

Peer Conferencing for Revision

Lesson Objective	(Revising) Students will learn to provide specific feedback on their peers' writing as part of the revising process.	
Vocabulary	<p>peer conference: students share their writing with each other in pairs or a small group, and give and receive feedback</p> <p>feedback: a response to a piece of writing that can help the writer make improvements</p>	
Reviewed Vocabulary	revising	
Instructional Materials	Teacher	Student
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Masters • Timer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Booklet

Preview

Writing is mostly independent work, with writers working alone to generate a topic, determine what will be written, and prepare a first draft. But at the revising stage of the writing process, writers often seek input from others. Revising is the act of changing something already written or printed, and good writers spend a lot of time revising their early drafts. Sharing our early drafts in a peer conference allows us to get another person’s perspective about our drafts and gives us guidance for making improvements. Peer conferences help ensure that we are making our ideas as clear as possible for our readers.

Teacher Note

Peer conferencing can be used throughout the writing process. This lesson addresses revising, but the procedure can be adapted as appropriate.

Engage Prior/Informal Knowledge

1. Students review what they already know about sharing their writing with peers.

Have students complete *SB#1: Engage Prior Knowledge—Silent Warm-Up*. Set the timer for 3 minutes.

2. Review the silent warm-up.

Display *TM#1: Engage Prior Knowledge—Silent Warm-Up*. Direct student’s to their copies, *SB#1: Engage Prior Knowledge—Silent Warm-Up*. When 3 minutes have passed, ask students to share their responses. Note student responses in the space provided on the display. Answers will vary.

Teacher Note

Ninth-grade students frequently believe that writers only share their writing with others in order to get help with editing for grammar, mechanics, spelling, and so forth. During this Engage Prior/Informal Knowledge section of the lesson, copy student responses and be sure to add content issues, such as “tell me where to add more detail” or “help improve my introduction.”

In today’s lesson, you will learn to participate in a peer conference, where students share their writing with each other in pairs or a small group, and give and receive feedback. Feedback is a response to a piece of writing that can help the writer make improvements.

Demonstrate

1. Introduce peer conferencing.

Display *TM#2: Demonstrate—Peer Conferencing Notes*. Have students copy the notes from the display onto their fill-in-the-blank *SB#2: Demonstrate—Peer Conferencing Notes* as you read.

Teacher Note

Some students struggle to copy from the board. Writing is a physically demanding task, and students must gradually increase their stamina for it. As students’ stamina increases, the amount of copying can increase.

In a peer conference, students share writing with each other in a small group, and give and receive feedback on what they wrote. Today we will use peer conferencing during the revising stage of the writing process, when the writer has finished a first draft but isn’t ready to proofread or fix small details like

capitalization or spelling. Your peer conference feedback today should be about the ideas or words in writing. The writer reads the writing out loud, but the group members do *not* look at the paper.

Although we might sometimes think that the purpose of reading someone's writing is to find mistakes, feedback in a peer conference can also be about what the writer has done well.

If student responses to the silent warm-up focused on critical feedback, display their responses and point out the critical feedback. Repeat that peer feedback can be positive, and add positive observations that might surface in a peer conference, such as “point out where my description is detailed,” and so forth.

Feedback in a peer conference must be respectful and helpful. The most important thing to remember about peer conferences is that the feedback must be specific.

2. Review the notes on Peer Conferencing.

Have students cover their notes.

What happens in a peer conference? *(Students share their writing with each other in a small group, and give and receive feedback on what they wrote.)*

What is feedback? *(a response to a piece of writing that can help the writer make improvements)*

During what stage of the writing process will we use peer conferencing today? *(during the revising stage of the writing process, when the writer has finished a first draft but isn't ready to proofread or fix small details like capitalization or spelling)*

Why does the writer read the writing aloud and the group not look at the paper? *(because peer conference feedback should be about the ideas or words in writing)*

What is the most important thing to remember about peer conferences? *(The feedback must be specific.)*

3. Review nonexamples and examples of feedback that is specific enough.

Today you are going to give feedback by telling your peers one thing you like in their writing, and one thing you would like to know more about. We are going to practice writing specific feedback about a sample composition. Listen carefully. I will read the composition to you without showing it to you, so you focus on the ideas in the writing, rather than on spelling, punctuation, and so forth. I will read it twice, so you can better remember it and provide feedback.

Display *TM#3: Demonstrate and Practice—Sample Composition for Feedback #1*. Direct students' attention to their copies, *SB#3: Demonstrate and Practice—Sample Composition for Feedback #1*. Read the sample composition aloud twice.

Display *TM#4: Demonstrate and Practice—Specific Feedback*. Direct students' attention to their copies, *SB#4: Demonstrate and Practice—Specific Feedback*.

This table gives some good examples of feedback comments that are *not* specific enough to be of any value to the writer. We're going to practice changing each of these to an example of feedback that *is* specific and valuable.

The table on the left shows examples that are not specific enough—in the shaded column—and examples—in the unshaded column—of feedback that tells one thing the listener wants to know more about. The table on the right shows more examples of feedback that is not specific enough—in the shaded column—and examples—in the unshaded column—of feedback that tells one thing the listener liked. I have written specific comments for the first two rows.

Look at the first shaded box on the left. The student wrote, "Need to add more detail." That is not specific enough to help the writer, because the writer needs to know what kind of detail, and at what part of the composition. So I changed it to read, "Include details that show the coach's emotions when your team lost."

Review the other examples of specific feedback. Refer to *TM#5: Demonstrate and Practice—Specific Feedback Answer Key* as needed.

Practice

1. Complete *TM#4: Demonstrate and Practice—Specific Feedback* with class input. Refer to *TM#5: Demonstrate and Practice—Specific Feedback Answer Key* as needed.

Read each remaining nonexample to the class. Ask student volunteers to give you examples of specific feedback that could replace each nonexample. Limit responses to two students per example, and choose the strongest example to write in the space provided. Ensure that students are copying the display.

2. Have students work in pairs to complete the *SB#5: Practice—Sample Composition for Feedback #2*. Refer to *TM#6: Practice—Sample Composition for Feedback#2 Answer Key* as needed.

Now you are going to pretend that you are having a peer conference with the Sample Composition for Feedback #2, so that you can practice giving specific feedback. First, one partner will read the composition while the second partner listens. When the first student is done reading, the second student will write his or her feedback in the space provided at the bottom.

Have students restate the instructions, and check for understanding. Set the timer for 5 minutes.

Circulate among the students, check for understanding, and provide corrective feedback as needed.

When 5 minutes have passed, stop students. Have students switch roles and repeat the activity. Remind them to give feedback that is different from the feedback provided by their partners.

When 5 minutes have passed, stop students. Ask for volunteers to share the specific feedback they wrote.

Independent Practice

1. Have students complete *SB#6: Independent Practice*.
2. Collect the materials, score the work using *TM#7: Independent Practice Answer Key*, and check for mastery

Teacher Note

If students will be applying the Peer Conferencing strategy to their own writing, have them write feedback on sticky notes and give them to their partners. You might use a different color sticky note for each type of feedback. As students become adept at this practice, you can include other types of feedback questions that target specific requirements for particular writing assignments. When introducing new criteria for conferencing, be sure to provide group practice with a composition prepared in advance.