Write Now Lesson Plan + Handouts
PERFECT SCHOOL, PERFECT PITCH

This is a copy of the **1st lesson** pulled directly from our
Write Now Lesson Plan Pack.

The full **Write Now Lesson Plan Pack** includes 5 innovative lesson plans that situate writing in real contexts

Yo, I'm Jill!

I live on macha green tea lattes + nerdy lesson planning sessions.

I'm on a mission to flip the script on how we teach today's writers, so...

I provide secondary ELA teachers with the
resources + mindset
they need to make the
writing process
more
relevant + applicable
for today's learners and tomorrow's leaders.

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PERFECT SCHOOL, PERFECT PITCH

No matter what kind of leaders they will go on to become, our students will need the combined power of energy and persuasion to win the world over with their talents + ideas.

In this lesson, students will redesign their school's physical structure, then create a pitch powerful enough to get teachers and related stakeholders to 'buy in' to their design.

LEARNING Targets PDF

PERFECT SCHOOL, PERFECT PITCH

Clearly some environments are more conducive to the learning process than others.

But just how linked is learning with layout?

Plenty of articles exist touting the latest trends in classroom design, and many an Instagram photo shows off non-conventional classroom structuring. From bean bags to ergonomics, tablet docking stations, natural lighting and white board desks, it's still largely unclear if these modern fashions merely promote unbacked fads?

A lot of that has to do with the unique needs of a local campus; design surely can't be one size fits all, right?

So it's time to turn to the students themselves to see what they most prefer when it comes to maximizing academic productivity on campus!

And while every young adult likely wants a zip line from Building 4 to the cafeteria, not all designs will fit the 'relevance' bill when it comes to learning, so the key to this project is that all ideas must be rooted in research and compared against the needs of local reality.

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The Ron Clark Academy is a school unlike any other, bursting with color, passion, and energy. A repurposed factory as the physical plant, believe it or not, it's a place where kids actually *want* to be.

Why is that?

Have students view the video 'Welcome to the Ron Clark Academy,' (first one at the top of the page, or view via YouTube here).

Ask them to take notes on why this school is so appealing and/or ideal for learning (particularly in relationship to the physical aspects), and have them record these observations in the left-hand column.

In the right-hand column, verify or challenge the relevance of these design decisions.

Then come together to ponder these observations as a whole class. Why might there be a trampoline in the school, for instance? To what extent is that helping learning (maybe it's for a science lesson, or maybe it's just for funsies!)?

As another conversation piece, ask students to think about colors and other features. In what ways might these contribute to (or detract from) learning? Why did the designers make these decisions, and how did they know they'd work? Who might they have needed to consult in this regard?

PERFECT SCHOOL, PERFECT PITCH

Lesson Part 1

1 | Ask students to think about their school's physical layout in accordance with learning. How conducive is this layout to the learning process?

To help them make these connections, gather students into collaborative groups and ask them to create a blueprint of their existing high school campus.

They should include all areas of the property, labeling each part and offering a brief summary of each area's purpose in accordance with the school's vision + mission for carrying out the learning process.

2 | Once this audit is complete, have them step back and think about what they might change about the campus' physical layout to level-up the learning environment. Allow for moonshots in this early phase, i.e. that aforementioned zipline! As they think of ideas, have groups place these ideas on individual post-it notes + add to a designated classroom wall or white board space.

3 | Next, ask students to gallery walk the many ideas shared, clustering them into like-minded groups of ideas. Once they've gained further inspiration from their walk (or walk-n-chalk, if you invite them to add to or critique ideas offered), have them return to their groups and begin prototyping their ultimate School Campus Dream Design.

Let your students dream as big as they want without limits to the concepts they create. They can draw it out, or provide them with (or allow them to bring in) things like Lego, molding clay, aluminum foil, cardboard, wrapping paper, rubber bands, random household items, or any other odds-and-ends, which might help them give physical shape to their designs.

This first design is their *un-researched* argument...

4 | Now it's time to back their ideas with evidence to prove that their vision for this new + improved 'dream campus' will actually aid in the learning process. Chances are, some revision is going to be needed!

So now that students are warmed-up and plenty inspired by the possibilities in school campus re-design, ask them to seek out the research which supports the kind of ideas they conjured up in their design.

They should work methodically through each portion of the campus, considering their ideas against research realities, and recording this process along the way.

If an idea they dreamed up has research to back its effectiveness, they should record their sources and corroborate them. If an outlandish idea of theirs has no evidence to back it--OR has evidence contrary to it--they should record this plus offer a design alternative, or 'pivot', from the original along with evidence and corroboration.

If they come across ideas that they didn't think of during the initial design phase but are backed by research as conducive to learning, they can add these into their revisions.

