



## What Makes this TEAM Reflection Paper Successful?

Some specific examples/evidence that contributed to the success of this paper are provided below.

Module Four: Assessment

Grade: 1

Subject: Writing

### Criteria I: Development of New Learning (How the teacher developed new learning and what was learned)

How the teacher developed new learning:

- Scored and analyzed students' winter writing prompts
- Discussion with grade-level colleagues in Professional Learning Community (PLC)
- Reviewed *The Craft of Revision* and *Small Moments* by Lucy Calkins

What the teacher learned:

- "Through collaboration with my team, I realized that students who scored a two in the area of organization, needed to make sure that their stories had a resolution and maintained focus throughout the piece to meet goal (3) by the end of the year. For students that scored above goal, I came to realize that I needed to teach lessons about making smooth transitions in writing."
- "Analyzing the student work allowed me to notice that students struggled to elaborate on the events or the problem in the middle of their stories. It would be important to be explicit with students about strategies for elaboration."

### Criteria II: Impact on Practice (How the teacher's practice is different)

- "Each class created a word wall that included both 'worn words' and 'vivid words' ... For students who were struggling with this activity, I formed a guided writing group and had students pick a story to share with the group. We then worked together to find the 'worn words' and brainstormed 'vivid words' to replace them. I used a T-chart to record students' ideas, and then I posted the chart to support students during their independent writing."
- "For my students, I created feeling cards which had a feeling on one card (e.g., sad, happy, surprised) and then a second set of cards that described what that feeling 'looked like' (e.g., his head was down, his hands were in his pocket, he walked slowing dragging his feet). Students worked in groups to match the feeling card with the 'looked like' card."

### Criteria III: Impact on students (How student performance/learning has improved as a result of changes in the teacher's practice)

- "Sixty-five percent of the students who were using the graphic organizer to aid them in including all of the story elements were able to independently move away from the graphic organizer and include all the story elements in their writing."
- "About eighty-five percent of the class was able to replace most 'worn words.' For example, one student decided to replace the word 'bad' with 'sour.' Another student replaced 'loud' with 'squeaked.'"
- "I believe that most students were able to internalize the five senses because their writing used descriptive words such as: loud, clean, cold, smooth, tart, quiet, purple, scratchy and soft."



Module Four: Assessment

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**Indicator 3** - Teachers use multiple measures to analyze student performance and to inform subsequent planning and instruction by: Collaborating with colleagues to review and interpret assessment data to monitor and adjust instruction to ensure students' progress

**Goal:**

I will collaborate with my grade level colleagues to review and interpret my writing assessment data (rubrics) to plan and adjust lessons to meet the needs of individual students.

**Initial Summary:**

Currently, I use the writing assessment rubric to score students' writing three times a year, however, I do not do much to analyze the data to inform my instruction. I also realize that I am not collaborating with my Professional Learning Community (PLC) to review and adjust my instruction based on the assessment results. As a result, students' performance in writing is not growing as much as it could be. I want to be able to identify areas in which students are not meeting grade level expectations and collaborate with my team to create lessons that will move them towards goal. I would also like to identify students who need further enrichment and develop a systemic approach to teach them writing to ensure they are being challenged. I will use my writing rubric and the winter assessments as a baseline to design groups.

**Reflection Paper:**

I began the process in January, when I administered the winter writing prompt to my first grade students. This is a district-wide assessment given three times a year. The writing rubric is based on a scoring system of 1-4, with four being the highest. It is divided into three categories: organization, craft, and conventions. First, I reviewed and scored students' writing prompts so I could gain a clearer understanding of their writing. One of the first things that struck me was the need for student growth in the area of organization. For organization, goal for winter is a two; four students scored a four, eight scored a three, and seven scored a two. This showed me, that I needed to make sure that the seven students scoring a two needed to score a three by the end of the year for them to meet goal. I wanted those students that scored a three, to score a four by the end of the year. For those that scored a four, I wanted to make sure I offered enrichment activities to move their writing to the next level.

During my next PLC meeting, I sat with my grade level colleagues, and we analyzed our writing prompts using the rubric to look at the areas of organization, craft and convention separately. Through collaboration with my team, I realized that students who scored a two in the area of organization, needed to make sure that their stories had a resolution and maintained focus throughout the piece to meet goal (3) by the end of the year. For students



that scored above goal, I came to realize that I needed to teach lessons about making smooth transitions in writing.

