THE UNIVERSAL WRITING CONTINUUM

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Teacher Dashboard

What are the **points** in the upper right-hand corner and how do I accumulate them?

This is a special feature unique to Uni-SPIRE. We know you work hard. Teaching writing and giving valuable feedback take time. We have designed **an award system to say thank you** for all you do!

As you use the features of the Universal Writing Continuum you will be accumulating points. At the end of each month, everyone's name that has reached or surpassed the monthly goal will automatically go into a random drawing for $100 for your classroom. Each month your points accumulation will start over.

(Please note, the points have been suspended for the Fall semester of 2017 while Debbie is traveling but will begin again in 2018.)

What does the **pie graph** represent and how do I use it?

The **pie graph** illustrates your class' holistic scores on the most recent writing samples you have evaluated. You can see the percentage of students that are writing proficiently, those that are ahead of or behind expectations, and the number of students in each cell. If you view the data, you will see the students' names, their writing pieces and their proficiency levels for that particular evaluation period.

We hope you use this graph as motivation to have students write more often for more purposes, not just for your school's benchmarks. Remember, when students can write, they can read. When students can write well, they are often critical thinkers and problem solvers. Writing effectively has an impact on all subject areas.

Manage Classes

What if I have **multiple classes**?

Teachers that have more than one class can add **multiple classes**, indicating the subject and period to distinguish each class. After adding your classes, you will need to enroll students in each class.
If you were enrolled in UWC 1.0, you will be happy to know that you no longer need to set up multiple classes to meet the needs of your special students that are at extremely above or below grade level.

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If you have a **multi-grade level class**, look for a new feature coming soon that will allow you to view a class portfolio page that includes all of your students from the multiple grade levels, even though you have placed them in classes for their grade level.

How are students enrolled in the **district roster**?

Initially when a district or school purchases the Universal Writing Continuum, the school or district administrator will send Uni-SPIRE an Excel spreadsheet (the template is on the school and district administrators' dashboards) with all of the students and their parents' data. **We will then add all of the data in bulk**.

If you receive a **new student from outside the district**, you may enter that one student under the Manage Class, Update District Roster buttons on the left menu. If the new students' parents have email addresses, go to Manage Class, Student/Parent Accounts and add the students' parents.

Evaluation

What is meant by a **developmental continuum**?

The **continuum** begins with **emergent writing in preschool and advances to college freshman English with 42 progress points**. The continuum contains 10 elements of writing that teachers can choose to evaluate. The continuum is tailored to 7 different text types including visual texts.

For each grade level, teachers have a range of 5 levels to assess each child's writing. The middle level is always the level that is considered proficient for that grade level and that month of the school year. The below basic levels are all levels to the left of the 3 columns and the advanced + levels are all levels to the right of the 3 columns. Use the left and right arrows to retrieve all levels of the continuum, Level A (emergent writing) to Level N (college Freshman English).

There is some teacher judgment required, but the more papers you assess, the easier these decisions will be. We highly recommend that you meet with other teachers at your grade level or representatives of different grade levels and practice scoring papers together. As you compare your responses, you will be able to better define each level. No two papers will be alike and not paper will like perfectly fit in all of the bullets related to any one features. This is always

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true of grading performance type tasks. We have tried to break the levels down to make the scoring more accurate.

What do the **letters and numbers** (1, 2, and 3) mean in the levels?

