

Get Ahead Writing Research and Results

Overview of *Get Ahead Writing*

Get Ahead Writing, LLC is an educational consulting company that works with teachers and schools on improving instruction of the writing application standards with the goal of improving students' overall academic achievement. *Get Ahead Writing* uses a patent-pending method of training and instruction which offers paralleled learning by using modeled, shared, guided, and independent experiences for both teachers- while being trained- and students- when being taught. According to Carl Nagin- commissioned by the National Writing Project to write *Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in our Schools (Jossey-Bass 2003)*- "Composition pedagogy remains a neglected area of study at most of the nation's thirteen hundred schools of education where public school teachers are trained." However according to Nagin, both Linda Darling-Hammond and Donald H. Graves argue that, "...there are no overnight success stories", and The Council for School Performance suggests that an effective professional development program is one that is long-term and embedded during the school year. The 1996 National Commission on Teaching and America's Future Report also states that teacher expertise is the most significant factor in student success; however, The National Commission on Writing recommends that teachers improve in their knowledge of writing and in their own abilities as writers. In *Investing in Quality Teaching: State Level Strategies* Darling-Hammond states that, "...every dollar spent on improving teachers' qualifications nets greater gains than any other use of an education dollar."

Get Ahead Writing focuses on improving writing instruction because research by Dr. Douglas Reeves in his 90-90-90 report shows that schools that emphasize non-fiction writing have more students proficient on state standards than those that don't. Regie Routman also states in *Writing Essentials* (2005) that the students who are the best writers are usually the best readers.

A Case Study of *Get Ahead Writing's* Results

Pomona Unified School District has seen results reflecting this research. Since 2003 elementary schools that have worked with *Get Ahead Writing* have seen an average increase of 25.8 points in the percentage of students who are proficient or advanced on the 4th grade STAR Language Arts tests. Elementary schools which have not worked with *Get Ahead Writing* have seen an increase of 10.8 points during that same period of time. Schools that have worked with *Get Ahead Writing* the longest (since 2003-2004) have seen the most growth- a 31.8 point average increase.

***Get Ahead Writing's* Training Method**

Get Ahead Writing provides two phases of professional development for schools and districts. The first phase can span several years and consists of training/coaching which establishes a writing program. Phase two includes training which is designed to maintain the writing program on campus by deepening the level of instruction and continuing to increase the level of students' writing proficiency.

Get Ahead Writing consultants provide two-day training/coaching sequences for teachers in the instructional method of each writing application. The first day of a training sequence consists of an overview of the four components, an in-class demonstration of the instructional sequence, an analysis of student writing and differentiation of instruction, and instructional planning. The second day of a training sequence consists of teacher coaching. *Get Ahead Writing* consultants provide appropriate support for teachers while they learn to deliver effective writing instruction.

Research to Support *Get Ahead Writing*'s Instructional Method

Get Ahead Writing's instructional method (the process teachers must go through to teach writing) is supported by research:

- All writing programs must include four components- modeled, shared, guided, and independent writing. These are identified Balanced Literacy writing components.
- Teachers work on two instructional sequences per week with their students. An instructional sequence includes dissecting a prompt, setting up a plan, modeled and guided writing, and revising the work with a scoring guide. According to the National Commission on Writing's Report "The Neglected 'R': The Need for a Writing Revolution", teachers need to double the amount of time that students spend writing in order to achieve proficiency.

- Editing and publishing occur monthly. Donald H. Graves suggests that one can improve students' writing by spending more time composing and less time on mechanics- grammar, spelling, conventions, etc.
- Using the student work created during the guided writing demonstration, trainer gives modification and enhancement options for students needing something other than the grade level content. "Teaching writing well involves multiple teaching strategies that address both process and product," states Hillocks in his 1995 book *Teaching Writing as Reflective Practice*.

eg: modify the product- student would include fewer details

eg: modify the instruction- small groups

- Teachers establish a scoring guide for student writing based on the state standards and student needs (using evidence of student writing).
According to Nagin in *Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in our Schools (Jossey-Bass 2003)* , "Principals frequently cite teachers' varied assumptions about writing proficiency as a stumbling block for faculty in creating any schoolwide writing program."
- Based on the established scoring guide, teachers design mini-lessons to teach the concepts required on the scoring guide.
- Teachers write prompts which align to the language arts stories and/or other content areas. According to Dr. Douglas Reeves in *Accountability in*

Action, an emphasis in non-fiction writing makes a positive difference in overall student achievement.

- Teachers establish a writing curriculum map which includes prompts and mini-lessons for a six week period of time. Robert Marzano states in *What Works in Schools: Translating Research Into Action* that after 35 years of research only a “guaranteed and viable curriculum” is the school level factor with the most impact on student achievement.

Research to Support *Get Ahead Writing’s* Training Method

Get Ahead Writing’s training method (the process teachers go through to learn both the instructional method and how to deliver an instructional sequence) is supported by research:

- Trainer will deliver an in-class demonstration of the method modeling the first two days of an instructional sequence (prompt, plan, modeled and guided writing). The Council for School Performance has identified active learning activities such as demonstration, practice, and feedback as a characteristic of effective professional development programs.
- With the support of the trainer, teachers plan an instructional sequence to deliver on the coaching day.
- Teachers deliver the first day of an instructional sequence and receive written and oral feedback from the trainer/coach.
- Trainer recommends differentiated follow-up, as necessary.

eg.: repeat demonstration, attend another session, redo coaching sequence

Implementation Requirements

Get Ahead Writing may only be implemented by schools and districts which have a contract with this company. Although schools may send teachers to a Training of Trainers (certain requirements must be met in order to attend), those teacher/trainers are only authorized to provide support to their school of record (where they are teaching when they attend).

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Patent Pending