As I prepared to write this article about the art and science of Gateway’s writing program, I paid special attention to the skills I was relying on to produce an effective written piece. At the forefront was planning—what is it I wanted to say and how did I want to say it. Knowing my audience influenced my vocabulary and sentence structure choices. Technical terms aren’t necessary knowing that a broad audience will be my readers. Other acquired skills are inherent now with repeated practice, such as keyboarding and the structure of a paragraph.

As educators at Gateway, we consider what skills are required to produce a product such as a written essay. And then we ask, how do we teach these skills explicitly and why do we need to teach this way? Guided by research and using evidence-based instructional methods, Gateway’s writing program answers those questions.
For handwriting, the motor patterns are always introduced through the large muscles of the arm and shoulder rather than through the small muscles of the hand because large muscle memory is pretty powerful, and using those larger movements helps the students remember those muscle formations. In early reading instruction, handwriting is taught and practiced directly in class, and it is essential that teachers provide immediate feedback. Once students know all the letters, daily handwriting practice is not needed, but writing assignments allow teachers opportunities for immediate feedback.

The Hochman Method®, an evidence-based and proven instructional methodology for effective writing, is the foundation of Gateway's writing program. The Hochman Method® teaches techniques for enhancing the clarity, precision, and complexity of a student's language. It provides explicit instruction in the writing process, from the planning stages that require high-level language and critical-thinking skills for generating ideas and analysis, to the revision stage, targeting vocabulary and grammatical use, and executive functions.

Beginning with the sentence structure, students receive explicit instruction in sentence skills, such as sentence expansion and using conjunctions. Even as students advance to writing essays and compositions, sentence skills are reinforced.

Another key principle of The Hochman Method® is a focus on expository writing, that which discusses or argues ideas, and explains processes. This type of writing is most expected in assignments and academic tasks, particularly as students advance to high school and college. By explicitly teaching the skills for expository writing, students also develop reading comprehension skills.

The ART AND SCIENCE OF GATEWAY’S WRITING PROGRAM

BY HEATHER IRONSIDE, DIRECTOR OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

While we tend to think of writing as a single product, skilled writing consists of multiple components that develop from foundational to complex. Its foundational skills are for transcription, spelling, and handwriting (or keyboarding), and its most complex necessary skills are language use and critical-thinking skills.

Gateway students require direct, explicit instruction in all of these skills necessary for effective writing. And whether online or in person, we deliver it; writing is not taught asynchronously.

Thus, Gateway’s language and literacy curricula weave together instruction in these skills. The thinking and language skills needed for reading and reading comprehension are the same skills needed for writing. Our multisensory reading instruction targets the decoding, spelling, and letter formation (handwriting) skills necessary for fluent, skilled reading and writing.

Becoming fluent in spelling, handwriting, and keyboarding allows students to focus more of their attention and cognitive energy on the higher-level language and thinking skills.
They learn to recognize and understand the sentence structures of textbooks because they are writing those grammatical structures. This focus on the type of writing facilitates the use of these writing skills and strategies throughout the program. Writing skills are embedded in other curricula, like Social Studies/Humanities and Science, and teachers reinforce the instruction which leads to mastery.

Just last week, a student told me, “Conclusion sentences are just so hard!” It’s true because of the critical-thinking skills needed for summarizing and synthesizing what’s been written. Yet, how remarkable is it that the student can recognize that a conclusion sentence is a different kind of sentence? A splendid example of how Gateway’s writing program builds metacognition and thinking skills leading to skilled, strategic writers.

**THE GATEWAY GAZETTE**

A CONVERSATION WITH GRETA LINCOLN,
LANGUAGE THERAPIST

TO READ EDITIONS OF THE GATEWAY GAZETTE, BE SURE TO VISIT THE SCHOOL LIFE PAGE ON THE GATEWAY SCHOOL WEBSITE: WWW.GATEWAYSCHOOL.ORG/SCHOOL-LIFE/

**WHAT SKILLS DOES THE GAZETTE HELP TO HONE?**

Our work on the newspaper helps to develop language, writing, and executive function skills. Once students have their topic in mind, they have to determine the main idea and purpose of their article, identify and succinctly share relevant details, and determine an appropriate way to conclude their article. Students must organize (ideas, work, and materials), time manage, plan, and prioritize. The Gateway Gazette is a valuable opportunity for students to also practice perspective-taking. Additionally, students collaborate on a Teacher Interview each month, which provides a chance for them to practice and develop skills targeted during Therapy Blocks, such as turn-taking, participating in group conversations, flexible thinking, and problem solving.

**HOW DID THE GATEWAY GAZETTE COME ABOUT?**

One of the greatest things about The Gateway Gazette is that it has been student-led from the very start! A Lower School student (current 5th grader, Ben H.) presented the idea to our Director of Lower School, Dr. Brockhausen, in the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year. I have been part of The Gateway Gazette team since it started in the fall of 2018. Currently, I co-lead the Gateway Gazette with Mrs. Strider, who is also a Lower School Language Therapist. Interestingly, through some investigative journalism, our students discovered that many years ago, students worked on a newspaper project, also called The Gateway Gazette, with Mrs. Lico. We are so proud to be bringing back this incredible project.

**HOW DOES THIS WORK TIE INTO GATEWAY’S CURRICULUM?**

Students are able to practice multiple skills from their Writing classes in a fun, meaningful way. We carefully break down and support each step of the process to further students’ skills. They use the same scaffolds they would in an academic class, such as a Quick Outline from The Writing Revolution® program, and apply and continue to work on foundational writing skills. For example, students learning about the paragraph writing process in their Writing class will practice developing an appropriate (and interesting) topic sentence, transforming their key words and phrases on their Quick Outline into full sentences, and creating a concluding sentence. Students often choose to tie in material from classes such as Science and Social Studies in their articles.
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Celebrating the Diversity of Minds, Intelligence, and Abilities

CONVERSATIONS X CONNECTIONS

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