The UWC begins with early emergent writing when students make letter-like symbols or single letters to represent complete thoughts. This is generally the type of writing typical of Preschool and early kindergarten. Children's writing develops quickly in kindergarten once they are regularly exposed to text. The UWC has three proficiency levels in kindergarten (Level A – emergent writing; Level B – novice writing [uses sentences and some vowels, but temporary or invented spelling is still predominant]; and Level C – independent writing or meets the end of kindergarten standards). Level D meets the end of 1st grade standards. The levels from A through N (equivalent to college freshman English) are explained in the document *UWC Levels Explained* found under Help Center.   The Level N was added for dual credit courses and may also be used for advanced placement, honors classes or senior projects. **The UWC has 14 levels and 42 progress points from early kindergarten or pre-school through Grade 12.**

Teachers asked us if we could break each level down further. **The subscripts** after the levels on the Continuum are defined as:
>   **1 = developing grade level standards**
>   **2 = adequately meeting grade level standards**
>   **3 = transitioning to next level.**

Teachers have reported that this made their decision making easier because they could identify many of the bullets from the UWC in the students' paper, but didn't feel they were well developed. One teacher described these subscripts as meaning "just barely in the level," "solidly in the level," and "ready to more to the next level." However you choose to think about these, they are a way for you to further identify student needs. Our suggestion is that if you can't decide between two subscript levels, always choose the lower one. This allows for more growth.

Why do the **grade levels overlap** in a level?

We noticed a trend since pacing guides came into existence that divided the curriculum for a year into the months of the school year to assure students meet the grade level standards by the end of the year. While we understand the need to assure that all skills are met, we believe that the best way to do this is to first

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target the skills that still need to be developed. We want students to be successful and make a year or more's worth of progress each school year. **The average student has just met the previous grades standards by the end of the school year**, and most students experience a lapse in achievement after their summer break. **We use the first part of the new school year to shore up those standards by overlapping the levels of proficiency.**

Thus, in **first through ninth grade**, students' expected proficiency from the beginning of school until the end of December (in a year-long course) will be the same level as the end of grade level proficiency from the previous year. We have made special allowances for block scheduling with semester-long, quarter or trimester schedules.

For example, Level F is correlated to the end of 3rd grade standards. A student in 4th grade from the beginning of school to the end of December will be expected to be progressing from F1 or F2 at the beginning of school to F3 by the end of December. In January, the fourth-grade student's proficiency level shifts to Level G1 and will be expected to be writing at Level G2 by the end of 4th grade. This overlap prevents students from being punished for not meeting the end of grade level standards at the beginning of the year. Because the UWC has continuous progress, no student is ever help back. There is always a next step for every student.

In **high school**, the CCSS standards are for two grade-level bands: 9-10 and 11-12. The UWC has 4 levels in high school, but they are a little different than previous levels. In 9th grade Level K (8th grade standards, is proficient through December); Level L (9-10 grade standards) is proficient through the end of the year. In 10th grade, Level L is proficient all year. In 11th grade, Level L (9-10th grade standards) is proficient at the beginning of the year and Level M (11-12th grade standards) is proficient at the end of the grade level. In 12th grade, Level M is proficient the entire year. Level N is for advanced classes.

What do the **10 elements of writing** mean?

The UWC is built around the **10 most commonly identified elements of writing**:

Ideas/Content
Includes the IDEAS and CONTENT with supporting details that develop the theme or main idea. Writers know the needs of their audience and convey ideas with authority and plausibility

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Structure/Organization
The three TEXT TYPES—argument, informational and narrative—are determined by the writer's purpose, and each contain multiple GENRE with organizational patterns, characteristics, and key elements that make up their internal STRUCTURE.

Voice/Point of View
VOICE is the storyteller coming through with a unique blend of description, character and style. Voice is the life and soul in the writing. Voice changes with the POINT OF VIEW and intended AUDIENCE.

Word Choice/Description
WORD CHOICE involves using everyday words effectively, choosing precisely the words, including figurative language, to convey the exact shade of meaning. DESCRIPTION is developed with imagery and sensory details that "show" rather than "tell."

Sentence Fluency/Sentence Structure
FLUENCY is the flow and rhythm of the sentences and paragraphs. SENTENCES vary in length and structure to best carry the message and enable the reader to read with ease.

