MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS

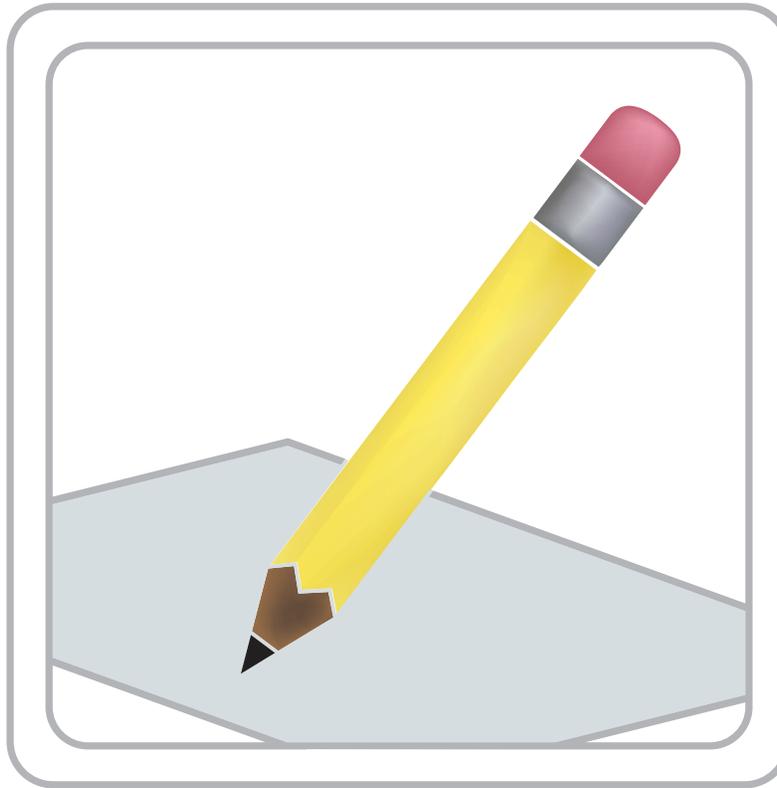## INSTITUTE

GEORGE W. BUSH INSTITUTE

The Meadows Center
FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK

Self-Assessment: Writing Throughout the Content Areas

Middle School Matters Institute
An initiative of the George W. Bush Institute in partnership with
The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk

ABOUT THE SELF-ASSESSMENT

Before developing specific implementation goals, educators must take stock of which research-based practices are already in place and which practices are lacking or need improvement. This template guides users through a self-reflection process for **writing** practices implemented throughout all content areas. Users should follow these steps for **each principle**.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Convene a Middle School Matters Leadership team and set aside 1-2 hours for the self-assessment.

Step 2: Gather all available data (see page 4).

Step 3: Assess current instructional practices, using data gathered in step 2, and indicate which instructional traits are implemented: a) consistently, b) inconsistently, or c) not at all.

Consult the MSM Field Guide for more information:

https://greatmiddleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/3b_FieldGuide_Writing_July19.pdf

Step 4: Summarize assessment results and determine the level of implementation according to the rubric (adapted from Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005).

1. **No Implementation:** No evidence of implementation.

2. **Exploration:** Willingness to implement, but little to no evidence of actual implementation. May be in planning stage.

3. **Initial Implementation:** Evidence indicates that implementation has begun but is largely inconsistent.

4. **Full Implementation:** Strong evidence of implementation of all or most of the traits and practices.

5. **Sustainability:** Strong evidence of implementation with processes in place for continued implementation in the future.

NEXT STEPS: GOAL SETTING AND ACTION PLANNING

After conducting this self-assessment, select a few key principles to focus on for the upcoming school year. Using the MSMI Action Plan Template (https://greatmiddleschools.org/resources/action-plan-templates/), develop measurable goals with specific action steps and deadlines for each chosen principle.

