



NIESC



NWIESC



West Central Indiana  
Educational Service Center



SMEKENS  
EDUCATION  
SOLUTIONS



# IGNITE *to* WRITE

## THE How to Teach Writing CONFERENCE

**VIRTUAL**  
*& Interactive*

**June 23-24, 2026**

### Fuel your passion for teaching writing!

During this two-day summer event for K-12 educators, you'll experience **over 40 breakout sessions** designed to spark fresh ideas and provide practical strategies that can be used immediately.

Whether you're a new teacher or a seasoned pro, this conference will get you fired up to teach writing and ignite success in your students, no matter what language arts program you currently use.





# IGNITE to WRITE

Virtual & Interactive  
**JUNE 23-24, 2026**

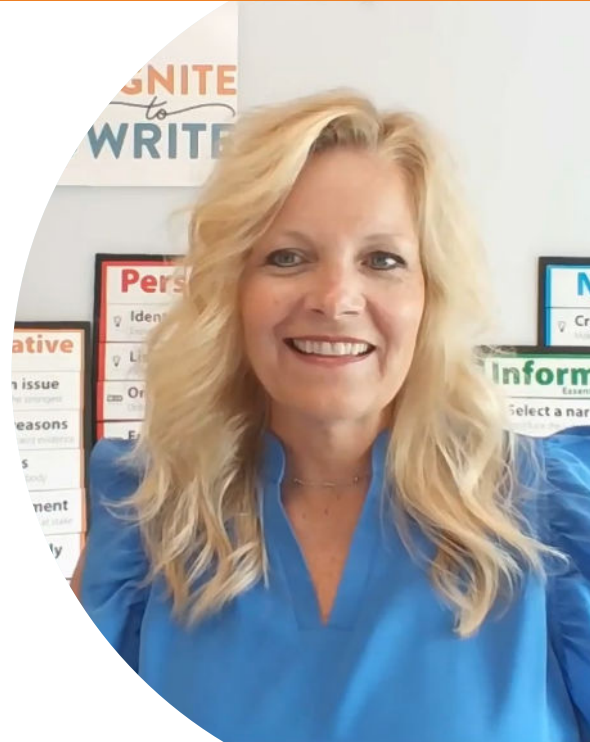
## Who SHOULD ATTEND?

K-6 General Education Teachers  
Literacy Coaches & Coordinators  
6-12 Language Arts Teachers  
High-Ability Teachers

Principals & Assistant Principals  
K-12 Curriculum Directors  
K-12 Special Education Teachers  
ELL Teachers

## What YOU GET

- Option to learn from the comfort of your own home—or register the whole staff and host Ignite to Write at your school
- Ability to engage with presenters and other attendees with the interactive live chat
- Energetic presentations and special surprises designed to rekindle your passion for teaching writing
- Opportunity to get recharged and rejuvenated after a long school year
- A special 15% discount when you buy books and resources from TheLiteracyStore.com
- 40+ relevant session topics to choose from, all on teaching writing skills and practices
- Handouts and note-taking resources to support implementation
- Downloadable completion certificates for every session
- Lifetime access to a “Secret Site” packed with digital resources from every session



Get **EARLY BIRD PERKS!**

Register by **April 15** to receive to receive a **FREE** Ignite to Write Conference T-Shirt and a **FREE** WebPD subscription for 1 year (\$99 value)!

**GRADUATE LEVEL**  
credit

For an additional fee of \$62 per credit/unit, Ignite to Write attendees are eligible to pursue 1-4 graduate-level university semester credit units from the University of the Pacific, Center for Professional Development and Continuing Education. Please check with your district to determine course acceptability.

# Powerful sessions to **BUILD BETTER WRITERS**

Opening Keynote & Closing Keynote by Kristina Smekens

## Meet writer needs

### Kick-start your genre-writing year with 6 key lessons

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Learn the essential lessons to teach writers at the beginning of the year to launch a daily writing time that blends instruction, practice, and feedback. Discover how to boost student engagement, tackle obstacles, and nurture independent writers with routines that keep the momentum going.

### Juggle language foundations & writing standards in PK-2

*Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2*

Learn how to effectively integrate writing standards into your literacy instruction alongside foundational skills. Discover a variety of curriculum resources and scheduling options to ensure that both transcription and genre writing are addressed daily.

