

Because Writing Matters

Improving Student Writing in Our Schools

by the National Writing Project and Carl Nagin

This important new book from the National Writing Project reveals how kids learn to write and what schools need to know about the most current research and classroom practice. *Because Writing Matters* offers step-by-step recommendations for developing effective writing programs in all grades.

This book provides administrators, policy-makers, teachers, and parents with a blueprint for improving writing in our schools.

Advance Praise for Because Writing Matters

"At last a book that is both comprehensive and up-to-date on the status and importance of writing in America. [This] carefully researched book shows how writing can be marginalized through ineffective assessments yet be a force in student lives. This book is must reading for teachers, school district leaders, and policymakers who wish to restore writing to its rightful place in student learning."

—DONALD GRAVES, emeritus professor of education,
University of New Hampshire

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BECAUSE WRITING MATTERS

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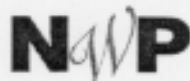
NATIONAL
WRITING PROJECT
and CARL NAGIN

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About the authors

THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT (NWP) is a nationwide professional development program for teachers begun in 1974 at the University of California, Berkeley. Through its extensive network of teachers, the NWP seeks to promote exemplary instruction of writing in every classroom in America.

CARL NAGIN is a journalist, editor, and teacher. His articles have appeared in *The New Yorker* and the *New York Times*. He taught writing at both the high school and college-level for more than 15 years as a faculty member of the New England Conservatory of Music and Harvard University.



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A sample of key points and findings from *Because Writing Matters*:

- Improving writing is crucial to learning in all subject areas, not just English.
- Writing instruction should begin in the earliest grades.
- Reading and writing are reinforcing literacy skills and need to be taught together.
- Learning to write requires frequent, supportive practice.
- Students have diverse abilities and instructional needs, and so teachers must use multiple strategies to improve students' writing.
- Effective writing instruction pays attention to both the product and processes of writing.
- Writing should be taught in school much as it is practiced by professional writers: that is, students should write for authentic purposes to real audiences.
- Students face ongoing challenges in their writing development and need practice with diverse writing tasks to improve.
- Simply assigning more writing is not enough; teachers must teach students such skills as how to organize thoughts, develop ideas, and revise for clarity.
- An effective writing assignment does more than ask students to report what they have read or experienced. It engages students in such processes as problem solving, reflecting, analyzing, and imagining so that they can think critically about what they have read or experienced.
- Schools cannot improve writing without teachers and administrators who value, understand, and practice writing themselves.
- Teachers and schools need to develop common expectations for good writing across grade levels and subject areas.
- Schools and districts need to develop fair and authentic writing assessments that are aligned with high standards and reflect student progress beyond single-test evaluations.
- Effective schoolwide writing programs involve the entire faculty and are developed across the curriculum.
- Schools and districts need to offer professional development opportunities in teaching writing to all faculty.

Because Writing Matters was written by the National Writing Project (NWP) and journalist Carl Nagin and published by Jossey-Bass. For excerpts and further information visit the NWP website at www.writingproject.org.