A Study Based on a Constructivist View to Teaching Writing in JFL / JSL Classrooms

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コントラクティヴィズムに基づく ライティング教授法

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Abstract:

In this paper, I will examine the role of constructivism in educational practice, and how this approach will work for students. Deep understanding is the goal of the constructivist view. Teachers should provide educational settings with student-centered learning, where students learn by thinking through what they are learning about. Such descriptions of constructivist teaching will provide a useful framework within which teachers can experiment with this new approach. I will present a lesson plan based on a constructivist philosophy which integrates technology to address the needs of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) and Japanese as a second language (JSL) learners. In this unit plan, I will apply creative approaches to teaching writing at a high school and a college in Japan. Students would learn what tools a writer should use, and intense process steps that will allow students to write well.

Introduction

In Junior and senior high school EFL curriculum, there are few opportunities for creative writing. Teachers rarely deviate from the grammar focus implicit in textbooks. Foreign language instruction is primarily by transmission: knowledge from the sender (teacher) is sent (transmitted) to the receiver (students). To learn a foreign language, for example, students listen to the teachers speak and repeat their words. Students memorize vocabulary and sentences and fill our worksheets but are rarely allowed to speak or write independently. Most Japanese high school students, therefore, lack experiences writing extensively in English. In EFL classes L2 writing is mostly limited to translating sentences into English. Conventional teaching in Japan might not make students creative and

thoughtful. To promote thoughtful learning, we need to know how to educate well.

Writing skills can only be developed through practical experience, and none of many hours spent on grammar will help improve creative writing. Writing as a form of language learning is mediated by social interactions between teacher and learner and among peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Mediated social interaction offers a structure for problem solving while inviting active engagement by students and teachers. As one way to promote learning English as a foreign language or as a second language, I propose a constructivist approach. Constructivist education is based on fostering personal relationships, and is driven by a belief in the empowering effect of learning and knowledge. (See Appendix A.) For instance, students' point of view is valued. Sharing ideas is valued. Constructivist teaching practices help learners to internalize and reshape new information. Deep understanding, not imitative behavior, is the goal of the constructivist view. I think it is important to develop social skills and creative thinking, and active use of knowledge. Such student-centered classes and student participation are more effective ways to learn teacher-centered classes, because in groups, students talk a lot to each other, explain things to each other, and pay much more attention. Teachers could also design developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that apply technology-enhanced instructional strategies to support learner-centered strategies that address the diverse needs of students.

Over the past few decades, a number of studies of young children's writing development has highlighted the transactional nature of oral and written language in the emergence of literacy. Researchers find that writing in the form of stories or dialogue journals is instructionally effective for developing literacy in most limited-English proficiency students. Based of a review of the current studies, Hudelson (1989) concluded that some LEP students become aware of English print and can write in English before attaining oral language fluency, and that writing enhances oral language development and reading comprehension. The relationships between oral and written language are established by transactions

from one language to another.

In the United States, there is movement toward integrating writing and speaking in ESL/EFL. Here in Japan, writing and speaking are often separated from one another in the English-language classroom. Combining writing and speaking is a challenging pedagogical task, but I want to suggest that untraditional methods for teaching English composition such as combining writing and speaking, having students cooperate on texts, etc can be seen as complementary activities.

In this paper, I will examine the role of constructivism in educational practice, and how this approach will work for students. Such descriptions of constructivist teaching will provide a useful framework within which teachers can experiment with this new approach. After considering the principles, in the second section, I will present a unit in which we teach EFL/ESL and JFL/JSL students how to live life as true writers. Students would learn what tools a writer uses and intense process steps that, once mastered, will allow students to write well throughout the rest of their lives.

Before selecting a topic and writing a unit plan, I created a list of principles that should drive the process of unit planning (See Appendix B). This list of principles (of leaning, of teaching, and of assessing) contains the criteria upon which all future decisions were made. The planning rubric, the unit of study and, in particular, the principles of learning, teaching and assessment which support the curriculum will also be shared with the English and Japanese teachers and those who are interested in education. The aim would be to introduce change in the curriculum. First, I will explore the principles of teaching, and identify "what works" to make conventional school practice better.

