



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1988 Volume III: Autobiography in America

The Autobiography of . . . Me

Curriculum Unit 88.03.07
by Pamela M. Fowler

Introduction

The Autobiography of . . . Me is a unit written especially for fifth and sixth graders who are special education students full-time. The overall goal of this unit is to not only to encourage the students to write about themselves but also to expose middle school students to the lives and endeavors of black Americans. The students will find themselves reading better, spelling better, writing more often and enjoying it.

The average reading level of the class is third grade-six months with an equivalent oral language level and a written language level equivalent to that of a first grade student. It is my intention to bring each student to a fifth grade reading level and an oral language level and written language level of third grade-six months. Overall I would like to achieve my goal of increasing their functional level by at least 40% upon the completion of this unit.

Students who are placed in a self-contained learning center class tend to develop an extremely close bond amongst themselves. They find comfort within the classroom, develop a strong bond and sense of security and trust. With this unit a learning center teacher will be able to develop further that security within the class and maintain it throughout the school year. As the close of school or anytime after the first month of school each student will be able to see the progress he/she has made academically as well as emotionally.

The unit is intended to begin simultaneously with the opening of the school year and conclude in June at the close of school.

As teachers we all know the importance of writing. There is more to it than just acquiring good grades in school or being able to complete a job application. Although these abilities are important, writing serves a greater purpose. It allows the author to open up doors that only the imagination has the key to. It can also serve as a form of therapy. Not very often are adults honest with their younger counterparts, let alone themselves. Adults often claim this dishonest, or avoidance tactic, is for the child's protection or in their best interest.

I see children born pure and they tend to be completely honest about the events which happen in their lives. They do not avoid the truth and will state what they feel until they are taught the avoidance tactic by friends, teachers and parents. This tactic keeps them from severe punishments and is often used to manipulate the

friends, teachers and parents who taught them. Once the child masters this tactic they start to believe what they are saying and eventually lose sight to the truth. The purity is lost.

Our kids today are so confused. Although not always on purpose, we contradict our teaching morals and values. We tell them one thing and model the exact opposite. We say no and really mean yes. The children learn to ignore and avoid the truth and tend to say exactly what adults want to hear, even if it is a lie or untruth.

When the time comes for the child to write in school about his/her experiences he/she do not know which experience is real and which is fantasy. They start remembering what they have learned and write what they think the teacher wants to hear. Problem number one.

Problem number two is the writing process itself. Normally at the beginning of the school year the majority of the teachers want their class to write about what they did over summer vacation. Well, if their summer was anything like mine there were so many things going on that it would be difficult to focus on one event and write about it. No one can sit down with a blank piece of paper and a pen or pencil and just write. They need stimulation, ideas, direction. They need to be taught the process of writing. 80% of school children believe they can write, but then again they need to be taught the process of writing, or more simply, how to write. I'm sure that we have all had the dreaded experience of someone, teacher or employer saying, "Here, write about yourself . . ." This is what we are putting our kids through on a daily basis. As you felt at that moment, they also feel anxious, unsure, scared and frustrated, not to mention confused.

Daily format

The daily format will basically be the same. From the start of school each student will start from the same place and from there they will never be at the same spot again with support and guidance. It is my hope that at the end of the school year, each student will have gained a vast amount of insight and understanding of the writing process and autobiography.

First the teacher must choose a period of time that will remain strictly for writing. The time period should be no less than fifteen minutes and no more than 30 minutes. This period should also be sustained and uninterrupted. In other words the teacher should stick to writing and the writing process eliminating frivolous conversation among the students as well as among him/herself. A very important aspect of the sustained, uninterrupted reading time is that the teacher should model what he/she expects the students to do. By this I mean while the students are writing, drafting or editing, the teacher should also be writing, drafting, or editing his/her own piece. By modeling, this encourages the students to continue to write and also shows them that the writing process is not another class that teachers teach to fill up the day.

Sample lesson/Sample Day—One Week into the school year

Writing
Class
time:

10:30-11:00

10:30 - Upon the opening of class, each student obtains their daily writing folder from the file.

10:32 - Individual students "pick up" their writing from where they left off the day before

Jill - Prewriting stage—Me-Web

Tony - First Draft—First story

Diane - Conference on first draft—mechanics and grammar

Reha - First Draft—Second draft

10:32-10:45 - Students write continuously and uninterrupted for 13 minutes.

