At the beginning of my teaching career, I attended an in-service workshop. After a session of sharing our teaching experiences, the trainer said to me, “Your experience could be very valuable to others. Please, write down what you’ve shared, and bring it back tomorrow.” I couldn’t imagine how my experiences, which seemed so simple, could help others, but nevertheless I obediently wrote a passionate account of what had been achieved with the little ones in my class. A few months later, the article was published in an education journal edited by the workshop coordinator. This experience opened the door to the world of formal written communication for me. Since then, many other doors have opened to a career possibility I had not envisioned.

Twenty years later, I find it hard to distinguish between the experiences of a writer and those of a teacher. I write because I am a teacher. Writing is a natural consequence of teaching. In the field of education, as well as in other sciences, knowledge is built on what others have researched and by accumulating experiences that enrich, change, and improve education. Therefore, written communication is essential within the field of education.

Not all teachers have been motivated to write, but I believe that the basic skills required of any teacher are sufficient for him or her to master the art of writing. I believe that there are six fundamental reasons for encouraging teachers to develop their writing skills:

1. Writing is an active form of reflection about teaching and learning. It is not the same to think about one’s actions as to both think and write about them. Writing requires reflexive thinking processes that are deeper, more systematic, and metacognitive.
2. **Writing is motivation for innovation.** When the teacher can share his or her experiences with others, the adventure of testing theories and trying new approaches takes on a deeper meaning.

3. When a teacher writes, he or she models for students the importance of writing. In many ways, a teacher who writes shows his or her students the value of written communication and encourages them to produce their own writing. A teacher who writes will be more inclined to produce students who write.

4. **Written documents become part of the teacher’s professional record.** For those who write fairly regularly, written work provides an account of their thoughts and professional growth as well as a useful tool for self-assessment.

5. **Writing promotes collegiality.** The loneliness of the classroom can sometimes wear teachers out. However, for those who write and publish, the classroom has no limits. They will find colleagues from many parts of the world who empathize with their point of view and with whom they can exchange ideas and obtain feedback. Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote, “The limits of language mean the limits of my world.”

6. **Writing enables the author to become more comfortable communicating his or her worldview.** A Christian writer will find that writing provides an opportunity to testify of lifestyle, faith, and interpretation of the world, as well as what is happening within the framework of that worldview.

In reality, for a teacher, writing is linked to the need to share and belong. But in a world overflowing with ephemeral experiences, the wish to belong may seem utopian. However, written work still retains a great deal of credibility. Books and articles published in periodicals or electronic journals are effective ways to share our ideas and beliefs. In this sense, writing can be a way of sharing and belonging.

That’s why each time I admiringly and respectfully read colleagues’ publications, I am encouraging them to share what they do, so that their ideas do not die in the classroom, and so their students feel that they are part of their teacher’s success.

A final reason for a teacher to write is Francis Bacon’s excellent claim: “Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man.”

**THE WRITING PATH FOR TEACHERS**

**How to Develop Writing Skills**

Reading is a writer’s source. Many people have a rich inner world, but lack the ability to express it through writing. Reading provides prime material—thoughts—for reflecting and developing one’s own ideas, but it also suggests models or writing styles.

An effective way of increasing writing skills is to enroll in writing workshops, which are frequently offered during school vacations. Teachers can also enroll in online writing courses.

Writing skills can also be developed through the activities of daily life, such as:

- Write letters. Start developing the habit of writing short daily Facebook messages or e-mails; or, if you do not use the Internet, write short notes or letters.
- Write a brief news or feature article for your school newsletter or a short devotional.
- Write an article for *The Journal of Adventist Education*.
- Compose curriculum material for one of your classes, or write an article in your area of expertise.
- Write a children’s story based on a childhood experience.
- Read aloud what you have written, and ask a colleague to provide constructive feedback.

**Encourage Students to Write**

From an early age, students should be encouraged to do creative writing. During my years of preschool teaching, I enjoyed reading the simple yet creative writing of my students. If teachers encourage their students to branch out into different writing genres, by the time these young people enroll in college, they will be able to express their ideas clearly, precisely, and aesthetically.

Strategies for Promoting Writing

Here are a few ideas for increasing student writing at all levels:
**Preschool Level**

- Expose children to many kinds of literature. Every day, make time in the school day to leisurely enjoy stories, tales, riddles, tongue twisters, poems, and other types of children’s literature. Showing the book, its illustrations and titles, and presenting the author will prime children to writing.
- Introduce children to the oral version of the genres they have been reading and writing. Record these compositions and read them to the children so that they can value their own and others’ work.
- Have the students compose stories by drawing pictures in sequence or by cutting out pictures and sticking them in order on a strip of paper. They can add the words they are able to write, and you can help them complete the story.
- Compose group stories based on objects taken out of a box, arranging the items to create a coherent plot.