Language Conventions: Spelling/Usage and Mechanics
Mechanics, spelling, grammar and usage are attended to in the editing process if not before. Spelling at these levels is beyond the developmental stages, but may have patterns that indicate the strategies that are or are not being used. Students are expected to apply only the skills they have been taught. The "copy editor" may need to finish editing for publication.

Writing Process
Includes planning/pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Note that not all writing will go through the entire process so this must be assessed accordingly; revision is the critical opportunity for ideas, structure, voice & word choice to develop.

Presentation/Publishing
Presents textual and visual elements of a message in print or digital formats. Handwriting, drawing and the effective use of technology are important, as are creating appropriate graphics and using design elements: line, balance, color, direction, shape, unity and contrast.

Research/Writing to Learn
Includes notebooks and logs, reflections and responses to questions. Students make comparisons, critical analyses, and evaluation of literary texts, documents, primary source materials and arguments that lead to short and lengthier research reports.

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Attitude/Range of Writing
ATTITUDE and interest in wiring impacts quality and effectiveness of writing. RANGE OF WRITING involves writing routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

What **writing elements** should I use to score different text types?

The type of genre you evaluate may make a difference in which writing elements are scored. The continuum's writing elements are already differentiated by the various text types. For example, ideas/content and structure/organization are different for each of the text types (argument/opinion, informational, narrative, letter, poem, response and visual text). Other elements may also vary by text type when appropriate.
When assessing an **argument or opinion piece** that you expect evidence to be presented, *content*, *structure,* and *research* may all be important. If the piece is a **final draft**, you may also want to assess any of the following: *voice/point of view, word choice, sentence structure, conventions, writing process, publishing* and *attitude/range of writing*.

For **informational pieces**, you will definitely want to assess *content, structure* and *research*. Again, if the piece is a final draft, you may assess any or all of the additional seven features.

For **narrative pieces**, you will want to assess *content, structure, voice,* and *word choice/description*. You may want to assess *research*, especially in historical or science fiction. If the piece is a final draft, you may assess any or all of the additional features.

A **math teacher** may decide that *ideas & content* and/or *research & writing to learn* are the most suitable for a writing assignment that asks students to explain the process they used in solving a problem.

A **science teacher** may want to score students' science notebooks with *ideas & content*, *structure & organization*, *research & writing to learn* and *publishing*.

The important thing is that you, the teacher, can make these decisions based on your instructional goals and what you know about each student writer and the author's purpose for the piece of writing.

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How should I distinguish between evaluating a **first draft vs. a final draft**?

Teachers can score a piece of student writing at any point in the writing process. **We have included an indicator in your evaluation data to note if the author of the paper is continuing to work on this or that this represents a final paper.** Sometimes teachers may evaluate a first draft and then compare it to a final draft to demonstrate to the student their improvements. Some teachers like for students to make several revisions, receiving feedback from their peers in peer conferencing before the teacher meets with the student. Together, the teacher and student may evaluate the 3rd or 4th draft to make suggestions for the final draft. The early drafts may be scored very differently from a final draft.

Scoring a **first draft** to learn how you can assist a student with their writing likely won't involve scoring *conventions, writing process, publishing* or *range of writing*, but these may be very important to you in a later or final draft. If you are scoring a "**quick write** or brief write," and your purpose is to see if students can work through all of the phases of the writing process in one sitting, then scoring *conventions, writing process* and *range of writing* might be scored. Some teachers score **what they have taught** to assess the students' application. Other teachers score **what they haven't taught** to see if they should offer more instruction on the elements of writing. We leave these decisions up to the individual teacher. Benchmark papers should be entered as final drafts, even if they are first draft writing.

How should high school teachers **use level N or the 12+ level** for dual credit honors or AP classes?