### Introduce the 6 Traits to students

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Discover engaging techniques to introduce the 6 Traits to your students using mentor texts, song lyrics, and visual icons. By establishing a shared understanding of these essential elements at the beginning of the year, you can create a strong foundation for writing instruction that will benefit students throughout the year.

### Provide focused & efficient writer feedback

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Strengthen students' writing by providing feedback that is prompt, purposeful, precise, and personal. Discover ways to make your writer conferences more efficient and effective, and learn a 4-step process to offer targeted guidance, track progress, and foster meaningful teacher-student interactions.

### Develop a flexible writing rubric for grades 3-12

*Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Incorporate a single, kid-friendly 6-Traits rubric that adapts to any type of writing and grows with your students. Learn how to score for individual traits, assign value, and convert scores to grades using an online rubric calculator—complete with personalized feedback for each student.

### Build a PK-2 rubric that grows with your students

*Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2*

Create a simplistic 6-Traits rubric that matches the wide range of developing writers in your primary classroom. Discover ways to co-create the rubric with students and guide them in using it to self-assess and improve their own pieces.

### Foster perseverance & resilience in writers

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Foster resilience in all writers by providing mini-lessons that acknowledge the challenges of learning how to write. Encourage perseverance and independent decision-making through writing tasks that empower students to overcome obstacles and develop strong writer habits.

### Revitalize the writing process

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Streamline the steps of the traditional writing process to accommodate one-sitting first drafts. Explore a fresh perspective on peer- and self-revision techniques that better reflects today's real-world writing situations.

### Boost achievement with the science of writing

*K-12 Instructional Leaders, Coaches, Administrators*

Explore key research findings from the science of writing to understand what developing writers need most. Learn five high-impact, evidence-based practices that build stronger, more confident writers. Then walk away with practical ideas to shape a research-based writing program aligned to standards and focused on student achievement.



# Plan powerful units

## Propel students from basic persuasives to sophisticated arguments

**Grades 6-12, ML Levels 3-5**

Learn how to transform a persuasive piece into a fully developed argument, guiding students to support original reasons with strong textual evidence, weaving claims and details to reflect critical thinking, insight, and a deep understanding of the source material.

## Convert opinion writing into powerful persuasion

**Grades 3-5, ML Levels 3-5**

Develop students' persuasive power by moving them beyond listing reasons in single sentences to building fully developed paragraphs. Everyone is entitled to an opinion, but the key to strong persuasion lies in reasoning that is clear, convincing, and well-supported.

## Spin strong stories from texts

**Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5**

Recognize different types of text-based narrative writing, from retelling a story through another perspective to creating fiction from facts. Then learn practical strategies to help students weave textual evidence within narrative elements to compose responses that are authentic, complete, and compelling.

## Scaffold a yearlong writing curriculum (Part 1)

**Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5**

Examine the research behind designing persuasive, informative, and narrative units that build logically from one to the next. Then learn how to maximize mini-unit planning by creating a cumulative spiral that strengthens students' writing skills over time.

## Scaffold a yearlong writing curriculum (Part 2)

**Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5**

Honor 4 factors when designing individual mini-units for grades 3-12, including ways to teach new writing skills at a manageable pace, how to design meaningful writing tasks, and steps to equip students to execute an end-of-unit assessment that reveals their authentic and independent writing abilities.

## Develop meaty middles in informative writing

**Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5**

Discover the secret to strong informative writing—helping students organize facts and details with purpose. Then learn how to guide them in crafting middle paragraphs that are structured to match the writing's purpose, whether describing, sequencing, or comparing information.

## Design PK-2 writing units that meet the standards

**Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2**

Even as young writers are still learning language foundations and concepts of print, they need to explore the building blocks of opinion, informative, and narrative writing. Teach genre-specific skills and show students how to integrate them at every developmental stage—expressing their own ideas through pictures, labels, lists, and sentences.

## Align conventions within writing units

**Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5**

Discover why students who ace workbooks and quizzes often struggle to apply those same conventions in their own writing. The solution: teach grammar within writing units, showing students how to incorporate grade-level convention skills within their own first drafts.

