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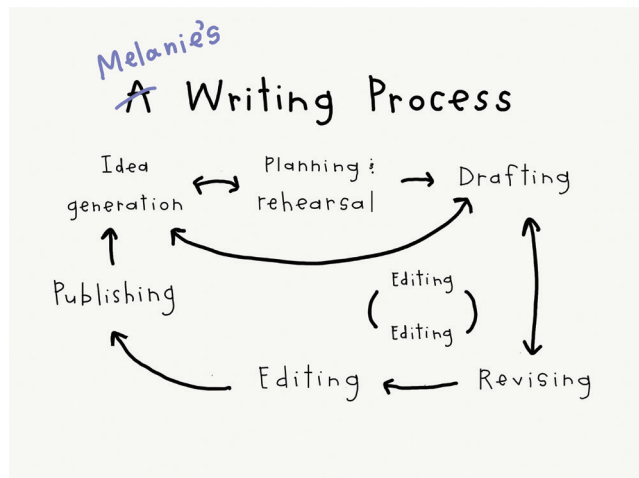
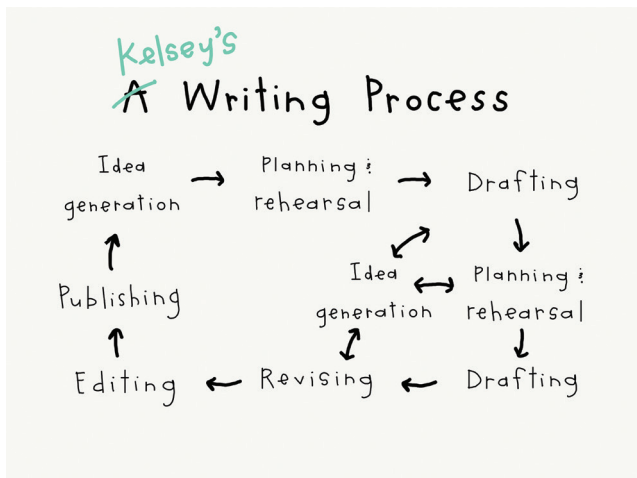
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# How Should I Think About and Guide Students' Writing Processes?

In addition to the traits and expectations of whatever genre they are working on, students should know and understand the parts of the writing process. The writing process has definite stages—generating ideas, planning, drafting, revising, and editing—but these stages are rarely linear, and the way writers move through each stage is a matter of personal style. For instance, when Kelsey Sorum and I co-wrote *The Responsive Writing Teacher* (2021), we realized that Kelsey's writing process had a much longer stage of planning. I am less of a planner and more of a reviser; to move a piece forward, Kelsey needs outlines, while I need words on a page. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 show the differences in our processes.

Figures 2.2 and Figure 2.3 Kelsey and Melanie share their own writing processes.



Source: Meehan & Sorum (2021).

## TEACH STUDENTS ABOUT THE WRITING PROCESS AND ITS VARIATIONS

The parts of a writing process should make up part of the writing community's language (see Chapter 1), and students should have a solid understanding of what they are.

- 🟡 **Generating:** Generating is the process of coming up with ideas for writing. Most writers have topics or ideas that they return to over and over, regardless of genre.
- 🟡 **Planning:** Planning is how writers set up a system for knowing what they will write and how their piece will go. Not all writers plan the same way, and not all systems work for all writers. The more students understand the role of planning in their own writing lives, the more effectively they will work through this part of the writing process.
- 🟡 **Drafting:** Drafting involves getting the words out on paper or digitally. It's important for writers to know that drafting does not imply completion, and it

also does not exclude or preclude revising and planning. Parts of the writing process are recursive and overlapping.

