Implementation of TC Writing Workshop

“We are writers, we are teachers, and we are teachers of writing.”
This is the juggling act we balance daily as we move our students through their writing lives. Transitioning into a writer’s workshop model has moved instruction from replication to innovation. Students write about what matters most to them as they transcend the genres of narrative, persuasive, and informative writing; this is an incredibly empowering approach for students and teachers alike.

Implementing a writer’s workshop format under the research-based structure of the Teacher’s College of Columbia University in New York, CNG primary and elementary teachers are working hard and enthusiastically to ensure that all students become writers, who can communicate effectively in an ever-changing world. Writing instruction has taken a new vision of facilitating independent thinkers who use self-direction, as well as collaboration in learning.

Embracing writing through the genres of: narrative, persuasive, and informational writing, all students become more experienced writers who look for ways to address all audiences. Students sustain extended periods
of time writing to ensure that their individual stamina and fluency as writers better reflect their abilities as readers.

Just like anything that we want to improve in, we must practice, and writing is not an exception. Teachers lead the way in this initiative by modeling with their own writing. Students learn the stories that make their teacher who he/she is while simultaneously encouraging students to share their stories, too. A heightened level of social responsibility is reached through the writer’s workshop as students partner with peers in rehearsing, discussing, and processing their writing efforts. Through collaboration, students extend their writing efforts in the same way editors help publishing writers move their writing forward too.

Specific skills and strategies are explicitly taught at the beginning of each workshop lesson often through teacher and/or published writers’ examples. Focus is given to strategies and skills that are transferable to all writers and genres of writing. Students then use this understanding of what makes great writing, great, to inform and shape their own writing. In this way, we are deliberately teaching students to become better writers, but not just for an individual assignment; we want their learning about writing to be reflected in their understanding of what it takes to be an effective and reflective 21st century communicator across the board. Much of the
novelty of the writer’s workshop is that it is what real writers do, and there is ample evidence that shows that students flourish in this learning environment.

Self-direction is another component of the writer’s workshop and students are embracing the opportunity to empower themselves through the writing of their own voice and experiences, as well as the writing of those around them. Using skills and strategies taught by teachers, students purposefully choose and apply what will best fit their needs and particular piece of writing, just as real writers do. Students experience the messiness of the writing process — a journey that is often not linear -- and we honor both their process and final writing products in publishing celebrations and in our Elementary Literary Magazine Young Voices. At CNG, we are committed to developing writers who can effectively, knowledgeably, and reflectively lead the world of tomorrow. The Teacher College’s Writer’s Workshop approach illuminates the way.