Best Practices in Writing
(Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde)

Increase	Decrease
Student ownership and responsibility by: • Helping students choose their own topics and goals for improvement • Using brief teacher-student conferences • Teaching students to review their own progress	Teacher control of decision making by: • Teacher deciding on all writing topics • Suggestions for improvement dictated by teacher • Learning objectives determined by teacher alone • Instruction given as whole-class activity
Class time spent on writing whole, original pieces through: • Establishing real purposes for writing and students' involvement in the task • Instruction in and support for all stages of writing process • Prewriting, drafting, revising, editing	Time spent on isolated drills on "subskills" of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, paragraphing, penmanship, etc. Writing assignments given briefly, with no context or purpose, completed in one step
Teacher modeling writing—drafting, revising, sharing—as a fellow author and as demonstration of processes	Teacher talks about writing but never writes or shares own work
Learning of grammar and mechanics in context, at the editing stage, and as items are needed	Isolated grammar lessons, given in order determined by textbook, before writing is begun
Writing for real audiences, publishing for the class and for wider communities	Assignments read only by teacher
Making the classroom a supportive setting for shared learning, using: • Active exchange and valuing of students' ideas • Collaborative small-group work • Conferences and peer critiquing that give responsibility for improvement to authors	Devaluation of students' ideas through: • Students viewed as lacking knowledge and language abilities • Sense of class as competing individuals • Work with fellow students viewed as cheating, disruptive
Writing across the curriculum as a tool for learning	Writing taught only during "language arts" period—i.e., infrequently.
Constructive and efficient evaluation that involves: • Brief informal oral responses as students work • Thorough grading of just a few of student-selected, polished pieces • Focus on a few errors at a time • Cumulative view of growth and self-evaluation • Encouragement of risk taking and honest expression	Evaluation as negative burden for teacher and student by: • Marking all papers heavily for all errors, making teacher a bottleneck • Teacher editing paper, and only after completed, rather than student making improvements • Grading seen as punitive, focused on errors not growth