- ☺ **Revising:** Revising involves making changes with the goal of improvement. Students should learn that revising happens across the stages of the writing process.
- ☺ **Editing:** Editing involves the use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Editing is NOT a separate stage in the writing process. It's important to encourage writers to use punctuation as they draft. Of course, there will be reviews and rereads that correct editorial mistakes, but students should not consider this to be a separate step.
- ☺ **Publishing:** The more that students envision an audience as they write, the more authentically they will see themselves as writers. Establishing the purpose and audience for writers as they are working their way through a writing piece paves their way toward meaningfully sharing their writing, whether it's for classmates, a loved one, or a public platform. Students will invest more deeply in their own writing pieces if they know their authentic purpose, which is synonymous with publication.

Students should learn that there's a circular and recursive process they can think of as an anchor for comparison: writers generate ideas, plan, draft, revise, revise plans, edit, draft, and revise again. Teachers can guide students to understand their own process and progression, creating an awareness and appreciation of some students' need to plan extensively before drafting, as opposed to other students' time spent revising an initial draft. There is not a specific amount of time required for any one step, and you will find variation between students. You may even find variation within the *same* student's process for different pieces of writing.

Figure 2.4 Regan's chart communicates her tendency to spend most of her writing time drafting.

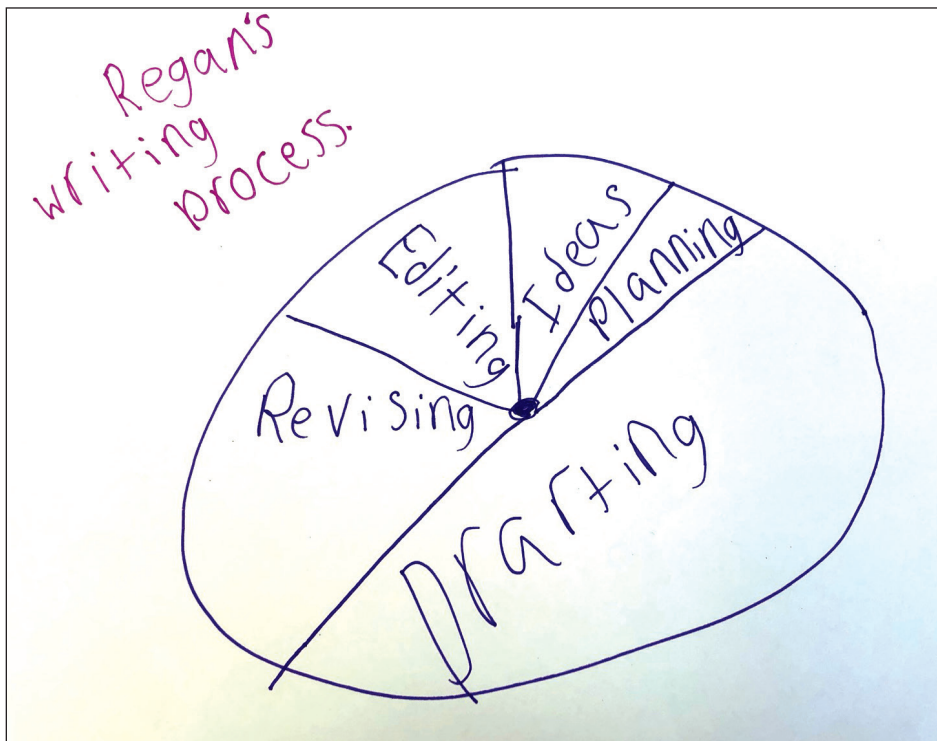
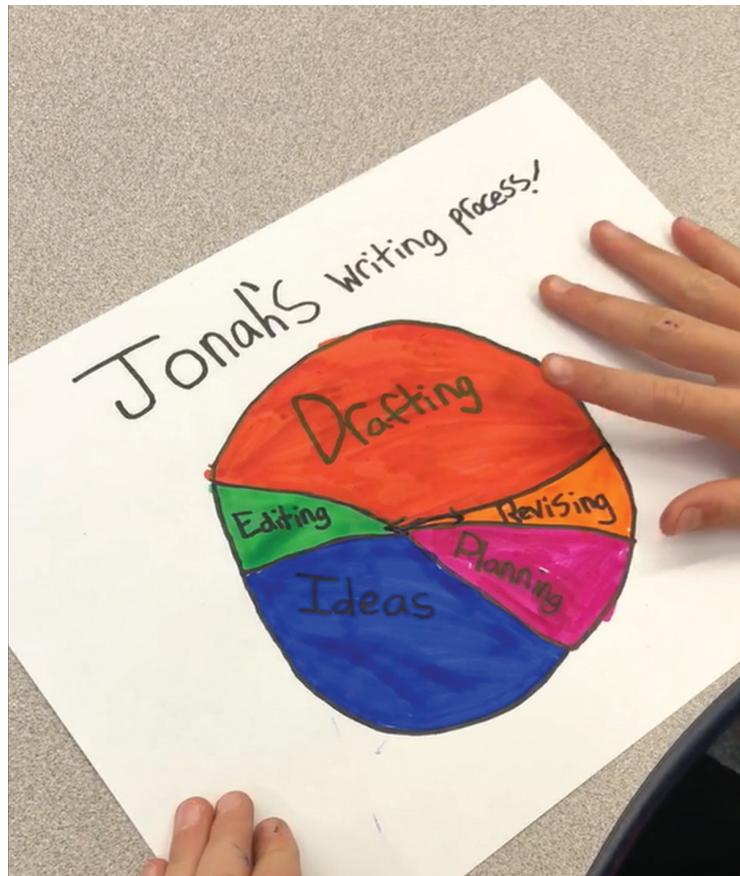