The principles of teaching

What are principles of teaching? Why are they important?

Sternberg (Sternberg & Davidson, 1986) proposed three types of intelligence that vary in strength among people. He suggests that rather than being innate, these intellectual skills can be taught. Gardener (1999) moves further than

Sternberg & Davidson (1986) from the idea that intelligence is an inherent trait. Like Sternberg, Gardner discounts a single intelligence and emphasizes many mental abilities and intelligences we all use. He considers these intelligences as mastery of competencies or skills, rather than underlying abilities or the quality of one's mind. His theory of multiple intelligence stresses the flexibility and variety of children's productivity to learn. Gardner suggests that everyone inherits the capacity to develop each of these intelligences.

The principles of teaching that guide my practice as a visionary educator are:

1. To develop students as independent thinkers and learners, risk-takers, or critical thinkers

2. To create life-long learners and to help build their curiosity, self-confidence, and creativity.

The principles of teaching serve, I believe, to create self-motivation. Students with high achievement motivation feel competent and in charge; they expect valuable success, and they exert the time and energy to learn. Teaching is to inspire learners to want to know more and to be successful. The principles of teaching also help create meaningful instruction. Teachers should encourage student inquiry by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions and by encouraging students to ask questions of each other. Complex, thoughtful questions challenge students to form their own understandings of events and phenomena. After posing questions, teachers should wait for students to answer their own questions. If teachers allow wait time, students can think through issues and concepts thoroughly. Another important principle of teaching is, I feel, to create an environment in which students feel safe to take risks, and to find ways to make ideas understood by everyone. Teachers are mediators of students and environments, not simply givers of information and managers of behavior.

What conditions have to be in place for learning to occur?

Dewey (1956) argued that children's learning is essentially problem

solving, especially when they are engaged in devising their own experiments, building equipment and cooperating with others in planning and doing projects. Dewey railed against the domination of instruction by rehearsing second-hand information, by memorizing for the sake of producing correct replies at the proper time. Dewey's work provided a foundation for considering children's learning as an active mental process. For Piaget (1973), learning or constructing new knowledge was the result of the mind's work not an outsider's manipulation. Children like "little scientists," investigate and learn pretty much on their own using the environment as their laboratory. Piaget saw children as independent learners.

Oakes & Lipton (1999) saw Learning as an apprenticeship; Learning through such apprenticeship is, at its root, "identity construction." Oakes and Lipton saw teachers as constructing authentic and social classroom learning communities. Together with rich content, these principles of learning support students' conceptions of themselves as competent learners, encourage effort and persistence and promote high intellectual value.

Students will learn more if teachers develop interactive teaching strategies and cooperative group activities that join cognitive and social learning. A report by Cooper, Johnson, Johnson & Welderson (1980) states that cooperative learning experiences promote interpersonal attraction among initially prejudiced peers, and that such experiences promote interethnic interaction in both instructional and free-time activities. The benefits of peer-to-peer dialogue reinforce the potential of cooperated learning for students.

From the constructivist point of view, students learn when a teacher has a good relationship with students. Learning requires relationships where individuals constantly adapt to one another without one being in complete control. Learning individuals must be willing to accept guidance and expertise from others, and be willing to change. Eventually, teacher and student will develop many agreed-on meanings that allow them to elaborate their thinking and push it even further, for culture influences thinking. Society and culture determine learning as much as

mental activities, or rather, learning and mental activities are cultural. Therefore, teachers should teach in a social and cultural context. The child's experiences and social interactions play powerful roles. Thus, people cannot separate how thinking takes place from what knowledge is available in the place where learning happens.

