Aimee Buckner – 6/16/14

It Takes Courage to Teach Children Writing Well

Children won’t always choose topics we like.

Children won’t edit things perfectly.

Children won’t always take our advice or use what they are taught in the mini-lesson.

Rubrics and assessment are not black and white and writing isn’t always easy to grade.

We have to be willing to write. We need to show our students that we write to and the process we go through – model.

We have to protect class time for writing.

Writer’s Notebook

Use the black and white composition notebooks.

* It’s a place where a writer explores his/her thinking.
* It’s a reflection of who the writer is at any given time. Writing is a cycle
* It’s a tool where a writer makes decisions about his or her own writing.
* Rereading the notebook helps a writer to explore topics more deeply or in a new way. This is a good place to teach the importance or rereading. Have students reread their entries from the day before writing again the next day.
* As a writer becomes more diligent in keeping a notebook, the notebook will evolve in its purpose. Not true any longer that not all kids will become writers. All kids must be writers to survive in the 21st century.

The Mini-Lesson – Teach (10 min.)

Start mini-lesson with notebook, pencil, and glue stick. Have already printed and ready to cut out and glue in what the strategy you are going to write on the chart paper ahead of time, so you don’t have to wait for kids to copy it all in their notebooks.

Writing – Independent, Guided, Shared (30 min.)

When conferring, do not go over the entire piece but look for something you can coach or teach them, spending only 3-4 minutes, per student, and then move on.

Sharing – Summarize/Respond (5 min.)

Allow a few students to share, particularly students who did well with what you taught. Allow students to just share a few sentences of their writing, only give them a minute or so, so you can have a few students share. Also, note at this time when you notice something a lot of students are doing such as using “Because” a lot and say that tomorrow you will teach them something about that.

Let students decorate the covers of their notebooks to make them personal to them.

Student writing should be in notebooks – hand-written and be expected to write every day! During writing time, they must be writing – it is not optional. They need to choose the topics they want to write about. You should have taught them strategies to come up with topics to write about. They can type up their published their pieces on the computer, but the process should be hand-written unless a child needs a netbook for other reasons.

If a child has a private entry they do want you to read, they can fold the page over. Tell them these entries will not count toward their grade.

Do not go through and grade every entry. Let students know that if they know how to use punctuation, correct grammar, capitalization, etc… they need to use it as you will be looking for and grading those things in their work. Their work doesn’t have to be perfect, but they do need to show what they know and how to use what they know how to do in their writing.

The teacher should also keep a notebook of their own and share from it frequently so the students see you as a writer and going through the process as well. We all share books that we have read and enjoyed with our class, and it is the same way with writing.

In the beginning of the year, we need to model the sitting down and writing part, but as the year goes on the students should be able to do it on their own without you having to model this as frequently.

Ready or Not?

Looking for cues that students are ready for writer’s notebooks.

8 cues a Student is Ready for a Notebook

* Word Wise
* Fine Motor Skills
* Fluency
* Reading Level
* Stamina
* Abstract Thinking
* Maturity
* Habits of Mind (do they know they may need to reread their stories, can they pick their own strategies, able to come up with their own writing ideas,etc…)

If students are not able to write in a notebook by the end of third grade, you need to look into a learning issue the students are having.

When do you move from small picture/writing books to notebooks?

The reading level matters as to when to start a notebook. Students should be able to read several sentences on a page to be ready to write in a notebook. Students also need to have some stamina built up to be able to write for longer periods of time. Students also need to have a sense of abstract thinking. Students need to be independent enough that you don’t need to tell them every few minutes what to do.

By 4th grade, students should be able to write at least 2 pages in a 30 minute writing passage, this is a reasonable expectation. At the beginning of the school year, you need to help kids build up their writing stamina to get to this point.

**Launching the Writer’s Notebook**

Purpose: To get to know your students as writers

To help your students begin to develop their own writing voice

To invite students into the writerly life

To find significance in the ordinary

**To introduce the writer’s notebook, start with this:**

**The History of a Name** – What’s the background story about your name? your pet’s name? the name of a battle in WWII? I have used the book “The Name Jar” by Yangsook Choi with my student’s the past few years and some of you may remember me presenting this at one of our Community Meetings when Paula was here. The students did the research by asking their parents and not only had to find out what their name meant but also why their parents gave them that name.

