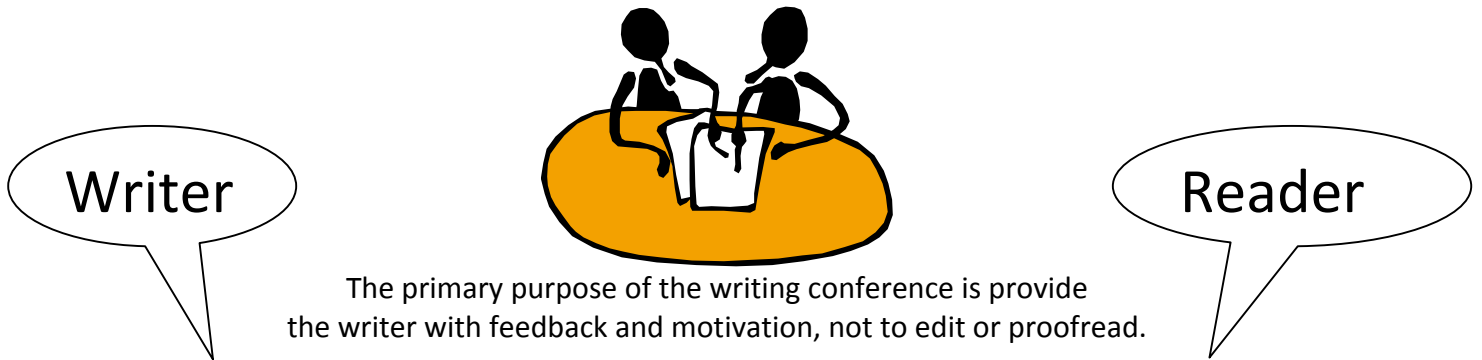


Additive Feedback in the Writing Conference



The writer requests feedback and decides how to respond and/or revise.

The reader reads, reacts and reports on the experience of reading.

Examples

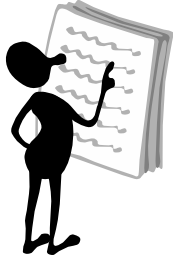
- I'd like your feedback on ____ (specific item).
- I was trying to _____. Do you think I accomplished that?
- What did you think about...?
- How did you feel when...?
- What would most improve this part?
- Was it clear when I...?
- Is there anything you'd like to know more about...?
- In the part about _____, could you image/see/hear/taste/feel/smell _____?
- Did you want to continue reading? Why or why not?

- May I read your paper? Would you prefer to read it to me?
- Would you like my feedback/reaction?
- What would you most like me look at/ look for/notice/react to?
- Would you consider...? Have you thought about...?
- I wonder: If you _____, would that _____?
- Can you clarify....?
- How does this relate to ...?
- I'd like to hear more about...
- During _____, I didn't understand...
- During _____, I was excited, scared, confused, engaged, sad, interested...

Non-Examples

- I really don't need/want any feedback.
- I'm embarrassed to let anyone read my paper.
- I'm not very good at writing.
- Would you correct all my mistakes?
- Would you re-write this for me?
- What would you say here?

- Good job. (*not specific*)
- I liked/didn't like... (*not specific*)
- I think you should change...
- Wouldn't it be better if you...?
- Why not cut out the part about...?
- Here's what's wrong....
- Hmm, where's my red pen?



Additive Feedback: Nurturing Student Authority

Giving the ownership of writing back to the student during student-teacher conferencing and editing

- Recognize that student writing is the exclusive intellectual property of the student.
- Mirror the student's body language.
- Ask to be invited into the student's writing.
- First give the student the opportunity to read his writing aloud.
- Always address content *before* form. Focus on meaning first.
- Maintain an additive approach and a positive attitude when responding to student writing. Be sure to point out what *is* working, not just what *needs* work.
- Keep the focus narrow and student-directed.
- Let students hold their own paper and pen.
- Use post-its whenever possible, rather than writing on the student's paper.
- Ask permission before writing on a student's paper. Use pencil instead of pen whenever possible. If you use pen, avoid red ink.
- Respect the student's right to accept, reject or modify editing suggestions and changes.
- Never assume that you know better than the student what s/he is trying to communicate.
- Offer suggestions and provide options—what Donald Graves called “nudging.”
- Ask open-ended questions that are personal and authentic.
- When giving praise, be as specific as possible.
- Remember: “A good writing conference is when you walk away and you want to write more.” —Donald Murray





The Biggest Bang!

Focusing feedback to students in order to maximize improvement in writing

It can sometimes be difficult for us, as writing teachers, to find sufficient time to conference with students about their writing during class time. For this reason, it is critical that we maximize those “little pockets of time” that we set aside for student conferences. If we know we only have ten minutes to conference with a student, we must strategize how to best use that time to get “*the biggest bang for our buck.*”

Minimally, we should accomplish two goals during each conference:

1. Motivate the student to continue the writing process. Donald Murray says, “A good writing conference is when you walk away and want to write more.” Young writers are motivated by specific praise and more importantly, by reader interest in the content of their essay. According to Nancie Atwell, “In questioning students, ask about something you’re curious about as an inquisitive human being. Forget you’re an English teacher, and focus on meaning.”
2. Guide the student in making improvements in one specific area (i.e., a rubric criterion), the improvement of which would have the biggest impact on the student’s next draft of the essay.

In order to focus on getting *the biggest bang*, we can begin planning for mini-conferences by asking the following questions:

What is your reaction to the student’s writing as “a reader?” (Not as “a teacher”)

What questions do you have for the student as “a reader?”

What type of encouragement would most motivate the student to continue working on this draft?

What specific guidance would have the greatest impact on improving the student’s score on this essay?