

Learning Resources

Amazon Writing Tool Taps AI to Help Students Become Better Writers

- By [Sri Ravipati](#)
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Amidst back-to-school season, [Amazon Education](#) today released [TenMarks Writing](#), a new online curriculum designed to help students improve their writing skills.

The company back in 2013 acquired [TenMarks](#), an ed tech startup that allows individuals to develop easy-to-understand mathematics curricula for students. For the last year, Amazon has been working with teachers to develop a writing version of TenMarks that employs the same underlying artificial intelligence technology: natural language processing that can detect spelling and grammatical errors, as well as argument and story structure, and provide students with automatic and differentiated feedback.

TenMarks Writing is built to pass three writing tests:

1. Easy for teachers to use in the classroom;
2. Engaging and relevant for students; and
3. Does not compromise the regular writing process.

To meet these guidelines, teachers were directly involved in the development of TenMarks Writing, said Meera Vaidyanathan, director of curriculum products for Amazon Education, in an interview with *THE Journal*. “We heard teachers say they want more creative ways to build a love for writing, since it’s such an important skill for students to have in school, college and future careers,” Vaidyanathan said.

The online curriculum includes a few features that are designed to help students improve their writing and support teachers:

- Writing Coach;
- Bursts; and
- Teacher Resources.

Guiding Students from Pre-Write to Publish

First, the Writing Coach acts as a digital assistant that breaks down the writing process into bite-sized pieces from the pre-write to publish phases. Once a student selects a topic, they need to take a position and begin writing their point of view. Afterward, they are asked to brainstorm and prompted to list reasons, which in turn are used for the outline. The outline is shown in the form of a visual typewriter that enables them to drag-and-drop items and organize the information. Lastly, they are asked to create a thesis statement and can begin drafting the essay — still in manageable sections with guided instructions.

Image: Amazon.

Throughout the process, the Writing Coach leverages natural language processing, and might recommend to a student to use another word in a sentence or reorganize their essay, as examples. The revise and edit phase offers students feedback; once submitted, teachers can also add pre-set comments to save time, or add their own custom comments.

Meeting Students Where They Are

Next, Bursts are short, playful writing exercises that tap into the short writing format with which many students are already very familiar. Students first pick a format such as text messages, comments or freewriting. Then, they can either visit the topics page to find what interests them (i.e. arts, sports, food, animals) or generate a new topic with one click and begin writing.

The feature aims to engage students with exercises that try to make writing relevant to students. "We're trying to show that writing is really everywhere," said Lisa Asari, senior product manager of TenMarks Writing, in an interview. "Writing involves process, and Bursts is designed to help keep the process and build confidence without judgement."

Image: Amazon.

Teachers have been piloting Bursts, according to Amazon officials, and many are reporting students completing more than 100 Bursts within the first week of deployment. A fifth grade teacher at **Harold Schnell Elementary** in West Carrollton, OH who piloted TenMarks Writing said in a statement, "When [my students] finished their required work, they wrote entire stories in the text messaging format from Bursts, talking and laughing about how funny their stories were the whole time. They even asked if they could do more writing during recess!"

Built Out Teacher Support

Finally, TenMarks Writing offers teachers a one-stop-shop for everything they need to effectively teach writing, including lesson and unit plans, rubrics, graphic organizers and anchor charts. The “Opinion” unit, for example, includes all of the resources needed to teach students the prewrite, draft, revise and edit, and publish stages of an opinion essay.

Image: Amazon.

TenMarks Writing is now available at \$4 per student for the entire year. Amazon is currently offering educators a 30-day free trial.

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