

Minnesota Writing Project

Demonstration Lesson Template

Title: Peer Conferencing in the Writing Workshop: Teaching Students to Have Meaningful Discussions About Their Writing

Grade appropriate: All grade levels K-12 and higher

Approximate Length of time to complete lesson/unit: This is an on going process that involves different amounts of time depending on where you are in the process and the age of your students.

Learning objectives and significance of lesson:

- Through peer conversations students will learn how to write as a reader, taking in compliments, suggestions and questions that a peer reader poses for them.
- Students will learn to read others' and ultimately their own writing thoughtfully and critically in order to help improve writing content and organization.

Background: This past school year I experimented with teaching my second graders how to have meaningful conversations about their writing. I found that the process took a lot of **routine, consistency, modeling, guidance and practice**. However, I also noticed students' writing improved as did their discussions about their writing throughout the year. They became more aware of their growth as a writer and enjoyed the process of discussing and sharing their writing with others.

Brief summary/outline:

Getting Started Teaching the Process of Peer Conversing in the Classroom

- Explain the importance of conversation in the writing process.
- Discuss guide lines on time. Depending on grade level, peer conferencing can take anywhere from 10-30 minutes. Students should have the opportunity to peer conference often---on a weekly basis.
- Discuss how to record the compliments, suggestions or questions given to the writer. One idea is to have the peer editor or the writer fill out a form with the comments or questions.
- Discuss what the writer does with the compliments, questions, or suggestions.
- Go through the scaffolding process with just one of the three types of responses (compliments, questions, suggestions) at a time.
- Provide sentence starters to help students with their responses and post these in the room.
- **Model** how to begin meaningful conversations about writing. Modeling can be done with your own writing and Think-Alouds or with a volunteer student's writing.
- **Guide** students in having conversations about their writing that help them improve as writers. Guiding activities can include students having a conversation about your

writing or a volunteer student's writing. Or you can do a fishbowl exercise in which the class watches as two students or a student and teacher demonstrate a conversation about a piece of writing. The audience then tells what they noticed about the demonstration.

- **Independent Practice:** Let students practice peer editing and revision using the strategies they have learned.
- **Reflect** and **Revisit** the process often.

Related Resources:

Graves, D. (1991). Writing: Teachers and children at Work. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Jackson N., Pillow P.(1992).The Reading Writing Workshop. Scholastic

Wood Ray, K.(1999).Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom.

National Council of Teachers of English

Kirby, D., Kirby, D., Liner, T.(2004).Inside Out, Strategies for Teaching Writing.Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Anderson,C.(2000).How's it Going: A Practical Guide to Confering with Students.

Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Caulkins,L., Hartman, A., Ryder, Z.(2005).One to One: The Art of Confering with Young Writers.Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Peer Conferencing forms from Welcome to English to Go:

http://www.etg4me.com/downloads/schreibwettbewerb_06/swb_pcfag.pdf

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:

- Video tape student peer conferences as a model for the class.
- Tape record students' conversations so they can replay them and recall information.
- Give students a list with response starters on it to use during the conversations.
- Have students exchange writing pieces before the conference to read and make notes about revision.

For additional information, contact:

Sarah Rutledge: rutledge.sarah@slpschools.org