Self-Assessment: Writing Throughout the Content Areas
Applicable Content Areas: ELA, science, social studies; math (predominantly Principle 1)

Date: _____ School _____ District _____

Participating team members: _____

SOURCES OF DATA:

STATE/DISTRICT CURRICULUM

☐ Teacher Editions of ELA, science, social studies, and math

☐ Scope and sequence of ELA, science, social studies, and math

☐ State standards for ELA, science, social studies, and math

SCHOOL/TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

☐ Range of lesson plans for EELA, science, social studies, and math classes

☐ Walk-through or classroom observations for ELA, science, social studies, and math classes

☐ Notes from department team meetings or grade level team meetings

☐ List of professional development sessions provided or attended over the past year

☐ Description of intervention groups/intervention classes, including schedule and curriculum

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC AND PERFORMANCE DATA

☐ Demographics, including number of English learners and students in special education

☐ Course passing rates for ELA, science, social studies, and math

☐ Scores from state assessments and end-of-course assessments

☐ Scores from standardized achievement tests

☐ Scores from interim assessments and/or curriculum-based assessments

☐ List of students receiving intervention and their progress within those interventions

Principle 1: Establish consistent school wide practices for using writing as a tool to support learning in all content areas.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	**Practice 1: Ask students to analyze, interpret, or personalize in writing information that has been read or presented.**
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers assign students writing tasks that include analyzing information that has been read or presented.
☐	☐	☐	b) Teachers assign students writing tasks that include interpreting information that has been read or presented.
☐	☐	☐	c) Teachers assign students writing tasks that include personalizing information that has been read or presented.
Consistently	**Inconsistently**	**Not at All**	**Practice 2: Ask students to provide written summaries of material read or presented in class.**
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers instruct students to write summaries of material read or presented in class in order to improve comprehension.
☐	☐	☐	b) Students are required to consider the essence of the material and make decisions about which material is most important and how ideas are related to one another.
Consistently	**Inconsistently**	**Not at All**	**Practice 3: Ask students to take written notes about material read or presented in class.**
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers model for students a structured note-taking procedure (e.g., The Cornell Note-taking Method).
☐	☐	☐	b) Teachers have clear expectations for students to take written notes about material read or presented in class.
☐	☐	☐	c) Students take written notes to organize presented material and connect ideas with one another. New information is blended with background knowledge to come to new and deeper understandings.

Principle 1: Establish consistent school wide practices for using writing as a tool to support learning in all content areas.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 4: Ask students to answer questions in writing about material read or presented in class.
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers require students to answer questions in writing to aid retention.
☐	☐	☐	b) Students create their own written questions.
Insert Total	Insert Total	Insert Total	Current Level of Implementation
_____	_____	_____	☐ Level 1: No Implementation ☐ Level 2: Exploration ☐ Level 3: Initial Implementation ☐ Level 4: Full Implementation ☐ Level 5: Sustainability

Principle 2: Explicitly and systematically teach students the processes, knowledge, and skills of effective writing.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 1: Analyze and emulate model text to discover the characteristics of good writing and the features of specific types of text.
☐	☐	☐	a) To realize the benefits of using model text, teachers first clarify exactly what they want the students to learn.
☐	☐	☐	b) Teachers guide students in analyzing model text to identify characteristics of good writing and features of genre-specific text developing a list of "Must Haves" for the specific genre.

☐	☐	☐	c) From the analysis of model texts, teachers and students develop:
			   1. Common goals—features and qualities of writing that apply to all students in the class
			   2. Individual goals—features and qualities of writing that are selected based on each student's strengths and needs

☐	☐	☐	d) Students emulate model text in their own writing by using characteristics of good writing and features of genre-specific text.
Consistently	**Inconsistently**	**Not at All**	**Practice 2: Model and teach strategies for planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing written work.**
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers identify what strategy or strategies would be appropriate and beneficial for students to learn.
☐	☐	☐	b) Teachers describe and discuss the strategy and its rationale.
☐	☐	☐	c) Teachers model the strategy.
☐	☐	☐	d) Teachers provide guided practice in applying the strategy.
☐	☐	☐	e) Teachers guide students in deciding when and how to apply the strategy in new writing situations.
☐	☐	☐	f) Students independently apply strategies for planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing written work.

