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A Word or Two About Modeling

In the beginning there was a teacher, and she wrote.

We say this now as we start because it is the most significant thing you can do as a teacher of writing. You yourself must be willing to write and to examine that process with your students. There is no better way of doing this than by example. We could cite article upon article from the last two decades written by people like Nancy Atwell, Lucy Calkins or Donald Graves that support this belief. But even if you've never read any of this research, common sense tells you the same thing. A piano teacher who never demonstrates playing the piano will not be as effective as one who plays for the students. A swimming teacher who never goes in the water is not your best bet for training others to swim. The same holds true for a writing teacher. We must be willing to teach by example.

We understand if this makes you nervous or if this takes you out of your comfort zone. Perfection is not required, in fact, perfection is an obstacle. Flawed writing, writing you must work on, is what is needed and will prove to be your most powerful tool. Most of the lessons in this book will require you to have something written to model for your students. Keep this in mind as you plan your writing lessons. Remember that modeling with and for your students will be the most profound thing you do in your writing instruction. Like anything else, the more you practice it, the easier it will flow.

After all, isn't that what we tell our students? Let the modeling begin!

FLAWED WRITING

Goal Setting

What exactly are we trying to do here anyway? Isn't there a famous quote about planning and failing and failing to plan?

For this reason, goal setting is the first step. We will start with the end product—by determining what it is that we want to see in our students' writing. Outcome-based instruction can be aligned with standards, assessments and grade level expectations. Personal favorites of your students (or of yours!) can be included in goal setting. Before the workshop begins, we want to help you have a vision of your expectations for your students. Maybe you are thinking, "But I have only one goal. To have better writers!" Breaking down this big goal into smaller pieces may make planning and goal setting a little easier.
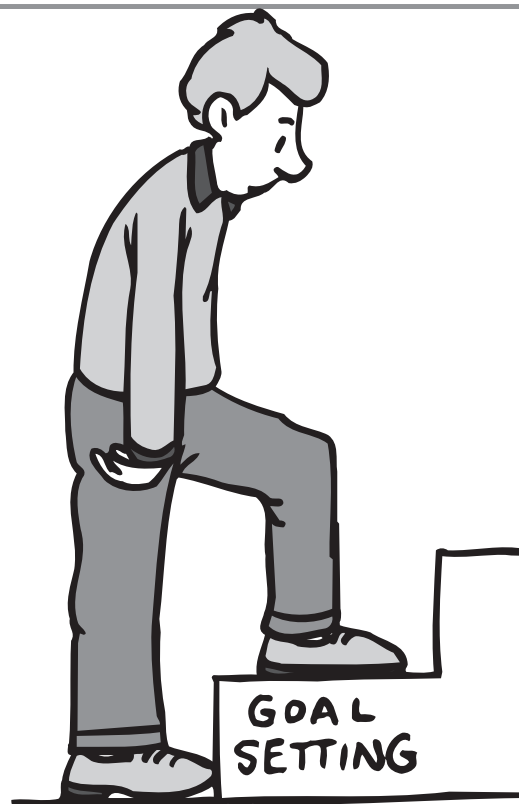
Three Types of Goals

Process Goals
Process goals are goals that are based on the observable habits and rituals of writers during a writing workshop.

Product Goals
Product goals are found in the actual writing itself. They are the content, mechanics and craft of the pieces that writers produce.

Genre Goals
Genre goals are goals for particular types of writing: poems, term papers, responses to literature and business letters are just a few of the items that fall into this category. These include many of the different types of writing that you want your writers to try.

Process Goals

These are some of the observable habits and rituals of writers during the workshop.

Before independent writing students should . . .

- be able to choose topics that interest them

- be self-starting

- contribute ideas during shared writing activities

- be considerate of the other writers in the room

- write from a place of feeling or emotion

- be able to use resources in the room

- use time wisely

During independent writing students should . . .

- be engaged during the writing time

- write from a place of feeling or emotion

- take risks as writers

- be able to use resources in the room

- be able to proofread with accuracy before final publication

- use time wisely

- use a variety of strategies when they get stuck

- be willing to revise and actively seek improvement after the first draft

- be considerate of the other writers in the room

After independent writing and beyond students should . . .

- know what questions to ask the teacher during conferences

- share their writing in small or large groups

- work cooperatively and respectfully with other writers during peer conferences

- be considerate of the other writers in the room

- write from a place of feeling or emotion

- be able to use resources in the room

- use time wisely