

Want to Share?

A Look at Students Sharing Their Writing.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	3
DESCRIPTION OF TEACHING CONTEXT: WHO IS BEING TAUGHT?	4
RATIONALE: WHY INQUIRE?	6
RESEARCH: WHAT DO THE EXPERTS HAVE TO SAY?	8
WONDERINGS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT SHARING	10
INQUIRY PLAN DESCRIPTION: HOW WILL THE QUESTION BE ANSWERED?	11
DATA	15
DATA COLLECTION METHODS	15
STUDENT SURVEYS	15
STUDENT INTERVIEWS	16
DATA ANALYSIS METHODS	17
STUDENT SURVEYS	17
STUDENT INTERVIEWS	18
CLAIMS: WHAT DOES THE DATA MEAN?	19
CLAIM 1	19
EVIDENCE	19
Table 1	20
CLAIM 2	22
EVIDENCE	22
CLAIM 3	23
EVIDENCE	23
CONCLUSIONS: WHAT DOES THIS INQUIRY MEAN?	26
NEW WONDERINGS ABOUT STUDENTS SHARING THEIR WRITING	27
BIBLIOGRAPHY	29
APPENDIX	30

Abstract

Want to share? While some students may find sharing their writing in front of the class enjoyable, others prefer an alternative to this whole group environment. Such alternatives may include small group meetings, the use of props, or one-on-one conferences with a teacher or peer. Allowing for one-on-one student interactions provides the opportunity for the diverse needs of a class to be met.

Description of Teaching Context: Who Is Being Taught?

Entering the last classroom on the second floor of suburban Park Forest Elementary School, you are met with bright smiles on the faces of fourth grade boys and girls. Eight of these faces would not identify themselves as white Caucasian, but rather as Malaysian, Italian, Indian, Hispanic, Saudi, or African-American. Regardless of the children's skin color, the fourth grade boys and girls enjoy each other's involvement in their own personal learning endeavors.

Among 13 girls and 14 boys, there are a variety of academic abilities, behavioral patterns, and social relationships. The academic abilities of the students are as follows. Seven students receive Title 1 support for Reading, and three of those students receive Title 1 support for Mathematics. Several students consistently finish their work ahead of other students and assist those students still working. However, some of these early finishers are not always doing their best work. They just want to complete their work. There are also several students who take extra time to finish their class work. Some students need more time because fellow students distract them, and some students need the time because they take longer to formulate their ideas and record them.

The class has several behavioral patterns that have emerged throughout the year. There are a set of boys and a set of girls that, when seated next to one another, cannot focus on the activity at hand. While moving through the hallways, the class will have small conversations with adjacent students. Mondays are very productive days for students as they are focused and ready to work after the weekend. On Fridays however, students are ready for the weekend and need more structure to stay focused.

Students in the class are very sociable. They interact maturely for their age and there is no strong evidence of cliques forming. Because the class and their teacher have been together for two years now, most of them know their classmates' strengths and weaknesses. However, there are seven students that are new to the class. Three of these students are new to the district and four were in other schools. These five students were easily integrated into the classroom due to the community that had already been built.

The class works well together. Students generally will not complain when paired with a student he or she would not normally choose. While students may make a small

comment, they are flexible and understanding of the teacher's decisions and requests. The boys and girls in my fourth grade class are eager learners ready to explore and learn about their world.

The strong community-based school to which the students belong is firmly grounded in its belief that every child has the potential to learn and better themselves. The school community includes three classes at each grade level: kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade. Teachers make it a point to work collaboratively during planning and implementation to better attend to students' needs and abilities. Because of this teamwork and high interest in achievement, student scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment test have been proficient or higher in the majority of students.

As Park Forest Elementary School is the newest building in the district, students have a renewed sense of belonging and eagerness to return to school each day with excitement and enthusiasm. Students are proud of their school and it shows in their participation in school spirit activities. Because the school is new, there is recently available technology for teachers and students in each classroom that goes above and beyond what was previously available. Each teacher now has permanent and continuous access to a Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) projector, Videocassette Recorder (VCR), and Digital Video Disc (DVD) capabilities, as well as an overhead projector. Because of this influx of technology, the way teachers are teaching and the way students are learning at Park Forest Elementary has greatly changed.

Rationale: Why Inquire?