## Write about & beyond texts in PK-2

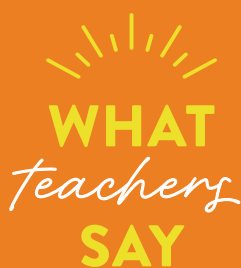
**Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2**

Expect ALL students to write reading responses—even the youngest! Teach them to independently express opinions, retell stories, and share information from texts, whether through pictures, letters, words, or sentences.

## Teach opinion, informative, & narrative writing skills in PK-2

**Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2**

Lead students through writing stages—from drawing to full sentences—while developing their opinion, informative, and narrative writing skills. Discover how to embed key elements of each genre within their developmental progression.



*"All of the sessions provided real-world examples that can be implemented in classrooms at any time."*

**JENNA SELVICK**

7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA Teacher  
Naperville, IL

*"The energy and excitement of the attendees amps up my own energy and that of my teachers. Thank you for getting my teachers excited about brand new concepts! I enjoy all that you bring to education!"*

**MARY-KATHRYN WARCO**

Principal • Roselle, IL

*"High quality resources, edu-tainment, and sessions. The VERY best."*

**ELAINE McEACHERN**

3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher  
British Columbia, Canada

## Write across subjects

### Convey math understanding through writing

Grades 2-12, ML Levels 3-5

Weave writing practices into math instruction to enhance critical thinking and analysis. Learn innovative mini-lessons that teach students how to demonstrate their understanding of mathematical concepts within informative and argumentative writing.

### Blend writing instruction with your reading series

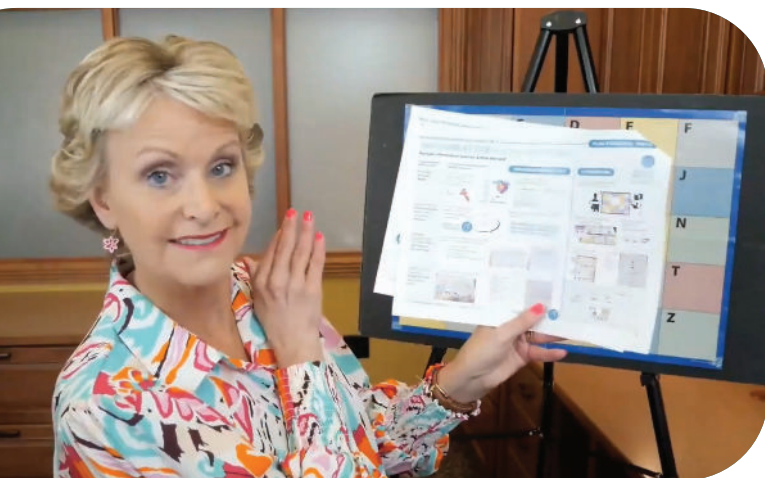
Grades K-6, ML Levels 1-5

Discover how to fit writing instruction into a robust elementary schedule, creating space for meaningful, focused practice. By doing so, learn how to develop both writing skills and content understanding, leading to stronger student outcomes.

### Demonstrate comprehension via succinct summary writing

Grades 2-12, ML Levels 3-5

Acquire a scaffold of 10 summary-writing techniques that work across literature and informational texts, and see them in action through authentic student examples from various grade levels and multiple content areas. Experience these strategies firsthand in this highly engaging session.



## Deliver writing lessons

### Write with the WOW! factor

Grades 6-12, ML Levels 3-5

Elevate the sophistication and style in students' argumentative, informative, and narrative writing. Learn how to refine their selection of words, choice of voice, and mastery of sentence fluency through targeted mini-lesson instruction and engaging writing tasks. This session is ideal for educators looking to turn good writers into truly great ones.

### Teach any grammar skill in 3 steps

Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5

Transform grammar instruction by focusing on 1 skill in 3 phases of instruction: 1) Notice and Name it, 2) Try it, 3) Apply it. Experience a structured path to mastery of grade-level grammar skills through the gradual release of responsibility.

### Make mini-lesson magic

Grades K-12, ML All Levels

Experience the transformative impact of a 4-step mini-lesson that delivers focused, Tier 1 writing instruction in just 15 minutes. Watch video demonstrations that maximize student engagement and launch the gradual release of responsibility.

