Writing Lesson Learned 1
Ideas: Students need to write a clear main idea and develop that main idea through relevant details and examples that support the main idea.

The Ideas trait has to do with topic, details, and clarity. More specifically, students are focused on finding the right topic, selecting interesting and relevant details, and making the content clear. Students should be able to write several sentences on a single, identifiable topic with elaboration on the topic by the end of grade 2.

To support writers to write a clear main idea and develop that main idea through relevant details and examples that support the main idea:

Try these Teaching Suggestions	Try these Assessment Suggestions
a) **Talk, Draw, Write!** Focus on ideas through choosing something concrete with which to tell a story (e.g., homemade bread, a rock). Model telling a story about how to make bread or the characteristics of a rock. Students take turns intermittently, choosing something of interest in their lives to tell their story. Once students have had an opportunity to tell their story, instruct the learners to draw a picture of the story they told. (Preferably, this is a pencil sketch, as more relevant detail can be included using this medium, rather than crayons or markers, if possible). Once sketches are complete, instruct students to write the story that they told and drew. This scaffolds the focus of ideas from an oral language connection to model, to using art as a bridge to writing. Layering many modes of language helps students to understand the essence of a main idea rather than choosing the first thing written as the main idea. b) **Graphic/Strategy Organizers:** When appropriate, provide students with a template on which they can plan out their writing. Making writing visible in this way helps the writer identify and plan what is needed in terms of developing an idea and supporting that idea.	**Conversations:** After lots of practice with making the connections from oral language to drawing to writing a story with a focus, detail, and clarity, listen for talking among learners that emphasizes or highlights these elements for developing ideas for writing. Prompt students, as they talk, to challenge each other to figure out the main idea or essence of the story. Help them understand this concept. **Observations:** After lots of practice, listen and look in on the telling, sketching and writing of a story to see if the ideas for the story include a focused topic, interesting and relevant details, and clarity. **Products:** Collect sketched and written story artifacts to assess for topic, detail, and clarity.

Selected Resources
- *English Language Arts Curriculum Guide Grades Primary–3*, pp. 73-80, pp. 228-232, pp. 392-394, 2014, Nova Scotia Department of Education.
- *Teaching in Action Grades Primary–3: A Teaching Resource*, p. 43–45, 2006, Nova Scotia Department of Education.
- *6 + 1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades*, Chapter 3, 2005, Ruth Culham, Scholastic Inc.

- *Creating Young Writers: Using the Six Traits to Enrich Writing Process in Primary Classrooms*, pp. 77–80, 2004, Vicki Spandel, Pearson.
- *6 +1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades,* The Primary Scoring Guide: Ideas, p. 70 (teachers), 2005, Ruth Culham, Scholastic Inc.
- *6 + 1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades,* My First Scoring Guide for Ideas, p. 99 (students), 2005, Ruth Culham, Scholastic Inc.

Writing Lesson Learned 2

Organization: Students need to organize their writing in a logical sequence, with an introduction, body, and conclusion, using a variety of transitional devices.

Organization has to do with structuring the information in a story so that it makes sense to the reader. Specifically the focus is on including a beginning, middle, and end, (lead, plot, resolution), as well as experimenting with sequencing and linking smoothly so that the internal and overall structure is well written.

To support writers to organize their writing in a logical sequence, with an introduction, body, and conclusion, using a variety of transitional devices:

