



Thinking Maps and the Science of Writing

Using Thinking Maps and *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond* to Support Writing Instruction Across All Content Areas

All writing starts with thinking; you cannot put down words on paper without first thinking about what you want to say and how you want to say it. Thinking Maps and *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond* (WFBB) provide a structure for writing that works across all content areas and writing domains, including narrative, argumentative, expository/informative, and response to text. Thinking Maps and WFBB support writing instruction with strategies aligned with the science of writing.

What Is the Science of Writing?

The science of writing, like the science of reading, combines insights from multiple disciplines, including psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and cognitive science. It is not a specific program, but a body of research that explores how humans process and produce written language, what makes writing effective, and how different factors influence the writing process.

Writing is not a single skill but a combination of cognitive, linguistic, and mechanical processes that work together. Effective writing instruction integrates these processes, teaching students not only how to produce text but also how to think critically about their message, structure their ideas, and refine their language for impact.

Joan Sedita's book, *The Writing Rope: A Framework for Explicit Writing Instruction in All Subjects*, introduces a comprehensive model for writing by intertwining five essential components. This framework emphasizes that skilled writing results from the integration of these interdependent strands:

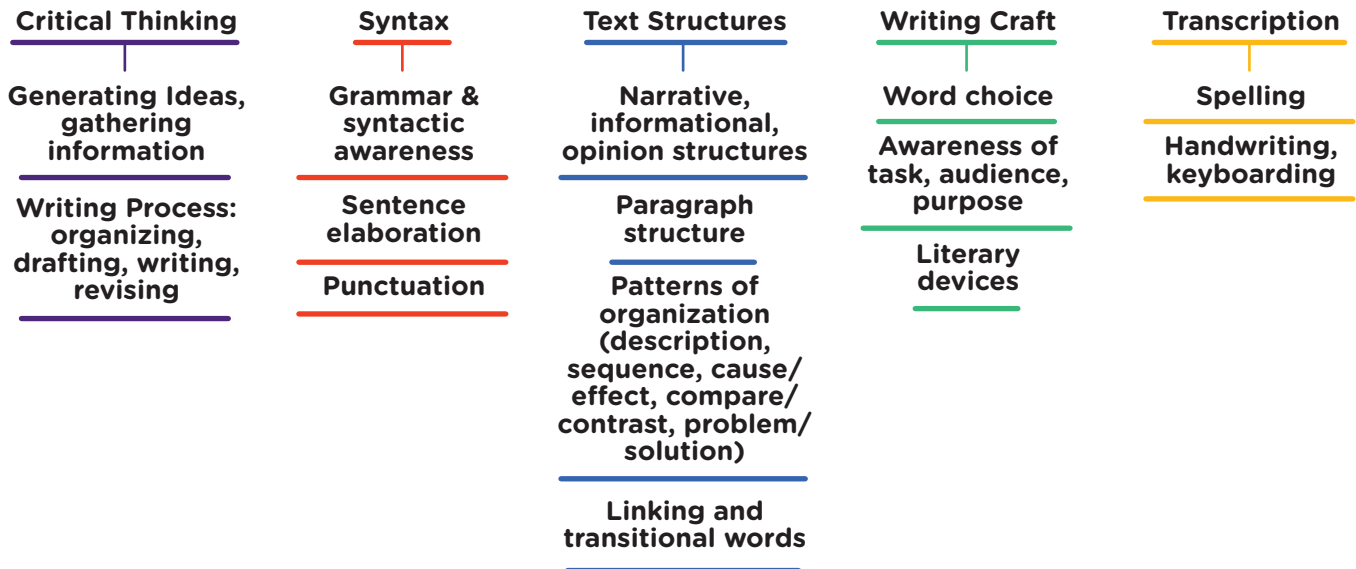
- **Critical Thinking:** This strand focuses on the cognitive processes involved in writing, including idea generation, information gathering, and the stages of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, and editing).
- **Syntax:** This strand addresses issues around grammar, syntactic awareness, sentence structure, and punctuation.
- **Text Structure:** This strand includes understanding paragraph structure, organizational patterns (e.g., cause/effect, compare/contrast, chronological/sequential, problem/solution, argument/persuasive, descriptive, etc.), and the use of transition words to link ideas effectively.
- **Writing Craft:** This strand pertains to the stylistic elements of writing, including word choice, tone, and the use of literary devices.
- **Transcription:** Fundamental skills such as spelling, handwriting, and keyboarding fall under this strand.