High school teachers have told us that they would like an **advanced level for advanced classes**. We have correlated level N or 12+ to freshman college expectations for writing across the curriculum for dual credit and honors courses and with AP expectations. Not all students take their advanced placement courses at the end of their senior year. AP teachers may have to make adjustments in their expectations for students who haven't previously had an AP English Language Arts course. Level N is the level that AP teachers and students should strive for, but younger students may not have the "abstract mindedness," as one AP U.S. history teacher stated, to achieve all of the goals of Level N. Students who have taken AP classes early should, however, be able to achieve Level N by the end of their 12th grade year in all of their courses.

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How can I **convert the scores** from the Universal Writing Continuum **into grades?**

Although we believe that **formative assessment** should, by definition, be used to formulate your instructional plan and inform the writer the areas that need to be improved, we know that realistically, **some of the assignments you use for formative will be graded**. Frequently, teachers want to know how to convert the levels into a letter grade. Reluctantly, we offer below our suggestion for how you might make this conversion:

Advanced to Advanced +   = A
Proficient $_2$ to Proficient$_3$ = B
Basic$_2$, Basic$_3$ and Proficient $_1$ = C
Below Basic$_3$ to Basic$_1$ = D
Below Basic$_1$ to Below Basic$_2$ = F

Uni-Spire gives teachers lots of decision-making power, and assigning grades is no different. If you believe the suggested scale above doesn't fit your expectations, please feel free to adjust it to meet your needs.

Can I **substitute a benchmark paper** during the benchmark period if a student writes a more effective paper?

Yes, the system will only allow one paper per student to be score for a **benchmark period**. If the student already has a paper scored for that benchmark, but writes a more effective paper several weeks later that you feel would better represent his/her ability level, then you score the new paper and indicate the intended benchmark under the evaluation period. The existing paper will remain in the student's portfolio. If the benchmark was for the beginning of the year *Benchmark August*, the older paper will default to August. If the benchmark is End of 2nd Quarter (*Benchmark December*), the older paper being replaced will default to December.

Why is **uploading student papers** important?

The Universal Writing Continuum can serve as an **electronic portfolio for students accessible from anywhere on multiple devices.** Not only will you

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be able to view your students' writing from the beginning of the year to the end of the year along with the scoring reports you constructed, but you will also be able to view your students' writing across years and even across schools in the district if the Continuum is being used district-wide. When meeting with parents or specialists, a student's writing and records of writing progress are just one click from your log in. Eventually, students will be able to have a complete portfolio of all of their writing samples from K to grade 12.

What is the best way to **upload multiple-page handwritten papers** such as science notebooks or a kindergartener's journal?

Teachers have found that **using their smartphones or tablets to photograph multiple pages is much faster than scanning pages on a scanner**. In the Help Center menu, we have included directions for how to make this process easier. Our suggestion is to use one of the free smartphone apps, *GeniusScan*, *CamScanner* or *Adobe Scan*.   We recommend that you set up a free *Dropbox* account to upload student papers as PDF files. These 3 apps are similar and are much easier than using a scanning machine. Click on the camera; click the Batch camera icon; take photos of pages; click Done; add a tag to name the file, then click the Upload icon, and choose Dropbox as the location. The multiple pages will appear as one PDF file in your Dropbox folder. For a one-page paper, you can choose the Single camera icon. If you have a batch of student papers, we recommend that you upload all to Dropbox and then open the UWC, and go to Evaluation and Upload Papers. You can now upload all papers in the batch before evaluating them. Unless you pay for additional space, you will want to empty your Dropbox folder every so often to be sure you have enough space for future papers.

Reports

How should I use **Class Data Reports**?

The **class data charts** provide teachers **valuable instructional data**. If you scroll down the chart for the most recent evaluation period, you can see at a glance, the writing element that students in your class are struggling with the most. For example, if Word Choice/Description has a majority of your class below basic and basic, yet your students are primarily at the basic and proficient level in other elements, then your whole class mini lessons and instruction might well focus on Word Choice/Description. For specific areas within this element, you may choose to set a Class Goal or two. You also may

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search Engagements for word choice, description, revision or standards W.4, W.5, W.10, WHST.4, or WHST.10.