10:45 - Teacher asks students if anyone wants to share their writing.

10:45-11:00 - Group share time. If no one wants to share their writing, teacher can spend the time on writing activities or lessons on grammar or punctuation or capitalization.

11:00 - Students put papers inside folders and place folders back in the file.

Class ends.

Folders

Each student will have two folders in which they'll place all their work in, including their writings. The student is responsible for maintaining their own folder. One folder is a manila folder or large brown envelope labeled final drafts. Inside this folder the stories, poems, letters, etc., which are final drafts are placed. This is the students permanent file.

The second manila folder contains four lists as follows:

The reading selections used range from a third grade reading level to a twelfth grade reading level. Although I have focused on the less academically talented student, this unit may be incorporated into any curriculum by appropriating the readings by interest level and ability. The students will direct you from there.

In addition to increasing and developing academic skills, a behavioral change will take place. There really will be no need to incorporate a behavior management system because the students will learn to carry out self control and discipline themselves.

The class will find themselves under no restrictions. Although there are requirements for them to fulfill in order to be successful, no one is saying to them "No, you can't do that," or "No don't do that," "No don't use that word," or "No, that doesn't belong." They have total freedom where their ideas and creations are concerned. They will eventually create their own book. This possession is a part of them and their being.

They will protect it, criticize it and try very hard to perfect it.

1. *Stories I've Written* : Stapled to the outside front cover. Lists the titles completed. A table of contents.
2. *Topics I Know Much About* : Stapled to the inside front cover. Lists the things the child is very familiar with, those things the child knows a lot about.
3. *Some New Ideas to Write About* : Stapled to the inside back cover. This lists ideas the students come up with to write about. These ideas can be and often are generated from the me-web(s).
4. *Skills I Can Use* : Stapled to the outside back cover. This page is kept up by the teacher and lists those skills each individual student is able to accomplish without the teacher reminding him/her.

Keeping Track of your class

It is good to know what each child in your class is doing, and to achieve this I have established a system to be used by the teacher. This system is titled "Status of the Class."

List each child's name on the appropriate line. Under each day of the week use the code below to note the step each child is on or has completed.

Code: NS = New Story

PW = Prewriting Steps

D ¹ = First Draft

D ² = Second Draft

FD = Final Draft

C = Conference Held

A = Absent

Objectives, Strategies and Lessons

It is my desire that through the curriculum unit 'The Autobiographies of Black Americans' the functional levels of my students will increase by at least 40%. I intend to accomplish all the following objectives in regards to the students' competencies. Each objective will appear in sequence with the appropriate strategy and lesson plan.

A. READING THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SELECTIONS

Goal: TO INCREASE COMPREHENSION SKILLS

The students will read orally a series of autobiographical selections and answer comprehension questions in relation to the story.

Reading is encouraged by way or oral readings. My classroom is not divided by reading levels, but rather by personalities and by which student works best with another. I have discovered the fact that children learn better from each other. There is a sense of support that a teacher cannot duplicate. Kids have a language all their own; often, when I have explained a fact several times and a student doesn't understand, I turn to peer teaching. I have found that it works very well. The group won't go on unless *everyone* has an understanding of the concept. Together the students develop and improve on those skills which they were lacking in September.

My students' most prominent disability lies in comprehension, retention, and recollection of the information read. My students are very visual students. I begin the lesson by oral readings, for example, selections from Ernest Gaines' *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* . The class takes turns reading aloud paragraph by paragraph. After the students have each read a paragraph, I ask literal questions about the readings and the class then answers them. The questions are not difficult and very rarely stray from the story. Inferences and conclusions are not taught until the class is able to recall information well. The class keeps a notebook just for comprehension questions. The questions are written on the blackboard for the students to copy down into their books. Each question is read aloud for the class to answer. As they give the answer, the teacher writes it on the board in a complete sentence. The class then copies the information into their books in the exact format they see on the board. This teaches them organizational skills as well as vocabulary, sentence structure and vocabulary. As the year goes on, the vocabulary and questions become more difficult so the students increase their vocabulary skills. You will find the reading list for the class at the end of the unit, labeled *Student's Reading List* .