The Writing Rope framework also emphasizes the importance of integrating reading and writing instruction, as reading comprehension and writing proficiency are deeply interconnected. Strong reading comprehension skills are a prerequisite for skilled writing, while writing helps students process and synthesize what they have read.

The Writing Rope weaves together five critical strands of writing skills.

Sedita, Joan. *The Writing Rope*.
Baltimore, MD, Paul H. Brooks
Publishing, 2019

The Writing Rope



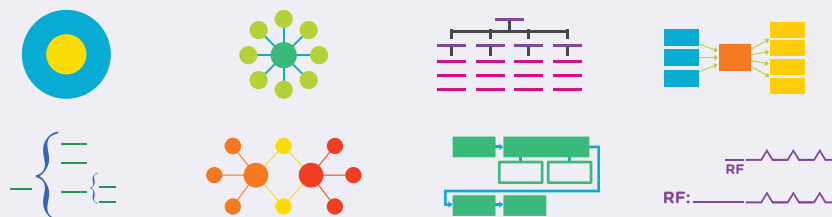
Thinking Maps and the Science of Writing

Thinking Maps address the hardest part of the writing process: the thinking. They provide visual tools that can be used across the writing process as students gather information, organize their ideas and plan their writing. Thinking Maps:

- Help students develop their ideas and organize their thinking prior to writing.
- Develop critical and creative thinking skills that are foundational to effective writing.
- Build reading comprehension skills for both literature and informative text to prepare students for effective written response.
- Help students understand and analyze text structure and organize their own writing within specific text structures.

About Thinking Maps

Thinking Maps is a whole-school, brain-based approach to teaching and learning designed to build foundational critical thinking, problem solving, comprehension, and communication skills necessary for academic success. The eight Thinking Maps, which correlate to core cognitive processes, provide a common visual “language for learning” that is used across all grade levels and content areas.



Write from the Beginning and Beyond

Write from the Beginning...and Beyond (WFBB) is a developmental, vertically aligned K-8 writing program that builds on the power of Thinking Maps. *WFBB* provides a structure for effective writing instruction, providing concrete tools and strategies to develop writing skills and build teacher capacity for effective writing instruction across all content areas and grade levels. It can be used as a stand-alone writing program or alongside a traditional English Language Arts and writing curriculum.

While traditional English Language Arts programs tell teachers what to teach, *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond* gives them the “how.”

WFBB includes:

- Focused, modeled writing aligned with the specific modes/domains of writing (narrative, expository/informational, opinion/argumentative, and response to text)
- Mini-lessons addressing the essential criteria of effective writing
- Analytic rubrics to assess writing progress and inform instruction
- Unassisted writing (writing not modeled by the teacher, as part of a “gradual release” methodology)

