

Writing Lab

The 2019-2020 school year promises to be an exciting year of operation for the Jefferson Middle School Writing Lab. Our teachers, our administration, and our students will work very hard to make our across-the-curriculum writing-to-learn program valuable and practical.

The Writing Lab has a Writing Clinician, who is an English teacher, Mrs. Melissa Kelly. She is available to help the students become familiar with the writing process and the strategies which will help them in their writing. In addition, the Writing Clinician will help students utilize the available software to improve their writing and learning. However, each student will remain the author of his own documents.

Each student who uses the Lab makes individual progress. Writing-to-learn opportunities are provided across the curriculum, and every child has the opportunity to grow and to experience success as a writer. **Please exercise understanding as English and literature teachers request that most papers be processed at school using Google Classroom rather than at home.** This request maximizes the child's opportunity to take advantage of the writing strategies and the content expertise offered by the child's teacher and the Writing Clinician. Processing, revising, and editing in school demonstrate the child's understanding of the writing process. You may wish to help your child by conferencing with him at home. For most writing assignments, a conferencing sheet, which has been coordinated to the teacher's assignment and evaluation, is available.

The Writing Lab is located in Room 102 and is available to all students and teachers. Full classes are scheduled to process, revise, edit, and print writing projects. **Any student may use the Lab** for across-the-curriculum and personal writing. **The Lab serves all students of all ability levels and is open during the day Monday-Thursday from 7:45 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. and Fridays from 7:45 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

All students are encouraged to use the many writing resources in the Lab. For their convenience, a *Writing Tip Book* filled with word banks, revision strategies, editing rules, and formatting guidelines is available at each computer. Each sixth grader will receive a copy of the *Writing Tip Book* to take home and to keep where they complete their homework; they will be expected to use them at home. Seventh and eighth graders are expected to still have their *Writing Tip Book* at home and accessible. Students who cannot find their *Writing Tip Book* should see Mrs. Kelly.

Volunteer Program

The heart of the Lab is conferencing: student-with-student and student-with-adult. Mrs. Melissa Kelly, the Writing Clinician, coordinates a program involving volunteers (parents, grandparents, and community friends) who conference with sixth, seventh, and eighth graders during the school day. Volunteering in the Writing Lab offers a flexible schedule and a priceless chance to help a child with his writing! There is absolutely no requirement for a volunteer to be a grammar expert! The teacher provides a streamlined conference sheet with a few targeted questions in regard to the content and organization of the student's paper. The volunteer listens to the student read the paper aloud and then offers feedback in the areas designated by the teacher.

Both new and returning volunteers need to use the following link to sign up to help in the Writing Lab this year. [2019-20 JMS Writing Lab Volunteer Program](#) Contact Mrs. Kelly via email at mkelly@mtlisd.net if you have questions. **The first training session for both new and veteran volunteers will be held on Wednesday, September 18, from 9:30—11:00 a.m. in the Mellon Middle School Library.** We will review and discuss the basic strategies used to conference with our students, and we will explain the operational aspects of our program.

That's a Good Question!

Parents sometimes ask, “What is the rationale behind middle level students completing their writing in school?” Usually, students are permitted to take copies of their work home, and they are often encouraged to have revision and editing conferences with an adult as well as with a peer. However, most writing process assignments are completed in school for several reasons.

- More important than focusing on the product, students are focusing on practicing the writing process. As a result, teachers want to observe the process and offer strategies along the way.
- A child learns from being physically involved with working with text. More revision takes place if a child can word process, conference, revise, conference again, and edit as a circular, on-going process, a possibility if he is working at school and using Google Classroom.
- When using Google Classroom, both the child's teacher and Writing Clinician have access to the student's work and leave feedback directly in the document throughout the process in addition to answering one-on-one questions in class.
- If a child works at home, he may possess an “I-am-finished” attitude that undercuts a desire for deep revision, one of the most important goals. If the child does not work at school, moreover, the student is unable to participate in the strategies and resources offered for revision and editing.
- Practicing the process in school offers students the opportunity to learn to be a part of a writing community, to collaborate, to conference, to suggest—qualities employed in real world writing.
- Writing assignments are specifically targeted to teach particular skills which are outlined on a rubric and reinforced by the teacher and the writing clinician during the class and lab time.
- Completing projects in school teaches valuable time management skills to middle level students.
- Offering the children time to complete the writing in school avoids conflicts with the family computer and printer and eliminates unnecessary additional homework time.

***Our Piece of Mind*, Jefferson's Literary Magazine**

Please encourage your student to be a part of *Our Piece of Mind*, Jefferson's award-winning literary magazine. Students can submit their original writing to be considered for publication, illustrate accepted pieces, type / edit accepted selections, or be a member of the magazine's selection staff. Poems, essays, stories, articles, etc. are all welcome. The selection staff meets weekly on Tuesdays to read, discuss, and determine which anonymous pieces will be accepted for publication. Student artists and typists then work to design the literary magazine which will be published in June. Submission forms for writing are available in the Writing Lab or from the English and literature teachers.

An informational meeting will be held after school on **Tuesday, September 10**, in the Writing Lab. Students interested in signing up to be a typist, artist, or member of the selection staff should attend.

Writing Lab Assistants

Mrs. Kelly is looking for students who are interested in being lab assistants this year. Lab assistants give up their team time one day each week to help in the Writing Lab. Helpers take care of whatever is needed that day. **Students interested in helping as lab assistants this year, should stop by Room 102, the Writing Lab by Friday, September 20, to sign up with Mrs. Kelly.** Committed, responsible helpers are needed!

Enrichment

A bulletin board advertising all current writing enrichment opportunities can be found in the Writing Lab, Room 102. Opportunities range from contests to publications and from essays to poetry. Please encourage your talented young writer to take a risk and to explore writing enrichment. Mrs. Kelly will gladly conference with any student concerning his enrichment submissions.