FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AS A COMPASS:

LOOKING AT STUDENT WORK AS AN INTENTIONAL PART OF ON-GOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT

BETH RIMER AND TERRI MCAVOY

INTRODUCTIONS
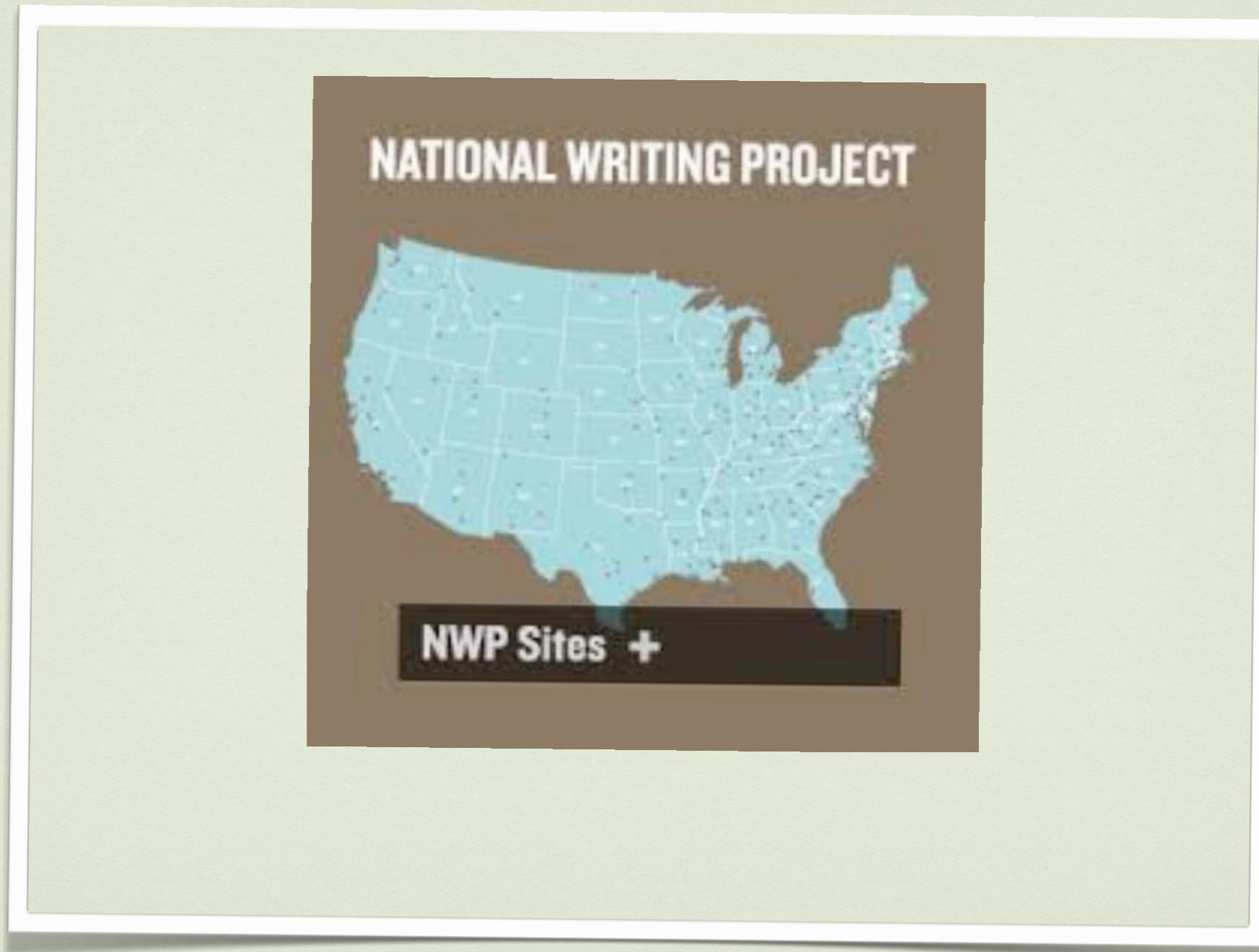
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK:

It's a cliché, those words of kids buckled in the back seat of a car, "Are we there yet?" Who can blame them for asking? They just want to get there, reach their destination, arrive. They know where they will end up but have no real control of the route.

This feeling, wanting to reach a destination but unsure of the route, is sometimes the exact feeling we have when we provide professional development focused on writing instruction. As professional development leaders, we know where we are going: supporting teachers in their practice, raising the quality of student writing, creating a community of professional learners. Yet, we don't always know if we are on the right track.

Sites of the National Writing Project have spent lots of time working with teachers in professional development settings. There are so many productive and practical parts to this PD. Sometimes teacher consultants come to the work with a previously prepared set of demonstration lessons that they have fine-tuned, perfected and are ready to share with teachers. Sometimes, teacher leaders sit side-by-side teachers in planning and coaching. And sometimes, we create workshops, focused book studies, and weekend programs. These are all good places to start. But it is not enough to get us to our destination of reflecting on practice and improving student writing.

So, what happens when a site engages in year-long, intensive professional development that requires several ongoing meetings with teachers? How do teacher consultants make the work fit with what teachers at the school are already doing? How do they make the work meaningful and connected with teachers and students at the center? And how do we know we are staying on track toward the destination? This is where looking at student work as an intentional part of professional development comes in.

This book presents thinking from two NWP sites during the National Writing Project's 2012-2013 SEED evaluation study, a year-long intensive professional development study in high-needs elementary schools. With a main purpose of presenting ways that intentional review of student work can be a guide in professional development, the book will also show consultants how to use formative assessment with teachers as a way of planning lessons that fit with classroom and student. The book starts with a definition of formative assessment and the connection between assessment and student work and then moves to the challenges of looking at student work in professional development. The book also offers strategies for when and how to notice what's going on with students for the purpose of moving them forward as writers as well as examples of how those strategies worked across a year with real teachers in authentic conversations.

Are we there yet? We're getting closer!

AN INTRODUCTION TO US:

National Writing Project: Teachers Teaching Teachers

Beth Rimer (The Ohio Writing Project) & Terri McAvoy (Prairie Lands Writing Project)

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT:

National Writing Project sites share a national program model, adhering to a set of shared principles and practices for teachers' professional development. Many of the **core principles** (below in green) connect specifically to the focus of this book: the thinking and learning that occur when teachers look at student work in a collaborative community of professional development.

Writing can and should be taught, not just assigned, at every grade level. Professional development programs should provide opportunities for teachers to work together to understand the full spectrum of writing development across grades and across subject areas.

Looking at student work in professional development allows teachers to discuss student writing and see the role of formative assessment in teaching writing.

Knowledge about the teaching of writing comes from many sources: theory and research, the analysis of practice, and the experience of writing. Effective professional development programs provide frequent and ongoing opportunities for teachers to write and to examine theory, research, and practice together systematically.

Looking at student work in professional development opens the door to the analysis of teaching practice and the transfer of teaching practices in a systematic, collaborative manner.

There is no single right approach to teaching writing; however, some practices prove to be more effective than others. A reflective and informed community of practice is in the best position to design and develop comprehensive writing programs.

Looking at student work in professional development provides a structured approach to creating an informed community of writing teachers who are able to use student work to guide writing instruction.

Looking at student work in professional development opens conversations about what is happening in student writing and in classrooms thus grounding reform in practice.

Teachers at every level—from kindergarten through college—are the agents of reform; universities and schools are ideal partners for investing in that reform through professional development.

National Writing Project (click here)

ASSESSMENT AS A COMPASS

I use a map. Sometimes I think I might be the only one left using a map to find direction. Sure I mapquest and everyone I know has a GPS, but something about a map helps me see where I am going, where the place I want to go stands in relation to everything else and how many different ways I might get there. I suppose I could be even more old-fashioned and drag out my compass. After all, Lewis and Clark had a map, but Magellan was working from what must have felt like nothing – just his ship and a compass to circumnavigate the world, to get from one place to another.

At times, as writing teachers, we might feel as if we, like Magellan, are working from nothing, like our classrooms need navigation. When students are writing and learning to become writers and we are learning to become writing teachers, we need a way to guide them and us around the world of writing, from one word to another. We need a compass because even the writing map doesn't have all the routes laid out.

So, what is that guide?

What can help us know where our writers have been and where they are going? How can we help teachers in professional development know where to go beyond a map?

One answer: Looking at student work as a mode of formative assessment.

Looking closely and intentionally at student work and letting it guide our teaching can be a compass for writing teachers. It provides direction: revealing where students have been, leading teachers to the next teaching steps and, if we let it, keeping us on our true north.

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Beth
Reading
Chapter 1
Introduction

Guided Questions for Site PD Leaders

For discussion or reflection

1. Grab a line from "Assessment as a Compass" and respond.

2. What is assessment to you?

3. What experiences do you have with assessment in a writing classroom?

4. What role should assessment play in professional development?

5. What is your "true north" when it comes to student writing and professional development?

6. What is your overall goal for the teachers with whom you are working?

7. What would the teachers say their end goal is for the professional development?

8. In what way do you connect what you are doing in professional development from session to session?

9. How do you get a glimpse of what is happening in classrooms and teaching when you are not able to be with teachers?

WHAT IS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT?

WHAT IS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT ANYWAY?

Before digging into the way looking at student work acts as formative assessment in a writing classroom or in an on-going professional development focused on writing, we might pause to define formative assessment in general. Formative assessment is one of those educational buzz-words. It is tossed around, defined, confused, and connected to the words that often make teachers a bit nervous: evaluation, grades, and paperwork. Too often, formative assessment becomes one more thing on a teacher's list of things to do without even knowing what formative assessment means.

Definitions of Formative Assessment

In "Working Inside the Black Box" Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, and William define formative assessment this way: "Assessment for learning is any assessment for which the priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning. It thus differs from assessment designed primarily to serve the purposes of accountability, or of ranking, or of certifying competence. An assessment activity can help learning if it provides information that teachers and their students can use as feedback in assessing themselves and one another and in modifying the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes 'formative assessment' when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs."

