Activity 4b

Connecticut Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy

Grades 6–12

Systems of Professional Learning

Activity 4b: "Writing to Sources" Teachers' Guide 6-12

DESCRIPTION

Participants read "Writing to Sources: Initial Guided Instruction for ELA 6-12" and discuss with a partner.

DIRECTIONS

1. Read the resource "Writing to Sources", found on the following pages of the Participant Guide, and consider the instructional design.

2. As you read, underline key concepts that will serve as supports for teachers and students.

3. Discuss your annotations with a partner.

Writing to Sources: Initial Guided Instruction

Source: This article is excerpted and adapted from a document of the same name located at achievethecore.org/Student Achievement Partners. The nonprofit creates and disseminates open source materials that are available at no cost. The organization encourages states, districts, schools, and teachers to take and adapt resources.

Writing about a text after doing a careful read is an important opportunity for students to synthesize their knowledge about that text. When they write clearly and thoughtfully about a text, even if the piece of writing is relatively short, they construct meaning of that text in a way that sticks.

Sometimes, of course, we use writing to *assess* students' understanding of the text. More often, we use writing to *help students build deeper meaning* of the text. In addition, we use writing about a text to help students learn to write clearly, logically, and thoughtfully. In this way, the writing not only helps students synthesize meaning of the text – it helps them think clearly and thoughtfully about other texts.

It is assumed that the concept of writing to sources will be new and challenging for most students and teachers and that the teaching should be scaffolded. However, this instructional sequence provided is meant to **introduce** a process that students (and teachers!) will eventually make their own. As you and your students become more comfortable with text based writing, be sure to modify your process towards independence. With careful instruction, much practice, and gradual release of responsibility, all of your students will enrich and improve, not only their writing, but the way they think about and interact with what they read.

The following estimated 2 – 3 day sequence provides a template for instructing and guiding students through the process of writing to sources.

Writing to Sources: Guided Instruction

DAY ONE *(approximately 45 minutes)*

- *Writing begins with the third read*

  The first read of the sequence establishes a first familiarity with the text. In the second read the teacher guides students slowly and carefully through the text, prodding their thinking with text-dependent questions. On the third read, students read with a specific purpose, to gather information that will allow them to answer a Focusing Question for writing, and code the text according to the purpose of the Focusing Question and taking notes.

- *Pose the Focusing Question for writing*

  Before the third read, the teacher poses the Focusing Question for writing. Each selection has a single, carefully crafted, Focusing Question that will be answered by gathering and synthesizing

evidence from the text. The teacher makes this question visible for all the students to see, and makes sure they all understand the question. The Focusing Question is <u>always</u> written at the top of the graphic organizer/notes sheet, reminding the students of the focus of their inquiry into this text.

- *Review the notes sheet / provided organizer*

For students, taking notes captures the knowledge that they will be generating on this third read and using as they write their response to the focusing question. The graphic organizers provided for each Focusing Question guide students in gathering, organizing and synthesizing evidence from the text. Every Focusing Question has a graphic organizer / note sheet to cue students about what knowledge they will be looking for, and to help them make sense of that knowledge both as they go, and after the notes have been taken. For less experienced students, this process is modeled and the teacher creates a large class note chart that can be used to model the process of taking notes. This can be done simply by enlarging the student chart and reproducing it on chart paper, a whiteboard or with a document camera.

- *Capture the knowledge, gather the notes for students needing support*

This is the longest step. As the teacher takes students through the third read, he or she stops frequently to model how to take notes *related to the Focusing Question.* The purpose of this step is to gather evidence from the text that students will use in writing. Depending on the grade level and the text, these notes may be generated by the class and recorded by the teacher (and often copied later by the students) or taken by the students as they go along, with as much conversation and guidance as they need to gather good, useful evidence from the text for writing. This is an initial step which will gradually be conducted independently or with peer partners.

- *Review the notes, develop a Focus Statement for writing*

It's essential that all students have a Focusing Statement (or "Claim") for their writing that addresses the Focusing Question. The Focus Statement, or "Claim," is a concise sentence (or sometimes two) that expresses the central idea of the writing piece and will be supported by the evidence they have gathered in the notes. The teacher helps guide this process. Depending on the writing task, the Focus Statement may be developed *before* gathering evidence (as a sort of hypothesis that students seek to prove using evidence from the text) or *after* gathering evidence (as a source of inquiry into the Focusing Statement). In both cases, the resulting Focus Statement needs to be clear, and needs to point the student clearly to the writing that will follow.

It's quite possible, even probable, that initially everyone will have the same claim and Focus Statement. That's fine. Remember, this is not an assessment – this is instruction! If you have taken group / public notes, make sure that at this point every student copies the Focus Statement individually. Eventually as students gather information from multiple sources and they grow in this process, they will use inquiry to produce their own claims and write their own Focus Statements.

DAY TWO *(approximately 45 minutes)*

- *Model the thinking / writing*

It's important for students to know what this kind of thinking looks like in writing. How will they use the evidence (with reasoning) to develop / support their Focus Statement? Begin by rereading the Focus Statement (or claim) students have written down.

Then, depending on the Focus Question, the text, the age of the students, and the familiarity of the students with this type of task, the teacher and the students create some part of the writing together. This might be a couple of sentences, or it might be a paragraph. Make certain to teach how to transitions between ideas and how to use mature transition words and phrases. Also students should understand how to appropriately paraphrase and quote from text(s). If students are going to be successful with this type of thinking / writing, they need to see what it looks like, and they need to know how to proceed. Make sure that every student copies this "model." It will become part of their finished writing piece.

- *Have students orally "talk the writing" for the rest of the piece*

Using their notes, students "talk the writing" before they write it. This might be in partners; it might be in somewhat larger groups; it could be a circle setting of some sort. The point is, students need to be able to orally verbalize their thinking before they write it and continue to organize their thoughts with the aid of a graphic organizer for pre-writing. Writing is hard: it's important to make sure, that when every student sits down with a pencil or at the keyboard, he is able to say to himself, "Hey, I get this. I know what I'm doing!"

- *Write the body of the piece*

Using their notes and the model, students write the body of the piece (up to the conclusion). For the Focusing Question, a sample piece designed to illustrate the type writing and thinking expected has been provided. This sample is not meant to be shared with students; it is included primarily to clarify the goals of the lesson for the teacher and to provide feedback and evidence of learning. Students go back and review for proper us of conventions, use of richer words, and infusing academic language.

- *Write a concluding statement or section*

The teacher helps students conclude. Depending on the Focusing Statement, the age of the students, the text itself, and the students' familiarity with the process, the conclusion could vary from a simple re-statement to an extension or reflection of some sort. For a more thoughtful conclusion, the teacher will often need to pose a relevant question or two and make sure students have ample opportunity for processing that idea together. Many lessons include suggestions for a reflective question to extend student thinking.

These two sections, along with the introduction, go together to provide a "clear and effective organizational structure that has a variety of transitional strategies, logical progression of ideas from beginning to ending, and an effective introduction and conclusion." This is taken from the SBAC rubric being used for the Writing Formative.

- ***Share, proofread and revise the piece***

In partners or in some larger setting, students read their work aloud, checking meaning and correcting conventions. The teacher may use a variety of approaches for this; no matter what approach he or she uses, he or she is available to check for meaning, proofreading, and providing feedback.

© Achievethecore.org, Student Achievement Partners. Common Core Standards and Assessment Conference 2013. solution-tree.com. Open source document (pp. 14-16). Retrieved from http://www.solution-tree.com/media/pdf/WriteLikeReportersK_5FREYCFF335.pdf