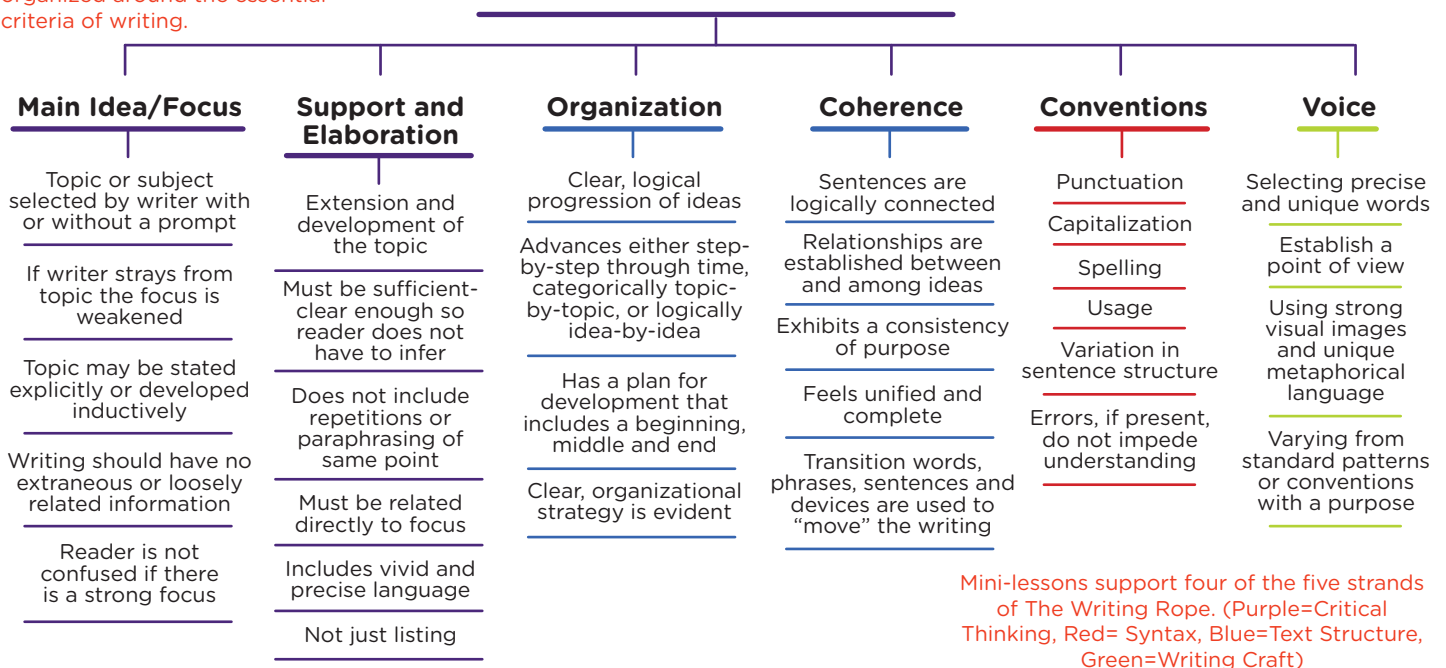
Instruction and assignments are vertically aligned and leveled, with clear expectations for what students should learn and be able to do by the end of each grade.

Thinking Maps and The Writing Rope

Many elements of The Writing Rope are addressed in the mini-lessons in *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond*. These lessons align with four of the five strands of The Writing Rope: **Critical Thinking, Text Structure, Writing Craft** and **Syntax**.

Mini-lessons in *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond* are organized around the essential criteria of writing.

Essential Criteria of Writing



Critical Thinking

Thinking Maps provide a visual framework for critical thinking, organization, and planning. Thinking Maps are used for both reading and writing, connecting both key elements of literacy. During reading and information gathering, Thinking Maps help to improve comprehension and information recall. During the writing process, students use Thinking Maps to organize their ideas and plan their writing.

Generating Ideas and Gathering Information

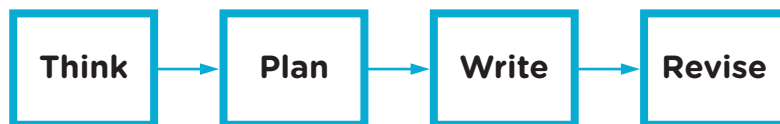
As students gather information and ideas, they can use the eight visual Thinking Maps to organize notes from various sources.

- The visual Maps help students synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources and deepen their understanding of complex topics before they plan their writing.
- The **Frame of Reference** teaches students to consider their sources and the point of view these sources represent, as well as essential questions and key takeaways.
- The **Circle Map** can provide a starting point for gathering ideas for writing.