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING:Working Inside the Black Box: Assessment for Learning in the Classroom Phi Delta Kappan September 2004 86(1): 8-21

http://www.soesd.k12.or.us/files/working_inside_the_blbx.pdf

Popham in his book *Transformative Assessment* explains, "Formative assessment is a planned process in which teachers or students use assessment –based evidence to adjust what they are currently doing" (2008, 6).

In *So What Do They Really Know: Assessment That Informs Teaching and Learning*, Cris Tovani characterizes formative assessment as the data teachers gather from firsthand sources and then use to inform practice and give feedback. She references a medical metaphor with summative assessments being the autopsy (Reeves 2000, 2004), while formative assessment is the "wellness physical" (2011, 13).

http://blog.stenhouse.com/archives/2011/08/09/cris-tovani-on-formative-assessment-in-the-classroom/

In "The Best Value in Formative Assessment," Stephen Chappuis and Jan Chappuis state, "Formative assessment, on the other hand, delivers information during the instructional process, before the summative assessment. Both the teacher and the student use formative assessment results to make decisions about what actions to take to promote further learning. It is an ongoing, dynamic process that involves far more than frequent testing, and measurement of student learning is just one of its components."

FOCUSING THE DEFINITION:

There are many definitions, yet, even with variations, the key elements seem to be the same.

Formative assessment is
* gathering data
* during the learning process
* in order to adjust teaching and learning.

For the purpose of this book and defining formative assessment within professional development, we imagine it as a guide for instruction, both ours and the teachers' in the workshops.   As professional development leaders, this idea of formative assessment as a guide functions on levels. In one sense, we ask teachers look closely at their teaching through formative assessment, thinking about what it reveals about student learning. If the teaching is not affecting student learning in ways that move learning forward, then we ask teachers to make decisions and adjust teaching moves. On a second level, formative assessment of student learning and student work allows us, as professional development providers, to see what instruction is occurring and what support teachers need, what adjustments our instruction needs.

Formative assessment is then is both a literal guide that helps us adjust the course of our teaching and the metaphorical compass that points us toward our goal.

WHO'S INVOLVED?

Formative assessment can take place with various combinations of people involved, but for the purpose of this book, with the NWP teacher consultant acting as a teacher teaching teachers, individuals taking part in different formative assessment scenarios with aTC might be:

* Individual teachers

* Grade level teams

* Vertical teams

* Content area teachers

* ELA teacher pairs or departments

* ELA and content area teachers

* Literacy coaches

* Administrators

Any combination of people interested in student learning!

WHAT STUDENT WORK IS INVOLVED?

There are numerous ways to gather formative assessment data in a classroom. For the purposes of this book and the focus on writing instruction, we are defining the student work as writing. Yet, even this writing can come in a variety of forms:

- Notebooks

- Stacks of papers

- Drafts

- On demand writing

- Performance assessments (both pre and post)

- Observation notes from model lessons

- Conference notes from individual or group conferences

- "Listening in on student conversation" notes

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

How do you define formative assessment?

Who do you see involved in the process?

What student work helps you judge and adjust your teaching?

A DETOUR INTO THE CLASSROOM:LOOKING AT STUDENT WORK IN A WRITING CLASSROOM

In discussing the rationale for formative assessment in his book *What Student Writing Teaches Us: Formative Assessment in the Writing Workshop,* Mark Overmeyer says "Assessment, when used correctly in a formative way, can empower students and teachers not only to improve but, better yet, to *believe* in themselves as writers and teachers of writing."

What Research Says About Formative Assessment in Classrooms

http://www.soesd.k12.or.us/files/working_inside_the_blbx.pdf

http://datacenter.spps.org/uploads/Data_InsideBlackBox.pdf

Empowering students to believe in themselves as writers and improve their writing - who wouldn't want that as a goal? Can looking at student work really do that?

Terri's thoughts on this question:

🔊

....

Beth's thoughts on this question:

🔊

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Although this book is focused on the use of formative assessment within professional development, let's detour into a writing classroom to see what is already happening.

We've defined formative assessment in general, but what does formative assessment look like in a writing classroom? How does a writing teacher know what writers are learning and what they need next? The answers come in a number of ways that are natural in a writing classroom: individual conferences, group conferences, processed writing pieces.

When we conference with a student, we are looking at student work and providing instruction. When we ask students to complete an exit slip that shows practice on a mini-lesson, we are looking at student work so we can provide instruction the next day if needed. When we collect student drafts, we are reading words to discover what other teaching a class might need. Writing teachers are constantly assessing student needs sometimes during and sometimes after learning.

What kind of assessment do we already do? Assessment may fall into two categories:

	FORMATIVE	SUMMATIVE
PURPOSE	To inform teaching during the learning process	To assess learning at the end of the process
AUDIENCE	Teachers & Students	Teachers, Students, Parents, Schools

LOOKING AT YOUR WRITING CLASSROOM:
Use the following chart to think about the assessment you do now in your writing instruction. Add more lines if you need them!

TYPE OF ASSESSMENT	WHAT DOES IT TELL YOU ABOUT STUDENT WRITING?	WHO IS THE AUDIENCE AND HOW DO WE SHARE THE INFORMATION?	HOW DOES IT AFFECT INSTRUCTION?
Conference	Application of mini-lessons	Student & Teacher: Conference and Chart	Small group conference planning, goal setting

GUIDING QUESTIONS:
What does your chart reveal about the assessment that is happening in your writing classroom?
What are your strengths?
Where are there gaps?

LOOKING AT STUDENT WORK AS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

There are so many ways we can get a glimpse of our student writers. But what else? What gives a teacher a real look into what writers are learning during the writing process?

The answer: Looking at student work in progress, the actual writing.

Beyond the natural aspects of a writing classroom, such as conferencing and assessing processed papers, looking at student work in an intentional way is formative assessment. It provides information about writers and writing in real time - what they are doing and what instruction they need next.

What does this look like?

We might look through writing notebooks, glance at a stack of drafts, or systematically assess a prompted piece of writing. Chapter 5 digs into each of these. Each time, we ask similar questions that help us see what student writers are doing well and what the next step in teaching might be.

QUESTIONS
TO ASK ABOUT   STUDENT
WRITING:

What do we want to know about or hope to see in student work at this moment?

How would we know it was happening?

What are students doing well?

What is the next teaching step?

How do we use the information or what is the teaching we will do?

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN ON-GOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: LOOKING AT STUDENT WORK

Terri's thinking on looking at student work in PD

Beth's thinking on looking at student work in PD

If formative assessment of student writing really helps students be better writers and teachers be more confident writing teachers, then it makes sense that we intentionally include formative assessment in professional development plans.
But, how do teachers feel and why make time for looking at student work in professional development?

Teacher Uncertainties: Finding a Way Around Roadblocks

Not Enough Time

In districts with multiple initiatives, formative assessment might feel like one more hoop to jump through, added work for data purposes only. However, effective formative assessment can come right from the work teachers and students are already doing. The added layer is not more "stuff" but more thinking about the work students are already doing and what it teaches us as teachers.

Not having enough time is a reality for most teachers. So, how do we look at student work and jump this roadblock? One step is to utilize the writing students are already doing such as student writing notebooks, drafts of processed writing pieces, and even writing created during mini or demo lessons. Although sometimes we want and need to use prompted writing to examine student work, we can learn much from writing that is naturally occurring in the classroom.

A second, more hidden time saving step is in the result of looking at student work. With a clear structure and purpose for the formative assessment, we can save planning time by leveraging the student work as a map that guides the next steps of teaching. Rather than teaching what students don't need or finding out we need to re-teach after a final paper has been turned in, looking at student writing during the process can direct teaching steps to just right lessons.

How Looking at Student Writing Saves Time:

1. Provides real-time, in the moment, data

2. Uses naturally occurring student writing

3. Focuses the way we look at student work

4. Provides clarity for next steps in teaching
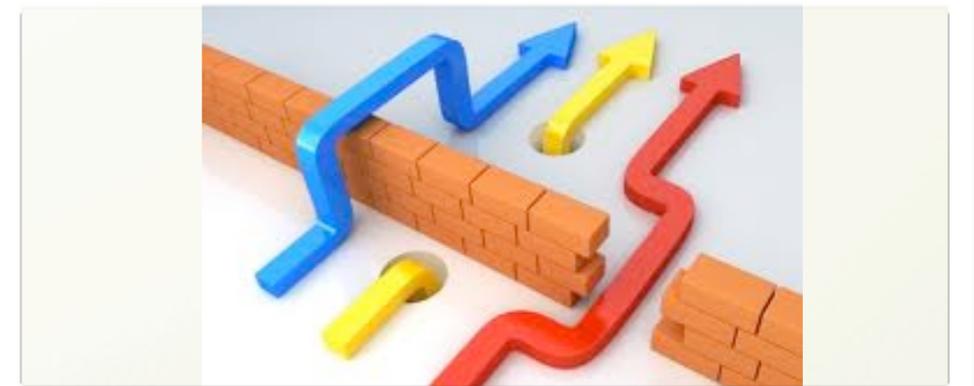
Incorporating time to look at student work within PD helps teachers see that formative assessment with student work is not extra but natural and essential.

Fear of Sharing and the Word Assessment

Fear of Sharing Work

Another worry teachers have when thinking about formative assessment is the simple idea of bringing student work in front of colleagues. Too often, teachers are worried about sharing their student work with others. Fears over the mistakes students are making and the judgments their colleagues will make often make it hard for teachers to share student work.

However, talking about student work brings the student, rather than the teacher, to the center of the professional development. Discussion is about what students need next. These discussions within professional development can build and support a community of learners focused on student needs rather than teacher comparisons.