Format for Comprehension Skills

(Title of Book) Name

Date

Pages Read

Course (Reading)

1. State the Question

State the Answer

SKIP ONE LINE BETWEEN EACH QUESTION

2. State the Question

State the Answer

ENGLISH AS A SUB COMPONENT TO READING

Goal: TO INCREASE WORD USAGE AND VOCABULARY SKILLS

The student will develop and utilize a vocabulary book which includes that vocabulary he does not know how to spell, is foreign to him or misuses in his work.

Phonics and linguistics are two ways of teaching children to read and spell. The two are so often interchanged in every school system, school district, school and classroom. My students spell phonetically. They know that they spell the words wrong because the words do not look right— in steps frustration and the idea that they will never be able to spell. I want to discourage that from happening. I intend to use the rote teaching for most of my vocabulary lessons in conjunction with phonics.

Each week, beginning on Monday and Tuesday, five words are introduced to the students for a total of ten words per week. These words gradually increase in difficulty so that the child can see progress in his ability to learn. The “New Vocabulary” is taken directly from the readings of the classics, and in the future, from the short stories. Once the vocabulary is identified, the teacher writes them on the blackboard as the students copy them down into their notebooks.

The first set of exercises that the students complete is to figure out the definition of the words. It is not important that the students know the book meaning. After the class understands what the word means, in relation to their lifestyles, it is time for them to come up with a sentence that explains the word correctly. At this point I found that all of my students were working together rather than working against each other. The teacher writes the class definition on the board and their sentence following. The class is to copy both down exactly as they see it. This will begin to teach them a simple form of organization and outline.

It is the student’s responsibility for homework to write each word and its definition three times and to study and know the definition for a quiz on the following day. This is done for two days, and on the third a set of written exercises is required for the students to complete. The exercises are written on the board and copied into their notebooks. Each exercise is related directly to the vocabulary to increase spelling, defining and utilizing the word correctly. For homework the same night I require my students to study the sentences and the words for a sentence dictation session the next day. This also aids in increasing their understanding of the meaning and use of the word in context.

On day five the students are well prepared to take a spelling test which is dictated by the teacher. The teacher says the word, uses it in the sentence that the class created and then repeats the word on their paper. Do not

allow the students to begin to write until the entire sequence has been completed. This session increases their listening and recalling skills.

In the second quarter when the class begins to read the selected short stories, the teacher introduces the students to an additional exercise that they are to be responsible for. The students are to locate and identify the vocabulary given in their readings, copy the sentence it is used in and find the “book definition” along with the definition the class came up with. Aside from this “dictionary work” each student is solely responsible for finding and recording ten words that he came across in his readings. These words are determined by asking three questions, “Do I know this word?”, “Do I understand what it means in context?”, “Can I spell it without looking?”. If the answer to any or all of these questions is “No” then the student knows that word is one which belongs in his vocabulary book. This book becomes a source of reference for the future semesters.

LESSON PLAN 1a English

Day 1

1. Introduce new vocabulary #1-5. Teacher writes the words on the board as students copy them into their notebooks.
2. Teacher and students define the word and create a sentence using the word correctly.
Teacher writes the definition following the word and the sentence underneath as the students
3. copy the word into their notebook. Example: Divide means to separate. I will divide this pizza in half.

HOMEWORK: Students make a copy of the words and definitions to take home. Write each word and definition three times each and study for definition quiz.

Day 2

- Students take a dictated definition quiz. Teacher says the word, students write the word on
1. their paper and follows it with the definition. Upon completion the class corrects peer’s papers together, by switching papers.
 2. Teacher introduces second half of new vocabulary as in Day 1.

HOMEWORK: Repeat assignment from day one using the new vocabulary.

Day 3

1. Students take definition quiz using the vocabulary from Day 2.

Teacher writes a series of written exercises on the blackboard for the students to do. Students write the exercises in their vocabulary books and complete as per the directions.

- A. Put all your vocabulary in alphabetical order.
- B. Unscramble these words to make the vocabulary.
- C. Fill in the blanks with the right letters.
- D. Write one of your own sentences for each of the following words.
- E. Match up the correct definition with the appropriate word. (and vice-versa)
- F. Write one vocabulary word which rhymes with each of the words below.
- G. Divide these words into syllables then tell how many syllables there are in the word.
- H. Tell what word means the same as these words below.

HOMEWORK: Students will study the sentences from 1-10 for a dictated sentence quiz.

Day 4

- Teacher will dictate the ten sentences to the class twice. The students will then write the
- 1. sentence on a piece of paper paying special attention to the spelling, capitalization and punctuation.
 - 2. The students will exchange papers and the class will correct.