### Craft engaging beginnings & powerful endings

Grades K-12, ML All Levels

Discover strategies for writing captivating openings and strong conclusions at every level. Analyze student work to uncover successful examples and gain practical tools for writing beginnings and endings that complement a strong middle in all modes and genres.

### Improve basic sentence conventions

Grades PK-2, ML Levels 1-2

Build solid sentence foundations using engaging, practical writing strategies. Teach students key conventions like word spacing, punctuation, and expanding fragments into sentences. Explore creative ways to guide them in self-editing, ensuring their writing practices become more clear, more coherent, and more impactful.

WHAT  
Teachers  
SAY

*"Very inspiring and really connected to gaps I had in understanding my current curriculum."*

**STEPHANIE GEORGE**  
1<sup>st</sup> grade Teacher  
Apex, NC

*"I absolutely loved this conference and loved that there were breakout sessions so we could pick and choose what we attended. Every session I attended was so valuable and informative!"*

**JULIE HAYNES**  
3<sup>rd</sup> grade Teacher • Xenia, OH

*"The conference just flowed seamlessly, and the presenters were very engaging and so informative."*

**ANNETTE CRANE**  
High School ELA Teacher  
Attica, IN

## Conquer state assessments

### Write from multiple sources

*Grades 4-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Help students extract key details, organize their thinking, and combine ideas from a variety of texts—skills that prepare them to write with depth. Then learn how to move them beyond highlighting and summarizing to produce cohesive, well-supported pieces that show true analysis and synthesis.

### Dissect author moves within literary analyses

*Grades 8-12, ML Levels 4-5*

Explore the art of analyzing a text beyond simply identifying plot elements and literary devices. Learn how to guide students to interpret author intentions, including the purpose behind craft choices, literary techniques, and text structure.

### Prompt smarter, score higher

*Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Design test-like prompts in seconds using AI, including reading-response tasks that mirror state and national assessments. Then help students crack the code behind each prompt—decoding academic vocabulary and structure—to build writer confidence and increase writing scores.

### Improve reader thinking to impact written responses

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Boost students' written responses by deepening their thinking about texts. Learn a straightforward 5-step process that helps students make inferences, answer text-dependent questions, and support ideas with strong evidence—the essential first step toward stronger reading responses.

### Target short constructed-response writing

*Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Discover the key components of effective short constructed responses, including inferential thinking and the use of textual evidence. Learn practical lesson ideas that cater to writers who will face state assessments, helping them develop the necessary writing skills to excel in this important format.

### Follow evidence with insight

*Grades 4-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Learn strategies to turn text details into unique expressions—paraphrasing, citing, and restructuring sentences. Once students can handle the evidence, guide them to interpret, elaborate, and provide meaningful commentary that strengthens their writing.

### Master evidence-based responses

*Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Help students overcome evidence-based response errors with targeted strategies. Explore common pitfalls like insufficient support and irrelevant information, while learning to adapt to modern testing formats. Leave with lesson ideas to help students provide strong textual evidence across diverse question types.

### Create a reading & writing calendar for test prep

*Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Acquire a comprehensive list of reading and writing skills necessary for students to perform well on read-write tests. Learn to align composition and comprehension strategies across the year for seamless writing-about-reading instruction, building on the mini-unit spiral for a cohesive approach.

## Benefits of ATTENDING VIRTUALLY

### ACCESSIBLE

With no travel required, you can attend Ignite to Write from anywhere that has a good internet connection.

### FLEXIBLE

Whether you attend the live event or watch the recordings afterward, you will get on-demand access for one full year.

### AFFORDABLE

Attending virtually means no need to pay extra for travel, lodging, or other expenses.



# Embrace Edtech

## Elevate multilingual writers with AI

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Explore asset-based strategies that help multilingual learners express rich ideas through writing while honoring home languages and preserving student voice. Use intentional, ethical AI tools to support translanguaging, idea development, sentence expansion, and revision—without lowering cognitive demand or replacing student thinking.

## Design creative writing products with EdTech

*Grades 3-12, ML Levels 2-5*

Reimagine writing instruction and practice by engaging students in creative digital formats such as podcasts, digital books, videos, and visual storytelling. Learn how these products strengthen core writing skills—planning, drafting, revising, and audience awareness—while expanding how students publish and share their work.

