

Powerful Personal Narrative- Oct 2, 2014

Kim Pham and Melissa Fisher

Get Ahead of the Game. Tips For a Great Unit

- Announce the date of your unit celebration in advance. This will help keep you and your class on schedule.
- Plan your teacher written mentor text carefully. Make sure it meets the class indicators and/or lacks the qualities for which you want your class to revise.
- Try to read some of your writing mentor texts during read aloud so you can revisit the text during Writing Workshop. This saves time!
- Strive for 4-5 week units.

Recommended Mentor Texts

- See *Mentor Texts To Lift The Level And Inspire Narrative Writing* handout
- Try to use only 2-3 mentor texts per genre.

Tightening and Strengthening Your Mini Lessons and Overall Workshop

- Save time and clarify your teaching point by NOT calling on students. Instead, have the kids turn and talk and then say (whether it is true or not), "I was listening in and heard one of your classmates say INSERT WHAT YOU WANTED THE KIDS TO SAY HERE." This way you don't waste time or confuse students with a off topic student responses.
- Have students set daily goals and write them on the top corner or their page or on a Post It before independent writing Then can refer to it while they write.
- Try not to write more than 2-3 sentences during your mini-lesson. Write in advance or story tell out loud, moving your hand as you talk.
- Rehearse! Rehearse! Rehearse! Have the students tell a partner what they are going to write/revise/edit before they begin writing independently. This helps EVERYONE to get started right away.
- Utilize voiceovers during independent writing to keep kids on track. "You should be finished a half of a page by now." "You should have written one page by now."
- Have students mark an X on their page to indicate how much they want to write that day. This can help to build stamina while building a goal oriented classroom culture.
- When you read students' writing aloud, read it like it's gold and wonderful. This will make them WANT to make it better. Gasp a lot. Ohh! Ahh! Do it. Lucy says so.
- During the collecting phase, students should not spend days listing. List quickly (5 minutes), then choose a topic and elaborate on the same day.
- Instead of turn & talk, move down the Depth of Knowledge Chart. Try:
 - Turn & Teach
 - Turn & Interpret
 - Turn & Explain

Powerful Personal Narrative Mini Lessons

- Teach students to use setting to bring out emotions in characters and accentuate mood.
- Teach kids to draft quickly, in 1-2 days. It leaves more time to revise.
- Teach kids to write multiple drafts. One draft does NOT allow for significant revision.
- Teach kids to decide what the story is REALLY about, determine what the theme is, and WRITE TO THAT.
- Teach students to find the heart of their story. Then have them write it slowly with lots of details. The heart of the story keeps the story alive!
- Teach students during developing to try our different ways to tell their story. Eventually they will choose the way that best depicts the theme of their story.
- Teach students to write within in the story, to not summarize.

Ps, Ms, and Es, Oh My! Assessing Personal Narrative

- Have students do a pre and post on demand piece. Grade the post. This is also great test prep.
- Assess the students performance across the process. Give the students a grade for each phase of the process. This ensures that students work hard all of the time, not just during publishing.
- Use the Writing Pathways checklist to assess the grade level that your students are writing on, to influence instruction and strategy groups, as well as to give students an actual grade.
- Consider having the students use the Writing Pathways checklists to assess their own writing. Cut off the grade level and see how students assess their own writing. Teaching realistic and honest self assessment is important.
- Create your own checklist based on the mini lessons that YOU taught and expectations that you have for YOUR students. Use the writing checklist from the book, but give it your own flavor. You can also differentiate by creating multiple checklists.
- Lucy says: There are 4 major assessment categories: Editing and Spelling, Volume, Revision, and Mini-Lesson Traction. If you MUST send home graded writing, one time saver might be to select a piece of student writing and assess for ONLY ONE of these categories. You don't have to tell the kids what category they are being graded on beforehand. You choose.

Questions, Quandaries, and Quests

- What are some of your Writing Workshop successes this year?
- What are some of your struggles?
- What are some of your goals?
- What, if anything, are you confused about?
- What strategies or suggestions from your own classroom can you share with the group?