Fear of the Word Assessment

Assessment is often related to evaluation and that one word brings with it a number of worries from how to grade to an overwhelming paper-load to assessment used as a measure of teachers. These fears are not irrational. They are all grounded in some sort of reality for teachers and acknowledging that fear is imperative. As PD leaders, we can help teachers see the purpose of assessing student work in the same way we assess a room. When we enter a room of people, we look around and assess the situation - where is the food? where are our friends? where do we want to go and where is the exit? When we look at student work as a form of assessment, we are looking around - where are students glowing? where do they need help? where do we want to go and how can we get there? No judgment - just looking around to take in the situation so we can teach.

Fear often comes from the unknown: Help teachers know how to look at student work and how to use formative assessment as an instructional tool. Make the unknown become known - Chapter 5!

Fear of Protocols and Paper Load

Protocols: It's all in the word. The word protocol sounds scary, serious, something removed from our everyday world of teaching. When we join the act of looking at student work with the word protocol, we create a double fear.   What if PD allowed teachers to re-envision the word? Does that matter? When I think of my own life, my kids see a "car picnic" as something exciting, fun, and different than the boring packing-a-sandwich-and-eating-in-the-car lunch. What if we re-envisioned the word protocol for formative assessment to structures for looking at student work? Maybe helping teachers overcome the fear of a protocol is as simple as changing a name or changing the way we introduce how to look at student work. A small change can be big.

On the flip side of the fear, comes the security of knowing a protocol or a structure. When we know a structured way to accomplish a task as big as looking at a stack of papers for teaching steps, the idea is not so overwhelming. Sharing intentional structures or protocols during professional development will help overcome the roadblock of protocols and the overwhelming feeling of not knowing what to do.

(See Chapter 5 for structures and protocols.)

Paperwork

There is one thing no teacher has ever asked for: more paperwork! The fear of formative assessment adding a layer of paperwork is real and relates to the roadblock of not having enough time. With large class sizes, expanding evaluation requirements and increased reporting, teachers already have too many papers in their bags and there is no time or room for more.

Working formative assessment within the year of professional development, allows teachers to see how to fit looking at student work within a normal routine of writing. As teachers learn to look at writing notebooks for evidence of teaching, review drafts of processed writing for next steps in teaching, and review prompted writing to check progress on skills, the formative assessment of student work becomes part of the process rather than another layer of paperwork. (See Chapter 5 for a year long plan.)

Ten Reasons:

1. Gauges learning of teachers

2. Transfers knowledge

3. Models strategies for looking at student work

4. Helps teachers see student learning during writing process

5. Builds a common language

6. Supports a community of learners

7. Gives teachers power over what they are teaching

8. Saves teaching time

9. Centers work on students rather than teachers

10. Focuses on what students are doing rather than what they aren't

Intentional plans for looking at student work within professional development has numerous benefits - maybe even beyond these ten.

What do you think?
Do you agree?
Do you not agree?
What other benefits are there to looking at student work during professional development?

STRUCTURES, PROTOCOLS AND STRATEGIES FOR LOOKING AT STUDENT WORK DURING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND IN A CLASSROOM:

Looking at student work to see what is going on out there:

Writing Slice

Notebook Check

Clipboard Cruise

* Low risk
* Open ended
* Use the student work as a guide

Looking at student work to determine skills and inform teaching steps:

Notebook Skill Check
Notebook After Teaching Check
Providing Feedback
 Using a Formative Rubric

* Middle of the process
* Focused on a set of expectations, lessons or skills

One way to choose a structure for looking at student work is by thinking about your purpose. You might just want to see what is going on in student writing, noticing who your writers are and what they are doing. Or maybe your writers are in the middle of a writing piece and you want to know what teaching has transferred and what teaching they need before revision. Or perhaps, you are at the point where you want to see what writers do all on their own, assessing a final processed or prompted piece for growth.

Looking at student work to assess growth across time and needs:

Prompts & Performance Events

*At the end of the process
* Focused on a rubric or specific traits
* Prompted or processed writing

GUIDED QUESTION:
What is your purpose for looking at student work?
What do you want to know?

PLANNING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT ACROSS A YEAR

Another way to think about formative assessment is to plan across a year. The year might start with a glimpse into the writing students are doing and end with a prompt event to assess growth and skills. Below is one way we might imagine using a variety of formative assessment structures across a year.

WRITING SLICE: What writing are students doing?

Beginning of the year (and repeated throughout the year) Whole school, grade level or

SKILL FOCUS: What skill do we need to teach and reteach during a cycle?

Multiple checks on a single or set of skills throughout the year

WRITING CHECK: How are students doing when they try a lesson?

Periodically throughout the year

THE STORY OF A YEAR

Terri McAvoy,
Prairie Lands Writing Project,
describes how looking
at student work informed
the professional development
with teachers in St. Joseph,
Missouri

Click on the image for a description and a link to the appendix.

QUICK GLIMPSE: What's going on out there?

Periodically throughout the year Small stack of papers

DURING THE PROCESS: What do we still need to teach?
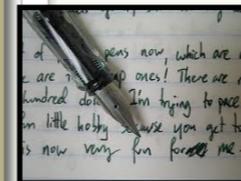
Throughout the process, glance or checklist for each student to design revision stations or inform re-teaching

PROMPT EVENT: How are students growing as writers across the year
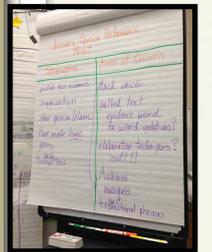
Beginning, middle and end or middle and end of the year

APPENDIX

Find:

Structures for Looking at Student Work

Charts

Student Samples

Story of a Year
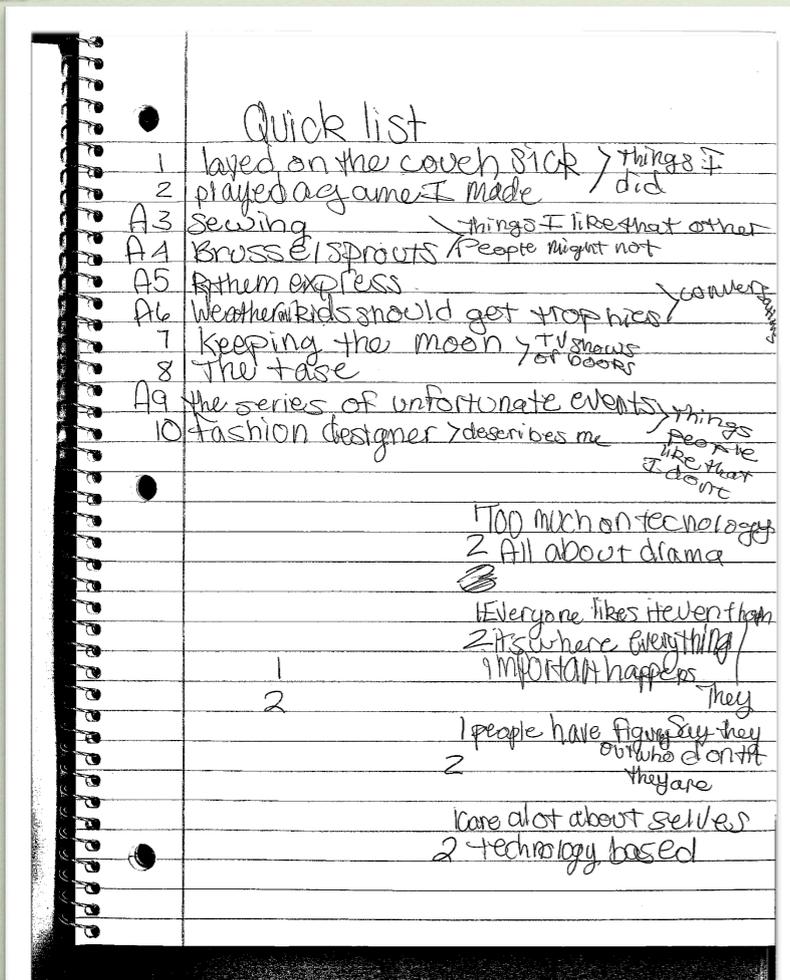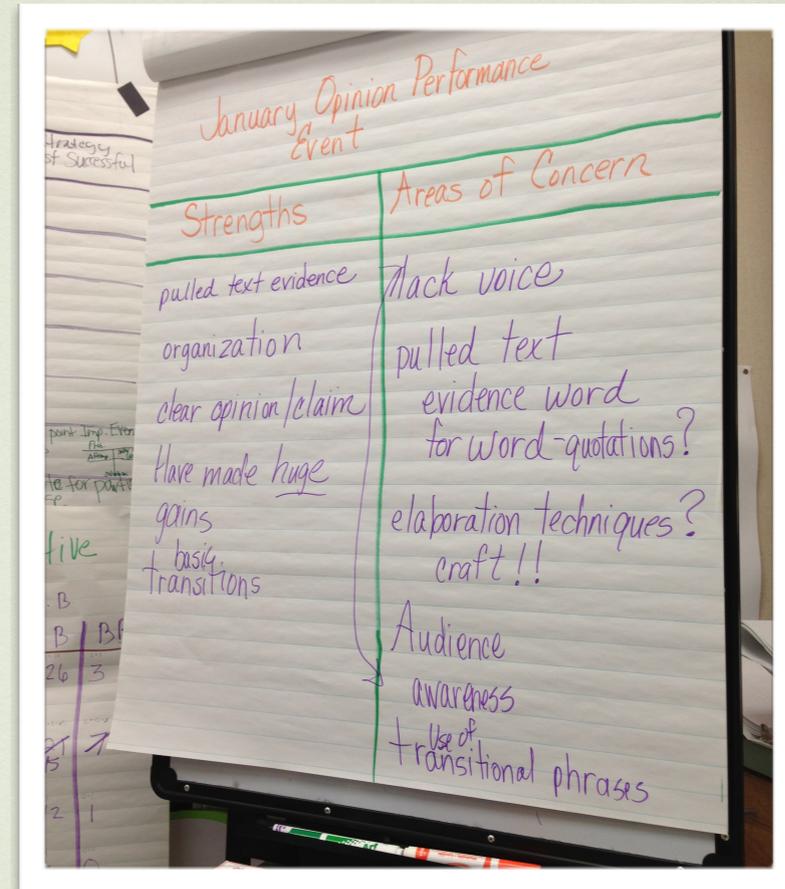
APPENDIX A:

Writing Slice: What's Going On In Student Writing Across a School   (Adapted from Rochelle Ramay, Northern California WP)

WHAT: A collection of all the writing that is happening across a day within a school.

