Writing Conference Guide

Making the most of every conference!

How’s it going?

Start your conference with a quick check. Begin with the question “How’s it going?” to get your students thinking.

Next, have your students read a passage from their writing.

As they read, think about a specific praise and a teaching point. (Every conference should include a praise before the teaching point!)
Questions you may lead with...

These are beginning questions written to help children begin thinking about their writing.

• What do you need help with today?
• What is something new you have tried in your writing?
  • What is your purpose?
  • Who is your audience?
  • What is your topic?

Telling the Whole Story

Writers who are learning often skip important aspects of their story. When a reader looks at it, it is sometimes not clear what the writer is saying. Use these questions to help the writer figure out what is missing.

• Could you say more about your ideas?
• Is there something that doesn’t fit?
  • What do you mean by…?
  • I don’t understand...
• How could you find out more about your topic?
**Parts of a Story**

Just like when they’re reading, students should be able to answer W questions about their writing.

- Who is this story about?
- What is the main idea?
- When did this happen?
- Where is the story taking place?
- Why did this happen?

If students have included these parts, encourage them to expand and add details to help the reader visualize each part better.

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**Word Choice**

Good writers use good words. Students need practice and guidance using words in new ways:

- What is a creative way to say the same thing?
- Replace overused words (big, small, said, etc.)
- Find exciting adjectives
- Use words that help the reader visualize your story
Voice

Students are using voice when you can hear how they are speaking as you read their writing.

• The voice makes it clear how the child feels
• Sentences are interesting and varied
• Word choice reflects how a child speaks

Conventions

Conventions are an important aspect of writing. However, be careful not to rely too heavily on conventions during your writing conferences!

• Work on grammar (subject/verb agreement & more!)
  • Work on punctuation
• Look at spelling of word wall words
• Strategies for spelling unknown words
• Introduce quotation marks when appropriate
Planning

Younger children are not yet ready to use graphic organizers as planners. However, children often need help organizing their thoughts. Here are some ideas:

• Have a child sketch the beginning, middle and end.
• Use post it notes and a few important words to mark what the child has planned for each page.

Ideas

Children might need help focusing on a single idea during writing or developing a writing idea.

• What is the main idea of your writing? What is the topic?
• How did you choose this topic?
• Share three details that support your main idea.
• Is there a part of your writing that does not focus on your main idea?
New Ideas

Record new conference ideas here: