

Conferences

Writing conferences are an integral component of an effective writer's workshop, and should begin early on in the Writerly Life unit of study. One aspect of this unit is to prepare students for the structure of writer's workshop. By conducting conferences from the start of the year, students will be able to understand that they are responsible for their own writing and that the teacher will be talking to them regularly about how their writing is going.

Keep in mind that writing conferences should have a predictable structure. Carl Anderson suggests that the conference structure follow these guidelines:

In the first part of the conference...

- invite the child to set the agenda for the conference.
- ask research questions.
- look at the child's writing.
- make a teaching decision.

In the second part of the conference...

- give the student feedback.
- teach the student.
- guide the student as he 'has-a-go' with what you've taught him.
- link the conference to the student's ongoing work.

It is also important for you to think about how you will take notes about the conferences you have with students. Conferences are a great assessment tool, and by taking notes you will have documentation of students' writing development over time that can be used to reflect on their growth and abilities as writers.