Approach guided by principles of teaching

As I will indicate in the rubric and curriculum that follows, the unit "Living Like a Writer" is constructivist in nature. At the beginning of the year, I introduce a writer's notebook and use it as a tool for each student to develop his or her individual skills by practicing the craft. Ideally, students will write in their notebooks during class three or five times a week for thirty minute periods and at home for fifteen minutes each night. Student entries are determined by the students brainstorming or developing their own ideas and ultimately finding a topic that is meaningful to them. Rather than introducing grammar, composition, structure, genre etc. separately, these subjects are taught in what we call mini lessons. Depending on the needs of the students, the teacher introduces 10-15 minute mini lessons that are relevant to the work (for a sample mini lesson, see Appendix C). Teacher-student conferences are on-going activities. Teachers should encourage student inquiry by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions and by encouraging students to ask questions of each other. Complex, thoughtful questions challenge students to look into topics deeply and broadly. Mini-lessons can serve as a forum for planning the day's work, which consists of talk or demonstration. Students are first deeply engaged in their self-sponsored work, and then we bring together what they need to know in order to do that work. Mini-lessons can be designed to provide occasions for conversation; in addition, it will also be a time for talking about procedural issues in each lesson. Mini-Lessons will help students learn peer conferring, lesson procedures, revision strategies, and the qualities of good writing. Immediately after a mini-lesson is taught, the students are asked to apply that skill to their writing. In the advanced class, students move through the steps of the writing process (from entries to

drafting, to revising, to editing, and to publication) at their own pace. In accordance with one of the key principles of teaching, I aim to develop independent learners who are able to support themselves as writers and choose the work they will do each lesson.

Technology engages students in planning, reflecting, making decisions, experiencing consequences, and examining alternative solutions and ideas; it provides guided participation and customized content to suit the particular needs or interests of individual students. Technology provides rich, multidimensional tasks and scaffolds students' learning. Like books, paper, and pencil, electronic technologies can serve either traditional or progressive classrooms. However, teachers should discern high-quality technology from the overabundance of low-level, trivial application. For example, students could use the Inspiration software (Visual learning) to nurture their thinking on a topic. Research has shown that visual learning is one of the best methods for teaching thinking skills. Visual learning techniques, graphical ways of working with ideas and presenting information, teach students to think clearly, to process, organize, and integrate new information, and to identify misconceptions. Idea maps help students generate ideas and develop thoughts visually. They are used for brainstorming and prewriting exercises, and producing plans and solving problems. Idea maps clarify thinking by helping students to see connections between ideas. Using fast, five-minute exercises in word and idea association, idea maps utilize keywords, symbols, colors and graphics to form nonlinear networks of potential ideas.

The technology provides challenging task, opportunities and experiences, and allows students to learn by doing. Technology used to enhance writing instruction and writing is important for students learning English as a second language.

Writing may take various forms from the simple reporting of facts to creative endeavors to business surveys. From a practical point of view, most jobs or careers require writing of some sort, such as lists, letters, cards, messages, memos, summaries, evaluations, explanations, editorials, or invoices. Writing

helps us think more clearly and perhaps more deeply about whatever is on our mind. We gain a better understanding of ourselves and the world around us through writing. Throughout our lives, regardless of what job we have, we have to communicate both verbally and in writing. Although some careers may require that writers have more creativity and exactness in form and grammar than others (journalists, analysts, etc.), every student that we graduate must have the ability to read and write well. Additionally, I believe it is our responsibility to help students become independent, critical thinkers, to be creative and to understand life through creative eyes.

Approach guided by principles of teaching that integrate technology

Process of the Project: The unit "Living Like a Writer"

The unit "Living Like a Writer" is one of many that can be introduced at an early stage in the teaching of writing. I think it is important because I believe that all of our students already are writers, some just do not know it yet. By creating time lines of their lives as writers, students come to understand that they actually have a history as a writer. By studying how other authors live and write, students learn that writing is hard work, even for the famous, and that there are as many ways to write as there are people who write. At the very beginning of the year, I will introduce a writer's notebook and use it as a tool for each student to develop his or her individual skills by practicing the craft. Ideally, students will write in their notebooks during class three or five times a week for forty minute periods and at home for fifteen minutes each night. Student entries are determined by the students' brainstorming or developing their own ideas and ultimately by finding a topic that is meaningful to them. With their writer's notebooks in hand, students then begin to live like writers by observing the world around them, making daily entries, reading like a writer, and working like a writer. Over the course of time, with reinforcement, collaborative work and practice, students identify themselves and their classmates as people who write and, hopefully, will write well for the rest of their lives.

