Minnesota Writing Project
--- Demonstration Lesson ---

How Do You Use Mentor Texts in the Primary Classroom?
The Kindergarten demo lesson inside the staff development session is "Using Mentor Text to Teach the Craft of Writing in Kindergarten"

Suggested grade/age: K-1, but with small modifications could be used at any level

Approximate time needed to complete lesson: 20 minutes for the Kindergarten demo inside the staff development session and 1 hour to complete the staff development session in full

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson:

The students will be able to add various elements of craft into their daily writing. The best practice in this lesson it to notice the element, name the element, and then show the children (over and over) how to implement it into our/their writing using the gradual release of responsibility strategy.

I am sharing this lesson in hopes of raising the bar for our young writers. I feel that teachers of young writers tend to focus all of their efforts and conferring time on conventions. Primary teachers spend so much time focusing our students attention toward spelling, letter formation, grammar, phonics, and punctuation that by the time the children leave the primary they are afraid to write or have a strong distaste for the physical act of writing. Children in kindergarten have a very strong voice when they start to write. I want to give my students something other than spelling and capital letters to think about after we confer. I want to make sure they still have voice after the innocence of their immature as been shed.

Brief summary/outline of lesson:

This is a lesson that I have done as early as September to introduce the idea to the students and to get them thinking (noticing) that there are elements of writing. I continue to model how to notice craft in several of our read alouds throughout the year. (Early on we sort read alouds by theme – later when the children start to own the language and the element, they will tell me to sort it into the book bin titles "books for writing". When I see this gradual release of responsibility- usually around March, I know it is time to talk about this element/craft in writers' workshop and remind the children that they can use this element in their writing too.)

'Notice and name' has been increasingly more successful for me in the past 3 years as I have taught kindergarten children to read and to write. It seems to help me teach to the strengths of the child's writing instead of trying to fix what they are doing wrong. LeAnn Trail says, "Highlight my strengths and my weaknesses will disappear." This has become my mantra for teaching.

Steps to the kindergarten demo lesson inside the staff development session

Connection – tell the students **why** you are teaching this lesson by connecting their known to the unknown. "I know that in writing…Yesterday I noticed that…"

Teach – demonstrate **how** the element is done. "I want to show you a writer who did this." I might also do a think aloud or a role play at this time to demonstrate in more detail.

Active Engagement – provide **practice** time on a well known text with you there to support. "Now we are going to try it together."

Link – restate/rename what was taught. "What we just did together, you can do all by yourself in writing, not just today, but every day."

Reread a title that the children are familiar with. Notice element that the author is using and then together with the children, think, and name the strategy. Describe how it looks and/or sounds. List the book where we saw it. Write an example from the text. Create an anchor chart for future use (see sample below).

Picture of the book	Notice It	Name It	Tell Why It Is Good
One Cold Duck	Use a sound word three times in a row	Use the same word 3 times.	"…click, click, click…" Helps the reader to pause and think about how the little duck feels.

Next, if appropriate, we would try the element on a story that we know very well or I would model it on one of my stories. I would ask the students to think, then if anyone had any ideas from their own writing that they would like to share. Finally, I would link it back to their writing today and every day.

As a teacher, I think the hardest part of teaching writing it learning to notice the crafts. So during the staff development session I would have teachers look through several children's books. I would like you to notice and name a craft in the simplest language (like kindergarten talk) and be prepared to share with the group.

Related Resources:

- ✓ One to One: The Art of Conferring with Young Writers by L. Calkins, Hartman, and White
- ✓ I Can Write Like That! By S. Ehmann and K. Gayer
- ✓ Talking, Drawing, and Writing: Lessons for our Youngest Writers by M. Horn and M. Giacobbe
- ✓ Reading and Writing connections in the K-2 Classroom by L. Mermelstein
- ✓ Helping Children Become Readers Through Writing by A. Schulze
- ✓ Interactive Writing by A. McCarrier, I. Foutas, and G. Pinnell
- ✓ Crafting Writers K-6 by E. Hale

  Handouts:
  - Mentor Texts matrix from I Can Write LikeThat! (great list of books to start with)
  - Student cumulative writing record from Talking, Drawing, Writing
  - Gathering Craft from literature form from Crafting Writers
  - Calendar Curriculums from Reading/Writing Connections in the K-2 Classroom (Find the Clarity then Blur the Lines)
  - Writing Assessment Criteria from Helping Children Become Readers Through Writing

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:

Other craft ideas that you could share with young children are –

- elements in drawing
  - People
  - clothing on people
  - Other ways to draw people
  - people in action
  - people from the back
  - hairstyles
  - skin, eyes, etc.
- dedication page
- author page
- dialogue
- proper names
- speech bubbles
- Repetition of a word
- Thoughts and feelings
- Writing with the sense of sound (sight, taste, touch, and/or smell)
- Including colors when we write
- Specific vs general (brand names)
- Describing the background (weather)

For Staff Development: I would have the teachers look at the picture books and identify craft by using kindergarten language to name it and describe it. I think this would deter the teachers from using their familiar 'jargon' and forcing them to actually simplify the language they use with their students.

For additional information, contact:

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