This data can also indicate areas of instruction that may not be as critical right now to see students' overall progress, even though your pacing guide indicates that you should be teaching this content in your curriculum. Our suggestion, in this case, is to challenge your students as a class in this area by targeting your instruction to increase your students' proficiency and not just provide instruction for skills they already have achieved. For example, your students are all proficient in their use of the writing process, Standard W.5, according to your assessment. The pacing guide may say to teach the writing process and encourage children to write 2 drafts. Don't waste time with instruction of a process your students are using well. Instead, challenge them to do more revision and emphasize elements that will improve their revision skills.

The **class data chart is also an invaluable tool for indicating and planning for small groups of students that require specific instruction**. You may have 4 or 5 students that all could benefit by more instruction in spelling. Some students in below basic may be 1 or more grade levels behind where they should be. The engagements on spelling that will improve their writing the most will involve their ability to proofread or know how to indicate words that they know are misspelled while they are drafting, such as circling. Instruction may also include how to seek assistance to edit and correct these spelling miscues before their final copy.

Finally, the class data chart is directly linked to the pie chart on your dashboard. on the pie chart, you will be able to quickly see holistically how your students are currently progressing. for students in red and yellow on either the pie chart of the class data chart, you may want to set aside time to conference with them, pulling up their portfolio to examine specific areas that can help them progress and use **conference notes** and **student goals** to keep track of how these students are progressing.

Which report should I share with **Parents**?

The **student portfolio** was **designed for you to share with parents and with students**. It does not compare student to student; rather it indicates the expectation for the grade level and evaluation periods and how the individual student measures up to that. More importantly, the Student Portfolio indicates the student's progress toward their goals and progress across time on their historical portfolio. By sharing the evaluation of specific papers, parents can see

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their student's strengths and needs. If you are using the parent portal, then parents will be able to keep up-to-date of their student's progress through this report.

What is the purpose of **Benchmark Reports**?

The **benchmark reports are primarily for administrative purposes**. Benchmarks are established by the school or district and each student should have a paper submitted for the benchmark. If the district or school wants to designate a particular text type or prompt for the benchmark, that decision is the school's or district's decision. The UWC allows benchmarks to be based on students' best pieces of writing for that period, regardless of the text type or topic. We encourage students to choose or have a voice in the choice of their best piece of writing. This encourages students to self-evaluate and take ownership of their writing.

Instruction

Why are **class and student goals** important?

Goals help you identify critical instructional writing elements. **Having clear goals gives you a destination to reach, a result you are trying to achieve**. With clear goals in mind, you are better able to select engagements that support that goal. It is easy to lose track of the instructional path to take to achieve maximum growth in your students. We often get side tracked by curricular materials that are prescribed and scripted, not specifically for your students, but for the general population of students at your grade level. With specific goals in mind, you can sift through all of the clutter of curricular materials for the instructional suggestions that really matter.

The UWC assists you in goal setting by tying the goals directly to your assessment. Once your assessment indicates an area of need, you can pull up the specific criteria from the continuum that will assist you in creating specific goals for individual students or your class. We have made individual goals visible to students and parents on their portals. We recommend that teachers post the class goals in the classroom for all students to work toward achieving.

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What is a **mini-lesson** and what do the different parts of a mini-lesson mean?

Mini-lessons are focused lessons that last approximately 10-15 minutes and are taught to the whole class or a small group. The single objective of the lesson should target a specific skill that is being introduced, elaborated or reviewed. The lessons is interactive and shifts the focus of the lesson from a teacher demonstration to students applying the new skill or content independently. We believe that almost all writing mini-lessons can begin with the teacher demonstrating with a mentor text---a published piece of writing, a student's writing sample (with permission), or the teacher's own writing. In most cases, this should be a positive demonstration or good example for students to follow. We try to avoid using negative examples, except in rare cases.