Depending on the needs of the students, the teacher introduces mini

lessons that are relevant to the work (for a sample mini lesson, see Appendix C). Immediately after a mini lesson is taught, the students are asked to apply the learning to their writing. In the upper grades, students move through the steps of the writing process (from entries to drafting, to revising, to editing, and to publication) at their own pace. I believe that students must be able to communicate not merely through reading and rote response, but by listening, thinking, and speaking. I think that teachers are responsible for helping students grow as thinkers and as writers.

I outline my goals of a unit plan as follows:

1. providing students with tools;
2. practicing the craft;
3. encouraging independence;
4. engaging in a rigorous process;
5. improving writing skills; and
6. making a writer's life accessible.

Students would learn what tools a writer uses, and they will learn intense process steps that, once mastered, will allow students to write well throughout the rest of their lives. I am passionate about the teaching of writing through a constructivist model in which, as described above, two-thirds of every writing class is spent writing and practicing the craft of writing.

Unit Plan

Writing Like a Writer: the Process

Project Title: *Living Like A Writer*

Content of the Project:

A writing lesson plan based on a constructivist philosophy which integrates technology to address the needs of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) and Japanese as a second language learners (JSL).

Essential Questions:

- How does an author live as a writer? (tools and practice)

- Who am I as a writer? (student - identity)
- What do writers do to develop a good piece of writing? (process)

Time Frame: 45 minutes per unit

Grade level:

High school students working to develop fluency in a language. These students already have a basic understanding of their language (can speak it to some degree) and are ready to improve their communication skills. This includes LEP / LJP students who need to develop stronger vocabulary. They have had experience with technology, such as web browsing and use of software such as Inspiration 6.0.

Process prior to the Projects:

Week One: *What do writers do?*

Writers share their histories as writers (share artifacts with partners, e.g. something that was written last year). Writers have goals for future writing (e.g. begin a portfolio for the year). The first entry is the artifact the student brought in the previous day. Writers need tools to write: a writer's notebook, pens, pencils, favorite authors.

Week Two: *What are the tools that a writer needs?*

Students write every day: nurture and publish.

Overview of the Unit:

Part One: How do writers live "writerly lives"?

Students select a topic and write about it, collecting entries in their notebooks, and collecting ideas form published authors about how to write well.

Part Two: How do we go from notebooks to drafting?

The students follow the steps of the writing process while learning specific techniques that will improve the quality of their writing.

Part Three: Can we evaluate our work and set goals for the future?

The students take their collections of drafts, edit the final copy, and a rubric to evaluate their process and the pieces they produced. In addition, they will set goals based on their evaluations for future projects. After editing, as the final lesson, a collection of all their works will be published. Publication inducts us as insiders into the world of authorship. It helps students match their writing and their reading.

Process of the Project:

Part 1: How do writers live "writerly lives"?

The following lessons are outlined by the information that is to be transferred to the students, not necessarily by the lesson itself. For example, when teaching students how to be keen observers, there are a number of ways that a teacher could teach this skill. One teacher might ask the student to select something from a grab bag and describe it so clearly that another student can figure out what it is without looking. Another teacher might take the students on a walk in the park and demonstrate how to zoom in on a tree by describing the bark, or the veins in a leaf. In a constructivist classroom, the teacher will help the students make meaning using what is available to her and to them.

Lesson One: *Writers select seed (topic) ideas that are important to them.*

Students look back at the writer's notebooks they've been keeping an select a topic that they have already written about that they feel is important to write more about. This will be the topic they stick with until the end of the unit.

Lesson Two: *Good writers are keen observers.*

Students will zoom in closely on the thing or the idea they have chosen for a seed. In their writer's notebooks, they will use many descriptions to explain what they see or what they have observed.

Lesson Three: *Writers write the real truth through honest eyes.*

Students will look for advice from published authors. They will consider why it is that their seed ideas are important...is there a truth behind the truth? Is there a hidden message or purpose in their writing that they were afraid to reveal?

Lesson Four: *When we need advice, we can go to writer's texts on writing and our favorite authors.*

Students will learn which tools are available for them to get advice on improving their writing, even when the teacher is not available to help them. When published writers are stuck, what do they do? They turn to each other (in the form of books) for help.

