



# Writing Through the Tween Years: Supporting Writers, Grades 3-6

*Bruce Morgan*

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*It's not easy being a tween. A lot of us are either in a tunnel or a bridge. A lot of us don't know who we are. Instead of following Barney's advice, we end up doing what pop stars do.*

Kelley, age 10

No longer little children, but not yet teenagers, tweens are beginning to see themselves as autonomous while still struggling to understand where they fit in. It can also be an awkward time for teachers who cherish the hilarious and poignant personalities of tween writers, but feel pressured by a new emphasis on testing in the intermediate grades. Many teachers have virtually abandoned writers' workshops in favor of formula writing and prompts, even though these workshops may be essential for understanding the emerging competencies and personalities of eight- to twelve-year-olds. Bruce Morgan and Deb Odom teach together at a school where formula writing and test preparation led to stagnant writing scores, student boredom, and teacher discouragement. They worked with their colleagues in grades 3-6 to make some dramatic changes in their collective writing instruction. These changes included a return to their roots as writing workshop teachers, but with new twists. The teaching staff drew up new common standards for writing assessment and achievement. The revised writing programs also involved integrating insights from reading strategy instruction with a renewed emphasis on the basics of writers' workshop: student choice, teacher modeling, revision, and using quality children's literature as mentor text. *Writing Through the Tween Years* documents how teachers can get back to the joys of teaching writing in a literature-rich, thoughtful environment. There may be no better way to understand and reach tween writers.

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