Principle 2: Explicitly and systematically teach students the processes, knowledge, and skills of effective writing.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 3: Teach students how to construct more complex sentences.
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers instruct students how to combine simpler sentences into more complex ones.
☐	☐	☐	b) Teachers instruct students how to deconstruct complex sentences into simpler ones.
☐	☐	☐	c) Teachers instruct students how to expand sentences by including additional details.
Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 4: Refine students' spelling, grammar, and usage skills.
☐	☐	☐	a) Students are provided opportunities to improve foundational skills such as spelling and handwriting.
☐	☐	☐	b) Teachers work with students to improve spelling by teaching them how word meaning and spelling are connected (e.g., Greek and Latin roots).
☐	☐	☐	c) Teachers instruct students in common prefixes and suffixes related to their content area to improve student spelling.
☐	☐	☐	d) Students proofread their writing for spelling, grammar, and usage errors to improve the quality of their writing.
Insert Total	Insert Total	Insert Total	Current Level of Implementation
_____	_____	_____	☐ Level 1: No Implementation ☐ Level 2: Exploration ☐ Level 3: Initial Implementation ☐ Level 4: Full Implementation ☐ Level 5: Sustainability

Principle 3: Establish word processing as the common medium for student writing.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 1: Make enough word processors available in the school so that all students can use them to complete writing assignments.
☐	☐	☐	a) The school and content teachers provide students access to computers for use in completing writing assignments.
☐	☐	☐	b) Students use computers or word processors to complete writing assignments.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 2: Teach keyboarding skills and how to use word processing programs and software.
☐	☐	☐	a) Students are explicitly taught how to use word processing programs and their editing features (spell check and grammar check) to improve the quality of their writing.
☐	☐	☐	b) Students who lack fluent keyboarding skills are offered instruction either as an elective or embedded within a specific content.
☐	☐	☐	c) Students use the spelling and grammar check functions of word processing programs to improve the quality of their writing.

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Principle 4: Assess and monitor student writing to improve instruction and identify students who require more intensive instruction.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 1: Monitor students' progress as writers.
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers frequently (weekly) assess students' classroom writing in terms of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and usage/conventions.
☐	☐	☐	b) Teachers judge student performance on more formal and standardized writing measures at least yearly or more often.
☐	☐	☐	c) Teachers assess student writing through observations, conversations with students, rubrics, and curriculum-based measurement (see Field Guide for more details).
Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 2: Provide students with feedback about their writing.
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers provide feedback with the goal to both inspire and support students' development as writers.
☐	☐	☐	b) Teachers provide feedback to students on a limited number of needed improvements, rather than everything that could be improved.
☐	☐	☐	c) Teachers provide feedback based on clear and appropriate criteria.
☐	☐	☐	d) Teachers provide feedback that is clear, specific, and explanatory.
☐	☐	☐	e) Teachers provide feedback that includes affirmation, reinforcement, and praise.
☐	☐	☐	f) Teachers offer feedback that helps students understand how their writing is experienced by the reader.
☐	☐	☐	g) Teachers ensure that feedback is appropriate, given a student's current level of proficiency. Teachers ask themselves, "Will the student be able to understand and successfully respond to the comments I offer?"
☐	☐	☐	h) Teachers provide feedback at multiple points during the composing process, not just on the final draft.
☐	☐	☐	i) Teachers help students understand and appreciate that feedback is offered to help them become better writers, not just improve their grade.