Part 2: How do we go from notebooks to drafting? The Writing Process

At this stage, teachers are aware of what the needs of their students are. If your students are really good at using capital letters correctly, there is no reason to do a whole lesson on capitalization rules. If, however, many students are writing dialogue and they don't know the punctuation rules for writing quotes, you might teach that during the editing stage of the process. The following sequence is merely a possible list of lessons to be taught that I believe will greatly improve

any writer's piece. The individual skills taught are not nearly so important as are the separate steps. Students must be able to articulate, "I am revising for ...," and, "I am editing for..."

Lesson One: *Drafting – Going from notebooks to computers.*

Use Inspiration 6.0, Outlining features in Word, etc., to generate the first draft of your piece. What is the focus of your piece? Did you select a genre that works for the topic and the message?

Lesson Two: *Revision – How should I organize my piece?*

Lesson Three: *Revision – A strong lead will hook the reader.*

Lesson Four: *Revision – Strong writers work with partners to improve the quality of their work.*

Does what I wrote make sense here? Use a peer conferencing sheet – for a sample, see Appendix D.

Lesson Five: *Celebration Planning – Authors celebrate their success.*

Who is generating invitations to hand out to the parents and faculty? How exactly are we going to celebrate?

Lesson Six: *Editing – Are my sentences complete sentences?*

Fixing run-ons and fragments.

Lesson Seven: *Editing – Did I use capital letters correctly?*

Lesson Eight: *Editing – Did I use commas correctly?*

Lesson Nine: *Publishing – Printing out the final product and preparing to turn it in.*

Are you making a book with illustrations? Are you printing a poster of poems? Any pictures to be added or color to be layered on the text is done now.

Part 3: Can we evaluate our work and set goals for the future?

Lesson One: *Writers celebrate and are celebrated for their effort!*

A classroom celebration takes place to share parts of the students' work. Parents and administrators are invited in advance.

Lesson Two: *Writers take time to evaluate the job they've done and make plans for the future.*

Students turn in the ENTIRE process piece. All the work they have done – all the drafts, the practice leads, the notes from any peer evaluators, notes from

conferences with the teacher, all are turned in with the final copy on the very top of the pile. All is stapled together. Once everything is collected, a student then evaluates his work using the pre-established rubric (for a sample, see Appendix E). The rubric should include a place where learners can reflect and set goals for the future.

Lesson Three: *Writers look back at the evaluation they received from their editor (the teacher) to make goals for themselves as writers.*

The students look at the comments that the teacher wrote on the rubric after reading and grading the process and the piece.

Assessment:

In writing, students accumulate portfolios of works during the school year. A portfolio represents a students' work. Students also select the best piece, chosen with the teacher's help. A portfolio could include a dated poem, short story, or personal narration, etc. The teacher collects the best pieces, and publishes them on the web.

Students will be assessed by:

1. Formal assessment: one piece of process writing (see rubric in Appendix E)

All the drafts and notes, including the peer conferencing notes, will be collected with the final draft. Students will use the rubric to self-assess as they move through the process. The teacher will use the same rubric to grade the final product.

2. Informal assessment: on-going teacher-student conferences (see Conference Record Sheet in Appendix F)

3. Informal assessment: a peer-revision conference (see Appendix D)

Assessment is ongoing as the teacher moves throughout the classroom to meet with four or five students each day while the other students are writing (See Appendix F). The students engage in peer assessment by reviewing each others drafts (See Appendix D) and each engages in self assessment upon publication of each final draft (See Appendix E). Assessments are used very specifically to inform the next steps in our teaching and for continuous learning by the students. Assessment of student learning is intermingled with teaching and occurs through teacher observations of students at work; the teacher can assess students' note-taking, observations, products of individual and group work, or portfolios. Assessment should be meaningful; it should reflect what was taught and what expectations were established.