Writing Process: Organizing, Drafting, Writing and Revising

WFBB provides specific tools and strategies for use across the writing process.

The Writing Rope



“A common recommendation given to students in upper grades is as follows:

*Spend 40% of the time reading, gathering ideas and information, and taking notes (Think, Plan)

*Spend 20% of the time writing a draft (Write)

*Spend 40% of the time rewriting and revising, including editing (Revise)”

Write from the Beginning and Beyond

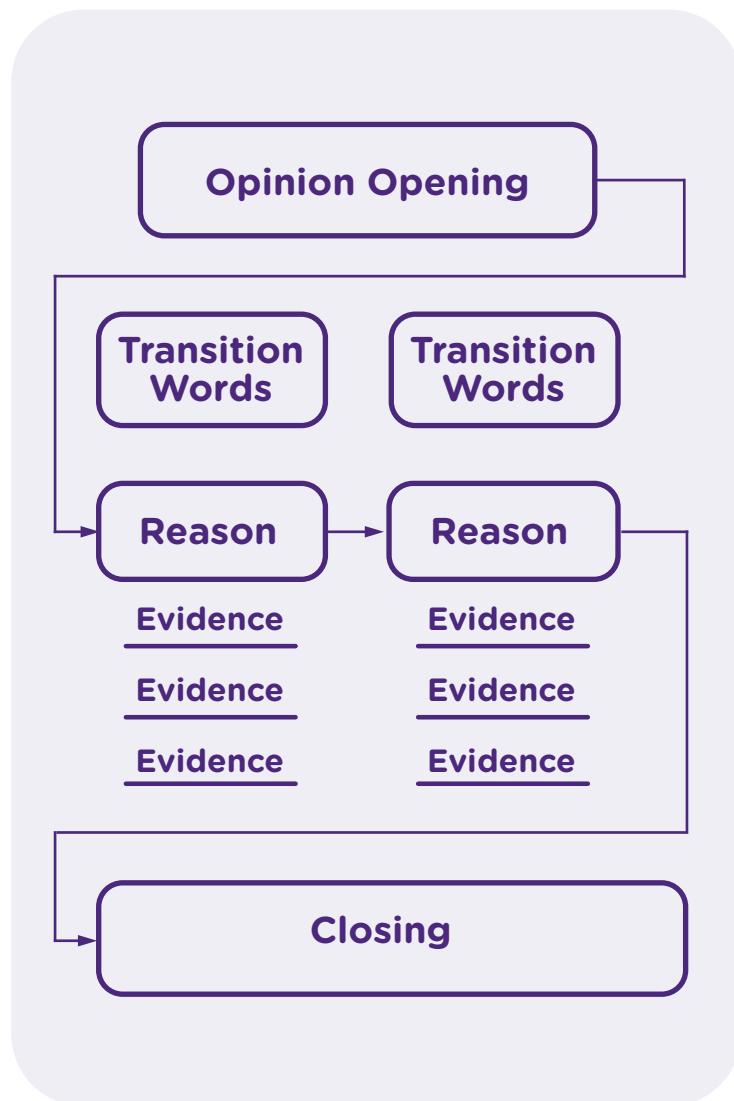


Think: Students learn to use Thinking Maps to take notes, gather information (see above) and organize their ideas prior to writing. They may use different Thinking Maps depending on the text structure appropriate for their piece (see below).

Plan: Students learn to use the **Flow Map** to plan their writing, including introduction, conclusion, body paragraphs and transitions. The specifics of the Flow Map will vary depending on the writing domain (opinion/argumentative, informational/expository, or narrative). The number of body paragraphs (and thus the number of boxes in the middle part of the Flow Map) will be determined by the parameters of the assignment.

Write: Students learn to take information off their Thinking Maps during the writing process. The visual format of Thinking Maps reduces the cognitive load of writing and results in more thoughtful and organized written output.