**Fierce Wonderings** – What is something you wonder about? What do you think about it or know about it?

**Observations** – What do you notice about the world around you? If writing about a certain topic- pr researching a topic what do you notice about it? I have some great student examples of this kind of writing from 6 years ago with my class of low performing students. This is a really fun way to kick off the writing. Lucy Calkins has a great set of lessons on how to teach this in her Units of Writing series. This also is a great time to teach students “Voice” in their writing.

**List and Star** – have students make a list of the top 5 or 10 of something. Then, students go through and star the things that have a story behind it or have enough information on it to write about. These are the ones that students will have something to write about to get started and become entries in their writer’s notebook.

When students write an entry, have them reread it and see if there is anything in there that he can expand on either to make his story longer or if he could use that idea to expand on and write as another entry. (Expanding or pushing your thinking for writing – I have a poster with thinking stems that I have used in the past with my students that I got from Lucy Calkins you can borrow if interested).

**Responding to the World (current events)**

Has something in the news caught your attention? Has something happened where you live? What are you thinking about this topic? How can this problem be solved?

**Write from a Word –** Any word can lead our mind towards a variety of topics. This is a good strategy when trying to find a topic of importance. It’s also helpful when trying to focus on exploring a particular angle about something. This is a timed exercise. Give students a limit on how much time they can spend writing about this.

Butterflies

Butterflies, to me, are one of the world’s greatest wonders. From the time a monarch butterfly lays its tiny cream colored egg on the underside of a milkweed leaf to the day its offspring emerges from its chrysalis, the whole process is a one of nature’s tiny but miraculous mysteries.

**Authors as Mentors**

Students can learn a lot from looking at one small part of an author’s craft. While a whole text may be overwhelming, a sentence, a page, or paragraph may be more manageable.

Once students, choose a topic to write to publish, go to draft paper and Aimee uses legal paper. Put the notebooks aside. Students can use the computer to write their drafts and do corrections on there, but Aimee usually doesn’t have them use the computer until they get down to publishing the piece.

Now use of a mentor text is…

…an example we want our students to follow. Don’t just use final, perfect pieces, but show them other students’ work so they can see that they can do it too.

…long enough for students to get the gist.

…short enough to read and study within a mini-lesson.

… within reach of our students’ abilities to emulate.

See Aimee’s power point after these notes for “How to Hook Your Reader” and Love a Book

Love a Book

* Read a favorite book and mark all of your favorite parts.
* Think about how the writer did it.
* Name the technique. Make it up if you have to do so. (Leads, simile, metaphors, etc…)
* Try it out in our writing or teaching.

Example, LEADS…have students look through several articles/books and mark all the leads and then discuss what are the things in the leads that make them so good to read. Have students do this IN THEIR NOTEBOOK first, not in their drafts as it gives them time to practice it before they put it in their writing to avoid lots of crossing off on their drafts. This also gives them a record of their different efforts to develop their leads that they can look back at for future writing pieces or drafts.

From Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse by K. Henkes – great text to teach developing paragraphs, you want to put ideas into groups of 3s to keep it manageable.

Find other examples of good writing in the books students are reading to show them how to improve or give them ideas to move their writing forward.

Sometimes we need to use adjective sparingly, but instead use strong nouns and verbs. (Use John Henry p. 18, by Julius Lester to show an example of this.

Grammar in the Workshop – For the love of grammar

* **Concepts impacts student writing**
* **Students can practice the concept in their writing.**
* **Students can use the concept in their writing in an artful way.**
* **Invite students to find opportunities to practice the concept in writing. Example: how to use a conjunction, use more powerful adjectives, quotation marks, colons, etc…**

**When you introduce a grammar concept do the following:**

1. Introduce the concept and give your own examples in the focus lesson. Also, give them an opportunity to either copy your example or create their own. Have them put these notes in their editing portion of their writer’s notebook or binder.
2. Try It - Send students back to reread an entry or their draft to see if they are already using this grammar concept or to go back and fix this in their writing piece. Find an ordinary sentence in your writing. Recopy it on the page with your grammar notes from today. Then try rewriting it with one or two examples of the grammar concept taught today.
3. Invite students to practice - Tell students that now and for the rest of their writing life, they need to practice using this grammar concept in their writing.