Check out these resources for potential use at the start of and/or during this phase:
- '<u>Classroom design should follow evidence, not fads</u>,' *The Conversation*
- '<u>Why Flexible Learning Environments?</u>' *Getting Smart*
- '<u>Flexible Classrooms: the research is scarce, but promising</u>,' *Edutopia*
- '<u>The 14 Most Futuristic Schools</u>,' *Inverse*

5 | So with all these research findings in mind, groups should now create an updated, 2.0 of their campus design.

This latter version is their researched argument, and it should immediately reflect their school's current vision and mission.

6 | Finally, groups will share their completed, 'researched argument' design with another group, whose job will be to cross check the School Design concept by looking into the research to verify and either accept or reject the choices made.

[NOTE: Students may notice that what they deem acceptable on their own design, they might be quick to judge on others' designs, thereby teaching them about bias and perspective!]

Lesson Part 2

7 | Now that they've had some feedback on their prototype (and that they have a taste of the competition!), student groups will create a 30-second speech to 'pitch' their design to a group of relevant stakeholders from the local area in order to obtain funding for its development.

[TIP: potential panelists could be parents or community members who are experts in fields like design, architecture, urban planning, or the like; community, campus and district personnel (ex. Director of Curriculum, Media Specialist, School Psychologist, Campus Police officer, etc.)

During their pitch, they should be sure to cite their research, of course.

But the 'Elevator Pitch' as it's called, should be employed for this unique situation. You're welcome to use the generic framework provided below, or you can invite your students to research what makes a good pitch, then create their own through a synthesis of these findings.

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Elevator Pitch: basic framework

(source: K. Brookhouser, the 20Time Project)

1. **Problem Statement:** explain what is wrong with the status quo, and why it's a significant problem.
2. **It gets worse:** explain how failing to solve this problem could cause more problems.
3. **Glimmer of hope:** suggest that the situation is not irreversible.
4. **The novel solution:** explain how their innovative design can help solve the problem in a realistic + workable way.
5. **The credible authority:** demonstrate that you are the right person to solve the problem and that you've uniquely put in the kind of work to guarantee results (i.e. what sets your group's idea apart from the competition?)
6. **The vision:** inspire the audience by painting a picture of how the world might look under your design and how it will effectively solve the existing problem.

Some 'added touches' might include involving the audience in the experience, mentioned as one of '21 Principles of Persuasion' noted in this Forbes article.

Another great option to help your students prepare is to study/analyze the various pitches on the popular television series, *Shark Tank*. A favorite of mine, which demonstrates a genuine 'why' + no-nonsense need is the LuminAid pitch. Invite your students to deconstruct all the ways this pitch shines in the eyes of its potential investors.

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ASSESSMENT

Students rehearse then present their Design Proposals to selected panelists who will then determine whose design they're most likely to invest in and why.

Panelists will offer feedback on how well researched, rehearsed, and prepared student groups were for their pitch, and score them out via standards-based reporting cards.

These scores will be factored into the teacher's own marks and final score, as well as students' self-reporting debrief with the teacher regarding how well they perceived their performance and through-task efforts to be.

Suggested approach to assessment:

Using a standards-based scale of 1-4 (1 = emerging, 2 = developing, 3 = achieved, 4 = exceeded), gather assessment data in 3 different ways:

1. *Sit with students and invite them to rate their own performance in each area. Walk them through each standard and help them understand each objective and the difference between levels to see where they think they stand.*
2. *Get feedback from panelists by asking them to assess students based on the standards set for this activity. Prior to, walk panelists through each standard, helping them understand the objectives and the difference between levels to see how they rate performances.*
3. *Rate the learner yourself. Based on your own observations and the perspectives you've gleaned from others (including the student him/herself), how well do you think the student did in achieving the learning objectives?*

When gathering assessment data, avoid leading or close-ended questions. Use inquiry-driven methods to help students arrive at their own insights, which will ultimately inform your own scoring.

Once you've gathered all assessment data, you can either merge the scores or simply use the 'informed scores' you determined from the process entire.

Suggestions for Standards-to-gradebook Conversion:

In converting standards-based scores of 1-4 to the gradebook, here is how I (personally) approach this process:

- *4 (96-100%) The student has exceeded expectation on this task, awarding him/her a mid-level A*
- *(95%) or above.*
- *3 (90-95%) The student has met the learning objective and received a low-to-mid level A.*
- *2 (74-89%) The student is still developing the skill, which can range. At the lowest point in this category, the student lands an average C range, and the highest point being equivalent to a B.*
- *1 (68-74%) The student has an emergent understanding of the skill but still needs plenty more exposure + practice. This score ranges between a high-level D or a low-to-mid- level C.*
- **67% and below** *would indicate unengaged or incomplete work. Scores of D and F are reserved for those students who purposefully did not attempt the work to their fullest ability or did not take advantage of the tasks at all (out of choice, not necessarily circumstance, i.e. absence).*

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REFLECTION

In this particular activity, students get to create with their hands as they design their schools, and they conduct research to support their innovations. They also get practice with public speaking. But what about writing?