WHO: Students, Teachers, Administrators

WHEN: At the beginning of the year or at any time to see the extent and amount of writing

WHERE: Analysis of the writing slice within professional development

WHY: Collecting examples of student work across a school day allows teachers and sites to see what kind of writing students are doing on a typical day.

HOW: Choose a small number of students who provide a cross-section of levels and grades. Ask teachers to collect all of the writing they do during the day. It is important for teachers to know that this collection won't be used to measure individual but instead to provide a snapshot of a student in the school.

Remove the student and teacher names.

In a professional development session, share each slice of writing. You might share through copies for each teacher, with a set of copies for a small group or scanned images.

While looking at the collected writing, jot noticings about the work. These noticings should focus on the amount, type, task, assignment rather than the quality of student writing. These noticings will inform teachers and admministrators about the writing that is happening on a normal school day.

Discuss the reality compared to expectations or goals for student writing and the changes that you might want to make as a staff.

Expectations: Looking at the writing slice can be couched by discussions of expectations for what writing teachers think is happening and what teachers want to happen.

Repeat: Repeat throughout the year to determine the changes in writing assignments and amount.

APPENDIX B:

Notebook Check: What's Going On Out There?

WRITING TYPE: Student writing notebooks

TIME: A quick (ten minutes or so) glance through notebooks to get a sense of what writers are doing

FREQUENCY: Once a month

WHY: Looking at real-time writing helps teachers see what is going on in student writing without scaffolding and processing. Teachers see what teaching is transferring to student writing, what teaching is needed, and who students are as writers.

HOW: Teachers look through a stack of 5- 10 writers notebooks using three different colored post-it notes to hold their thinking.

On a **pink** post-it, teachers mark places in the student writing where they see evidence of their teaching. On the post it note, make a list of what you see, noting the student, lesson and evidence. Post it notes might also mark the actual page in the notebook, allowing the writer to see what you noticed. You can even include a note to the writer on the post it. For example, perhaps a teacher has taught a mini-lesson on using a question to start a piece and sees students doing it in the notebook beyond the one mini-lesson. The writing is telling her that there is evidence of writers internalizing and trying the teaching.

On a **yellow** post-it, teachers mark places in the student writing where they see evidence for teaching – a lesson that needs to be taught based on what they see happening in the writing. Again, the post it note records the thinking, noting the student, lesson and evidence.   For example, a teacher might find a writer starting every sentence in the same way, so a lesson on sentence variety might be in order. Although the lesson might not have been planned, it is the next nudge that writer needs. This lesson might be a one-on-one lesson, a conference conversation, a small group conference or a whole group lesson depending on the class need.

On the **blue** post-it, teachers mark their noticings, anything that strikes them about the student writing such as a great line that could be used for teaching, evidence that growth is occurring or even a pattern of thinking that gives clues for how they might help a writer. For example, a teacher might see that a writer is always writing about family so she can help that writer find a topic that matters to him or maybe a writer has a golden line that would be a perfect class example for adding specific details.

Final Step: Teachers pause to reflect, writing down observations and next steps – what teaching might need to be done, what writing can be used for a model and what celebrations can be made.

EXTENSIONS & MODIFICATIONS:

Change the type of writing: Looking at a stack of writers notebooks allows a teacher to get a sense of the real-time writing going on in a classroom and get a glimpse into a few individual students. If a teacher wants a quick look at what is happening in a specific genre, unit of study or assigned piece, a short stack of papers in a genre set allows for a glimpse into the process so far with that piece. Focus could even be narrowed to one student by looking at a set of papers from one student to identify patterns, needs, or growth.

Use a chart: Rather than simply making notes on the colored post-its, teachers could make use of a four column chart that notes the student, the evidence of teaching, the evidence for teaching, and the noticing about the writer.

STUDENT	EVIDENCE OF TEACHING	EVIDENCE FOR TEACHING	NOTICING ABOUT THE WRITER
Jill	Using questions as a hook	Sentence variety: most sentences starts with I	Frequently writes about family

Teach: Use the findings to determine who needs what teaching and then gather students into small group conferences, to find individual conference teaching points, or to guide whole class lessons.

Share: Use findings to celebrate the successes students are having in writing in a "Great writing I found in the notebooks" showcase lesson.

APPENDIX C:

Notebook Check: Focused Skill Check

WRITING TYPE: Student writing notebooks

TIME: A quick (one or two minutes per writer) glance through notebooks to get a sense of what writers are doing in relation to a specific skill or strategy.

FREQUENCY: Whenever you want to see how writers are using a skill in an ongoing manner.

WHY: Looking at real-time writing helps teachers see what is going on in student writing without scaffolding and processing. Sometimes we teach a lesson, check it off and then move on. This strategy asks us to return to a previously taught skill to determine how it is being used in daily writing.

HOW: Teachers name the skill or lesson that was previously taught but that they hope to see as an ongoing skill. For example, a teacher might have taught hooks, transitions, sentence variety, commas in a series, matching pictures to words ... any number of things. The key is to focus your search and look only for one skill.

Teachers look through a stack (5- 10 or the whole class) of writers notebooks noting where they see writers using the skill and where they see it not being used. These notes could be specific, noting writer and evidence, or simple hash marks to determine the number of writers using the skill.

Teachers reflect on notes to determine teaching steps. Perhaps a whole group reteaching is needed or maybe only a few writers need a small group refresher lesson.

EXTENSIONS & MODIFICATIONS:

Change the type of writing: Teachers can do a focused skill check on any type of writing from a primary book to a processed essay. Again, the key is to look for one skill that matters.

Use a chart: Teachers can keep track of ongoing focused skill checks by using a chart that marks the student and the skills. A simple star marks that there is evidence of that skill in daily writing without scaffolding and a blank notes that it is not yet seen.

STUDENT	TRANSITIONS	COMMAS IN A SERIES	STARTS SENTENCES IN A VARIETY OF WAYS	
Jill		*		

Teach: Use the findings to determine how many writers need the skill lesson retaught and who is ready for the next related lesson. Then gather students into individual or small group conferences or reteach to the whole class.

Share: Use findings to celebrate the successes students are having with the skill.

Student Ownership: Remind student writers of the focus skill you taught earlier and ask them to look through their own notebooks to find examples of times they used that skill in their writing. When students mark the places they used the skill, you can easily see both the examples of the skill and their ability to notice what they are doing.

APPENDIX D:

Formative Assessment after Teaching: Skills and/or Strategy Check

WRITING TYPE: Student writing after a model lesson (notebook or specific writing)

WHAT: A guided look into student writing for a specific skill

WHEN: After a model lesson in professional development

WHY: When looking at writing immediately following a lesson, teachers can determine the extent to which students tried the lesson during writing instruction and identify next steps in instruction. As part of the professional development, PD leaders can use the student writing to guide adjustments in our teaching of strategies and model a useful way for teachers to look at student writing.

HOW:

• Collect a sampling of writer's notebooks or student writing from the classroom. Take samples to where you will be meeting with a group of teachers.

• Identify the lesson, skill or strategy on which to focus such as introductions. Look through the student writing and find the places where the students attempted the strategy.   Make enough copies of the student writing for each teacher to have a set. Label the copies as follows: Student A, Student B, Student C, and so on.

• Pass out a set of **green**, **yellow** and **red** sticky dots. Each color has a meaning:

        Green (got it – good to go)

        Yellow (we're making progress)

        Red (we need to think of a different way to teach this strategy)

•   As a group, decide **on two to four** aspects of the strategy you will be assessing. For example, after teaching introductions for opinion writing, the following aspects may become the focus areas and also column headings:

    * More than one introduction attempted

    * Introduction is engaging

    * Opinion stated somewhere in the introduction

    * Introduction established a structure for the paper

• Take turns reading through each paper noting observations on a separate piece of paper or a chart:

STUDENT	MORE THAN ONE INTRODUCTION ATTEMPTED	INTRODUCTION IS ENGAGING	OPINION STATED IN INTRODUCTION	INTRODUCTION ESTABLISHED STRUCTURE FOR PAPER	OTHER
A					
B					
C					

- Share out, focusing on one common sample at a time. For example, everyone looks at Student A.

- Read through each descriptor for Student A while teachers place a colored dot that represents their assessment of the student writing for each descriptor.

- Pause for discussion if colors do not match. It is often helpful to hear one another's thinking behind color choices.

- Through discussion, come to a common agreement about the student's attempt at the strategy before moving on to the next paper.

- Continue on until all papers have been assessed.

- Notice where the colors fall on the chart. This will serve as a quick, visual indicator as to where adjustments and teaching are needed.

- Place a big star in the column beside the descriptor to which you will give immediate attention and plan next steps.

Writing Introductions

	More than one introduction attempted	Introduction is engaging	Opinion Stated Somewhere in introduction	Introduction established a structure for the paper
Student A	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Student B	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟡
Student C	🟢	🟡	🟢	🔴
Student D	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟡
Student E	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡
Student F	🟢	🟡	🟢	🔴

🟢 = green (got it - good to go)
🟡 = yellow (we're making progress)
🔴 = red (we need to adjust)

Becky

Terri says:
We used this strategy after teaching lessons on
different ways to write introductions for opinion pieces. After students practiced
some different approaches to apply to their own opinion writings, teachers picked up
some random samples, made enough copies for everyone on the team and returned to the
professional development room. The team then analyzed the student work to see how students
tackled the strategy. While most students attempted more than one introduction, it became
clear that further teaching in different ways needed to be done.
Teachers agreed that this formative assessment work was a quick, painless way to see
how writers were doing, and it was a glimpse into the effectiveness of the
way the lessons were taught.

