understands the kinds of things to collect. Also review the “Seeds for My Notebook,” “Topics to Write About,” and “Notebook Expectations” pages, checking for understanding as you go.

Explain that, while they will be expected to write every day, the topic, genre and mode will usually be up to them. From time to time, however, you will also suggest topics to write about. For example, tomorrow, everyone should bring in one item from their personal collection (doll, coin, etc). During Writer’s Workshop we will free-write silently for 10 minutes about the item that we bring in.

If there is time at the end of this lesson, invite the class to free write in their new Writer’s Notebooks for 5-10 minutes. If not, don’t worry. In this case, building anticipation for writing that first entry is a good thing. You may find several students will have written their first entry before the next lesson!

**After Lesson Reflection**
Name ______________________________

**What Goes in My Writer’s Notebook?**

- Memories from my past ... or stories from someone else’s
- Reflections on something I read or saw, or heard, tasted or smelled
- Questions I’m wondering about and want to explore
- Rambling thoughts that may or may not go anywhere today
- Hopes and wishes for myself, my family and friends ... or for the world
- Fears and nightmares I want to slay
- Book and movie reviews
- Lists of things ... important things and any-old-things important to me
- Sketches and pictures ... visual seeds of ideas
- Descriptions of unusual characters I meet or interesting settings I visit
- Quirky dialog I overhear
- Sticky notes and scraps of paper with ideas to explore
- Inspiring examples of writing from other writers
- Text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world connections
- Interesting words that I may want to use in my own writing
- Writing, revision and editing strategies that I want to try
- Brainstorms, rough drafts and works-in-progress
- My stories, speeches, letters, poems, or a single word that moves me
- Whatever I want to write about!

“I write to hold what I find in my life in my hands and declare it a treasure ... significance cannot be found, it must be gown.”

-- Lucy Calkins
# Seeds For My Writer’s Notebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am an expert at:</th>
<th>Things I will always remember:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics I feel deeply about:</th>
<th>Kinds of writing I would like to try:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Topics to Write About
# Notebook Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Write Every Day</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise your “writing” muscles and you will build stamina and fluency.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Find Topics that Interest You</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From your life, from your reading from your natural curiosity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Write Independently</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write from your heart about your life. Your unique voice matters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fold the Page Over</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If something is too personal to share with the teacher.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respect Your Notebook</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take good care of yours and don’t read another’s unless you’re invited.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practice What You Know</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice “book” spelling and grammar. Write neatly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Share from Time to Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So other students can learn from you too.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discover For Yourself</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How writing can enrich your life!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide Time to Write</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So students can exercise “writing” muscles and conference with others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teach Writing Strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That students can try in their own writing or use when they get stuck.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Get Out of Your Way</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So students can explore and express their unique perspectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respect the Folded Pages</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unless there’s a reason to believe a student is going to be hurt or hurt someone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Write Every Day</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So we all grow as writers together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teach Spelling and Grammar</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So students can practice their “book” spelling and grammar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make Time for Sharing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And share what we’ve written so we can learn from each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discover For Ourselves</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How writing can enrich our lives!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Notebook Know-How: Strategies for the Writer’s Notebook by Aimee Buckner*
Lesson 2: Day One in the Literary Gym

Introduction
This lesson provides students with their first opportunity to write in their Writer’s Notebook during a 10-minute, silent free-write. Their performance in terms of quantity and quality of writing, as well as writing stamina, will serve as a benchmark in the formative assessment.

Preparation
Students bring collections from home and writers’ notebooks to meeting area.

GLCEs
W.PR.04.01 set a purpose, consider audience, and replicate authors’ styles and patterns when writing a narrative or informational piece.

W.PR.04.02 apply a variety of pre-writing strategies for both narrative and informational writing (e.g., graphic organizers such as maps, webs, Venn diagrams) in order to generate, sequence, and structure ideas (e.g., plot, setting, conflicts/resolutions, definition/description, or chronological sequence).

W.PS.04.01 exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message (e.g., in narrative text: strong verbs, figurative language, sensory images; in informational text: precision, established importance, transitions).

W.AT.04.01 be enthusiastic about writing and learning to write.

L.CN.04.01 ask substantive questions of the speaker that will provide additional elaboration and details.

L.CN.04.02 listen to or view critically while demonstrating appropriate social skills of audience behaviors (e.g., eye contact, attentive, supportive) in small and large group settings.

L.RP.04.04 combine skills to reveal strengthening literacy (e.g., viewing then analyzing in writing, listening then giving an opinion orally).

Engagement (10 minutes)
Ask the class if anyone would like to tell the class what they brought in from their collection to write about today. They shouldn’t give a long explanation. That should go into their Writer’s Notebook.

Exploration (15 minutes)
Explain that you are going to draw a star on the board. When you do, everyone will free-write silently for 10 minutes in your Writer’s Notebooks. Silently means just that. No talking. No visiting with neighbors. No questions for the teacher. Just writing. Ask for questions or clarification. Then draw a star on the board and begin.

After 10 minutes, erase the star on the board. There will be a tremendous sigh of relief ... as if they were holding their breath for the past 10 minutes!

Explanation (25 minutes)
Invite students to talk about their experience writing for 10 minutes silently. What did it feel like? How did they decide what to write? At first they won’t understand that you want them to talk about writing, not talk about what they wrote so you will need to gently guide them.
Use this opportunity to point out the different writing strategies used (listing, writing as if talking, free-association, etc.). This will help students understand the many different ways that writers think about writing and how they will frame what they want to write.

Importantly, no matter what students write or how long they are able to write, heap praise on their cleverness and effort. This is the first day of their literary athletic training ... a giant first step that deserves recognition and positive reinforcement!

After Lesson Reflection
Web Resources

Oracle ThinkQuest: Forms of Writing
http://library.thinkquest.org/J001156/forms%20of%20writing/formwriting.htm

WritingForKids.com: Getting Student Work Published
http://writing-for-kids.com/publish.html

Oregon Department of Education: Sample Student Writing + Assessments
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=524

The Writer’s Handbook: Thesis and Purpose Statements
http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Thesis_or_Purpose.html