In the area of craft my team collaborated and determined that students who scored a two needed to improve their writing by including a variety of sentences, adding supporting details and using specific vocabulary while writing. We also determined that for students who scored above goal, to move their writing to the next level, they needed to use specific nouns, strong verbs and vivid descriptions, as well as, elaborating on at least one story event.

Our team then focused on the area of conventions. We realized that students who were at goal needed to work on capitalization and punctuation to meet goal and score a three at the end of the year. Students who exceeded goal would continue to work on capitalization and punctuation, making sure that the rules were being applied “most of the time” as stated in the district’s analytical writing rubric.

We continued our work at the next PLC meeting where we collaborated and analyzed our units of study, focusing on the areas listed above. We wanted to set up a scope and sequence for the writing lessons. We began with organization, and realized that one of the best ways to help first graders maintain focus in their writing is to use graphic organizers. After our research, we identified three graphic organizers that would help students include all the important story elements (i.e., characters, setting, problems, events, resolution). We then developed lessons to introduce each graphic organizer using *Touchstone Texts*. Our lessons included modeling, guided practice, scaffolding and independent work. To differentiate for students who needed to be challenged, I provided a different organizer that would scaffold students in the use of transition words and phrases.

After completing the graphic organizer, students were to write a narrative using that information. To assess student success, we would use their writing to determine if students were able to transfer the information from the graphic organizer to their writing.

After teaching these lessons and giving students an opportunity to practice the skills, we met again as a PLC to reflect on the lessons and the results. We determined that students who needed to be challenged benefited from the graphic organizers and were able to independently use transition words in their writing. Sixty-five percent of the students who were using the graphic organizer to aid them in including all of the story elements were able to independently move away from the graphic organizer and include all the story elements in their writing. The remaining thirty-five percent of students continued to struggle without the graphic organizer. Therefore, for these students the graphic organizer was made available. I learned that providing students with graphic organizers is a valuable tool since it can help them maintain focus and sequence their thoughts.

As a PLC, our next step was to collaborate and develop lessons on the craft section of the writing rubric. We realized that the sequence of our lessons should reflect two of the three subsets on the writing rubric, elaboration and sentences. Our analysis of student work indicated that students were able to clearly “use words to convey ideas logically.” Therefore,



we wanted to spend our time focusing on the other two subsets. We decided to work on elaboration first, specifically teaching how important vocabulary is in one's writing. The team identified different texts that demonstrate how authors choose specific vocabulary words to help paint a picture in the reader's mind. These words also help to develop the author's ideas and events. Each class created a word wall that included both "worn words" and "vivid words". Students then went back in their writing and picked one piece to edit. Their task was to circle the "worn words" and try to replace them with "vivid words." For students who were struggling with this activity, I formed a guided writing group and had students pick a story to share with the group. We then worked together to find the "worn words" and brainstormed "vivid words" to replace them. I used a T-chart to record students' ideas, and then I posted the chart to support students during their independent writing. About eighty-five percent of the class was able to replace most "worn words." For example, one student decided to replace the word "bad" with "sour." Another student replaced "loud" with "squeaked." In the follow up lesson, students were asked to write a story and practice using "vivid words."

Recognizing the challenge of having first graders use their writing to "show not tell," our PLC decided to turn to experts in this field. We developed lessons as outlined in Lucy Calkins book *The Craft of Revision*. We read *Touchstone Texts* and pointed out specific areas in which the characters were showing and not telling their feelings or thinking. For my students, I created feeling cards which had a feeling on one card (e.g., sad, happy, surprised) and then a second set of cards that described what that feeling "looked like" (e.g., his head was down, his hands were in his pocket, he walked slowing dragging his feet). Students worked in groups to match the feeling card with the "looked like" card. As I informally observed students working, I noticed that several students were acting out the "looked like" card to help others in the group match the feeling card. For example, one student smiled and clapped her hands to demonstrate the feeling of excitement. After all the matches were found, we then made a T-chart of feelings and what it looks like and displayed it in the room. In the following lesson, students practiced these skills as I worked with small groups and individuals. The students seemed to grasp this craft easily, and I learned that when students are actively engaged in their learning, they are more successful.

The PLC reviewed students' writing assessments and made informal observations about the students' writing, then reviewed the writing rubric. We realized that to move students along the continuum in the area of elaboration, we should teach lessons in which students use their senses to help create a picture in the reader's mind. Our sequence of the lessons began with a review of the five senses. We then created a chart of the five senses and included a picture of each as a visual reminder.