Children love sharing their writing work with one another. This became apparent to me as students were reinvesting themselves in their academic studies at the start of the new school year. Students were more than eager to share their personal writing with the rest of the class with the statement, “Look how I have grown over the summer!”

As the year began, students had short writing assignments and could complete them quickly. Towards the end of a class period, students would occasionally gather on the carpet facing the teacher’s chair where a student would sit to share their day’s writing with the group. Once a student had shared, the rest of the class had the opportunity to report what they liked about the student’s piece as well as some suggestions for improvement.

When students would share their writing, they did so enthusiastically. Those students who would volunteer to share anxiously awaited positive comments about their work as well as suggestions for altering their work. Students who shared also seemed to enjoy making remarks on what they were thinking when they were writing, as well as what they thought about comments their peers gave.

As the year progressed, however, the group that was able to share their writing began to dwindle. Writing assignments gradually became more in-depth and took longer to write. Those students who had completed their work more quickly were the ones who had the opportunity to share their writing. These sharers also had a smaller audience of listeners from which to receive feedback. This was the case because only those students who had also completed their task could listen and respond. During this small group sharing time, the majority of the class would continue working on their writing individually. Working students only received feedback when they requested it from the teacher or asked a friend for advice.

It became apparent that my students needed to continue sharing their writing with their peers in some fashion to receive feedback. I wanted them to be able to have that opportunity for personal growth again. The question was, “How do I have students share their writing?” How do students *want* to share their writing in order to better their writing skills? If students have the chance to obtain another’s opinion and suggestions

about their work, would they be more apt to think critically about their own work? Regie Routman, author of “Writing Essentials,” believes that, yes, “...peer interaction (in the form of students conferencing) is likely to help writers progress” (220).

Knowing the most efficient methods for students to share their writing work is important information for me as an elementary teacher. If students are comfortable in their sharing situation, I believe they will ultimately gain more from the time. As teachers, we need to create a safe environment for our students to share themselves through their work. A safe environment is “an atmosphere that encourages kids to take risks in their writing” (Fletcher and Portalupi 24). However, if students are not comfortable sharing their work in a particular situation, I believe they will avoid it at all costs. When students avoid sharing their writing, I believe they lose such benefits as peers’ suggestions and constructive criticism. If a teacher is unable to effectively reach all of his or her students’ writing needs, then I believe there is no guarantee that students’ skills will increase through the year.

As I began formulating a base for my inquiry project, I wanted not only to create benefits for my students, but benefits for myself as a growing teacher as well. With the undertaking of this project, I hoped to influence the way in which I help my students become better writers in the future through the avenue of sharing their writing with their peers. Having access to this toolbox of strategies will allow me to differentiate my instruction to meet more students’ needs.

Research: What Do the Experts Have to Say?

“[C]hildren generally love hearing and responding to their classmates’ writing” (Bridges 48). As teachers, we are taught to take into account our students’ strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, and preferences when creating conducive working environments. With the majority of students enjoying their peers’ work, why not accommodate for this interest? In order to hear and respond to their peer’s writing, students need to share their writing. One of the most common ways for students to share their writing with classmates is by conferencing.

Marianne Tully shares that “[w]riting is communication” (“Helping Students Revise Their Writing” 24). Looking at any group of children, you could deduce that children love talking with one another. This conversation is another form of communication. By putting these two forms of communication together, Tully continues, “the conference can offer the writer a wonderful opportunity to have ... one-on-one attention” (24). Conferencing provides students with the opportunity to do something they like doing anyways, but in a more controlled environment.

With whom do students conference? Marianne Tully suggests a one-on-one situation. Lois Bridges suggests, however, that “[c]onferences can be with partners, with small groups, or with the whole class” (47). Each of these situations has their advantages, and a teacher must decide which environment is the best fit for his or her class through out the year. No matter the nature of the sharing though, the goal remains the same: For students “to continue to write and to take risks” (Routman 223). Teachers want their students to become better writers while in their class. To become these writers, students need a safe environment.

In a safe environment, students will feel the confidence to share pieces they have written. Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi say it simply, “[k]eep the share positive” (“Writing Workshop” 42). One of the best ways to keep the sharing atmosphere positive is to use constructive criticism when commenting on a piece of writing. When commenting is gentle and supportive of the writer, he or she will not feel threatened and more than likely will share in the future (Bridges 48).