Apart from recording their research, and writing out their speeches, students will need a chance to reflect on how the many steps they've taken throughout this lesson are in alignment with the writing process. Specifically, how the designs they created represent the basic elements of an argument and how they spoke each of these as they explained their school concepts (i.e. claim, reasons, evidence, transitions).

<u>Reflecting on tangible application of skill</u>

Ask small, collaborative groups to ponder the different ways the skills and outcomes built during these tasks might prove useful otherwise.

- Where might they use the skills they've acquired in design thinking or in creating an elevator pitch again?
- Identify a passion, talent, or area of interest you have…how might the skills you've practiced in this lesson translate into your pursuit of that interest?
- In what other contexts might they need the ability + confidence to pitch their ideas in the futures they envision for themselves?
- How would they need to adjust their approach in these different instances, and how might their know-how help them stand out amongst the rest?

Have groups create 2-3 unique scenarios to share with the rest of the class.

Write Now Lesson Handouts

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Use these student handouts and templates to work through the Perfect School, Perfect Pitch project with students.

WELCOME TO RON CLARK ACADEMY

Perfect School, Perfect Pitch: Warmup activity

*In the left-hand column, take notes on why this school is so appealing and/or ideal for learning
(particularly in relationship to the physical aspects).
In the right-hand column, verify or challenge the relevance of these design decisions.*

OBSERVATIONS	CHALLENGE

PERFECT SCHOOL, PERFECT PITCH

Group Work: School Audit

BIG IDEA
*Think about our school's physical layout in accordance with learning.
How conducive is this layout to the learning process?*

TASK
Use the space below to create a campus/school blueprint, labeling each part of the campus or school (as directed by the teacher) and offer a brief summary of each area's purpose in accordance with the school's vision + mission for carrying out the learning process.

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Group Work: School Audit

BIG IDEA
Think about our school's physical layout in accordance with learning.
How conducive is this layout to the learning process?

TASK
Consider your campus blueprint and think about what they might change about the campus' physical layout to level-up the learning environment. As you think of ideas, your ideas in the boxes below, cut them out, + add to the assigned location.

PERFECT SCHOOL, PERFECT PITCH
Group Work: School Audit

Now that you have a part of the school you are focused on, and a plan for what you are considering as a solution, it's time to research. Try to find some research to support your idea. Document that research below. If you come across ideas that you didn't think of during the initial design phase but are backed by research as conducive to learning, add these into your designs.

Research Notes	Citations

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Group Work: School Audit

You will spend time talking to another group about their project, reviewing their research and planning, and verifying their design while also providing feedback. Use the timeline below to guide your time together.

Timeline

(10 minutes)
- Talk to the other group and get an overview of their design, decisions, and research.

(15 minutes)
- Review all research and sources looking for the following...

    - Accuracy of claims (does research stay in context)

    - Does the research truly support the project.

    - Strength of source (the source is timely and from a reputable source)

(10 minutes)
- Review the plans and/or prototype and brainstorm as a group before providing feedback and suggestions on ways to improve the project.

(10 minutes)
- Meet with the group again or provide written feedback as directed by your teacher.

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Group Work: School Audit

Now that you've had some feedback on your prototype and plans, create a 30-second speech to 'pitch' your design to a group of relevant stakeholders with the (hypothetical) goal to obtain funding for its development. This kind of speech is commonly called an elevator pitch.

During your pitch, be sure to cite your research.

Use the space below to brainstorm an outline for the speech with your group, but consider using a computer to type out your final speech.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

How do you feel about the pitch your group created? What are your overall feelings and reflections on the process?

What were your sources of inspiration in terms of your pitch's structure, visual appeal, contents, style, etc.?

Rate the anticipated success of this pitch. Are there any details or changes that could have been improved upon to make the argument more successful?

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Write out the process you worked through as you completed this project.

In what ways did your process benefit you? In what ways could you improve upon this process?

Were there any new tools or resources you learned about as part of this process? How could you see those tools serving you in the future?

After sharing your project and process with others, what is some key feedback you recieved or observations you made from watching others pitch their projects that you will consider either with this project or with other projects in the future?

GROUP REFLECTION

Create 2-3 unique scenarios (based on your own lives!) to share with the rest of the class for each of the questions below.

1 Where might you use the skills you've acquired in design thinking or in creating an elevator pitch again?

2 Identify a passion, talent, or area of interest you have...how might the skills you've practiced in this lesson translate into your pursuit of that interest?

3 In what other contexts might you need the ability + confidence to pitch your ideas in the futures you envision for yourselves?

4 How would you need to adjust their approach in these different instances, and how might your know-how help your stand out amongst the rest?