The class took a sensory walk around the school, stopping at specific locations (i.e. cafeteria, music room, gym). At each location, students sat and recorded what they heard, saw, felt, smelled, and tasted. After the walk, we collaborated, as a class, to discuss the different experiences we had on the walk. Students were instructed to write a story about one location



on the sensory walk which included all the five senses. I believe that most students were able to internalize the five senses because their writing used descriptive words such as: loud, clean, cold, smooth, tart, quiet, purple, scratchy and soft.

Our next craft technique to teach was developing the middle part of the story. Analyzing the student work allowed me to notice that students struggled to elaborate on the events or the problem in the middle of their stories. It would be important to be explicit with students about strategies for elaboration. As a PLC, we collaborated and developed lessons to help students with this technique. In our first lesson, I read aloud a book and then students used post-it notes to retell all the events in the story without using the book. After their retell was complete, students used the book to check their work. More than fifty percent of the class realized that they had forgotten key events in the middle of the story. This brought to their attention how much information and detail is in the middle of the story.

The following day, I modeled writing a story and demonstrated how the middle is the biggest part of the story. In the middle, I included dialogue and description; I used my senses and incorporated the other craft techniques. Students were then sent off to write a story making sure that the middle part was developed and elaborated. I pulled a guided writing group and offered them a graphic organizer with the words “first, then, next, and last” to help them organize their ideas and expand on the middle part of their writing. I gave the rest of the class writing paper that had beginning, middle, and end written on it, and the middle section had more pages in it.

That night, I read their stories and made a few observations. First, I noticed that seventy-five percent attempted to elaborate on the middle part of the story. This was an improvement, however, their stories were sounding “listy.” I then pulled my resources and noticed that Lucy Calkins offered suggestions on helping writers make a movie in their minds. I also, referred to her book, *Small Moments*.

I adjusted my writing plans for the next day to better meet the needs of these students. Before writing, I read aloud the book *A Chair for My Mother* by Vera B. Williams and thought aloud how the author slows down the moment when the mother and daughter are walking and see the fire. We then discussed how the author stretches the fire out over a few pages. I modeled how I take a small moment and stretch it out over multiple pages to create a picture for the reader. Students then practiced this skill using the same writing paper that I used as a model. Then I noticed a few students had difficulty getting started so I pulled them and worked with them while others were working independently. Once I got my small groups started, they seemed successful at this task. As I rotated around the room, I noticed that about ninety percent of students were successfully adding thoughts, feelings and sensory details to stretch out moments in their stories. I wasn't sure what to do with the ten percent of students who continued to have difficulty; therefore, I met with my PLC to collaborate on the next steps. We decided that those students needed more practice so, I repeated the lesson the following day, modeling a new story. Those students that were successful would



continue to work on this skill independently. Just when I was becoming concerned, it appeared that ninety-seven percent of the students were able to stretch out a story. I learned that not all students are able to grasp concepts immediately: some need more time and practice.

During writing the next day, I pulled my writers together and told them that another strategy good writers use is “getting a picture in their minds.” I told them to close their eyes as I told my story. As I was telling the story, I had them get a picture in their minds. Then I modeled writing the story. Students were then instructed to come up with their own stories and to create pictures in their heads. They turned to their partners and told their stories to their partners and vice versa. Students then went off to write using the same paper I offered the previous day. I did not pull a guided writing group that day, but instead circulated and conferred with my students. I noticed that eighty-five percent of students did well with this activity. I encouraged those that I felt needed to add more writing by listening first and then telling them, that as a reader I would like to hear more about their topics (as suggested by Lucy Calkins). Some students needed to sketch first and we referred to the sketch to make sure they included all the parts in the story.

As a PLC we decided that students would practice these skills for a minimum of five days. I learned that when students create pictures in their minds, it helps them add details to their writing.

During that time, our PLC met to review our writing rubrics and assessments to determine our next steps. It was agreed upon that we would spend time helping students develop endings of their stories. We reviewed the endings that we teach in first grade: circle story, solution to the problem, lesson learned, feeling or thought. Then we selected different texts as read alouds to show the students each ending. We taught each ending separately and modeled with our own stories. Students were then given the opportunity to practice each ending. In class, we discussed how different stories lend themselves to different types of endings. We charted examples of each for students to reference. I learned that students would benefit from additional repeated practice. Our PLC decided it was important to continue practicing this skill.

I feel collaborating with my PLC on the writing assessments was beneficial because I learned how to better interpret the writing rubric and assessments. This allowed me to gain a better understanding of where my students were and where they needed to go. I also grasped the specifics of skills I needed to teach to get them there. This process also allowed me to notice growth within my students’ writing and that each child is moving along the continuum at his/her own pace while moving toward grade level expectations.