When students are conferencing there should be a focus. As part of their steps to a successful writing workshop, Fletcher and Portalupi suggest teaching one thing during each conference session (52). Here, Fletcher and Portalupi are referring to teacher-student conferences, but the concept can be applied to any sharing situation. By keying in on a single thought or idea, students are not always ‘bothered’ with spelling, grammar, punctuation, or capitalization. Instead, they are working to improve one aspect of themselves as writers. “The idea is to add to the young writer’s repertoire of strategies – not merely to improve a particular piece of writing, but to improve *all* the writing that student will do” (Fletcher and Portalupi 52).

With an ever-changing group of students for teachers to educate and a variety of conferencing styles, Regie Routman wants to inform teachers: “Be flexible, and above all remember you want your students to go on writing. The conference is secondary; the student as writer and confident learner is primary” (216).

Wonderings and Questions about Sharing

As I pondered the specific question that would target my wonderings accurately, a variety of questions began flooding my thoughts.

- “How do I help students feel more confident and proud of their work?”
- “How do I help students feel more comfortable sharing all types of their work in a public forum?”
- “What are the most effective ways to get and keep students excited about writing towards the end of the year?”

Then I found a tighter focus for my thoughts:

❖ *“How can students successfully share their writing work - both personal and class assignments - with their peers and receive feedback?”*

I wanted to know the most productive ways that students could conference with one another to discuss their writing. Not only did I want students to share their assigned class pieces, but I also wanted students to share writing they completed on their own time. I wanted to know in which forum students would receive the most influential feedback. Now that I had my main question, there were other questions that started coming to mind.

- △ In which forums will students be most comfortable sharing their work?
- △ Will students be more willing and open to share their work in a large group setting, a small group setting, or a one-on-one setting?
- △ How might student writing change as a result of regular sharing of their work?

Armed with my overall question and list of sub-questions, it was now time to begin finding the answers to my questions.

Inquiry Plan Description: How Will the Question Be Answered?

I had my question. I had my further wonderings. Now what? It was time to make a plan to answer my inquiry.

I had first planned on providing students with the opportunity to share their personal writing pieces as well as writing they had done for the class. Students were going to have the opportunity to share in small and large groups, as well as one-on-one. There was going to be a sign-up sheet posted in the room where students could sign up to share their writing in any of these settings. As sign-ups are currently used in the classroom during morning activities, students would already feel comfortable committing themselves to share. Each student would have a comment-encouragement journal that would be kept in a single crate or box so that students would easily access their fellow students' journals and write comments for that student. Comments were to focus on writings that students had shared with the class, but they could also write notes of encouragement for the student. Teachers were also going to be able to write entries in the students' journals. Students would have been encouraged to write entries to students with whom they might not normally converse.

After further discussion with experienced teachers, however, I realized that while my plan was ambitious and students may have enjoyed journaling to one another, the previously described method would have taken more time out of the school day than it would have benefited the students. Also, there were potential management issues, such as students trying to access the same student's journal at the same point in time. Because of this, I decided to go down a different avenue.

My new thought was to determine what method my students most wanted to use as a sharing forum. Based upon the outcome of that information, I would tailor a sharing time towards the class' likes. In order to be prepared for what my students would identify as their ideal sharing situation, I felt that it would be valuable to brainstorm a few possibilities prior to gathering this data. Possible sharing methods began running through my mind.

I could picture groups of three or four students sitting at a desk set, on the carpet in a small circle, or in the class library listening intently while a peer shared their writing. I could see the smiles on students' faces as their work was being appreciated, improved, and they were working cooperatively.

I could picture a student whose turn it was to share, wearing a fun hat. This hat could be a tall, colorful Dr. Seuss hat, a flat reggae hat with yarn hair, or a baseball hat. Whatever the style, the person sharing would be wearing a silly hat. What better way to relieve the pressure and nerves of sharing one's work than by having a lighter, less stressful working environment? I felt that if a student's attention was taken off of his or her nerves, they would temporarily forget these nerves about sharing something personal with other students and be able to focus on their piece of writing.

Making groups smaller and putting students into pairs, I could hear a room buzzing with constructive discussion. Students would be sitting in an area of their choice in the classroom and discussing each other's work. What does a little noise matter when students are making progress in an enjoyable fashion? With many possible methods for students to share their work, I wanted to make sure that I was prepared for the method students said they would enjoy the most.