Digital Tasks on the Unit Plan:

During the first week, Students are asked to find phrases and words from their favorite novels on the web. To conduct the research, students access E-texts of their favorite authors, and download graphics and text from them. Students skim and find where their favorite phrases and words are used in the E-text. After they research and find their favorite words or sentences, the data is put into a database. It can be sorted and queried by a teacher. On the screen, students discover an idea that has potential to lead to deeper thinking and to a project. As an assignment, students are asked to start with their favorite phrases and continue the story. In drafting, going from notebooks to laptops, students use the Inspiration software, and outline features in Word, etc. The students open a web page that the teacher has built. The teacher has created a stack or folder, and has created a button to link to the screen or a card. Students work at their own pace and share with one another. The graphic organizer, "Inspiration" software can be used to create a cognitive model. That is, this software allows the students to diagram their thinking in a variety of forms. Visual learning techniques, graphical ways of working with ideas and presenting information, teach students to think clearly, and to process, organize, and integrate new information and to identify misconceptions. They also stimulate creative thinking. The Inspiration software nurtures their thinking on the topic.

The students are asked to open a web page that the teacher has built, where the students engage in peer assessment by reviewing each others' drafts (See Appendix D) on the screen. As an alternative, groups of students can make a presentation to show their best pieces by using MS Power Point, or Hyperstudio. A Presentation of what groups or individual students have done can be one of the most valuable activities in a curriculum unit. As they work on a presentation, student groups should be able to justify their organizational decisions. In terms of thinking skills, group presentations offer challenges and opportunities. To decide what to present can be the most demanding part of the group's decision making. The presentation allows the group to provide a product in which the group can

take pride.

Conclusion

When students learn a foreign language, they have to just memorize much vocabulary, and formulas and grammatical rules; however, teachers often do not consider how to use a language in an actual situation and they do not teach students in such a way that they can communicate. In learning a foreign language, formal education does not seem enough.

Therefore, when teachers notice what is lacking in our education, hopefully they could change the traditional classroom into an environment where students can develop creative thinking and internalize knowledge. To create meaningful knowledge, language teaching should emphasize how skills in reading and writing develop through involvement in authentic reading and writing activities. Students should not write mock pieces as exercises for the teachers. Rather, students need to write diaries, stories, and arguments that have genuine communicative functions. I feel that a more student-centered educational system needs to be developed for Japanese higher education. Teachers should behave in a more interactive manner and mediate the environment for students.

Teachers could create an environment based on constructivist strategies, where students engage in cooperative group work, since learning occurs best between a learner and others. Interaction with others is important for social growth. For example, collaborative work such as a group project, student-student conferences, and student-teacher conferences will enhance students' learning. Discourse with one's peer group and teacher-student conferences are important factors in learning. For instance, if students discuss as a small group in a classroom, using a foreign language, they use their knowledge in an authentic way. Also they will learn a social skill. It allows students to express their own ideas and to hear and reflect on the ideas of others. Teachers could also provide open-ended questions to students to guide deeper understanding of a topic.

We should provide educational settings with student-centered learning, where students learn by thinking through what they are learning about. For

instance, applying technology-enhanced instructional strategies will enhance student-centered learning. Teachers could design developmentally appropriate learning opportunities to support the diverse needs of learners. Technology provides challenging tasks, opportunities and experiences, access to experts, peers, and community members, access to rich media sources for data manipulation or presentation, and tools for interactive browsing, searching, and authoring. It allows students to learn by doing: planning, reflecting, making decisions, experiencing consequences, and examining alternative solutions and ideas. It also provides guided participation and customized content to suit the particular needs or interests of students through Socratic questioning, intelligent tutoring, diagnosing and guiding an analysis of mistakes, and through adaptations or changes that respond to students' actions.

On the teachers' web page, teachers could provide a question sheet, where students are asked for creative answers to the questions; in a weekly newsletter or student-student e-mails, a topic could be discussed or students' questions for each unit or their answers could be posted on the web. Idea maps, using visual learning techniques will also help students generate ideas and develop thoughts visually. These are used for brainstorming and prewriting exercises, and producing plans and solving problems. In drafting, going from notebooks to laptops, students can use a graphic organizer.

What Japanese teachers can do now is limited and it will take time, energy and perseverance to introduce a constructivist curriculum; however, teachers could create environments where a teacher helps students develop higher thinking skills and social skill. The more the students are interested in learning itself, the more they are motivated to learn.