EXTENSIONS & MODIFICATIONS:

Change the skill: This formative assessment strategy with teachers could be used to closely look at any ongoing skills/strategy practice in the writer's notebook. The important things to keep in mind are: Name what you are looking for, break it down into smaller, unpacked chunks, assess it, and adjust your teaching accordingly.

Extend to a whole paper in draft form: If writers are in the middle of a process piece, teachers could identify skills or expectations for the whole paper such as organization, claim, introduction, transitions, evidence from a text, use of quotations, ... This will allow an overall assessment of the need for re-teaching before the final.

Teach: Use the findings to determine who needs what teaching and then gather students into small group conferences, find individual conference teaching points, or guide whole class lessons.

<u>Share</u>: Use findings to celebrate the successes students are having in writing in a "Great writing I found in the notebooks" showcase lesson.

APPENDIX E:

Looking for Teaching Steps & Providing Feedback During the Process

WRITING TYPE: Student papers/writing in the middle of the process/draft

WHEN: In the middle of the process – before revisions and re-teaching

WHY: Looking at writing in the middle of the process allows for feedback and re-teaching before a summative grade when it is too late. Experience tells us that when a paper is returned with a grade, students will rarely be motivated to make revisions and changes. Looking at student writing in the middle of the process for the purposes of finding the next teaching step provides feedback that will guide immediate teaching and support students in the moment when revisions can happen.

http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept12/vol70/num01/Seven-Keys-to-Effective-Feedback.aspx

ASCD: Feedback for Learning

HOW:

Step One: Collect a set a papers in draft form in the middle of the process.

Step Two: Make a quick list of what you expect and hope to see in student writing at this point in the drafting. This list may be based on the teaching you did, the expectations you have of a certain type of writing or even what you might just like to see when you read final pieces. This list can be a quick jotting in your teacher notebook or a more formal chart. Either way, it provides a focus for you as you look through the papers. For example: In an opinion unit for the 4th grade, a list of elements we expect to see as a result of teaching might be a topic they have an opinion about, reasons to support the opinion, facts and details to support the reasons, linking words and phrases to connect opinions, organization including an introduction, multiple body paragraphs and a conclusion, possible research to support opinion and sentence variety.

Step Three: Look through the student work simply answering the question, "What do you see the students doing well?"   Keep track of what you see in a chart or a list. Skip writing on the papers, just make notes and keep a tally for yourself. For example, as you look through the opinion papers, you might notice that most all of the students are stating an opinion, providing reasons, and using an introduction.

Step Four: Now that you know what they are doing, look through the papers again. This time, look for the next nudge, the next step that students need as it relates to what students are doing and the list of elements you want to see in the final. Again, avoid writing on the paper and make the list for yourself. Don't worry about marking everything you see in a paper. You are trying to find a manageable number of next steps for your writers.   A student can easily revise one or two nudges but six becomes overwhelming and the goal is for them to revise. Thinking again about the opinion paper, you may notice that the majority of the papers had weak support for the reasons which means that is a place for teaching in the next week.

ELEMENT	+	-
clearly claim	1111	1
introduction	11111	
organized structure		
reasons to support opinion	11111	
facts and details to develop reasons		11111
linking words and phrases to connect reasons	1 1	111
multiple body paragraphs and a conclusion		
research to support opinion		
sentence variety		

Step Five: Look over the list of teaching steps you have made. Brainstorm multiple ways to teach that next step. Think about ways you want to model the writing - do you want to show yourself writing, deconstruct a mentor text, use a student sample to highlight what works, or return to your own writing, The possibilities are endless. The key is that you teach what you want your writers to revise. For example, knowing that my students need to revise their development of their reasons, I will brainstorm multiple ways to teach development, such as using models to identify different types of development or use my own writing to highlight the construction of support.

Step Six: Teach. It is useless to tell students to return to papers and revise an element. If writers knew how to develop a reason, chances are they would have tried it already. Set up group lessons, create a station, teach in a small group conference - just teach them how.

EXTENSIONS AND MODIFICATIONS:

Group: As you look through a stack of papers, you could group them by next steps, creating groups with writers needing a similar conference or mini-lesson.

Stations: After creating a list of next steps, the top four can become revision stations that writers take their papers through in order to work specifically on the next steps of their paper. This revision stations can be designed with models, try it activities for their notebooks and then action for their piece. These stations can be centered around anything you want writers to revise or try: introductions, last lines, transitions, a repeated line craft, or even capitalization.   Stations could also include a teacher station which involves small group conferences so a small set of students are working with the teacher while others are working through the stations.

PD Idea:
After determining station topics, work in groups to design a classroom station and share with the group.

Feedback to Students: Rather than keeping the checklist for the teacher's eyes only, provide feedback to students through a feedback checklist. Create a checklist that informs the writer on what is working and what areas are in need of revision. This checklist can guide students as they revise, helping them find a focus for their revision and point them toward the most useful revision stations.

Models: As you chart, note students who are successful at an element you'd like to teach to the class or a small group. Then, use the student writing as a model for others.

Use Technology: As you create revision stations or lessons, make use of technology such as creating a screencast that videotapes you making revisions. Students can watch the screencast and follow along with their own revisions.

PD Idea:
Thinking about expectations, groups can create their own feedback checklists

APPENDIX F: Formative Assessment with a Skill Specific Rubric

WRITING TYPE: Any student writing

TIME: A minute or so a paper to look at just one skill

WHY: Looking at student writing for a specific skill and then applying the noticing to a rubric allows teachers to see in a manageable fashion the extent to which a class or set of students is mastering a skill and adjust accordingly. The use of a rubric in a professional development setting creates discussion of the skill, student performance and teaching.

HOW:

Step One: Professional development provider decides on the focus skill for which to look. For example, after teaching model lessons and workshops on opinion and claim and evidence, we might focus specifically on those elements.

Step Two: Professional Development leader creates a rubric to use in assessing the skill.

ADVANCING	MEETING EXPECTATIONS	NEEDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT
All of "Meeting Expectations," plus independently and accurately making claims as well as supporting them with a variety of kinds of evidence.

Modification after PD session: Variety of kinds of specific evidence | Stating an opinion in response to a situation, and connecting the opinion to an appropriate supporting statement..

Modification added after PD session: Evidence is specific. | Making statements in response to a specific situation but they are statements of fact rather than opinion (ex. Sanders is a school rather than Sanders is a good school.) AND/ OR unable to back up the claim with evidence OR not responding to teacher invitations to state an opinion.

Added after PD session: Evidence is general |
| | | |

Step Three: Teachers gather evidence about students' progress by looking at papers and using the rubric to score. For example, we might ask teachers to "Please gather evidence about students' progress in making claims and using supporting evidence between now and Sept. 12. In your notebook, list ways that you help students practice making claims and supporting them. Bring a class list on which you have scored students as A, ME, or NAS as of Sept. 12. For students who are not meeting expectations, try to pinpoint the nature of their struggles, especially if the categories on the rubric do not capture their problems."

Step Four: In professional development, compare what we are expecting as a group to what we are seeing and make adjustments in teaching steps. For example, after noticing that most students fit into the "Needing Additional Support" or "Meeting Expectations" categories, look for daily opportunities to help students practice making claims and supporting them with evidence—in classroom conversations, in at least a few planned lessons, and in any/every kind of content lesson that affords a quick connection to making a claim. Prediction, for example, is a way of making a claim.

Step Five: Modify rubric to accurately reflect expectations and variations in student work for use with the next set of papers. Modifications on the rubric are seen in green

EXTENSIONS & MODIFICATIONS:

Record Keeping: Using a chart with each student's name allows for record keeping on skill growth. We can loop back around and use the same rubric to determine growth.

Change Skill: The rubric and process can work with any skill.

Feedback: Use the rubric above to provide specific feedback to students about their efforts.

Teacher Ownership: Teachers can be part of the rubric building process. With models of the expected skill, teachers can describe what they see and build the rubric descriptions.

APPENDIX G: Prompts and Performance Events

LOOK A LITTLE DEEPER: IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE SCORE

WHAT: Formative Assessment Using Writing Samples Generated from Prompts and Performance Events

WHO: Teachers in PD

WHEN: At the beginning of a school year (pre-assessment), in the middle of the year (midway checkpoint), and at the end of the year (to see if we got there and make adjustments for next year's teaching)

WHY: Two reasons really - to inform instruction based on what we notice in student writing generated from a prompt and to celebrate the growth of our writers

HOW: The Process

- Gather student writing samples generated from a prompt.

- Remove names from copies and make enough for all teacher readers to have a set.

- Decide which assessment rubric, appropriate for the type of writing required, you will use.

- Review the rubric.

- Score the writing individually and then have a discussion (calibrating session) to ensure that we're all on the same page regarding scores.

- List strengths and areas to grow. (Sample chart on next page.)

- Make sticky note reminders on student samples to use in later instruction.

- Make sticky notes to place on samples which could be later used to illustrate good writing points in future lessons.