We believe that one result of a mini-lesson is an anchor chart that students help construct during the lesson. These anchor charts, usually on 11" x 17" paper, are hung up for the class or group to use as a reference in their own attempts to apply the new skill or content in their writing.

The UWC recommends a 6-step Inquiry Mini Lesson Plan that is similar to what science educators call the 5-E lesson plan.

Mini-Lesson: **Engage** begins with a provocative statement or question that raises students' curiosity such as:
- Last week when we read...., you said you felt (or imagined, predicted, pictured)…. Let's examine what the author did to make the reader….
- How does this author...
- Some times when we are writing, we aren't sure about....

Model is a quick reference to the mentor text as a demonstration. The teacher points out specifics of how the author has embedded details to help the reader understand, has structured the text to achieve her purpose, or has used word choice to help you picture. The teacher may the teacher may share the author's bio to demonstrate how the author has used his background experiences to embellish his writing. This demonstration has to be focused. We recommend that the mentor text be chosen for the demonstration from familiar texts, books or other texts from the repertoire of readings you and the class have shared.

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Explore is similar to the Model, except there is a shift of responsibility from the teacher to the students. The teacher may choose a passage from the mentor text and ask the students to explain with support how this author's writing demonstrates the new skill or content. Alternatively, the teacher may ask the students to choose an example that demonstrates the skill or use of content being taught.   The teacher should reinforce new vocabulary during this step.

Explain is a restatement by the students, augmented by the teacher, of the skill or content being learned. The anchor chart might include a brief explanation in bullet form and examples. We hang these on the wall for students' reference, for future lessons, and to add additional examples.

Follow-Up:　　　**Apply** is the opportunity for students to "have a go" in their own writing. Before the end of the mini-lesson above, the teacher will remind the students to have a go at applying the newly learned skill or content in either the piece they are currently working on or in a revision of a piece in their writing folio.

Share is a brief opportunity at the end of the writing period for a few students to share their application of the new skill or content.

This one lesson will not result in all students having mastered the skill or content, but it is a starting place for the teacher to follow up in writing conferences and with small groups. The teacher will need to come back and revisit the skill, increasing the expectations and taking a more advanced examination of the application in other texts read.

Are **engagements** the same as mini-lessons?

The **UWC** **engagements are critical teaching moves, tools, and lesson ideas to support students in their pursuit of becoming effective authors, inquirers and problem solvers.** We believe that teachers just need a few sparks and they can light the flame. Scripted lesson plans often take away teachers' creativity. We want to stimulate that excitement for teaching and learning by providing enough support for quality instruction, but leaving room for each teacher to adapt the ideas to their own teaching style and students. The Engagements include classroom management ideas, overviews of key

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concepts, but primarily ideas for instruction. Most of the engagements can be turned into routines, mini-lessons or even "maxi"-lessons.

The UWC engagements are searchable by grade-level bands, by key search terms and by general standards, using the Common Core Anchor Standards.

Why are **Conference Notes** important?

Lucy Calkins once reminded us that in a writing conference, we are teaching the writer not the writing. Conferences or writing conversations are a critical part of teaching writing. Even if you don't view yourself as a writing teacher, if you ask students to write in your class, then conferencing is an important part of getting the results you are trying to reach. **Conferences are the opportunity for student authors to share a part of their writing that they are most proud of and a part that they feel could be strengthened or they can't "get right."**

Most conferences last anywhere from 1 to 5 minutes. Rarely does the student need to read the entire piece because the conference should focus on one issue, usually the student's issue, and not all issues that you notice. The students need regular feedback to know that someone is noticing their improvements. They often need guidance beyond what they can get from whole-group or small-group lessons. We recommend that conferences always begin with 2 positive comments or praising 2 strengths and then offer a suggestion for how the student can solve their problem. When students own their own problems, they are more willing to fix them.

The notes from this conference further confirm what the student is doing well, what they are working on, and what they can examine next. The UWC gives students and parents access to these conference notes so everyone is kept informed on strengths and needs.