Teaching is guiding students through something that is unfamiliar. Teaching has the power to transform the lives of both the teachers and the students. Eventually, teachers should develop independent thinkers and learners, and inspire students to know more, and develop students' truthfulness and self-confidence.

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Appendix A: A Look at School Environment

Traditional Classroom	Constructivist Classroom
Curriculum is presented from part to whole, with emphasis on basic skills.	Curriculum is presented from whole to part with emphasis on big concepts.
Strict adherence to fixed curriculum is highly valued.	Pursuit of student questions is highly valued.
Students are viewed as "blank slates" onto which information is etched by the teacher.	Students are viewed as thinkers with emerging theories about the world.
Teachers generally behave in a didactic manner, disseminating information to students.	Teachers generally behave in an interactive manner, mediating the environment for students.
Teachers seek the correct answer to validate student learning.	Teachers seek the students' points of view in order to understand students' present conceptions for use in subsequent lessons.
Assessment of student learning is viewed as separate from teaching and occurs almost entirely through testing.	Assessment of student learning is interwoven with teaching and occurs through teacher observations of students at work and through student exhibitions and portfolios.
Students primarily work alone.	Students primarily work in groups.

Brooks. J. G. & Brooks, M. (1993).

Appendix B: Planning Rubric

The list of principle (of leaning, of teaching, and of assessing) contains the criteria upon which all future decisions were made.

To use this as rubric in the future, one would merely refer to it as a check list. Did all the activities adhere to these principles? Did the essential questions stem from these principles? By returning to these principles throughout the unit-writing process, we were able to keep ourselves focused on what we believe is effective practice.

	Principles of Leaning:
	Tell me, I see. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand.
	Students lean by engaging in cooperative learning and discussion.
	Learning is built on prior knowledge.
	Principle of Teaching:
	We want to create life-long learners.
	All children can learn.
	We want to develop independent thinkers and learners.
	Principles of Assessment:
	Assessment should inform teaching and learning.
	Assessment should reflect what was taught and what expectations were established.
	Assessment should be meaningful to the student.

Appendix C: Lesson Plans

Writing – In a writing workshop format, lesson plans will usually follow this model.

Date: _____

Focus Lesson (10-12 minutes)	Connection (Motivation): How does today's lesson fit our unit? The teacher might explain how s/he noticed someone yesterday do this really great thing. . . or maybe she noticed something in a conference that seems to be troubling a lot of students. Lesson: Transfer of information. Usually very directed. Only one skill or idea is presented at a time. Lessons are short and precise, with emphasis on applying the skill in the student's own writing. Students "try it": a 5 minute attempt to apply the skill immediately and briefly, so the teacher can make sure that the information was presented effectively
Independent Writing Time and Conferring (30 minutes)	Students are working on their own pieces. Teacher circulates and confers with students to assess and help students develop their skills. (See the Conference Record Form, Appendix F)
Share Time (5 minutes)	Students report out how today's writing session went. Sharing of work, especially as it relates to today's lesson (sometimes called a mini-lesson). Teacher is able to assess how many students actually applied what was taught in their writing.

Reflection: Teacher will reflect on what went well – or not! – during the day's lesson and work session. This helps lessons flow naturally from day to day while still addressing the needs of the students.

Appendix D: Revision Conference – Peer to Peer

Author's Name:

Title of Work:

Name of Peer Editor:

I. Copy and paste your two favorite sentences or sections. In a different color, explain why you chose those sentences.

1.

2.

II. Copy and paste a sentence or section that seems unclear to you.

III. In your partner's essay, highlight in pink any words that you think are misspelled or are incorrect.

IV. Highlight in green the items below that you recommend your partner work on:

- Add descriptive language
- Add dialogue
- Delete repetitive sentences
- Check grammar and punctuation

V. Highlight in green any of the following problems that exist:

- Unfocused; covers too many events or days
- Too short; lacks details, facts, or feelings
- Lead does not "hook the reader"
- Conclusion is too sudden
- The paper seems to drag on and on
- The paper is confusing; reorder the paragraphs

VI. In your partner's paper, add comments by highlighting a section and go to Insert/Comment. Type in your suggestions and comments politely. Do not make any changes to the paper without your partner's consent.

