

Adam Bautista's Story

How IEW built confidence, competence, and an engaging culture in a 4th-grade classroom



Mr. Adam Bautista is the 4th grade teacher who participated in the field study at Berwyn North School District in Berwyn, Illinois. (See study on page 13.) Distinguishing himself early, he was a recipient of the Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois Scholarship and the Minority Teachers of Illinois Scholarship. He holds a master's degree in curriculum and instruction with an ESL endorsement from the American College of Education (ACE). With his background, he is qualified to recommend our approach as beneficial for all elementary students, especially non-native English speakers.

1. What training in writing instruction had you had before IEW?

Prior to IEW, I had no formal training in writing instruction. I utilized teacher resource books on the teaching of various writing genres.

2. What does our methodology do differently from everything else you have tried?

All other models I've tried usually just provide writing prompts and some tips on what is needed to master that type of writing. The IEW lessons build upon each other week by week releasing more responsibility on the students each week as they gain more skills and confidence in their writing.

3. At what point did you start believing this could make a real difference? Before the training, during the training, or in the classroom?

I started to believe this program could make a real difference when I experienced the training myself. I had never learned writing this way, but it was easy to understand, and all lessons were mapped out in a way that I could easily see my students fully engaged and retaining the material.

4. Did your teaching style change?

My approach to teaching writing definitely changed with IEW. Prior to adopting the IEW method, I taught writing using prompts, and I tried to model answering the prompts. Using this method, I did not feel my students understood the critical aspects of each writing lesson. After using the IEW method, I feel I was able to successfully teach writing. It has to be done in a systematic, step-by-step method. Before, I would model a prompt once and expect students to understand the whole

writing style based on that one example. I now realize, especially with my large EL class, the writing process needs regular modeling and guidance by the instructor until the student feels comfortable to write more independently.

5. How easy was the transition from learning the methodology to teaching the methodology?

I felt the transition from learning the methodology to teaching the methodology was fairly smooth. The training allowed me to experience the program firsthand while understanding the sequence and seeing how each lesson builds upon the prior lesson. Viewing the specific *Models for Imitation* lesson prior to teaching the lesson was especially useful because it helped refresh my memory regarding what was taught during the training.

6. Were you teaching any IEW strategies before the training?

IEW utilizes total physical response (TPR) movements to emphasize various writing objectives. The EL teachers' regular use of TPR is encouraged for EL students' successful language and content acquisition. I used TPR prior to my implementation of the IEW program.

7. Was asking questions already your style?

I feel that as a teacher I generally asked a lot of questions in hopes of gaining more participation and feedback for formative assessments. The types of questions I now ask during writing changed because I have a better understanding of the process for getting my students to master the objectives in that writing lesson.

8. *How did you make time to teach and model the lessons?*

I made writing a priority in my classroom on a daily basis. I made sure I set aside at least thirty minutes four to five days a week for writing because I knew the program would only be effective if I was consistent in its implementation.

9. *What surprised you the most?*

Many of my students felt writing became their favorite subject. They could see growth in their writing, and this encouraged them to be more creative and become bigger risk takers when going through the individual lessons. I was surprised by how much the students enjoyed the IEW approach to writing and the routines that were consistent with each lesson.

10. *Did this method change your classroom culture?*

During our writing lessons we emphasized the importance of listening to others when it was their turn to talk. We knew each student's input could help spark ideas and provide great examples others could build upon during the writing process. By placing a strong emphasis on the peer editing components of the writing process, we also emphasized how valuable our peers could be in helping us improve our own writing. In general, by implementing the IEW writing program, I think we fostered a stronger classroom community. Students valued the insights of their peers.

11. *Were your students willing to engage more during writing class?*

More students than usual participated during whole-group writing lessons. Even the weaker writers appreciated the high amounts of modeling and felt more willing than usual to participate once they were comfortable with the objective being taught.

12. *Did this change your students' attitude?*

Students were much more excited to participate in our writing lessons. They enjoyed the stories that were being used to model the lessons, and when they realized they were becoming better writers, they wanted to improve further.

13. *What was your favorite part of teaching the method?*

I think my favorite part of the teaching method was modeling the task of identifying key details from the resource. I enjoyed helping my students determine an important detail versus a minor detail and then helping them turn those details into a cohesive summary.

14. *Has this approach affected other subjects you teach?*

Both my students and I appreciated the organized approach the program took to teaching writing. The binders with tabs were elements of the program we transferred over to both math and English language arts.

15. *Regarding your IEW instruction, what do you want to improve this coming school year?*

As a teacher who had never used the IEW method before, at times I was nervous when determining if I taught a lesson successfully. After having implemented the method for a school year now and seeing the impressive growth many students accomplished, these results give me more confidence in my abilities to successfully teach the method. For the upcoming school year, I would like to go further in the lesson sequence model.

Mr. Bautista received IEW training and these materials:

TRAINING

- Live Two-Day Training
- Teaching Writing: Structure and Style DVDs and Seminar Workbook
- Demonstration Day Training
- Observation Day Training

CURRICULAR MATERIALS

- Models for Imitation Level A
- Classroom Supplement and Lesson Plans Level A

STUDENT MATERIALS

- Student Writing Portfolio Level A [Blackline Masters]
- Student Reference Handbook Level A [Blackline Masters]

OPTIONAL RESOURCE

- Classroom Posters