One specific method I was planning on implementing in my classroom, as a way for students to share one-on-one with each other, was **“Partner Sharing Time” clocks**. Each student in the class would have a “Partner Sharing Time” (PST) clock (See Appendix, Figure 1). On these clocks, there is a blank line next to each hour of the clock. Before any sharing could occur, each student would fill his or her clock hour lines with the names of their peers in the classroom. Students would ask their peers to be, for example, their ‘two o’clock partner.’ If the peer did not already have another student's name written in that two o’clock time slot, then these students would become two o’clock partners. No student would have another student's name repeated on his or her clock, depending on the class' size, and there would only be one name on each hour line, again depending on class size. If, for example, the class has an odd number of students there would need to be groups of three during sharing time. Now that each student would have a full sharing clock, sharing could begin.

With much appreciated guidance from my mentor, I devised a strategy called the **“Sharing Spotlight”** to be used along with the PST clocks. Each time the students would meet with one of their PST partners, there would be one or two elements for the students to focus on during their time together. Students would know what that element was by referring to the day’s spotlighted phrase. On the board, there would be a spotlight made of construction paper that would ‘illuminate’ a drawn microphone and a written short phrase. Phrases might say, “Spelling and Capitalization,” or “Grabs the reader’s attention,” and “Opinion clearly stated.” Depending upon the writing mini-lesson for the day, the “Sharing Spotlight” element would reflect that focus. Also building upon the day’s lesson, there might be two short microphone phrases for student partners to highlight.

Students’ task with their day’s partner would be to check for the “Sharing Spotlight” element in each other’s papers. Using constructive criticism strategies, students would assist one another in editing their pieces of writing. When looking for constructive strategies to share their thoughts with their partner, students would consult a poster titled “Constructive Criticism: How can I be helpful without being hurtful?” Strategies on this poster include:

“I was wondering if you might...”

“I suggest that...”

“I have an idea! What if...”

“I was a little confused when...”

“I didn’t understand...”

With these conversation starters, students could make their partners feel good about their writing while giving them suggestions (Daughenbaugh 2004).

As this partner sharing time would last only about ten minutes, students would have about five minutes to work on each of their pieces. Towards the end of a Writing period, the teacher would share which time partner they would be sharing with that day and record it so as to avoid repeating partners before all partners had met. The teacher would also share the day’s “Sharing Spotlight” element, so students know specifically what they are looking for in each other’s pieces. While with their partners, students would be expected to stay focused on the task at hand, listening to each other, and sharing

ideas. If student pairs accomplished discussing the “Sharing Spotlight” element, they could then begin looking at the mechanics of the piece: capitalization, punctuation, spelling.

With the ring of a bell or the flick of the lights – signals with which the students are familiar - students would know that sharing time is has come to an end, to return to their desks, and prepare for the next activity.

Data

Data Collection Methods

Student Surveys

Having ideas in mind as to what student sharing time might look like in a variety of forums, I needed to narrow down my options so that I could focus on my students' needs. Knowing that students are the only ones that truly know their needs and likes, I decided to begin gathering data through a student survey.

The survey, available in the Appendix (Figure 2), focused on student thoughts and feelings about sharing their class and personal writing work in a variety of situations. Given the following ten situations, students rated how they would like sharing in the different situations based on a scale of 1 to 4, 1 representing the thought, "I would NOT like sharing in this situation," to a 4 representing the thought, "I would REALLY like sharing in this situation!"

Sharing Situations:

- a. with the whole class
- b. with a small group of 3 to 4 students
- c. with a friend 1-on-1
- d. with a teacher 1-on-1
- e. with a puppet
- f. with props
- g. being video-taped
- h. being tape-recorded
- i. if the teacher asked you (the student) to share with the class that day
- j. if you had time to prepare to share

Using a similar scale from 1 to 4, 1 representing the thought, "I would NOT like it," to a 4 representing the thought, "I would REALLY like it!" students were asked to respond to the following situations for receiving feedback on their writing.

Giving and Getting Feedback Situations:

- a. talk with a teacher *and* the class
- b. talk with only a teacher
- c. talk with a student
- d. have a journal or note written to you by someone to give you feedback
- e. write a journal or note to someone to get feedback or ideas

Besides rating the different sharing and feedback situations, students were asked to answer five questions. First they were asked to share their opinion about including more sharing during the day and why they would feel that way. Second, students gave their opinion on how sharing their writing makes them feel and why. Third, students were to give their opinion on whether they want feedback after they have shared their writing and why. Finally, students could provide other ideas for beneficial sharing situations and strategies for receiving feedback.

