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Inquiry  
Project

No Writing  
To  
Writing  
Continuously

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By Erica  
Cook



# Newbie, Rookie, No name. . .

**My story has many twists and turns, but one thing remains constant. I was always teaching.**

- ★ Attended MWSU for my Bachelor's
  - Acquired most of my experience in the St. Joseph School District
- ★ Student taught for Platte County School District at PCHS
  - English I
  - Pre-AP
- ★ Graduated in December of 2017 from MWSU



# Barry School

- ❖ Got hired mid-year right after graduation teaching 6th grade ELA
- ❖ Characteristics
  - 6th through 8th grade = middle school
  - 5th grade in the basement
  - Serve the south side of the district (Kansas City area)
  - More diverse and lower-income community



# Struggles that came about. . .

- ❖ Group projects or activities = DISASTER
- ❖ No trust
- ❖ Revision = fix grammar and spelling
- ❖ Peer Revision = DISASTER

**We didn't write enough. . . me nor the students.**

# Goals for my first, complete upcoming year. . .

1. Create a community of writers
  - a. Enhance their own writing → learn the process
  - b. Enrich their peers writing → be the process
2. Have students advocate for themselves and well as others
3. Write often. Read often. Respond and Share often.

How can I develop a  
community of writers  
to give effective  
feedback during peer  
revision?



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Community of Writers



Giving Effective Feedback



Peer Revision



# 1st Step: Create the emotional tone.

- ❖ Everyone writes.
- ❖ Everyone shares.
- ❖ Everyone helps define the group.

**Class**  
**Small Group**

*I am a writer and you are writers.*

# Writing Prompt: First Day of School

- ❖ How does it feel to see your classmates again?
- ❖ What qualities make a good teacher?
- ❖ What is the best time of the school year? Why is it the best?
- ❖ What was your first impression of your new classroom?
- ❖ What is your favorite part about going back to school?
- ❖ What is your goal for the school year?
- ❖ What is the most important thing to do on the first day of school?

# Writing Prompt: First Day of School (Teacher Version)

- ❖ How will it feel to see your teacher friends?
- ❖ What is the best time of the school year? Why is it the best?
- ❖ What is your favorite part about going back to school? Least favorite?
- ❖ What is your goal for the school year?
- ❖ What is the most important thing to do on the first day of school?

Basically. . . What are you most excited, nervous, anxious, anticipating about that first day of school?

*\*It's closer than you think!\**

# Pick One Sentence

- ❖ Look at what you have written. Choose one sentence to share.
- ❖ Stand in a circle around the room.
- ❖ Each one of us will read our chosen sentence.
  - No comments. Not from the reader nor the listeners.
- ❖ Begin moving around the room till everyone is finished.

# We are Writers. . .So. . . What does that mean?

- ❖ What do students want their classroom to be like? What norms do they want to establish?
  - First day of school
  
- ❖ What do students want their writing groups to be like? What norms do they want to establish?
  - First/Second day in writing groups

Cynthia D. Urbanski

“When we don’t read and write regularly, we quickly forget what it feels like to struggle with words, and our advice loses its validity.”

# \*Something to Also Consider\*

How do you make your classroom a comfortable space?

- ❖ Motivational posters?
- ❖ Comfy cushions? Couches? Futons? Flexible seating?
- ❖ Lamp lighting? ✓
- ❖ Soothing music? ✓

## 2nd Step: Model the process.

- ❖ Student-Generated Rubrics
- ❖ Jumpstart the Writing Process
- ❖ Teacher-Student Conferences



# Student-Generated Rubrics

Students deserve to have a say in how their own writing is going to be evaluated.

