

Literacy Strategy

Writer's Workshop

Writer's Workshop involves use of an instructional strategy by which students are engaged, encouraged, and developed as writers and readers. Within the context of Writer's Workshop, a variety of organizational patterns for instruction are used. A whole class session, a small group mini-lesson, or a student-teacher conference are examples of the various intra-class organizational structures. The Writer's Workshop is devoted to supporting student learning in writing. What students need to learn during a Writer's Workshop is based upon their present writing competencies and the English language arts standards and benchmarks for each grade level. For the majority of the time in Writer's Workshop, students will be engaged in actual writing. This strategy may be employed over a period of several days, and has several "sub parts."

Mini-lesson

A mini-lesson (Calkins, 1986) provides direct instruction by the teacher which will help students independently engage in their own writing. It is a short, focused lesson about a specific writing technique which is often thought of as an opportunity for the teacher to explain and demonstrate a specific technique for improving a piece of writing. It is an invitation for students to try a particular technique in their own writing. Selection of the topic for the mini-lesson is based on students' writing needs.

A variety of topics may be selected based on the identified need in student writing as the teacher helps the writer to further refine a piece of writing. The mini-lesson may involve revising a piece of writing based on a need for organization and clarity, while another mini-lesson might focus on helping students generate topic ideas for one's writing.

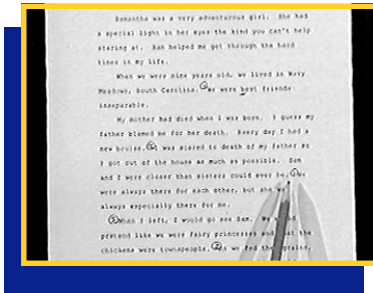


Teachers may use the writing from one of the students in the class as the text used to discuss the mini-lesson topic. Using your student's own writing to help other students develop their writing skills helps to build a community of writers. It is important to remember to value student ownership and seek permission to use the student's writing prior to using it in a mini-lesson.

Status of the Class

Status of the Class is a procedure for initiating Writer's Workshop, identifying writing responsibilities, and obtaining information about the students' plans for writing that day. This daily procedure helps students keep focused on their writing tasks while assisting the teacher in monitoring student writing progress.

Status of the Class is also useful as a management technique. It is helpful in determining how each student will be engaged in the writing process during Writer's Workshop. One might say it is a quick check for the teacher for facilitating an effective Writer's Workshop.



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