Through this student survey I would receive valuable insight into my students' thoughts and feelings about sharing their writing and giving and getting feedback. With this information I would be able to determine where to go next with my inquiry.

Student Interviews

Whichever situation the student surveys indicated was the most popular, sharing would begin in that forum. After a sharing period, I planned on interviewing students to gather their thoughts on how the sharing time was progressing. Depending upon which situation students shared their writing, the questions might differ slightly. The following is the set of questions students were posed.

Interview Questions:

- Did/Do you like working with your partner(s)? Why or why not?
- Did your partner(s) give you some good advice? Did they use good strategies to give advice?
- Did you give your partner(s) advice? What was that advice?

- Do you like having time to share with one person/two people rather than the whole class? Why?
- Can you do something with your partner(s) that you *can't* do with the whole class? What is that?
- Do you think your writing will improve over time as we continue partner sharing? Why?

By gathering feedback through the individual student interviews, I would be able to determine if students are getting anything valuable out of their sharing time. I would also be able to tell if students are enjoying their sharing time.

Data Analysis Methods

Student Surveys

With data collected, I needed a way to interpret that data and make sense of it. Now that I had my first piece of data, the student surveys, it was time to compile the data into an easily readable format. On a blank piece of white paper, I created a large chart. Along the left side of the paper, I wrote A through J in reference to each sharing situation in question 4 on the survey (How would you like *sharing your writing* in the following situations?). I also wrote A through E in reference to each method for giving and getting feedback in question 5 on the survey (How would you feel *giving and getting feedback* about your writing in the following situations?). Along the top of the paper I wrote 1, 2, 3, 4 to represent the rating students gave for each situation. As I went through the questions, I made a tally mark in the appropriate column on the chart according to the rating students gave. After recording each student's rating responses, I counted the tally marks in each box and recorded that total number in a spreadsheet (See Appendix, Figure 3).

In this spreadsheet I bolded the two highest numbers for each sharing situation and method for feedback. I also put a star next to the situations that received the highest ratings of 3 and 4, so I could refer to this data later in my analysis. Once I could visually

see what situations students had rated the highest, I wrote a few initial claims based on those numbers underneath the compiled data.

Sharing Situation Claims:

Students would prefer sharing their writing in a small group setting.

Students would prefer sharing their writing with a friend, one-on-one.

Students would prefer sharing their writing using props.

Students would prefer sharing their writing if they can prepare

Students would prefer sharing their writing if they can prepare ahead of time.

Feedback Situation Claims:

Students would prefer to give and receive feedback from the teacher.

Students would prefer to give and receive feedback from a student.

Student Interviews

In order to analyze student interview responses, I put all student responses together in a word document. Under each interview question I typed all responses to the question. Because there was not always sufficient time to ask each student all of the questions, there were instances when I would ask the questions I felt were most important. In these cases when questions were not asked or students did not respond, I went on to the next answered question from the student to record in my analysis document. I understand that by not asking each student all of the questions, I may have biased the outcome of my results. However, I feel that the results are still a valid reflection of how my students feel about sharing their writing.

With all interview responses recorded, I then went back and bolded those student responses that stood out to me. These responses were from students at a high, middle, and low level of writing achievement.

Claims: What Does the Data Mean?

Claim 1

Students prefer sharing in one-on-one and small group situations rather than in a whole class situation.

In order to determine how students can successfully share their writing work, I decided to ask the students in my class. Through completion of the student survey and having interviewed students after sharing, I have come to believe that students prefer sharing one-on-one and with a small group rather than in a whole group situation.

Evidence

Student Surveys

Through analysis of student responses to questions 4 (How would you like *sharing your writing* in the following situations?) and 5 (How would you feel *giving and getting feedback* about your writing in the following situations?) on the initial student survey, I was able to identify the situations in which students say they prefer sharing their writing. In Table 1 on the next page, you can see where the highest number of students responded for each of the four highest sharing situations. These numbers are bolded for easier visibility. (For the complete results of questions 4 and 5, please refer to Figure 3 in the Appendix).