Principle 4: Assess and monitor student writing to improve instruction and identify students who require more intensive instruction.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 2: Provide students with feedback about their writing.
☐	☐	☐	j) Teachers improve the likelihood that students will attend to feedback by holding individual conversations with them or asking that they summarize how they responded to the feedback on the next draft.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 3: Teach students how to give each other feedback about their writing.
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers structure the feedback process and provide training to students in providing and receiving feedback (see Field Guide for more details).
☐	☐	☐	b) Teachers use peer feedback in combination with instruction and strategies that target revision.
☐	☐	☐	c) Teachers discuss and model the peer feedback process by sharing a piece of their own writing with students and facilitating a discussion about how a peer might review and respond to the text.
☐	☐	☐	d) Teachers model appropriate ways to receive and respond to constructive criticism and manage emotions.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 4: Teach students how to assess the quality of their own writing.
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers instruct students in self-evaluation procedures focusing on specific features of their writing (vocabulary usage, ideation, organization, voice, sentence formation, and conventions).
☐	☐	☐	b) Students apply self-evaluation procedures to assess and improve the quality of their own writing.

Principle 4: Assess and monitor student writing to improve instruction and identify students who require more intensive instruction.

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Principle 5: Provide extra assistance and instruction to students who experience difficulty learning to write.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 1: Provide students with intensive and extra instruction to acquire the strategies, knowledge, and writing skills that still need to be mastered.
☐	☐	☐	a) The school uses a diagnostic writing assessment to identify students who need extra assistance and the specific strengths and areas of need to plan an appropriate intervention.
☐	☐	☐	b) The school has a method in place for providing individualized instruction and extra assistance in the skills and strategies that a student still needs to master.
☐	☐	☐	c) The school uses a writing intervention that is evidence based and appropriate for the needs of students (e.g., self-regulated strategy development).
☐	☐	☐	d) Teachers work with students to set clear and specific goals for what students are to accomplish in their writing.
Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 2: Teach students how to use word processing programs and software that provide assistance in carrying out targeted writing strategies and skills.
☐	☐	☐	a) For students who continue to experience difficulty with specific aspects of writing (spelling, handwriting, planning, or evaluation) despite strong efforts for correction, schools provide instruction with word processing programs and software that assist with these challenges.
Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 3: Provide more intensive and extra instruction in using writing as a tool to support content learning to students who need it.
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers provide instruction in writing to learn strategies (e.g., note taking, summarizing, analyzing, interpreting) through a gradual release model in which the technique is described, modeled (possibly repeatedly), and practiced on real learning tasks with the teacher until students can successfully apply the strategy independently.

Principle 5: Provide extra assistance and instruction to students who experience difficulty learning to write.

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Principle 6: Discontinue practices that are NOT associated with improved outcomes for students.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 1: Take stock of all of the instructional practices and models currently implemented and determine whether they are necessary and associated with improved outcomes for students.
☐	☐	☐	a) Schools have a system for monitoring the effectiveness of all teachers' writing instructional practices.
☐	☐	☐	b) School leaders and teachers review student outcome data to determine effectiveness of writing instructional practices.
☐	☐	☐	c) Practices that do not improve student outcomes are discontinued and replaced with research- and evidence-based instructional practices.
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Principle 7: Improve teacher capacity to teach writing and use it as a tool for learning.

Consistently	Inconsistently	Not at All	Practice 1: Provide ongoing in-service professional development to all teachers to increase their capacity to teach writing.
☐	☐	☐	a) School leaders clarify expectations for school wide practice with regard to writing and provide in-service and support on these practices for all teachers in the school.
Consistently	**Inconsistently**	**Not at All**	**Practice 2: Have teachers create learning groups to share their best writing practices and work together to discover new ones.**
☐	☐	☐	a) Teachers within and across disciplines form groups to teach one another best writing practices and collaborate to improve writing instruction and the use of writing to support student learning.
Insert Total	Insert Total	Insert Total	**Current Level of Implementation**
_____	_____	_____	☐ Level 1: No Implementation ☐ Level 2: Exploration ☐ Level 3: Initial Implementation ☐ Level 4: Full Implementation ☐ Level 5: Sustainability