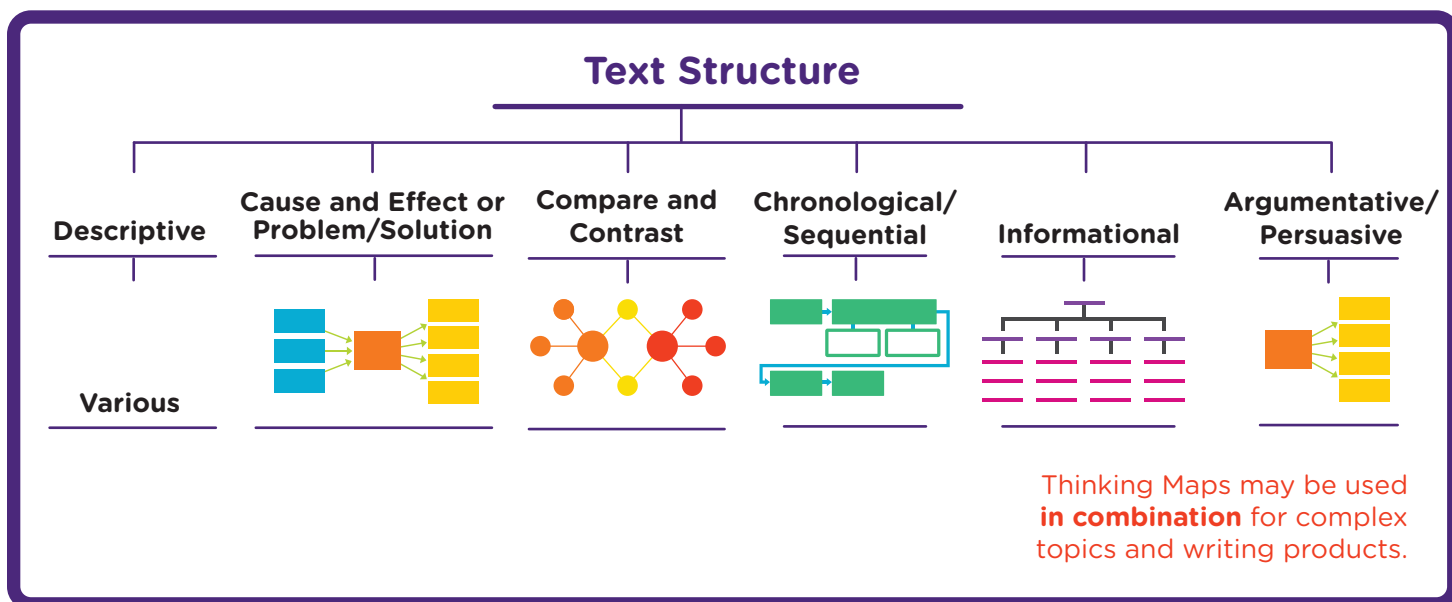
Revise: Mini-lessons in *WFSB* address the revision process and provide strategies for students to use as they proof, revise, and improve their writing. Students learn how to analyze and critique their own writing and written pieces produced by others.



