



Institute for  
Excellence in  
Writing

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## Filtering

Each classroom contains students who are performing at varying levels. In composition, students who can correctly compose complex sentences with a sophisticated vocabulary may sit near students who struggle with composing a simple sentence. *Filtering*, the process of moving the students from class-directed assignments to independent assignments, allows the teacher to challenge one student without overwhelming another.

### Overview

The ultimate goal of filtering is for all students to complete assignments independently. To prepare for filtering you need to collect source materials for Units 1-4 in a “file box.” These can be purchased from Excellence in Writing. (See *File Box Source Texts* on page 17.)

In my file box, I have these basic source texts, and I have included sources based on what we are or will be studying during the year. This makes filtering a way for the students to review or be introduced to the topics I am responsible to teach. The sources for each unit should graduate in reading level: below, at, and above.

Start by modeling the structural unit with the whole class participating. As you observe your students, notice the students who are clearly understanding the process. (When you teach for any length of time, you realize that some students catch on after being told something once; others need to be told a multitude of times.)

Next, grade the papers and look for the students who followed all the instructions. Depending on the grade level and the number of years students have been taught the IEW method, you could know after one lesson if students are ready to work independently. The first five students or so (depends on class size) who are ready to work alone are called the engine. They determine the pace in which you introduce new skills and more complex assignments. An example of a skill would be a stylistic technique, and an example of a more complex assignment would be a Stage Two essay. By their participation and their papers, look for the students who understand the process, and thus you have your engine.

On the next assignment, have your engine students go to the file box and choose a source below their reading level to accomplish alone. You can have all material below their reading level printed on yellow (or any color) paper so that you simply say, “Choose from the yellow papers.” As your engine works independently, you work with the students who are left. After that lesson is graded, again determine which students are ready to become independent.

With each assignment, more students are filtered as they show the signs of understanding the process. Some students will not be able to transfer to individual work before the time planned for the unit to end. You must still move on to the next unit. Their chance to work independently may happen in a later unit, or it may not happen until the next year with another teacher.

While there are many variables which affect filtering, I hope you can envision the general idea. If you need help tweaking this process for your specific situation, please email [schools@IEW.com](mailto:schools@IEW.com).

### **Creating an Independent Learning Station**

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- Make two copies of the source texts on card stock. (To find additional source texts, see the *File Box Source Texts* described on page 17 of this Teacher's Manual.)
  - Obtain folders and a freestanding file box.
  - Label folders for each of the Units 2–6 (See below for explanation on Units 7–9.)
  - Fill each section with appropriate source texts, filed according to unit number and reading level.
  - Allow students to use the Learning Station once they have mastered the structural or stylistic technique. (Note: Students should return the source text to the file when they are finished using it.)
  - Record or plot their progress.
  - Add to your files as you find more resources. (hints and helps for collecting source material below)
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### **Aim for Independence**

Much of the instruction for IEW is done as a class, but the ultimate goal is for students to be able to complete the process and produce a quality composition independently. Again, *filtering* is the process of moving the students from class-directed assignments to independent assignments. It allows the teacher to challenge one student without overwhelming another. The ultimate goal is for all students to complete assignments independently.

At the beginning of each unit or when a new concept, such as a stylistic technique, is introduced, the teacher must *model* the writing process for the entire class. When one-third of the students have shown mastery, they can then use supplementary sources from the Independent Learning Station to continue the same process independently. This station is simply a file box that holds additional source material for the different units. Supplemental texts can be found in the *File Box Source Texts* (See page 17 of this Teacher's Manual.), or taken from your other core subjects such as history, science, or literature. Gradually each student transfers from class-directed to individualized work. When students who are working independently are no longer challenged, you should simply instruct them to pick a story or article from the next reading level, or add an additional stylistic technique.

### **Choose Supporting Source Materials**

Again, you can use the source materials available in this book or find your own. As you become more and more familiar with IEW's methodology, you may tailor everything in your file box to support your classroom study of science, history, religion, countries or states, etc. For every section you will need material below, at, and above your grade's reading level.

**Units 1 & 2:** Look for expository (short, factual articles) and narrative (story) paragraphs of no more than seven sentences.

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- self-contained paragraphs so that you do not need information from previous paragraphs to understand the text
- information contained in a text box
- overviews, introductions, or conclusions.
- rules of the classroom
- procedures in the classroom
- one-paragraph stories or anecdotes
- Bible passages

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**Unit 3:** Use short stories, fables, myths, and fairy tales.

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1. short stories
  2. songs
  3. poems
  4. chapters from your literature book
  5. chapters from your history book, if it is written in narrative form
  6. parables and Bible stories
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**Unit 4:** Use articles or chapters of a book that have many facts so that students must narrow their choices by deciding which are interesting or important.

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- songs
  - poems
  - chapters from your history book (if it is written in expository form)
  - chapters from your science book
  - articles of children's magazines
  - articles for newspaper magazines
  - Bible
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**Unit 5:** Obtain pictures in a sequence, like a cartoon strip.

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1. political cartoons
  2. art
  3. pictures drawn that depict any historical event
  4. students' original pictures that they trade with another student
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**Unit 6:** Use articles as in Unit 4, except you need three different sources on the general same topic.

**Unit 7:** Creative Writing has no source materials by definition.

**Unit 8:** Essays can use either Unit 4 or 6 source texts.

**Unit 9:** Critiques can use Unit 3 source texts.

### **Chart the Students' Progress**

This is especially important once they have begun working independently. Progress can be monitored on a classroom wide bulletin board, where the teacher creates a path that students follow as they attain the goals set before them. Move a marker for each student forward like a game piece on a game board. Even if there is a progress wall or board, it is important to maintain individual student records.

Students can track themselves on a page in a notebook or portfolio or the teacher can maintain the pacing charts. Either way, remember that bulletin board markers can fall or be moved, so keep accurate records elsewhere.