Table 1

Student Survey Ratings				
Response Number Statements:				
1 = I would NOT like sharing in this situation.				
2 = I MIGHT share in this situation.				
3 = I would like sharing in this situation.				
4 = I would REALLY like sharing in this situation.				
<i>Sharing Writing with:</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Whole Class	1	11	3	4
Small group (3 or 4)	0	6	12	5
Friend, 1-on-1	0	2	7	14
Teacher, 1-on-1	1	8	8	6

In reference to whole class sharing, only a total of seven students responded with a rating of 3 or 4. The highest rating for this style of sharing occurred as a rating of 2, “I MIGHT share in this situation.”

When asked about sharing with a small group of 3 or 4 students, the majority of students replied with a 3, “I would like sharing in this situation.” Five students rated this sharing style as a 4, while six students rated it a 2.

In the class of 27 students and the 23 that partook in the survey, 14 students responded with the highest response of 4, “I would REALLY like sharing in this situation!” in reference to sharing with a friend one-on-one. In the same situation, seven students responded with a 3, “I would like sharing in this situation.” There were only two responses between the 1 and 2 ratings in this sharing style.

While the previous three sharing situations had very clear majority in one rating than any other, sharing with a teacher one-on-one was not so clear cut. With eight

students responding with both a 2 and a 3, student thoughts were fairly split. However, because there were six students who rated this situation as a 4 and one student who rated it as a 1, I gather that more students would like sharing with a teacher than those who would not.

Based solely on the numbers students rated these sharing situations, I believe that they prefer sharing in one-on-one situations and small groups rather than in a whole group experience.

Student Interviews

Further support of my analysis that students prefer sharing in one-on-one and small groups rather than with a larger group was found in the responses students gave to their post-sharing experience interviews.

In response to the question “Do you like having time to share with one person rather than the whole class? Why?” students responded with:

- “Yes, because I get stage fright (in front of the whole class). One person gives good opinions...”
- “I don’t like the whole class yelling at me. That makes me feel like they don’t like my work. It makes me feel sad. (With one person), I get one or two ideas instead of a lot.”
- “You can share and the other person has to listen. (With the whole class), they (students) don’t always listen (and focus on your work).”

Simply by reading these interview responses, I am certain that there are benefits for those students who do not feel as comfortable sharing or speaking in front of the whole class. As I continue interviewing students after sharing time, I expect to hear responses similar to those above in which a one-on-one situation allows for more personal interaction, sharing of ideas, and opportunities for giving and receiving advice.

With more exposure to this type of sharing, students would naturally form strong opinions of the process.

Claim 2

Students like receiving feedback on their writing.

While there are those students who would rather revise and edit their writing individually, the majority of students in my fourth grade class enjoy receiving feedback and advice.

Evidence

The third question on the students' survey was "Would you want feedback or suggestions after you have shared your writing with a group or another student? Why do you feel this way?" Of the 24 students who answered this question, 20 said that yes, they would like feedback, while only four students said they would not like feedback.

In their interview responses, students shared that they gave and received feedback on such topics as spelling, verb tenses, and repetitiveness. For students' persuasive writing pieces in which they gave several reasons why a teacher or principle should change something specific about their school, students were given additional reasons for why their topic should be changed. The strength of how their opinion was stated as another example of the type of feedback students received.

Not only were students asked to share their feelings about giving and getting feedback on the survey, but they were also asked to explain *why* they felt as they did. Several students who believed that feedback was a positive thing explained their reasoning as follows.

- "Yes, because it makes me feel proud of myself."
- "Yes, because it helps me get a better piece of writing."

- “Yes, it feels nice to get comments and it is helpful to get suggestions when you need help with your writing.”
- “Yes, because I like to hear other people’s suggestions.”
- “Yes, I could improve my writing.”

For these students’, getting feedback about their writing is important for them in becoming better writers and having the confidence to improve.

A specific example of a student seeking feedback occurred on April 19th, 2006. Having been working on a type of form poetry in which each line has seven syllables that day during writing, one student came to me during his own reading time and asked for advice. Together, we sat on the carpet until the student was pleased with the way his poem was written.

Claim 3

Students enjoy using the “Partner Sharing Time” clock to share their work.

There are many ways teachers can pair students to share their writing work. I have found one method that students thoroughly enjoy is using the “Partner Sharing Time” clocks to share their work.

Evidence

Observation

Once “Sharing Spotlight” was introduced to the class, students were very eager to begin meeting with their clock partners. The first thing students needed to do was fill in their clocks with their peers’ names. The day students did so, you could hear the excitement as they moved around the room trying to put their closest friends names on their clock first. (It had been explained to students that while they would want to work

with their closest friends, they should also be looking for those students who would challenge them to become better writers.) Given about ten minutes to fill their clocks, students were busy during the majority of that time adding more names to their clock.