Text Structure

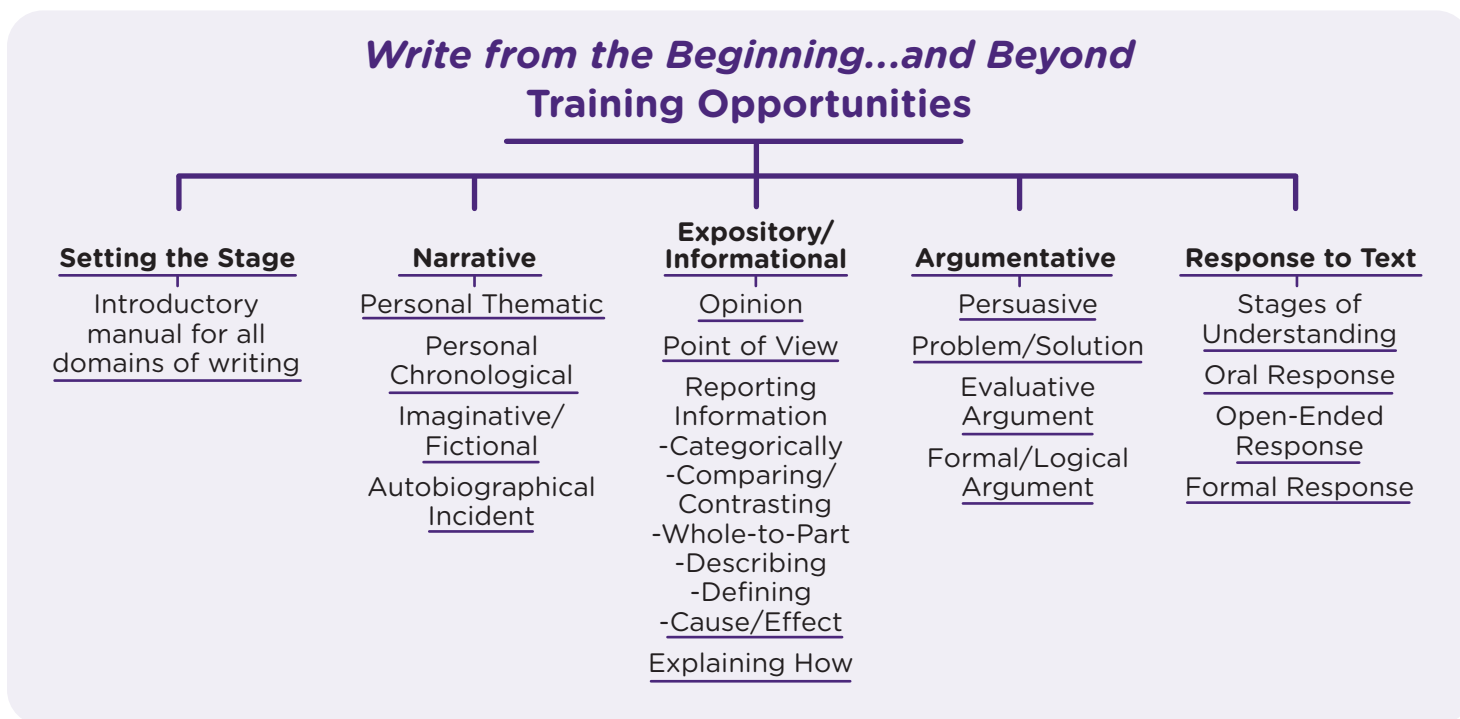
Different text structures align naturally with various Thinking Maps, as each Map is designed to visually represent specific patterns of thinking. This alignment helps students organize their ideas and match the structure of their writing to its purpose. A Circle Map can be used to brainstorm ideas for all types of writing before transferring ideas to a Thinking Map aligned with the text structure. For example:

- The **Multi-Flow Map** is used for cause-and-effect or problem/solution writing. It can also be used to identify the causes and consequences of a course of action in an argument/persuasive piece.
- The **Double Bubble Map** is used for compare-and-contrast writing.
- The **Flow Map** is used for chronological/sequential writing, such as instructions or most narrative writing.
- The **Tree Map** is used to classify information into main topics and supporting details. It is particularly useful for informational text that involves classification.
- A variety of Thinking Maps may be used to organize ideas for descriptive writing.
- Thinking Maps can be used in combination to explore complex topics and prepare for longer writing pieces.



Writing Across Domains

Write from the Beginning...and Beyond also includes advanced manuals and teacher training focused on the individual writing genres: narrative, expository/informational, argumentative, and response to text. These modules provide a deeper dive into the text structures and writing strategies specific to each domain.



Want to know more about Thinking Maps and writing instruction?

Talk to your Thinking Maps representative about your writing goals. We can help you develop a training plan to address student needs in writing.

Contact your Thinking Maps representative to learn more.

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