Try these Teaching Suggestions	Try these Assessment Suggestions
a) **Getting Hooked:** (Spandel, 2004, p. 121) Through a developmentally age appropriate form of media (DVD, YouTube clip etc.), show the first minute or two and ask learners to pay close attention. Then discuss if the snippet is a good opening and why. Try to choose a variety of angles (funny, scary, mysterious) so that students can see the variables that make strong beginnings. Also, jump into a particularly engaging spot somewhere between the beginning and the end and discuss the importance of organizing a story into a logical, sequentially linked order.	**Conversations:** Listen to students talk about what makes a good lead, debate about whether a particular clip viewed was one that grabbed your attention and interest, and how some transitions work better for the flow of a story than others. Record the exchanges as students search for words, focusing on the problem solving involved as they make their way through the reordering of sentences or steps. Interview students to delve into how they make choices and why they make certain choices to see if they have a solid understanding about the relationship organization has to a reader's ease of understanding.
b) **Word Hunts/Collages:** Focus on brainstorming words that are good for smooth transitions such as *and* or *but*, OR words that show passage of time such as *while, later, after, next* (see Appendix M). Provide magazines to hunt for these and other words that help pull the reader smoothly through a story and present to classmates in the form of a collage or poster that can be showcased subsequently in the classroom for ready reference.	**Observations:** Watch students as they hunt for words to display and manipulate the ordering of sentences or steps and talk with one another about possibilities. Why do they make the choices they make? How do they come to the conclusions that they do?
c) **Sentence strips or Lists:** To practice order or sequence, provide sentence strips of a simple story that can be physically moved around so as to play with the arrangement until the order makes the most sense. Talk with a partner about various possibilities, if desired. Alternately, provide out of order lists such as recipes or "how to" or procedural samples that need to be reordered in a more logical way.	**Products:** Collect artifacts such as collages, posters, lists, and procedural "how to" samples to check for accuracy and logic in choices made.

Selected Resources
- *English Language Arts Curriculum Guide Grades Primary–3*, pp. 228-232, pp. 391-394, 2014, Nova Scotia Department of Education.
- *Teaching in Action Grades Primary–3: A Teaching Resource*, pp. 43–45, 2006, Nova Scotia Department of Education.
- *6 + 1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades*, Chapter 4, 2005, Ruth Culham, Scholastic Inc.
- *Creating Young Writers: Using the Six Traits to Enrich Writing Process in Primary Classrooms*, pp. 104–108, 2004, Vicki Spandel, Pearson.
- *6 +1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades,* The Primary Scoring Guide: Ideas, p. 104 (teachers), 2005, Ruth Culham, Scholastic Inc.
- *6 + 1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades,* My First Scoring Guide for Ideas, p. 133 (students), 2005, Ruth Culham, Scholastic Inc.

Writing Lesson Learned 3

Language Use: Students need to use voice, style, word choice, and varied syntax to contribute to clear and fluid written communication.

To support writers to use voice, style, word choice, and varied syntax to contribute to clear and fluid written communication:

Try these Teaching Suggestions	Try these Assessment Suggestions
a) **Readers' Theatre:** Students love to be on their feet whenever possible! Provide scripts for rehearsal and performance that give students the opportunity to "dramatize" works such as folk tales, fairy tales, fables, and poetry. The emphasis given to characters in performance enhances the learners' ability to embed a personalized voice in associated writing. By regularly using Readers' Theatre scripts, reading fluency is also practiced and improved. However, it is important to make explicit the connection to using similar effects in their own writing. If students become familiar with various techniques for bringing a story to life as they read, they can transfer these strategies to their writing. b) **Speed!** Expanding vocabulary so that students have a broader base of words from which to choose as they write is important. In this example, the focus is on speeding up or slowing down the writing adverb choice (e.g., "fast" adverbs are *swiftly, rapidly, briskly, abruptly, suddenly*, etc.; "slow" adverbs are *gradually, sluggishly, leisurely*, etc.). Students can hunt for adverbs in books and magazines, provide examples that they already know, or search for them online. Once they have a good inventory of adverbs, they can qualify the speed of their writing based on word choice and usage. For example, students can select a single paragraph from their own writing and examine how the description could be further enhanced. Students need explicit teaching around how to "explode" their paragraph to make it come alive through the use of vivid language. Reading aloud a sample story with vivid description can model how word choice can impact a piece of writing. c) **Poetry:** Poetry is naturally fluent and has rhythm, and, perhaps, rhyme that models the prosody that needs to be embedded in their writing. Compose and share varieties of poetic forms often!	**Conversations:** Provide lots of opportunity for students to talk about voice, word choices, and fluency in their writing. Provide various samples of obvious strong and distinguishable voices in writing and listen as they discuss the elements necessary to have voice in writing and identify the benefits of voice. Listen in to conversations about how certain words are a better "fit" than others. How does the way a sentence is structured affect the quality of the writing? **Observations:** Watch students as they use body language to enhance character development during Readers' Theatre, as they search for new words such as fast and slow adverbs to add to their repertoire in books, magazines and on-line. **Products:** Collect and assess various artifacts looking for voice, word choice, and fluency (flow) in the writing.