- Develop long range planning for a possible timeline for getting the work done.
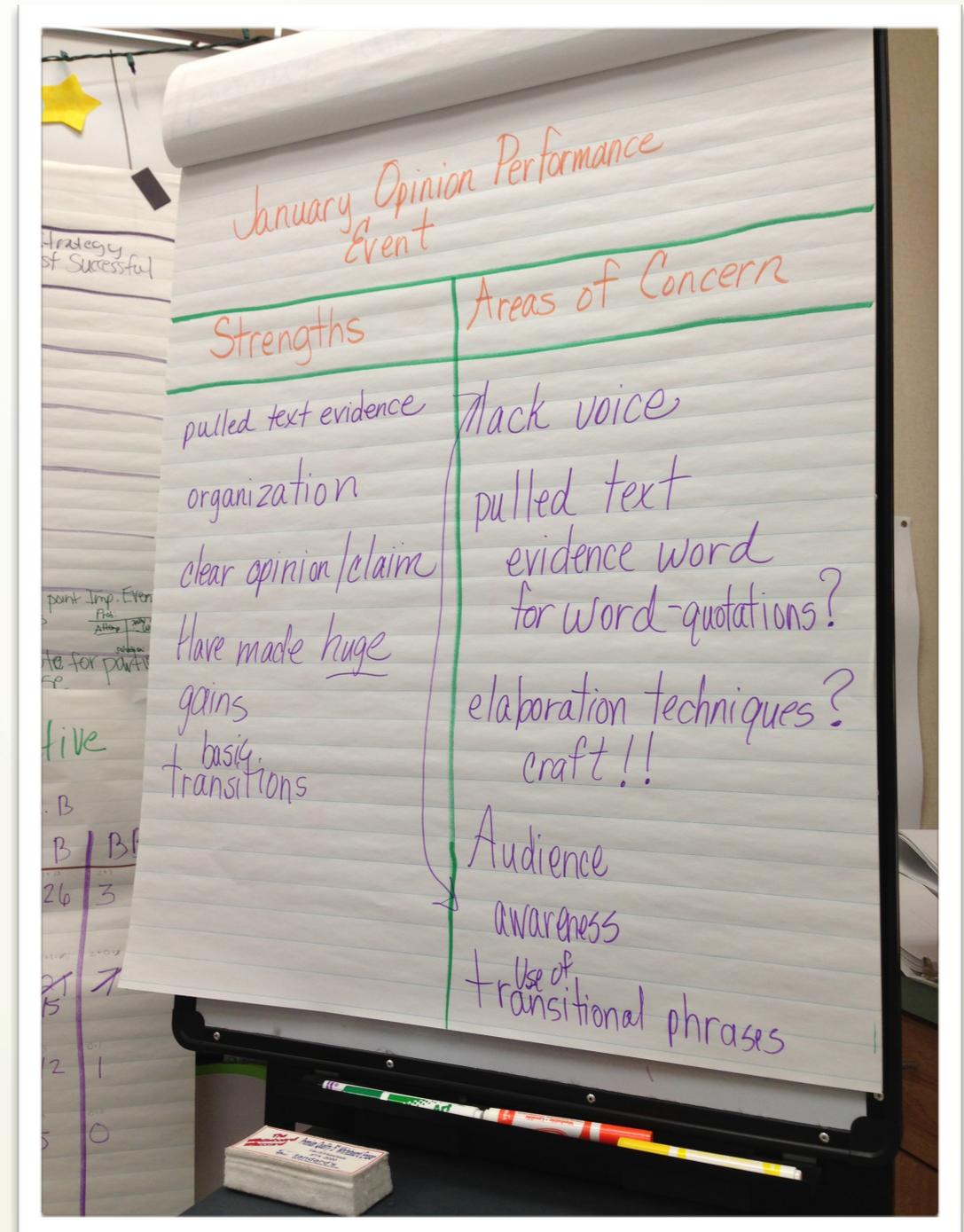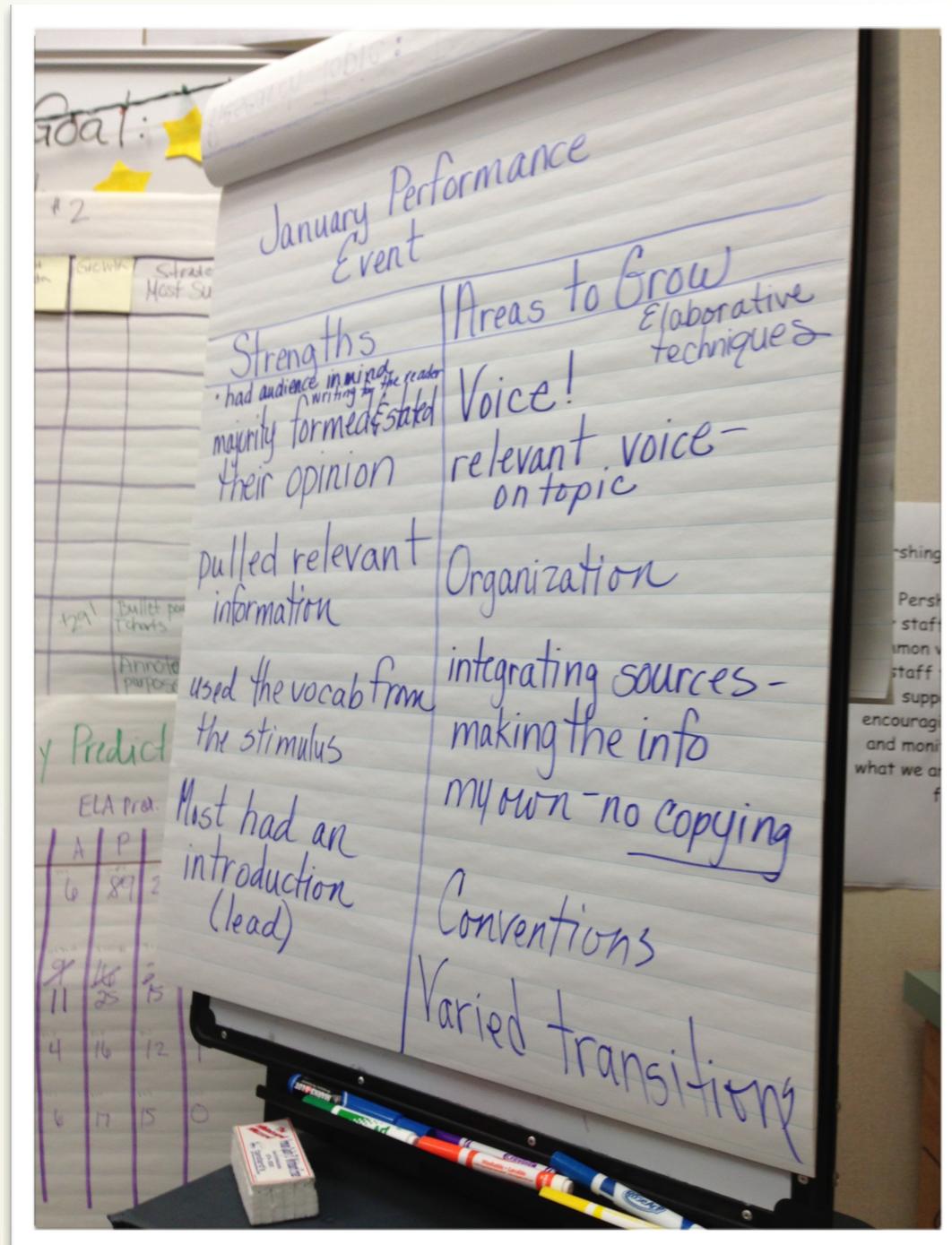
APPENDIX H: CLIPBOARD CRUISE

WHAT: Noticing what is happening in real time writing

WHO: Teacher Consultants and teachers who are observing a model lesson

WHEN: During strategy practice following a mini lesson

WHY: To see if students are easily tackling a strategy or to see if there are tricky spots for them as they "give it a go."

HOW:

• Get writers settled into their writing time.

• After students are writing, toward the end of the workshop, grab a clipboard, paper, and pen begin cruising the room.

• Pause by writer or writers to see what is happening.

• Jot notes – no conversations at this time – just notice and jot.

• When doing a cruise, the purpose is to see who "got it" and who could benefit from some additional or different teaching.

• Use these observations during debrief time with teachers for the purpose of planning next steps or adjustments in teaching.
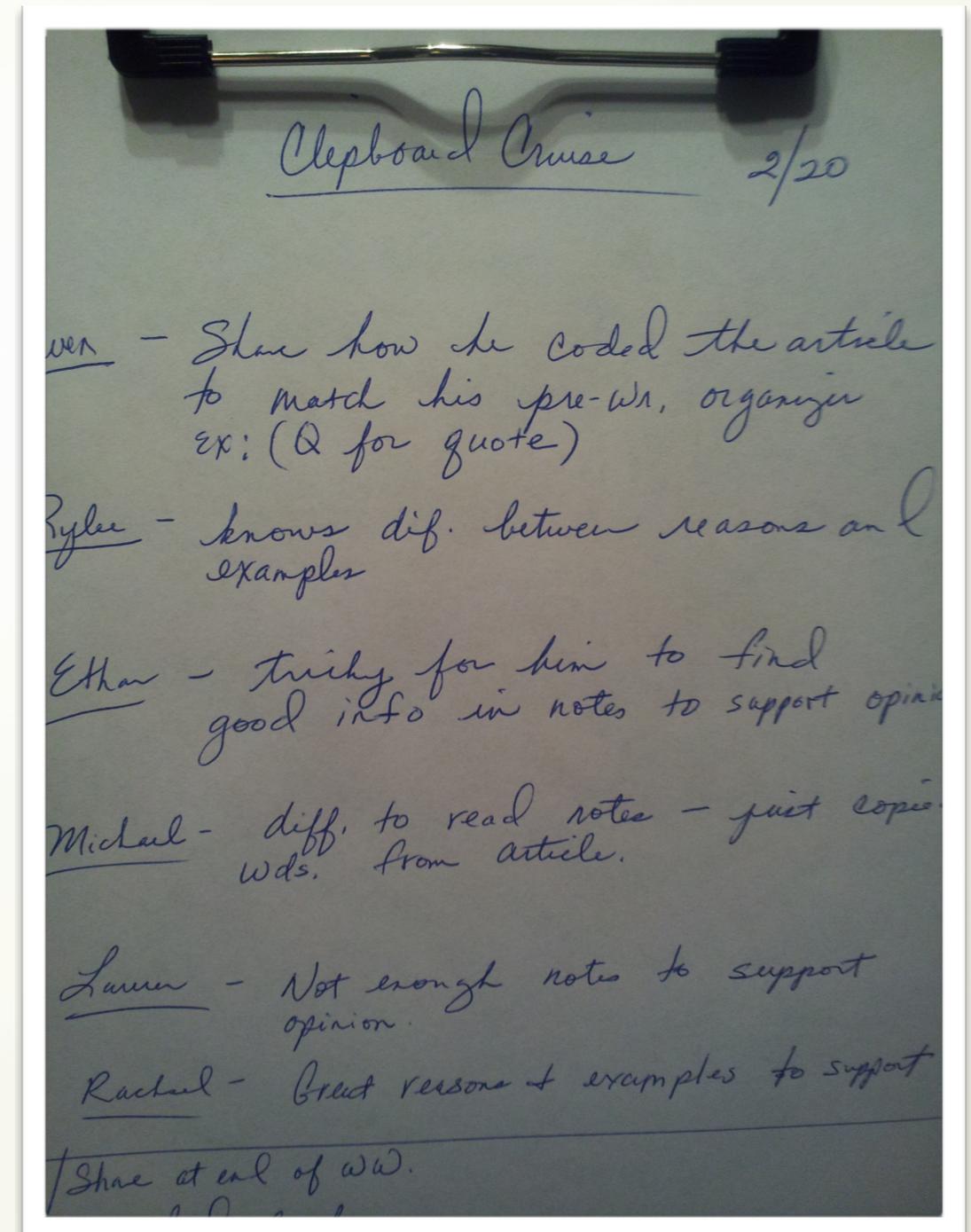
EXTENSIONS & MODIFICATIONS:

Conversations: The clipboard cruise could also be used to listen in on conversations as students work together to peer revise or peer edit. Possible things to look for:

1. Is the writer giving useful feedback to a partner?

2. Are writers using peer response time in a constructive way?

3. Do we need to review expectations for sharing writing?

Student Models: Use observations for the purpose of deciding which students could model good thinking behind their use of the strategy. These students could share during the workshop.

APPENDIX H

APPENDIX I: One Teacher Leader's Story

What Does it Look Like in Year Long Professional Development?

Just the mention of two simple words, formative assessment, can cause eyes to immediately glaze over. That's what happened to me, a long-time teacher consultant for Prairie Lands Writing Project, the first time I approached some very overwhelmed teachers during a recent year-long professional development series at a high-needs elementary school in Northwest Missouri. The school was chosen to be a part of an NWP study during the 2012-2013 school year, throughout which the focus of the work was improving student writing, honing in on the area of information and opinion writing. Teachers in the school were already responsible for two other "big wheels" of professional development, text complexity and vocabulary, in the same year and were, in the beginning, reluctant to take on more heavy duty learning. So the mere mention of formative assessment was nearly enough to send them over the edge. Gaging the tense atmosphere around a table filled with very smart and assertive teachers, I felt compelled to quickly come up with the right words to diffuse the situation.

Writing is good for diffusing situations, clarifying ideas, and just airing things out sometimes. So we wrote. I issued the two- word prompt, "formative assessment," and pencils started flying, not because we were a well-established community of writers because, in fact, we were not. It was early in the year. The prompt simply touched a nerve and was a hot button topic for this particular group of teachers. When the time came to share what we wrote, many

responses leaned toward the negative, varying from frustration about taking too much time out of their instructional day, just jumping through hoops to satisfy administrators, to the ever present "it's just one more thing we have to do." I knew these teachers had been using formative assessment in their work with teaching reading, but I now wondered if they saw it more as an accountability piece of their work, rather than a way to inform instruction and help learners. Puzzling indeed.

Terri's Thinking Now

At the conclusion of the share session I offered, "What if I could show you some ways to notice how your writers are doing that just benefit you and your students? What if these ways of looking at what writers are doing are quick, simple and really helpful to planning and adjusting your teaching? Would you be open to exploring this within the context of a model lesson and debriefing format? We'll make it fit within your day." Not accustomed to being asked to weigh in on their feelings about district professional development content and delivery mode, there was a big pause before heads started nodding up and down and someone said, "Well okay, we can give it a try, but if it gets to be too much can we let you know?"


Terri's thought about this conversation

"Sure," I replied. I immediately sent myself an instant mental reminder to take it easy, honor where the teachers were coming from,
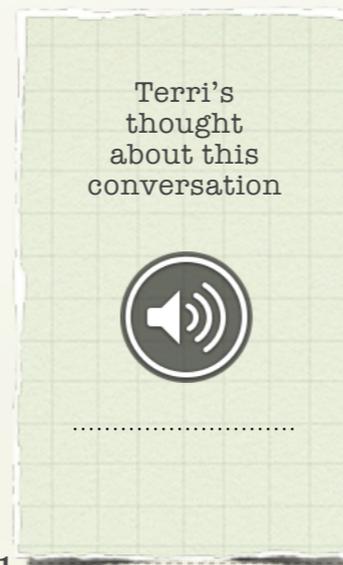
and build upon their expertise. I wanted them to see the value in formative assessment and to want to use it to inform their instruction. One step at a time, one step at a time became my mantra.

At this time I need to back up a bit. In September of the same year we spent a great deal of one whole group PD session looking at the language of the Smarter Balanced Rubric, which Missouri Schools would be using for Common Core assessment purposes. The teachers worked in grade level teams to notice and discuss the language for each criterion in the opinion writing rubric. They were asked to jot down what they noticed about the rigor and skills writers would need to know in order to meet the criteria. We also shared with the entire group how the demands increased as we advanced through the subsequent grade levels. We charted what we noticed, and each grade level team gathered again to think about their writers and to consider a logical place to focus instruction. Every team chose to begin with organization. During the month of September students continued to build writing stamina and gather snippets of writing in their writer's notebooks.

In doing my own formative assessment, reflecting on what transpired during September's work, I made a mental adjustment to encourage teachers to break down what they planned to teach in even more specific ways. Organization? That's huge. Where were they going to start with organization? How would they build on that? One step at a time, one step at a time.

Terri's Thinking about October
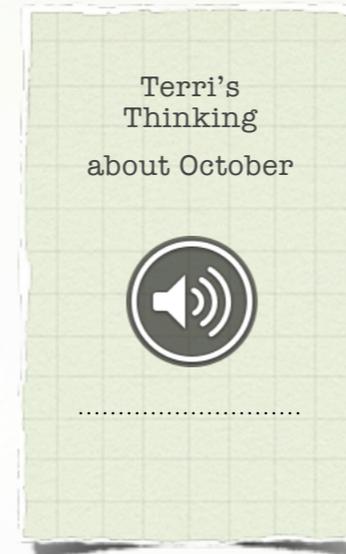
October:

During a debrief time in October, the question was asked, "So, when will we know the results of the study? When will we know how our students did?" When I explained that SRI would not be sharing that information with us teachers were not pleased. Continuing on, I reminded them that SRI was an outside evaluator conducting research and that their work was part of a nation- wide evaluation study involving several schools in several states. I know that this had been explained at an earlier meeting, but some may have forgotten that information. Next they asked if it would be okay to create their own pre and post assessment writing prompt. "Why not?" was my answer and they ran with the idea. By the end of the two day back to back visit, teachers landed on the following prompt: Should elementary students have their own iPads? Justify your opinion with facts, reasons and details. All teachers agreed to have their students write to this prompt between now and my next visit. Teachers also agreed to keep "noticing" notes in their own writer's notebooks to share with me via "checking in" emails before my next visit. Thanking them, I expressed how important their feedback was in helping us plan next model lessons.

Terri's Comments about Noticing
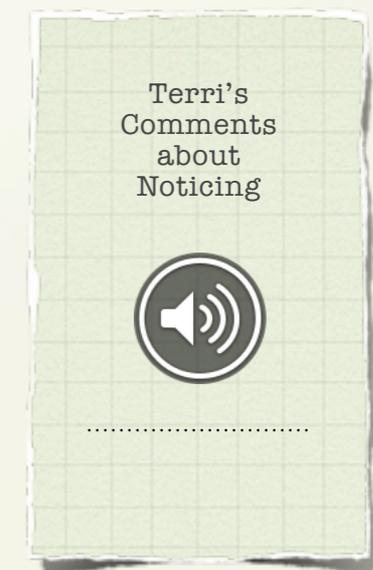
Following the October work, I reflected that I should have given teachers a deadline for checking in with me. A couple needed more than one reminder and perhaps needed a more focused way of giving me feedback. Some actually waited until I was driving to Northwest Missouri to respond. This didn't work very well, mainly because I wanted the writing lessons to fit smoothly within their content area work as well. How could I do that if I had no input from the teacher? One of my goals was for us to plan together, to not be yet another situation where an outside person comes in, delivers unrelated PD, then goes on her merry way. I wanted the teachers and I to become co-creators of the work, to know that their input was valued and needed.

November:

Terri's Thinking in November

During the November debrief sessions grade level teams divided the student work randomly without names for the purpose of really looking closely at organization (which teachers agreed to have been teaching between the October and November PD days.) They wanted to use the Common Core State Standards annotations as a model. The teachers noted that many annotations comment on the following areas: introductions, organization, reasons supported by facts and details, ways of linking opinion and reasons with words and phrases, conclusions related to opinion, and command of conventions. The teachers pushed back against the longer, more formal protocol I suggested using in September and opted to go with annotations similar to comments found in Common Core Appendix C. I did, however, caution teachers about looking at each piece of writing for all qualities. Reminding them that the main focus of our teaching during the past three weeks was organization led teachers to a common agreement that, for the purpose of looking at today's writing, we would focus on organization.

