

Reading and Writing Grow Together

Why teaching reading and writing as one makes both stronger

Reading and writing are not two subjects that happen to sit next to each other. They are two sides of the same coin, and the research is clear that teaching them together makes each one stronger. When students write about what they read, they understand it better, and when they read like writers, their own writing improves.

Writing makes readers

A large analysis of the research found that having students write about a text improves how well they comprehend it, and that teaching writing improves reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word reading as well (**Graham & Hebert, 2011**). Writing forces a reader to slow down, choose what matters, and put an idea into their own words, and that act of construction deepens understanding in a way that reading alone does not.

When a student writes about what they read, they are not just recording the text, they are rebuilding it in their own mind.

Reading makes writers

The relationship runs both ways. Wide reading gives young writers the words, the sentence patterns, and the sense of how a piece is shaped, which they then carry into their own writing. Effective writing instruction and reading instruction share the same foundations, so time spent on one supports the other rather than competing with it (**Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000**).

Teaching them together

Because the two reinforce each other, the strongest programs weave them into one. Explicit writing strategies, combined with real reading, raise both writing quality and

reading achievement (**Graham & Perin, 2007**). Separating them wastes the natural transfer between them.

What this means for Teach BIG

This is why our program never treats writing as a bolt on to reading. Students read a passage, then write about it, using the evidence and the structure they just met. Every essay is a reading task and a writing task at once, so the two grow together and every established reader is becoming a stronger writer at the same time.

References

- Fitzgerald, J., & Shanahan, T. (2000). Reading and writing relations and their development. *Educational Psychologist*, 35(1), 39 to 50.
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- Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools*. Alliance for Excellent Education.