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ What elements should be the focus of our revision?</li><li>❖ What elements should be the focus of our grading?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Grading is a deadline</li><li>● Revision is ongoing</li></ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ How much of the grade should each of the elements be worth?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Equally balanced</li><li>● Emphasize some elements</li><li>● Incorporate others, just not as much</li></ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ What is the teacher's responsibility?</li><li>❖ What is the student's responsibility?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What should I mark or comment on?</li><li>● What should I ignore?</li><li>● When should I stop grading and simply fail a paper?</li></ul>

# Example of Elements:

## Content

- ❖ Good, interesting, or original
- ❖ Supported, consistent, have overall meaning

## Quality of Writing

- ❖ Clear and stylistically unique
- ❖ Without awkwardness and errors

## Organization

- ❖ Transitions
- ❖ Logical flow

## Mechanics

- ❖ Technically and grammatically correct

# Model the process - Looping

**WARNING:** Used primarily for creative writing (poetry, stories, personal essays)

1. Students fast write a first draft ✓
2. Student reads through it, circling any areas that seem:
  - a. Promising
  - b. Suggest other stories or important points
  - c. Stand out in some way
3. Student chooses ONE of the circled areas or phrases and starts a new draft from that point or idea.
4. Repeat again and again. . .

Why looping?

Focus, clarity, weeding out extraneous argumentation or background info.

# Teacher-Student Conferences

**“Every student deserves individual attention paid to his or her writing at least once in awhile.”  
- Barry Gilmore**

## Two Types

- ❖ Informal
  - Glancing at the paper and answering a quick question
  - Email, brief encounter in hallway, etc.
  - Usually spontaneous
- ❖ Formal
  - Scheduled and structured
  - 5-10 minutes
  - In-class during group activities or solitary writing

## Guidelines:

- \*not for me to fix or revise a piece of writing\*
- ❖ What is your overall goal in this piece?
- ❖ Where do you think the paper needs help or work?
- ❖ Are you happy with your piece?
- ❖ What revision strategies are you planning on using?
- \*summarize the conference before student leaves\*

# 3rd Step: Create independent but collaborative writers.

1st: Assess their OWN writing.

2nd: Assess others.



Describing

1. What are you trying to say?
2. What are you trying to do?
3. What are you trying to get your audience to do or think?

Judging

4. What are some problems you see in your piece of writing in achieving your answers to 1, 2, and 3?

Selecting appropriate revisions

5. What are some changes you can make to deal with those problems?

To revise  
Or not to revise  
That is the question.  
Whether tis nobler to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous rubrics  
Or take arms against a sea of gradebooks  
    And by opposing flunk out.  
To fail, to drop, to leave  
No more and by our leaving say we end  
The homework and the thousand unnatural shocks  
That school is heir to,  
Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished  
To fail, to leave,  
To leave, perchance to write  
    Aye there's rub  
For after that writing  
Of the 1st draft  
What new dreams may come  
When we have shuffled  
Off this verbal coil,  
Must give us pause  
There's the calamity  
That makes revision worth it.

Foreword in  
*“Is It Done Yet?”*  
By Barry Lane

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# So...What about Blogs?

1. These 6th graders are not tech-savvy like most. They barely know how to send an email.
2. It is their first year having their own Chromebook they are responsible for.
3. I am considering setting up a teacher blog where I can post student work myself.
4. Perhaps in the future...when I become confident enough in blogging myself.

Any suggestions?

# MLS Standards

6.W.3.A.b Word choice, syntax, and style: Choose a precise language and establish a maintain an appropriate and consistent style; sentences are complete.

6.SL.2.A Speak clearly, audibly, and to the point using conventions of language as appropriate to task, purpose, and audience when presenting including volume.

6.SL.2.B Position body to face the audience when speaking and make eye contact with listeners at various intervals using gestures to communicate a clear viewpoint.



# MLS Standards

- 6.W.3.A.a Organization and Content: Introduce the topic, maintain a clear focus throughout the text and provide a conclusion that follows from the text
- 6.W.3.A.d Use transitions to clarify relationships and connect ideas, claims and signal time shifts
- 6.W.3.A.a-e Follow a writing process to produce clear and coherent writing
- 6.W.3.A.a-e Review, revise, and edit writing with consideration for the task, purpose, and audience

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