Figure 2.5 Jonah's chart reflects his challenge to come up with ideas, as well as his commitment to edit as he drafts.



### Keep in Mind

Writing processes vary from writer to writer and even from piece to piece. The process is not linear, and there is not a prescribed amount of time that writers should spend on each step.



## PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO ENTER THE PROCESS AT DIFFERENT POINTS

As you and students learn about each other's writing processes, you might recognize challenges and teaching opportunities because of the observations and understandings. For example, a student may struggle to think of an idea or topic but be able to plan and draft once a topic is available. In that case, it could be helpful to spend time reflecting, setting goals around, and teaching that student various strategies for finding writing topics. Additionally, that writer should appreciate and celebrate the skills that exist in the other parts of the writing process. Competence grows from confidence, and it's often more successful to teach from places of strengths and assets. Some students may experience more growth and success if they can enter the writing process at different points. The important thing is to recognize this and provide opportunities for practice so that students become able to navigate their own writing process from start to finish.

## TEACH STUDENTS TO COLLABORATE DIFFERENTLY BASED ON WHERE THEY ARE IN THE PROCESS

The following chart shows some of the questions that students can lean into depending on the stage they or their partner is working on.

Stage	Questions to Ask or Pose
Generating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are times when you've had strong emotions or reactions?</li><li>• What are some topics you love or know a lot about?</li><li>• Who is someone you care about?</li><li>• What would you like to change?</li></ul>
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is your beginning, middle, and end?</li><li>• What sections do you envision?</li><li>• What are your reasons for thinking this?</li></ul>
Drafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How are you bringing your story to life?</li><li>• What questions do you think your reader will have?</li><li>• How can you explain your reason even better?</li></ul>

As you can see from the chart above, the deeper the understanding of the stage and the expectations, the more pertinent the questions and ensuing conversations can be.



### *Agency and Identity*

The more you can engage students in becoming effective partners and collaborators, the more ownership they have over both their own learning and their classmates' learning. This ownership creates greater agency, and it also empowers you, the teacher, to reach and teach more students!



### *Keep in Mind*

Do not think of editing as a separate step in the writing process. Instead, think of editing, especially when it comes to skills students have learned, as part of the drafting process.