

Dear Friends,

Looking back and looking forward: On a mission to make a difference! You can help!



Transitioning from 13 years in Taiwan to the U.S. gave me an opportunity to look back on my 25 years in education, reflect on them, and then consider how I want to go forward. I evaluated what I had learned about how children learn and what allows them to be successful; I reflected on what science has discovered about how the brain learns; I reviewed the many changes to curriculum that have occurred; I identified the curricular areas and objectives that continue to fall short of our goals; and I considered how I could best use my skill set, expertise, and experience to make a positive difference in the world. Specifically, I recognized that our young people need help and guidance in becoming critical thinkers and effective communicators.

Our kids are the future of our world. They are the future problem-solvers, policy-makers, decision-makers, and voters (who need to compare, contrast, and evaluate their choices). We do not want them to be dependent on a computer to do their thinking for them. Critical thinking skills include the ability to analyze, make connections, solve problems, understand cause and effect, compare and contrast, evaluate, create, and more.

Part of the joy of thinking, though, is to communicate our ideas with others! Otherwise, our ideas just stay in our own brain, remain unknown to everyone else, and cannot be used to make a positive difference in the world. One of the main ways to communicate is through writing.

As I contemplated all of these things, and thought about the work I have done in education, I decided to take on the challenge of publishing a one-year curriculum for students in grades 3 up through 5 or 6.

Back in 2002, I created a one-year curriculum that was approved by my public school in upstate New York. I then trained all of the third-grade teachers in the school on how to use it, and we piloted it for two years. I witnessed every third-grade student be successful. Students with ASD or Asperger's, with ADHD, with learning disabilities, with the classification of "gifted and talented," and more. They thrived. They found joy in writing. In my curriculum, I include many examples of the writing that those students did during those two years.

I continued to use the curriculum over the next 20 years with ELL students, and with students in other grades. I believe that the curriculum has value, and so I decided to publish it. To achieve that goal, last year I started a small publishing business that I named Lūminé Press, LLC.

Title: A.S.K. Language Arts: Reading with Comprehension, Thinking with Skill, and Writing with a Plan

This one-year program allows students to improve in both their critical thinking skills (seen in reading comprehension), and in their writing skills. Here is how it works:

First, much of the writing is done in response to reading literature. Before the student writes a literary analysis, the focus is on improving one's critical thinking skills, and that in turn improves one's overall reading comprehension. How is it possible to improve one's thinking skills? I believe that students who don't know what to say, or what to think about, are simply not sure what the question is. They depend on the teacher or the curriculum to tell them what the question is. But, if the student learns what questions to ask himself for every step in the process, they will become more independent thinkers.

One of the ways the student will learn this is by watching the videos which are included in the curriculum. In them, I (the teacher) model the metacognitive strategy of stating my thoughts out loud. Specifically, I state out loud the questions I am asking myself before, during, and after reading.

In this way, the student is able to learn first from observing, then by imitating, and finally through repetition to the point of mastery. This process involves a gradual hand-off of responsibility from the teacher to the student. By the end of the unit, the student will feel empowered and confident to write independently using the same step-by-step process that has been repeated throughout the unit.

If you are interested, you can help! The process of taking several hundred Word document files and turning them into illustrated books requires several different areas of expertise, ranging from graphic designers to illustrators to web designers to publishing consultants to marketing managers. Currently, I have a great team and we are heading down the final stretch! A soft launch of the website occurred on May 23, 2025. Keep an eye on it as much content will be added in June and July. There is a place on the website where, if you feel led, you may be a donor for this project. There is also a place on the website where one can pre-order the curriculum. The goal is for 1,000 pre-orders by December. If we reach that number, the curriculum will be printed by a book-printing company and distributed in January so that it is ready for the 2026-2027 school year.

The initial marketing will focus on the homeschooling market worldwide, but the curriculum could be of use in the following ways as well:

- Homeschoolers: grades 3-5. (also appropriate for a high second grader, or a sixth-grader wanting to develop confidence in their writing)
- Schools (for an entire class or grade-level)
- Teachers who are looking for an effective method of teaching writing
- Students who are not homeschooling but who would like to gain confidence as a writer.
- Cram schools or specialized schools that help students prepare for attending high school or college in the USA or any English-speaking country.

Components of the curriculum:

1. **Teacher Books (4):** These include step-by-step directions for how to teach the curriculum, examples of student writing, and “guides” for what a completed graphic organizer and paragraph or essay might look like for each assignment. There are four of these (one per quarter).
2. **Student Books (4):** There is one of these for each quarter. Included in these books are stories I have written myself, and stories I have written with students.
3. **Videos of each lesson being taught by a teacher.** With purchase of the curriculum, these are provided for the first 1-2 lessons of each of the ten units. As a separate purchase, the entire year’s set of lessons will be available on streaming video.

Starting a small business is daunting but exciting, and I look forward to every day as I believe in the potential this curriculum has to help many young people gain confidence as readers, critical thinkers, and writers. Whether you would like to be a donor or not, please consider joining the mailing list, following the Facebook page, and staying in touch! I appreciate your support of education and your friendship!

Sincerely,

Elsie Lungren

