



Make Every Step the Write Step

## CASE STUDY:

Washington Elementary, Lodi, New Jersey

NAESP National  
Distinguished Principal  
of the Year Makes  
Writing a Top Priority



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# Making Writing a Top Priority at Washington Elementary

One of the most difficult challenges Emil Carafa, principal of Washington Elementary School, 2015 Visionary Principal of the Year, 2015 NAESP National Distinguished Principal of the Year, and past president of the New Jersey Principals Association, had in his career was to instill a culture of writing at his school.

“It’s not that we weren’t doing writing at our school. We were. But the question was, were we teaching writing effectively across the grades to make our students better writers? This had been a challenge of mine over the past years that needed to be met head on,” said Emil Carafa. “So I set out on a quest to find a writing program where my school could create a culture of writing and utilize the program to improve writing and writing scores across the grade levels.”



*Emil Carafa, NAESP National Distinguished Principal of the Year, New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) Visionary Principal of the Year, past President of the NJPSA, Principal of Washington Elementary School, and Educator’s Leader Cadre Representative of New Jersey for PARCC.*

## Determining Needs

Collaboration is the key to any successful program or initiative that is implemented in a school. To change the perception of writing at his school, Emil first met with a committee of teachers to discuss writing and what they were looking for in a program.

During the meeting he discovered that teachers:

- 1 Needed more time for writing.
- 2 Needed professional development in writing.
- 3 Needed a writing program that was teacher-friendly and aligned to their state standards for English Language Arts.

## Establishing a Commitment to the Importance of Writing

As the instructional leader of the school, Emil knew he had to show his commitment to the importance of writing. He demonstrates this in a variety of ways.

“At my Back-to-School Parent-Teacher Association meeting, I had the opportunity to share with my school community our commitment to writing at Washington Elementary,” said Emil Carafa. “I explained to teachers and parents that writing was taking center stage at our school, and it was going to be the lead-in for all subject areas.”

Throughout the year, students were asked to share their writing with the

school community. Students would read their writing out loud to their classmates on a weekly basis during a time called, “Writer’s Workshop.”

Student writing was also displayed

in the school’s hallways throughout the year to demonstrate the school’s commitment to writing.

“We have a schoolwide assembly and select students’ papers that were interesting and well written,” explains Emil. “The assembly lasts about thirty minutes, and students love to read their work to the entire school community.”

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### The Quest to Find the Perfect Fit

While Emil was creating a strong writing environment at Washington Elementary, he was also on the hunt for a writing and grammar program. WriteSteps caught Emil's eye during a conference he was attending in New Jersey.

"The program was different; it made sense. My teachers did not have to be a content area specialist to use WriteSteps. There was professional development attached to the program, and there was a time schedule attached to each unit," said Emil. "BINGO! I believe I hit the jackpot! I knew I had discovered a program that fit the needs at my school."

After piloting WriteSteps, teachers in grade four could not contain their enthusiasm. They invited other teachers to their classes and shared what they had been doing with their students. The word spread like wildfire throughout the school. Grade five was chomping at the bit to try WriteSteps. After piloting for fourth grade, WriteSteps was purchased for the entire school.

### Washington Elementary School's writing scores have doubled since implementing WriteSteps.

"I'm so proud when I visit classrooms and observe effective writing instruction happening with my teachers across the grade levels," says Emil. "They love how everything they need is at their fingertips. With WriteSteps, my teachers don't have to do any extra planning or resource gathering. As we wrapped up our third year with WriteSteps, my staff was amazed at the progress their students had made."

"Our students and teachers are excited about writing every day! WriteSteps solved our challenge. I am extremely pleased with the outcome at my school!"

-Emil Carafa

During the past year, Emil has had other school districts visit Washington Elementary to see what an effective writing school looks like. Educational leaders are astounded at the progression of writing displayed in the school. They see the connection and the importance of all grades speaking the same language when it comes to writing.

eWriteSteps is the most teacher-friendly, K-5 writing and grammar program on the market. The digital curriculum:

- fuses its daily lesson plans with best practices such as the 6 traits of writing, Madeline Hunter lesson steps, Writer's Workshop, Multiple Intelligences, and Bloom's Taxonomy.
- gives teachers and students everything they need to develop their craft with confidence.
- can be used with interactive whiteboards, visual projectors, computers, tablets, iPads, and document cameras.



For further information, feel free to contact Emil Carafa at [Emil.Carafa@lodi.k12.nj.us](mailto:Emil.Carafa@lodi.k12.nj.us). If you would like to learn more about WriteSteps and how the K-5 writing and grammar program can help improve writing at your school, visit <http://WriteStepsWriting.com>.