Selected Resources

- *English Language Arts Curriculum Guide Grades Primary–3*, pp. 228-232, pp. 440-445, 2014, Nova Scotia Department of Education.
- *Teaching in Action Grades Primary–3: A Teaching Resource*, pp. 43–45, 2006, Nova Scotia Department of Education.
- *6 + 1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades*, Chapters 5, 6, 7, 2005, Ruth Culham, Scholastic Inc.
- *Creating Young Writers: Using the Six Traits to Enrich Writing Process in Primary Classrooms*, pp. 109–124, 2004, Vicki Spandel, Pearson.
- *6 +1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades,* The Primary Scoring Guide: Ideas, p. 140, 174, 209 (teachers), 2005, Ruth Culham, Scholastic Inc.
- *6 + 1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades,* My First Scoring Guide for Ideas, p. 169, 203, 239 (students), 2005, Ruth Culham, Scholastic Inc.

Writing Lesson Learned 4

Conventions: Students need to use correct conventions (punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, noun-pronoun agreement, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, spelling of frequently used words) to contribute to effective written communication.

Young writers show increasing control of conventions as they become aware of the need based on the audience and the purpose for their writing. It's like cleaning up after the party; the party being the actual act of writing, and cleaning up, as required, in order for the written meaning to be clearly communicated to the reader. Specifically, adhering to conventions in writing takes place largely within the editing and proofreading stages of the writing process.

To support writers to use correct conventions to contribute to effective written communication:

Try these Teaching Suggestions	Try these Assessment Suggestions
a) **Convention Hunt:** (Spandel, 2004, pp. 125–131) Provide time for students to work in pairs in a "free hunt" experience, whereby students just go looking for basic conventions that are familiar to them (such as period, comma, exclamation mark, and question mark). Follow up to broaden the base by introducing other conventional forms through browsing through big books or providing a projected similar story that has exceptional opportunities for students to see other forms of conventions. Discuss how these conventions add to the reader's clarity of understanding and have students offer examples. Hold another Convention Hunt; this time students expand the search for a greater variety of conventions, while discussing how they are and can be used to increase a more thorough understanding of the reading. b) **Self and Peer Editing:** Students can self and peer edit on a regular basis as authentic opportunities throughout the writing process present themselves. Keep the focus on one thing at a time with the youngest learners, from remembering to put their name on their work to dating and spacing. Always double space rough drafts so that there is room below the original work to make the edits needed. By doing this, students can see what they had, and the edits that were made to make the writing clearer for the reader. Also, for older writers, providing editing checklists and symbols for ready reference (see Appendix H) and lots of writing tools in the writing centre gives young writers lots of reasons to be excited about	**Conversations:** Lots of whole group and small group discussion will help ensure that exposure to and distinctions around conventional detail become well understood and applied with a level of automaticity during editing. Listening to what students say to each other in dialogue around the hunt for familiar and less familiar conventional features, as well as listening to how they help one another through the editing process provides lots of evidence of knowing what the student has under control. It also offers teachers valuable information about the next steps for whole group, small group, and individual instruction. **Observations:** Watch the interactions among students as they search for various conventional examples that they do know and recognize as a conventional tool, even if they are not certain as to how they are used. See how pairs of students use reference tools such as anchor charts, dictionaries, or thesauri to check various editing strategies as they process their writing in this stage. **Products:** Regularly analyze various artifacts of conventions such as collections of samples, rough draft edits done independently or with a partner (using double-spaced, rough draft, lined paper so the evidence of editing attempts are known), and everyday writing samples such as journal entries or quick writes to monitor progress and inform instruction. Is the student noticing that a misspelled word was modeled in some feedback and then applied in a subsequent writing attempt? Was it sustained beyond a one-time correction? Use all writing sample products to determine what the student has under control over time.

Try these Teaching Suggestions	Try these Assessment Suggestions
cleaning up their writing so that readers can make good sense of the messages within. c) **Model/not correct:** It is always good modeling to provide regular, descriptive, and immediate (if possible) feedback to students' writing. Within the written feedback, there are always lots of opportunities to model correct spelling, use of punctuation etc. within your response rather than pointing out obvious "errors" within this domain.	

Selected Resources

- *English Language Arts Curriculum Guide Grades Primary–3*, pp. 440-449, 2014, Nova Scotia Department of Education.

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