## Increase writing access with AI & Google tools

*Grades 3-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Identify common writing barriers and match them with accessible design strategies rooted in Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Apply AI and Google tools to create flexible writing tasks that increase independence, confidence, and participation—without lowering expectations.

## Teach students to use chatbots wisely

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Explore why students need to learn how to use chatbots for their future jobs and how teachers can guide that learning in safe, simple, and meaningful ways. Engage in honest conversation, examine clear examples, and leave with ideas you can use right away—even if you're new to AI.

## Gogh Digital: Create AI images & videos

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Explore simple tools that help students turn ideas and stories into digital artwork and short videos, putting imagination first while boosting creativity and student expression. Learn how to support visual storytelling through easy classroom examples and ready-to-use activities—no tech experience required.

## Implement AI in dyslexia interventions

*Grades 2-12, ML Levels 3-5*

Discover how AI can empower both teachers and students in navigating the challenges of dyslexia. This essential session features a student's candid story, highlighting the transformative role AI has played in her educational journey and offering actionable strategies for educators.

## Supercharge your Canva skills with simple hacks

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Boost your Canva skills with effective hacks. Learn to navigate Canva's features, from easy animations to collaborative tools that streamline your workflow. This session is designed for those ready to enhance their design game, creating engaging materials that captivate students and enrich learning.

## Master AI Prompting for Planning Writing Instruction

*Grades K-12, ML All Levels*

Explore the art of smart prompting and use AI as a purposeful planning partner to design high-quality writing instruction while preserving professional judgment. Generate mentor-text ideas, quick-writes, scaffolds, revision activities, and differentiated supports aligned to grade-level expectations—saving planning time so you can spend more time conferring, giving feedback, and supporting student writers.

## MEET *your* GUIDES



### Kristina Smekens

Keynote Speaker + Session Presenter

A celebrated educator, author, and literacy consultant, Kristina Smekens has built a reputation for using enthusiasm, humor, and common sense to equip K-12 educators with simple and effective strategies for teaching reading and writing.

As president and lead consultant for Smekens Education, Kristina is constantly developing new strategies to help teachers meet the demands of today's College and Career-Ready Standards. She shares those strategies with teachers across the United States and beyond through on-site professional development, seminars, and an always-growing pool of print, digital, and video resources.

## SESSION PRESENTERS



Makenzie Gilkison



Nadine Gilkison



Courtney Gordon



Didi Harris



Brenny Kummer



Shona Lansdell



Kristi McCullough



Rachel Remenschneider



Holly Sluyter



Adam Sparks

# Get **SCHOOLWIDE ACCESS**

Host the Ignite to Write Virtual Conference at your school

Empower your whole team with two days of practical, high-impact professional learning designed to elevate your school's writing instruction. By purchasing access to the Ignite to Write virtual conference for your entire staff, school leaders can unlock a wealth of professional development—without ever leaving campus.

## Here's why this is the best option for participating virtually:

### **Largest discount available**

Schools and districts that purchase access for entire staffs benefit from the biggest discount. This is an affordable way to invest in every educator while maximizing your professional development budget.

### **Collaborative learning environment**

Bringing everyone together fosters a shared learning experience. Teachers can immediately discuss strategies, share ideas, and build collective enthusiasm to apply new insights in their classrooms.

### **Convenient on-site participation**

Instead of traveling to an off-site location, teachers can participate in the conference from their own school or district. Set up in classrooms, a conference room, or a common area to engage your team in two full days of virtual sessions—saving time and eliminating travel expenses.

### **Schoolwide impact**

When every educator hears the same message and learns the same strategies, it amplifies the effect on student outcomes. Together, the whole staff will be better equipped to implement effective writing instruction across all grade levels.

### **Customizable and flexible schedule**

Choose which sessions to attend based on your school's specific needs. Recordings will be available for any sessions missed, giving teachers the chance to revisit and learn at their own pace.

### **Fun professional development**

School leaders can make Ignite to Write extra special by incorporating fun elements like prizes, catered meals, or snacks. Consider planning themed activities, giving away classroom supplies, or hosting friendly competitions to keep the energy high and the learning enjoyable. A little creativity can elevate an already engaging event into fun professional development for teachers!



**Invest in your entire team, save with our largest discount, and make professional development more impactful—and fun—by bringing the virtual Ignite to Write conference experience to your school.**

