

What You Need to Know About DLI

DLI is not an all-inclusive writing program, nor is the DLI sequence of skills intended to dictate the overall order of writing instruction for your classroom. DLI was developed to support just one *slice* of your writing program: skill instruction in the area of writing conventions. Having this part of your writing instruction organized, sequenced, and assessment-ready, will allow you more time to address other aspects of a rich writing program:

- Developing ideas, organization, fluency, word choice, and voice,
- implementing the writing process,
- encouraging reflection and providing editing support,
- exploring different modes of writing,
- and examining the craft of authors in mentor texts.

The Friday mini-lesson: *Critical*

The cornerstone for student success is your Friday mini-lesson. DLI features daily practice tasks tailored to reinforce the skills taught in your mini-lesson. However, they are simply that-practice tasks. It is your direct instruction on the focus skill for the upcoming week that makes these materials become daily language instruction rather than daily language practice. You will find great support in the mini-lesson section.

The use of mentor texts in teaching writing conventions: *Powerful*

While DLI is a stand-alone resource, it is not intended to be isolated instruction. When you combine the use of DLI mini-lessons with models from mentor texts, it can enhance instruction on the focus skill in a powerful way. The following books can provide invaluable support as you look for effective examples of mentor texts: *Mentor Texts* (2nd edition) and *Nonfiction Mentor Texts* by Lynne Dorfman and Rose Cappelli and *Micro Mentor Texts: Using Short Passages from Great Books to Teach Writer's Craft* by Penny Kittle. *Everyday Editing* and *Mechanically Inclined* by Jeff Anderson are also worthwhile resources. Mentor texts are accessible in every part of your instructional day. Passages from social studies, science, and reading materials offer built-in opportunities for supporting your instruction in writing conventions.

**The use of supplementary practice materials:
*Unnecessary***

You need not search for additional supplementary practice for skills because DLI spirals continuously from week to week and brings the focus skill you have introduced to the surface in daily practice tasks and weekly assessments for the rest of the year.

**The role of DLI in preparation for formal assessments:
*Effective***

To experience success on formal assessments, students need to demonstrate proficiency in several areas: a command of the content, an ability to navigate the formats, and the experience to access an arsenal of test-taking strategies. DLI proves to be an effective resource to promote these proficiencies. Weekly assessments provide an opportunity for students to develop their test-taking strategies and stamina and for you to monitor your students' progress and to provide early intervention on content concerns.

**The power of the weekly DLI assessment:
*Intrinsic***

Aim to use the weekly DLI assessment as a teaching tool, rather than simply a measuring tool. The time you spend discussing the assessment can truly be one of the most productive parts of the week. Discuss items that tripped students up. Encourage them to share items they knew, but missed, and to explain why. Ask students which items required them to problem-solve and have them think aloud about how they chose their answers. Creating an open, accepting atmosphere in your classroom as you discuss the assessment can be powerful. Celebrate, yes celebrate, the errors your students make on these weekly assessments. Each of these errors helps them to become more skilled, more attentive to detail, and more in charge of their own learning.

The role of DLI in the context of writing conferences: *Vital*

As the year progresses, you will find that students bring more background to their writing conferences as a result of their work with DLI. The five to ten minutes you spend each day on DLI is a great investment in providing a scaffold for their time in conference with you or an effective follow-up. They may meet a new skill in the context of a writing conference with you or an exposure to a mentor text, which may be later reinforced by DLI. Or DLI can provide the first exposure, which will be applied in a writing conference. In either case the combination is effective.

The function of the DLI pre-post assessments in instruction: *Integral*

DLI includes pre-post assessments at six-week intervals; they are valuable tools to support your instruction. While a spiraling review is built into the DLI materials, the pre-post assessments will easily allow you to identify areas where more support may be needed and to celebrate growth with your students.

The use of wall charts to support application of skills: *Magical*

It is suggested that you and your students create simple wall charts to display in your classroom. The ownership generated by creating these charts together enhances their value. Examples of conversation patterns, common homophone meanings, the four reasons to start new paragraphs, or lists of prepositions support the application of skills by making information visible and accessible. Jeff Anderson, in his book *Mechanically Inclined*, appropriately calls these wall charts “brain magic.”

Share your input

Please contact us and let us know how DLI is working for you. We love questions and suggestions!

We invite you to explore the DLI website. You will find information about DLI, CCSS correlations, reviews, and ordering information for print editions. Full week samples of every grade level are available to download and print. Don't hesitate to call if you have any questions.

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