

# New research offers guidance for improving primary grade writing instruction

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New research from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College offers guidance for teachers to help them improve writing instruction in the primary grades and develop stronger student writers.

The two new studies by Steve Graham, professor and Curry Ingram Chair in Special Education, were recently published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*.

"The primary purpose of both articles is to inform teachers about writing practices that work with a wide variety of students," Graham said. "We're hoping to help give teachers the opportunity to creatively incorporate effective writing strategies in the classroom to improve the writing of their students."

The National Commission on Writing has stated that writing should be placed at the center of the school agenda.

In "A Meta-Analysis of Single Subject Design Writing Intervention Research," Graham and Leslie Rogers, a current Vanderbilt University doctoral student in special education, identified effective writing practices for all students including students who struggle within the classroom. This research focuses on the current writing practices in grades 1 through 12, including some suggestions for improvement.

"Among the more important findings is the need for students to be taught how to plan, revise and set clear and specific goals for their

writing," Graham said. "Students also need to be taught the skills to write clear and effective paragraphs."

Graham's other paper, "Primary Grade Writing Instruction: A National Survey," co-authored with Laura Cutler, a graduate student in Special Education at the University of Maryland when the research was conducted and currently a teacher in Florida, provides more direct recommendations to improve classroom writing practices.

"Primary grade teachers need to focus on increasing the time spent writing, balancing the time spent writing with the time spent learning how to write, boosting their students' motivation for writing, making computers a more integral part of their writing curriculum, and improving their own preparation for teaching writing," Graham said. "These recommendations offer educators the opportunity to focus on their weakest areas to improve instruction and the quality of student writers produced in our classrooms."

Source: Vanderbilt University

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