Appendix E: Writer's Notebook Evaluation – Living the Writerly Life

Name: _____

Date: _____

Please rate your work on a scale of 1 (lowest), 2 (average), or 3 (highest).

	1	2	3
Building a writerly life: Do you write in your notebook almost every day? How often do you have it with you?			
Thinking in my notebook: Do you dig deep into topics? Are there sections where you stay with a topic for more than a page or two?			
Using various kinds of entries: Do you try to write lots of different kinds of ways in your notebook (observation, description, trying to use writer's craft, different genres, lists, letters, poems, playing with words, dialogue, etc.)?			
Playing with words: Do you try to play with words (riddles, antonyms, synonyms, nuance, definitions, puns, interesting words)? Give an example.			
Collecting things: Do you have things other than words in your notebook (pictures, artifacts, ticket stubs, literary gifts, etc.)?			
Being Creative: Do you try to be creative? Give an example.			
Having evidence of mini-lessons: Do you have notes about writing in your notebook? Are you doing the "try it" in class and at home? Do you have homework boxes?			
Increasing volume: Are you writing more and more each week?			

Setting Goals

On the back of this page, write a reflection about how you are changing as a writer. What are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Writing Evaluation – 2nd Piece

Name:_____

Date: _____

Title:_____

Genre: Rook Review

Please rate your work on a scale of 1 (lowest), 2 (average), or 3 (highest).

	Student Rating	Teacher Rating
Collecting/Gathering Entries About Your Seed Idea (your book): Was your seed a good choice for a thoughtful piece rather than a blurb or summary?		
Genre: Does the piece you are publishing reflect the elements of a book review?		
Drafting: Does your first draft reflect the thinking that you did in your notebook?		
Peer Revision: Did you take questions about your piece to at least two other people? Did you make a real effort to talk through your tough parts and improve your piece?		
Revision: Does your draft show that you have re-thought, re-organized, re-written, and/or re-worded your original draft? Does the final copy look *much* different from the first draft?		
Editing: Did you check for and correct capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphing in your piece?		
Publishing: Did you publish your piece in MS Word? Will you feel proud of this piece when it is put up on the Internet for the world to see?		

Development: Does your book review include enough information to satisfy the reader?		
Clarity: Is it evident that you have searched for just the right words, phrases, and information to help the reader understand and make sense of the writing? Does the writing flow smoothly from idea to idea?		
Language Convention: Did you fix any errors in sentence formation, word usage, and spelling? Did you employ appropriate grammar usage?		
Using Quotes to Support Your Text: Did you use effective quotes from the book that you are reviewing? Did you use commas, quotation marks, and other punctuation correctly when quoting the text?		
Timeliness: Were you ready for each stage of the writing process? Are you ready for the celebration?		

Setting Goals

Look back at the rubric from your last piece. List your goals you made on the back of that rubric:

1.

2.

3.

On the back of this page, write a reflection about how you are changing as a writer. Did you meet the goals that you set for yourself after the last piece? What are your new goals?

Appendix F: Conference Record Form (Informal Assessment Tool)

This is a sample of a conferring sheet that a teacher might use with his/her students. During the writing and conferencing part of a workshop (30 minutes), the teacher walks around the room to meet with students individually while students work independently on their own writing. As the week progresses, the teacher checks off which students s/he *actually* conferred with, including comments to act as a reminder of how the student is doing. These weekly record sheets go into one folder so that the teacher can quickly reference all the conference notes on any student at any time. This acts as a form of informal assessment, allowing the teacher to follow a student's progress independently of others in the group.

This format designed for the middle grades (taken from Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) also allows the teacher to see at a glance which students have been too long without a conference. At the bottom of this form is a place for the teacher to record the mini-lessons that were *actually* taught that week, plus any notes that might help recalling the work and progress of the students.

Name	M	T	W	R	F	Comments
S 1						
S 2						
S 3						
S 4						
S 5						
S 6						
* * *	*	*	*	*	*	* * * * *
S 7						
S 8						
S 9						
S 11						
S 12						
S 13						
Mini Lessons: Mon: Tues: Wed: Thurs: Fri:						

(Fountas, I. C. & Pinnell, G. S., 1996)