\*Aimee finds that she uses the above strategies more in the drafting stage rather than in the editing stage of writing.

**Three Things to Consider When Teaching G.U.M.S. (Grammar, Usage, Mechanics, Spelling)**

1. Will the lesson impact student writing?
2. Is the concept directly related to the spelling of the word? (If so, you may want to cover it during word work time).
3. Will the student be required to use the lesson on a standardized test?

**A WRITER’S NOTEOOK MEETS NON-FICTION**

**Notebook Strategies for Taking Notes and Writing Informational Pieces**

**When to take notes:**

1. **Reading to Learn and Reflect**
   1. **Remember key ideas and details**
   2. **Determine importance**
   3. **Integrate knowledge of varied resources with our own information and experiences**
2. **Reading to Support Writing** 
   1. **Remember key ideas and details**
   2. **Determine importance of information to support writing angle**
   3. **Integrate knowledge of varied sources to support writing**

**Create a RESEARCH NOTEBOOK**

**\*Students need to be taught not to copy**

**\* One way to do this is to draw pictures of what they read rather than write the words. Have students take notes in a form different from the way it is presented. An example would be that if you want to use information from a graph or something visual, use words to take notes. If it is written in words, draw pictures to take their notes. This helps students to learn how to avoid copying word for word from a reference.**

**When students go about writing something, they should know ahead of time what the final project is supposed to look like. For example, if they are to produce an article, give them an example of how the final project should look so they have a vision of what we are asking them to do.**

**Thinking About the Topic**

What information am I trying to get out of the text I am reading? What information do I need to include in my writing?

**Organizational Structures (note-taking strategies differ)**

There are some of the more common patterns students will across in their reading. There are many more. (cause/effect, compare/contrast, Chronological or sequence, problem/solution etc…)

It’s helpful for students to have cues – other than the main idea – to determine the organization of a text.

If students are aware of the text structure it affects how they take notes.

Sequence – use a timeline, draw a flow chart

Cause/Effect – T-chart, boxes and bullets, sketches, diagrams

Compare/Contrast – Venn diagram, sketches , T-chart

Problem/Solution – T-chart, boxes/bullets, sketching/flow chart, timeline, flow chart

Much like LIST and STAR for narrative work, students start with a topic they know a lot about or want to know a lot about it.

They create a web of general information, starring the ones they know about of which they could write. Students write off the stars and then reread their work. They begin to jot questions down the margin of information they may need to research.

Benefits: Students sift out what they know and what they don’t know.

Students begin to see a need for focused research.

Sifting through questions will help student begin to organize information.

**At The Heart of It** (similar to Georgia Heard’s idea in her book Poetry of the Heart)

Sometimes students love a topic – like cheetahs – but can’t figure out how to focus their passion. This strategy allows students to get their love out and look for patterns or hot topics within their larger subject.

Students then write sample entries exploring these ideas and reflecting on the further research that might be needed.

Instead of drawing a heart and dividing it up and putting pictures in it, students draw a heart and list ideas of things they love with bullet points. They then choose one of the things they wrote down and write about and research it.

**RECOMPOSTION**

**SEE conference notes uploaded below on our website)**

Have students read the article or material on their topic and take notes on it as they wish. Next, have them do a turn and talk with a partner and explain how they took their notes and what information they were able to pull out about their topic. Students may have drawn pictures or created a diagram (with pictures and words) of the information in the article and do their retell based on that. This helps students to restate what they read in their own words without copying.

For 2nd graders, boxes and bullets works very well. Students need to make sure that their main idea and details support each other in their writing. It almost looks like an outline. At the top of the page, students write their main idea and box it. Then, they list bullet points that go with that main idea. This helps them before they go to write their draft their information is organized or has enough information before they begin to write the draft. They are already able to identify if there are any “holes” in their research before they start their writing.

**ASSESSMENT**

**See conference notes uploaded on our website for a sample evaluation rubric you can use to assess your students writing in their writer’s notebooks.**

**Make a Plan**

What are you willing to try with writing notebooks?

How do you envision the first few days? Strategies?

Think about the notebook as a quick unit of study or as an aid to a unit of study.