**Primary Level**

- Search for ways to encourage students to write creatively. Offer starter ideas like these: “What would have happened if...?” “What would this place be like if...?” “The strangest dream I’ve ever had...”
- Have students reflect on what they’ve done today. “In five lines or less, tell what you have learned today.” This daily exercise of self-reflection and synthesis has helped whole classes to improve noticeably in a variety of subject areas.
- Encourage students to write using all five senses and the arts. Offer a starter statement like “A mint candy makes me think of...” or have them describe their reaction to music or write a story based on a painting.
- Choose a Bible verse and write an opposite meaning. This will help to understand the implications of a decision. For example, if they wrote Ruth 1:16 with its opposite meaning, it would
say this: “Don’t urge me to follow you or go with you. Where you go, I won’t go, and where you stay, I won’t stay. Your people will not be my people, and your God will not be my God.” What would have become of Ruth if she had responded that way? How would this have changed Naomi’s life? And Boaz’s life?

- Show students the pragmatic usefulness of writing. Write the recipes for the students’ favorite foods and compile a class recipe book. Write down interesting facts, news and jokes in a class journal. Write requests, thank-you notes, invitations, and letters to children in other places. Keep a personal diary. Compose the
- Write about what you like and what you don’t like.
- Write about your dreams. Where do you see yourself in 10 years’ time? How do you think you can make a difference in your community?
- Modernize Bible stories. “Lot chooses to live in the big city”; “Daniel enrolls in a public school”; “A traveler who is mugged and left for dead is rescued by a foreigner (Good Samaritan).”
- Change the ending. Cain decides to exchange vegetables for a lamb from his brother Abel. Esther doesn’t have the courage to go before the king. Nehemiah returns to the palace soon after the rebuilding of Jerusalem begins. The rich young man goes back to see Jesus one night, together with Nicodemus.

- Do in-depth research. Have students choose a character from the Bible or from history and research the personal information and contributions of that person. They can present their research in the form of a brief biography.

University Level

The challenge for this level is to help students polish their writing to achieve a marked improvement in the quality and variety of language used, and in expressing ideas in complete paragraphs with internal coherence. They should also be able to produce a good synthesis of content, and most important, develop the ability to write a summary or critical evaluation of another writer’s thoughts.

Some simple exercises can be assigned at the beginning of a course, and then at the end, to compare the student’s progress.

- “Write about your worldview.” Stimulus questions: “Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? What is my mission in life? What problems are there, and what is the solution to them?”

- “Express your feelings, thoughts and suggestions about the course.” Questions to answer: “What are your expectations of this course? What has had an impact on you? Have the assignments changed your way of thinking about a topic? What issues didn’t you understand?”

- Teach students to write a brief essay. Often, when university teachers make such assignments, the students have not yet

Box 1: Advice for Writing a Simple Article

- Choose a topic.
- Identify the readers/audience.
- Plan each section carefully. Search for supporting documentation.
- Write down brief, precise, and simple objectives before beginning to write the article.
- Once the necessary information has been gathered, organize the article in a logical order.
- Develop conclusions for the article.
- Make an outline of the contents before writing the article in order to ensure thematic unity, logical progression, and coherence.
- Use brief sentences. Express only one idea per sentence.
- Give the main idea at the beginning of each paragraph. Include only those secondary ideas that are necessary to support the main idea.
- Reinforce the main idea with a conclusion at the end.
- Avoid using indefinite adjectives such as some, many, etc.
- Achieve a balance between brevity and clarity.
- Use strong nouns and active verbs.
- Use bold type, italics, and underlining for emphasis.

Secondary Level

For teenagers, writing can be a means of expression and an escape from personal conflicts. Here are some topics to get them started:

Plot and dialogue for a video that will be produced by the class.

- Show the beauty of poetry. Stimulate the joy of poetic expression by selecting poems that are simple and appropriate, so that the children can make simple changes, such as replacing words, adding a stanza, or changing the ending.
developed the necessary skills. It is important to guide the students so that they know how to do the project, and to have them make successive revisions and corrections until the essay has the required format and content. (See Box 14 for suggested steps for doing this.)

- Encourage students to read chapters of books and to write a critical review. To get them started, supply a list of questions like these: “Do you agree with the author? Why or why not? Which of his or her ideas do you support? Which ones do you reject, and why? What arguments can you give to oppose or support the author’s ideas? Can you find another bibliographical source that supports your point of view?”
- Create open-ended questions that will elicit varied answers, and have the students write their responses. (See examples in Box 2.)

Final Thoughts

We may not all think of ourselves as writers, but we can develop more effective ways to engage our students in the world of writing. We can also motivate our colleagues and staff to write and share their expertise.

My final advice is to give writing a try. Don’t be afraid of making mistakes. A favorite teacher of mine often used to say that “We learn by ruining.” Horace said it well: “Often you must turn your stylus to erase, if you hope to write anything worth a second reading.” This said, paper, pencil, and eraser (or I-Pad) in hand, I encourage you to travel through the world of the written word!

To paraphrase the wise Solomon who said, “A word aptly written is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11). 

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NOTES AND REFERENCES