Each grade level team looked closely at nine total student papers focusing on organization. In a strong sense, many students seemed to attempt to engage with the topic. However, most tended to jump right into their supporting reasons in the opening statement. The teachers noticed three areas of concern: leads/introductions were weak, conclusions were non-existent, and transitions were spotty and general. Based upon what we noticed, teachers decided to guide students in choosing a snippet of writing from their notebooks, create a draft, then teachers would teach effective ways to introduce topics, use thoughtful transitions and write quality conclusions. General topics and ideas for teaching each were plugged into dates on their blank planning calendars. We then looked through resource binders, which I provided, and chose possible lesson ideas to utilize in the classroom.

From one month to the next, between my visits to the school, I asked teachers to be my eyes and ears and really notice what the students were attempting in their writing, what successes they were having and what strategies were tricky for them. About a week before my next visit, I emailed teachers asking them for feedback about how their writers were doing with organization. From these comments I created model lessons as follows: third grade was still

grappling with conclusions, fourth grade struggled with being clear in getting specific elaboration and detail in their writing, and fifth grade needed work on sentence fluency. (Fifth grade felt as though organization was okay and wanted to move on to fluency.)

I was excited that teachers were beginning to notice these things without my presence in the building. On my long drive home I had time to reflect about teacher engagement. There was a beginning shift from me doing most of the guiding, to the teachers owning the work and creating their own path leading toward our goal of improved and engaged student writers. I couldn't wait to begin working with them and their students on revision next month, because I knew this was an area teachers felt least comfortable teaching and one for which I had a huge toolbox and was ready to share.

December:

December's model lessons focused on revision, an area in which many teachers expressed total frustration. During our debriefing conversations on day one, teachers discussed noticing me using the same piece of my own writing for each class, but using different sections to teach for a different strategy in each room. Teachers also noticed that the students became willing to revise when I asked them to make just one or two changes, not to revise the entire piece. Also, teachers shared that allowing students to talk with their partners about their writing was motivational. Even the most reluctant writers took part.

During December's day two model lesson debriefing sessions, teachers shared that they needed to see how their students would handle a more rigorous writing task such as the kind in performance events. They decided to call this a mid-year checkpoint and chose to use a performance event discovered on the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project website: www.readingandwritingproject.com/resources.html. The topic: Do zoos help or harm endangered animals? Support your opinion from texts you have read and videos you have watched. The event included information material for students and led to an opinion piece.

Following the decision to use the already created performance event, teachers then turned to their planning calendars to plan for the remainder of December teaching days and the first half of January. This planning became very specific, indicating how they have blended opinion writing into their teaching.

• From December 6 – 20, teachers will continue revision strategies, focusing on leads, conclusions and transitions.

• From January 7 – 9, teachers will review learning to write strategies.

• From January 10 – 15, teachers will administer a two-day performance task, including note taking and opinion writing.

Once again, after thinking about the December work, I was energized and ready to help teachers dig deeper into looking at

what the student writing would reveal. I was looking forward to talking with my Prairie Lands fellow teacher consultant and number one thinking partner, Christie Leigan, to plan the January two day PD sessions where we wanted teachers to dig deeper into the experience of being writers themselves and to gain some fresh perspectives after looking at the mid-year performance event. I knew there was still so much ground to cover with teachers and we had a long way to go. Again, I kept telling myself, One step at a time, one step at a time, we're getting there.

January:

On day one we were writers, experiencing the same strategies that would be introduced sometime in the coming months to our students. We practiced complex sentence writing strategies, read and responded to multiple stimulus materials with opinion responses, then used peer response strategies to share and revise our writing. Teachers reflected upon the experience as one that was much needed and eye-opening. "Now I know what it feels like when I ask my kids to do this! It's not as easy as it sounds," commented one teacher.

Day two of our January whole group PD sessions found us spending a large chunk of time analyzing the student writing samples from a performance event students completed during the previous week. Teachers reviewed the Smarter Balanced Opinion Writing Rubric, read a series of student papers, scored those papers and discussed strengths found in the writings as well as areas that teachers need to address.   One of the largest "aha" moments came

when we began to realize that, although writers were getting so much better including relevant information to back up their opinions, they were lifting this information directly from their notes and source material without giving credit to that source in any way, shape or form. Teachers expressed the need to have some information on the topic of teaching paraphrasing during the whole group PD gathering in February. They also landed on the need to focus upcoming model lessons on transitions for fifth grade writers and sentence fluency for third and fourth graders. Teachers agreed to review the idea of audience awareness and conventions with their students between my visits.

On the 300 mile drive back to Southwest Missouri that January day, I felt good about the work. I knew teachers were feeling more like writers themselves, having experienced the very act of putting words on paper, having the courage to share those words with their peers, and trusting that the newly learned strategies they applied would enhance their writing. A sense of determination also came over me as I knew I needed to get busy researching teaching strategies for paraphrasing. This was one skill for which I had not found many creative teaching strategies in the past. Was I up for the challenge?

Well, we all know what is said sometimes about best laid plans. Right? As it turns out, Mother Nature doesn't have a sense of humor when it comes to schools needing to stick to their professional development schedules. In

Terri's Thinking

February, 2013 we had some of the worst snow events surrounding every professional development day that we scheduled, canceled, rescheduled and canceled again. I began to really miss my teachers and students. I would not see them again until March.

March:

In spite of Mother Nature's cruel weather tricks, it was obvious to me upon my return to the school in March that teachers had not lost momentum in their teaching of writing. Both teachers and students were enthusiastic and very engaged in both the model lessons and debriefing sessions. The lesson topics remained the same as we planned in February and teachers still wanted ideas for teaching paraphrasing as well as model lessons on transitions and sentence fluency.

When we sat down to look at student work with fifth grade teachers, we focused on four questions:

• Did the transitions make sense?

• Were basic transitions used or more sophisticated ones?

• Were a variety of transitions used?

• Did students capitalize the transition if placed at the beginning of a sentence?

From their examination, teachers discovered a number of students "going through the motions of inserting transitions." The students did not choose transitions that were effective or, in some cases, ones that made sense. The teachers then planned to provide more modeling for students, including generating, with their writers, a categorized list of transitions.

It's funny how driving and thinking in the car on long trips seem to be a given. On my March journey home I realized something so fundamental had been overlooked in my formative assessment work with the teachers. It was a real "Duh!" moment. Why had I not taken the time to break down with the teachers the exact skills that went with transtions that students needed to know before teaching the overall strategy? I knew that we had unpacked the different components that related to organization. I knew transitions were one of those components. But I had failed to go even further by breaking down transitions into even smaller writing skills. I knew this. So why had I overlooked leading the teachers in this practice? Was I backing off too much from guiding them? Was I allowing the teachers to be their own decision makers without gently nudging them to do best practice work? I reminded myself to show them how to unpack even further, teach, assess, and adjust during our next days together.

April:

With April being my last visit to the school, I began to feel the need to look back and reflect on all of the great teaching and learning we had done together. So during the final professional development

time together we revisited a great mentor text for opinion writing, A Pig Parade is a Terrible Idea. As we looked back at this wonderful text, we noticed again all the great strategies Michael Ian Black used to craft effective opinion. We compared those strategies with what we collectively taught throught the year and were amazed at all the great teaching we had accomplished. From the beginning I wanted the teachers to get a sense of what it's like to band together for the purpose of working really hard toward a common goal and achieving that goal. In my opinion, we achieved it.

Teachers did decide on their own to ask their students to write to the same prompt as the one at the beginning of the year, mainly to see growth and change over time. A few said that they would also like to use the resulting work to see where gaps were in their own teaching. What had they not covered that students really needed in order to become proficient writers of opinion? This, they shared, would remind them to be sure and get those lessons in their tool belts for next year. They were, however, writing to this prompt after my final visit. I wanted so much to be there with them to look at the writing and what it revealed. I told them that I also wanted to share my "unpacking" epiphany from my March drive home. This, I told teachers, would help guide them even better when teaching the strategies and then looking at the students' resulting writings.

 In brief reflections that I asked teachers to write during our last debrief session I was surprised when some wrote of their appreciation for watching me model the lessons and then openly sharing what worked, what didn't seem to work and how I might approach the lesson differently next time. They also liked the fact that I admitted my "late in the game" awareness about the act of unpacking objectives even further before teaching those skills, leading to greater detail and focus when looking at student work. They came to consider their professional development leader to be a teacher just like them, a human who experiences glitches, as one who reflects and grows from new insight. Most of all, they seemed to value being very much involved and having so much input in planning and designing the work. I truly believe that making formative assessment a huge part of this work had a major impact on teacher buy-in, ownership, and lasting change. I went away that last day knowing that teachers would carry this work forward. What a great feeling!

Much to my surprise, in May, when we regathered at our local university campus to celebrate our work and do a bit of reflection, the third grade team gifted me with a folder of writing samples, copies of student work they wanted me to have. I was touched that they were so proud of how far they and their students had come. These teachers will move forward, reflecting on what works best, noticing writers' strengths and potential for growth, using what they learn to make adjustments, and wise decisions as they forge onward. And thanks to them, so will I, so will I.

Terri's Thinking for next year

REFERENCES & RESOURCES:

From the National Writing Project:

Wise Eyes: Wise Eyes: Prompting for Meaningful Student Writing Mary Ann Smith and Sherry Swain (National Writing Project, 2011)

Looking at Student Work Website

Reviewing Student Work/Improving Student Achievement

Books:

Tovani, Cris. 2011. *So What Do They Really Know: Assessment for Teaching and Learning*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Overmeyer, Mark. 2009. *What Student Writing Teaches Us: Formative Assessment in the Writing Workshop*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Other:

Educational Leadership September 2012 Feedback For Learning:

Educational Leadership March 2014 Using Assessments Thoughtfully