

Minnesota Writing Project

--- Demonstration Lesson Template ---

Title of lesson: How to Introduce Peer Conferencing

Suggested grade/age: 4th grade

Approximate time needed to complete lesson: 45 minutes

Before this Lesson:

- Lay the groundwork for peer conferences by modeling and practicing prerequisite skills in class: share teacher and student writing aloud, listen carefully, respond with specific positive comments, ask thoughtful questions.
- Model and show students strategies for revising writing.

Learning objectives:

- Introduce purposes of peer conferences
- Model using PATS form for written feedback. (Praise, Ask a question, Tell something you remember, Suggest an idea)
- Participate in peer conferences
- Reflect on peer conference.
- Plan how to revise writing (tomorrow)

Best Practices:

- Access prior knowledge/experience
- Explicit goals
- Model, practice, reflect on conference

Brief summary/outline of lesson:

- **Set:** We know that writers revise their writing again and again. One way they get ideas for revising is by sharing their work with other writers.
- **Goals:** Participate in a peer conference so that you can get feedback that will help you revise writing.
- **Define peer conference:** a conference with other students about your writing
- **Assess students' experience peer conferencing:** Fist to Five (Students hold up fist. Zero fingers up shows me that you have no experience with conferencing. Five fingers shows that you are an expert. One-four fingers up shows that you are somewhere between a beginner and an expert.) How much experience do you have with peer conferencing?
- **Access prior knowledge:** How have you used peer conferences in the past? Record ideas on A-Z Taxonomy chart.
- **Share the plan for today:** Why conference? How to conference? Participate in conference, Reflect on conference, Revise writing.
- **Why peer conferences?** Immediate feedback, helps the writer and the listener. Connect to writing conferences with the teacher.
- **How-to peer conference?**

- Focus on writing strategies we've learned (on chart paper, such as writing similes, sensory words, descriptive phrases...). As you conference today, keep these strategies in mind. Use them to help you give specific praise and ask questions. For example: "This simile...helps me to hear the frightening sound of the thunderstorm."
- Build on skills we've already practiced: share writing, listen carefully, respond with thoughtful comments, and ask thoughtful questions (on chart paper)
- Hand out PATS form with the next 3 bullet points and PATS steps:
- Sit knee-to-knee, eye-to-eye.
- 2 jobs: Writer owns the writing. Listener focuses on careful listening.
- Process:
 1. Writer reads aloud
 2. Listener listens carefully, writes a specific praise.
 3. Writer reads aloud again
 4. Listener listens carefully, asks a clarifying question.
 5. Listener gives paper to writer
 6. Switch jobs
- T-Chart: Success looks like/sounds like:
 - focusing on the writing/respectful words
 - Model with a student: Student as writer, teacher as listener. Explicitly model listening for a praise, then writing it, then sharing it. Listening a second time, pausing to think of and write a question, writing it, then sharing it. Focus ONLY on the PA of the PATS form this first day.
 - Add to T-chart: "What did you notice in this peer conference?" Add "feels like" at the bottom of T chart.
 - Practice: Each partner will have six minutes to listen and respond to the other partner.
 - Find the writing piece that you want to share. If it's more than 1 page, choose one page to focus on during this conference.
 - Assign partners by handing out two of each playing card, numbers 1-10. When you choose your card, find partner that has the same card. Together, choose a place to sit, knee-to-knee, eye-to-eye and complete the top half of the conference form. Listener: black club or spade card. Writer: red heart or diamond card. I will collect the conference forms after the writer has seen them.
 - Monitor conferences, making note of successes and challenges.
 - Reflect: What went well for you and your partner? What was challenging?
 - Revisit writing: Now that you've heard read your paper aloud and heard a comment and a question, take 5 minutes to revisit your writing (or plan how you might revise your paper.) Is there anything you might add, delete, or change after today's conference?
 - Share: How did you revise your writing after today's conference?

More peer conferencing forms:

- 3-2-1: 3 compliments, 2 questions, 1 suggestion
- TAG: Tell what you like, Ask Questions, Give advice
- Bless, Address, Press

Next Steps:

- Collect and review PATS forms to assess quality of responses and inform instruction. Return PATS forms to writers the next day.
- In follow-up lessons: Two students model peer conference to check for understanding:
- Help students to articulate how they can benefit from both roles in peer conferencing.
- Engage students in conversations about what kind of feedback is helpful.
- Teach students that the writer can ask for specific feedback by asking questions.

Related Resources: PATS form

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:

- Scaffold the complexity of peer conferencing, starting with “Praise” and “Ask a question”, then adding “Tell something you remember” and “Suggest an idea”

For additional information, contact:

Janice Laven -- janlaven@edina.k12.mn.us