It is advisable to implement peer conferencing so student authors can get feedback from 2 or 3 peers and work on revisions before they have a teacher/student conference. If the initial teacher/student conference on a piece focuses on elements of writing other than conventions, most students will continue to revise their piece, learning new skills and making their writing more effective.

Editing conferences are important but work best when the student is fully invested in their writing after multiple revisions with a clear audience and purpose in mind. Teachers may also conduct and take notes on process

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conferences that focus purely on how students are using the writing process or any part of the process.

Resources

What are the **Anchor Papers** and how should I use them?

Anchor Papers are students' writing that is representative of each level A-K with annotated notes. These papers have been rated by expert writing teachers with high inter-rater reliability. They have also been compared to the quality of the writing at each level represented in Appendix C of the CCSS.

As you are evaluating your students' writing, you might be more consistent in your indicated proficiency level if you compare some of your students' writing that you consider proficient to those in Appendix C and the UWC Anchor Papers. Remember, what is proficient at the beginning of a grade level should be compared to the end of the previous grade level exemplars in Appendix C to be a reliable comparison to the UWC Anchor Papers. It is unfair to think that fourth graders, for example, will be proficient and meet the end of fourth grade standards in November of fourth grade.

What terms are represented in the **glossary**?

The **glossary of terms contains terms used in the   and terms we commonly use to talk about writing.** Many of these terms relate to grammar simply because these are least familiar to many teachers. To make the terms and definitions meaningful, we have added examples. Before teaching any of these concepts, we recommend that you read over the definitions and refresh your understanding my reviewing the example and thinking of your own. We recognize that teaching grammar had dropped out of favor in many regions of the county. The Language Standards of the CCSS include many terms that teachers have likely heard but may be under of their meaning.

How can I use the **graphic organizers**?

Most teachers are familiar with graphic organizers and have used one form or another. **The 21 graphic organizers included in the UWC are templates for the structures of an opinion, argument, narrative and 5 informational text structures: report, procedure, description, explanation and recount**. If

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you are using these, we recommend that you remind students that these are simply places to make some notes about what they want to include in their piece and a basic way to structure the piece to meet their purpose for their intended audience. Often writers over-use the organizer and then feel they have written their piece and don't need to do more.

Teachers can actually conduct mini lessons using several familiar mentor texts as models and have students conclude the structure for each of the text types listed above or other text types. For example, after the teacher shares several business letters, students can conclude the proper structure for a business letter and name the parts. These constructed structures can now serve as students' graphic organizers.

Please note, structures are to get authors started, but as students become familiar with the structure and purpose, they will likely notice examples of text that don't exactly follow the model they created. Students will hopefully learn that they can break away from a strict model to add their own voice and interest and still achieve their purpose.

Why are students' **self-evaluation checklists** important?

Our goal in all of our instruction should be to develop independent learners. In writing, self-evaluation is how writers become independent. The Self-Evaluation Checklists are basically reminders to writers of what they should be checking in their writing independently before sharing with other students, their teacher, and ultimately with their audience. These have various grade ranges with increasing levels of sophistication.

What are **interactive mentor texts** and how can I use them?

We originally developed the **interactive mentor texts** as a way for teachers to become more proficient in their own evaluation of writing. We had expert writing teachers contribute to the evaluation of the pieces that were exemplars for various levels. We then highlighted the parts of the text that were the basis for the evaluation bullets. Several teachers told us that these where very helpful and shared them with their students. They used these student-written mentor texts in mini-lessons, asking the students to locate the parts of the text that exemplify the skill. Then they clicked on the skill to see if their students' assessment was similar to the experts. Teachers would only focus on one element of writing in a lesson and might follow up with a published author's

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writing to see how students and authors alike could develop their writing in similar ways.

We encourage you to play with these and decide how you can best use these in your class. Let us know how they work with your students.

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