I could tell that students were eager to begin. There were several students who consistently got out their PST clocks during Writing time even if they had not been asked to do so. One student specifically asked me at the beginning of the day, even before Writing began, "Are we doing "Sharing Spotlight" today?" This student has continued asking this question even now that "Sharing Spotlight" has begun. The only difference with this boy's question is, "What time partner are we sharing with today?"

Student Interviews

After several sharing times, I had interviews with students to discuss their thoughts and feelings about "Sharing Spotlight" time. Of the students interviewed, there was a mix of higher and lower level writers. The very first question posed to students was "Did you like working with your partner? Why or Why not?" Based on the following responses to this question, I came to believe that students were really enjoying their time together.

- "I like to get people to tell you what you need (spelling), and give them suggestions. I like giving others suggestions. I like being the teacher; it's fun!"
- "I like the idea of sharing with different people. (You can) learn how they write, their techniques... I like not knowing who I will be sharing with; it is a surprise."
- "Yes. (I like to) share with someone and pick who (I will) share with."
- "Fun, because you get to share (your) thoughts with each other."

Students in my fourth grade class have been responding very positively to “Sharing Spotlight” time. I expect to see continued enjoyment and engagement as students work collaboratively to assist each other in their writing skills.

Conclusions: What Does This Inquiry Mean?

What does this all mean? How can I apply what I have learned through this inquiry project in my future teaching?

With such a diverse group of children entering my room each year, it will be important for me as a teacher to determine my students' most comfortable sharing styles. Through a survey and personal interaction, I will establish the needs of my students. Based on such a survey, I will adjust "Sharing Spotlight" time. If students would rather share and present their writing with the whole class, maybe there will be a weekly sign-up sheet for students to share their work with the class. During this time, the class as a whole can focus on a single element of a student's piece of writing.

Based on the overwhelming enjoyment students demonstrated with the "Partner Sharing Time" (PST) clocks, I will try to incorporate them into other aspects of learning during the day. Maybe students want to use their PST clocks to determine their partner for paired reading. Maybe there is a special activity or event happening in the classroom. Students may decide that the best way to prepare for this event is in pairs.

I believe that I will use an increasing amount of one-on-one student interaction in the classroom. It is important for students to take greater responsibility in their education. By determining their own partners, students had this privilege. While students were looking for the type of student they could work well with, they were looking for someone who is a good listener and gives good advice. By seeking these qualities in peers, students are forming good habits that will transfer into other aspects of their academics - finding those students that will be of benefit to them - and they are forced to look for these qualities in themselves as well. Students know best how they work with their closest friends whether or not that is a good partner match.

It is my intent as a teacher to provide opportunities for students to share what they have written and both give and receive feedback on that writing. Students will be able to take more responsibility for their writing and the writing of others; they will have more ownership in their work. With students having a stronger hold on their learning they will have a stronger sense of pride in their daily writing skills and work.

New Wonderings about Students Sharing Their Writing

With one question comes many. As one question is answered, another arises.

After answering my initial question in one fashion –

How can students successfully share their writing work with their peers and receive feedback?

- One-on-one sharing using a “Partner Sharing Time” clock

– there are many more questions that arise around the same topic.

➤ How can a teacher better structure writing time so that all necessary elements of a lesson are included (teacher instruction, independent student work time) and there is still time for students to share their writing more often?

➤ Could a teacher use the “Partner Sharing Time” clocks to create small groups in which students could share their work?

➤ Can a teacher create an atmosphere in the classroom in which students do not feel intimidated when sharing in front of the whole class?

➤ Could “Partner Sharing Time” clocks be used at a younger grade level? How would the structure differ in these situations?

➤ How could “Partner Sharing Time” clocks be integrated into other aspects of the curriculum - in Science, Social Studies, Math, Reading?

➤ Would prolonged use of the “Partner Sharing Time” clock assist students in picking smart partners for themselves- those partners who would *really* challenge them as writers?

As a teacher the answer to the question of the best way to teach will never completely be answered. With new methods and strategies constantly being developed

and new students entering the classroom each year with diverse needs and a variety of backgrounds, inquiry will never come to an end.

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Appendix