

# 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 great daily practice items. However, they are simply that: practice items. 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 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 and Nonfiction Mentor Texts by Lynne Dorfman and Rose Cappelli and Everyday Editing and Mechanically Inclined by Jeff Anderson. Anderson shares strategies for inviting your students to edit and to become **sentence stalkers** as they examine the craft employed by the authors whose books they read. 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 a cadre 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 DLI assessment:  
*Intrinsic***

Aim to use the 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 writing.

## **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: the combination is effective.

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

DLI now 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.

**Wall Charts:** It is also suggested that you create simple wall charts for your classroom. Examples of the correct use of singular possessive and plural nouns, common homophone meanings, uses for commas, or conversation patterns support the application of skills by making information visible.

### **Share your input**

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

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