Improving How we Teach Writing

Traveling Beyond the Prompt

Zooming in on the Starting Point

Writing Prompts

Sharing the Ride

Purpose – “Why of Writing”

• Not pie’ed
• We want students to write to
  – Show understanding of learning
  – Reflect on their thinking and learning
  – Show creativity and explore their world
• Big Question for Teachers—What is the end result?

Ready... Set... GO!

Zooming in on the Starting Point
“Great innovations and discoveries come from a fertile and encouraged imagination.” - Denise Hinson

Focus in on Pre-Writing and Drafting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Intro</th>
<th>Body Paragraph 1</th>
<th>Body Paragraph 2</th>
<th>Body Paragraph 3</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does it mean to you? Connection between truism and book.</td>
<td>Connection between truism and movie.</td>
<td>Connection between truism and personal experience.</td>
<td>Questions or wonderings still have about truism.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Prompts

A writing prompt is simply a topic around which you start jotting down ideas.

- The prompt could be a single word, a short phrase, a complete paragraph or even a picture, with the idea being to give you something to focus upon as you write.
- Prompts should not be the only source of writing. We want students to write based on choice as well. It is like reading, if we always assign a book or reading topic we will have students who lose interest in reading – same is true for writing.

Picture Prompts

- Picture prompts are an amazing tool to use in the classroom to get students writing.
  - You can use picture prompts already created.
  - You can use pictures with no words.
  - You can use wordless picture books.
  - You can use photos you or the students have taken.
- Picture prompts can help build vocabulary when we move students from general language to specific language.
- Start the thinking process with these basic questions:
  - What is going on in this picture?
  - What do you see that makes you say that?
  - What more can we find?
Word of Caution – Don’t underestimate the Importance of Modeling

- Students need to see what writing looks like
- As you model, do NOT intentionally make errors – the purpose is not to get students to revise and edit, it is to model how to develop a writing piece
- Have the students help create the writing piece by contributing ideas as part of the model
- Note, copying of the class story may happen, and that is okay in the beginning. All writers struggle with some ideas and this enables the students to get past the blank page – eventually, they take a leap of faith as you conference with them and support them as writers.
We have a draft......

Time to Travel Beyond the Prompt

Mini-Lessons

- Every writing lesson should begin with a mini-lesson and model writing
- The model writing includes the use of the new skill taught for the lesson
- The mini-lessons should address standards, but is differentiated based on the need of the students.
- Examples:
  - Strong Introductions
  - Excellent Endings
  - Transitions
  - Specific grammar skills
  - Editing and revising
  - Subject/verb agreement
  - Main idea and supporting details
  - Adding solid and meaningful details
    - Ba da Bing
    - Good use of adjectives

Ba-Da-Bing

Where your feet went
What you saw
What you thought

What are the actions that go with the details provided?
What did you see, taste, touch, or feel? Think: 5 senses
What questions do you still have or what you are left wondering?

Created by J. Edgar Education Consulting
Let’s Try It!

• Here is a boring sentence...

  My mom and I saw some students.

Bring out the Bling!

by adding in some “Ba-Da-Bing!”

BA —

• What did your feet do?

 – Mom and I stepped out of our car and into the school parking lot.
DA —

• What did you see, hear, taste, touch, or feel?

• The students were walking around in identical red shirts and the same khaki pants.

BING —

• What did you think?
— I thought, “Oh, great! Uniforms are the last thing I want to wear.”

So the Ba-da-Bing would read...

Instead of: My mom and I saw some students.

Mom and I stepped out of our car and into the school parking lot. The students were walking around in identical red shirts and the same khaki pants. I thought, “Oh great, uniforms are the last thing I want to wear.”
Choose a “boring” or vague sentence from your essay and add some “BA-DA-BING”!

Sharing the Ride: Focus in on Revising and Editing

Peer Edit

- PMI – Plus, Minus, Interesting Fact
- Proofreading Spectacles
- Switch! Revising and Editing Stations
  - Station 1: Reel in the Reader – Did the writer use a strong hook to pull the reader into the text?
  - Station 3: Focus on Content – Did the writer stay on topic?
  - Station 4: Show, Not Tell – Did the writer use strong verbs and descriptive adjectives to help the reader feel like they were part of the story?
  - Station 5: That’s a Wrap – Did the writer use an effective ending to the text?
  - Station 6: Conventions – Did the author use proper capitalization and punctuation
Writing Conferences

• The writing conference is a conversation between the teacher and the writer to
• identify the needs of the writer
• Strategic in nature to help improve the skills of the writer (this includes identifying what the need is, Why it is important, and how the writer can improve)
• Can be done as one on one, group, quick conference, as needed, or scheduled

Purposes of the Writing Conference

• **Listening** (to what writer is trying to say)
• **Affirming** (what writer has done well)
• **Reinforcing** (the writer’s strengths, attempts)
• **Assessing** (confusions, strengths, next steps)
• **Teaching** (what’s most important for the writer to move forward and only what the writer is ready for)
• **Scaffolding** (helping the writer say, write and do what she can’t quite do yet without help)
• **Setting goals with students’ input** (for the writer to attempt to meet on his own, with minimal guidance and support)*

*Writing Essentials-Reggie Routman

Sharing

• Part of publishing, and providing time for students to showcase their work, is the author’s chair.
• The author’s chair can be done multiple ways – with a real chair or a stool, Turn and Talk, Small groups, publishing parties, share with the principal or with other grade level buddies, speed dating, etc...
• Allow students to sign up to share or have a designated day for everyone to share.
• This is a step that should not be forgotten – if time constrains allow at least once a week
• Sharing can also have the same purpose as conferring if you establish a purpose.
The purpose of our conference today is going to be to **Listen** to each other’s stories, **Affirm** what the writer done well, and **Assess** the writer’s strength.

When we continue to support writers, we help them along their path to a great journey.