HOMEWORK: The students will write all ten words five times each and study for the vocabulary test.

Day 5

- Teacher will dictate to the class the vocabulary. He/She will say the word, use it in a sentence,
- 1. then repeat the word a second time. The students will spell the word on their paper. Follow the sequence through all ten words.
 - 2. The teacher will assign two students to correct the tests.

Lesson 1b English

Day 1

- 1. Introduce new vocabulary #1-5. Teacher writes the words on the board as students copy them into their notebooks.

2. Teacher and students define word and create a sentence using the word correctly.
3. Teacher writes the word and sentence on the blackboard as the students copy the format down into their notebooks.
Teacher instructs students to read short story and upon completion to find the vocabulary in
4. context, noting the page number and the exact form in which it was used. HOMEWORK: Same as Lesson Plan 1a.

Day 2

Same as Lesson Plan 1a

Add step four in the above lesson using the second half of the new vocabulary.

Day 3-5

Same lesson as in Lesson Plan #1a.

B. THE WRITING PROCESS

Goal: TO INCREASE CREATIVITY, WRITING ABILITY AND OVERALL SELF WORTH

The student will write daily on a journal and actively participate in self worth activities.

Starting to write is the most difficult part of writing. The class is taught the writing process through this curriculum unit. They begin with the me-web. From the me-web the ideas for stories come. A web is made the first day of school and kept in their folders for the remainder of the year. At times a students may ask you if they can make another web instead of always using the first on. That is always permissible. They may get an exciting idea and want to develop that into a story.

MAKING THE ME-WEB

1. In the center of a blank unlined piece of paper have the class write their first names.
2. Circle it.
3. Off of that circle have them draw six lines going outward.
4. The first line will depict their family.
The second their friends.
The third school.
The fourth their hobbies.
The fifth their dislikes.
The sixth trips they have taken.
5. Now have them start listing their family members, keep it immediate family.
6. Once their family is completed have them go to the category of their friends and do the same.

- Continue this pattern until all the categories are complete. In the third category “school” the kids can list their favorite teachers and favorite subjects, since they don’t have the
7. experience of attending several school in their short span of life. Of course there will always be that child who has been to as many schools as he is in years, so if he wants to do that, list all the places he has been fine.

This web is to be kept inside each child’s folder and they are allowed to an encouraged to add to the web as often as they want. With this in mind it is safe to say that the web is never finished.

Lesson Plan Writing - The four components

PREWRITING

1. Introduce the Me-Web. Teacher make and explain own we on the blackboard before class makes their.
2. Teacher assist each student with me web.
3. Discuss the class me web. Class share the information on the web with each other. Teacher included.
4. Students select a topic from the me web to write about.
5. Students web their chosen topic, to narrow the ideas down.
6. Class share and discuss the chosen topics.
7. Have students write for ten to fifteen minutes on chosen topic.
8. Class read aloud and share writings.
9. Teacher introduce to class the art of criticism and practice during sharing time.
10. Class should share writings on an average of two to three times a week.

THE FIRST DRAFT

1. Using the web tell class to chose a topic, web it and begin to write about their topic.
2. Continue to write without worrying about the mechanics of grammar or spelling. Have the kids use sound-it-out spelling and then correct the words when they see you for conferences.
3. Allow the thoughts to run freely.
4. Conferencing can begin at anytime the students needs one.

*See following lesson.

REVISING

1. Share writing with the class. Have the student read his/her word out loud.

- Work with the class and allow them to compliment *and* criticize the piece that is being read.
2. Stress that they are to say what they like about the piece and what they feel could be expressed more. You can compliment without criticizing, BUT you CANNOT criticize without a compliment. The kids need to know this rule.
- After the piece has been critiqued have the child return to his desk and rewrite the piece in
4. another form, e.g., from story to poem, letter or whatever comes to mind (If this does not seem appropriate omit).
- Revise. Using the information given in the group share add or delete information, change the
5. wording, delete repeated words, (an excellent opportunity to utilize the dictionary and/or thesaurus) or delete unnecessary detail.

EDITING

1. Hold a conference with the child for editing purposes.
 - a. Have the child read you draft aloud.
 - b. Then you read the draft aloud to the child.
 - c. Check their grammar and punctuation. Explain where necessary.
 - d. Circle their spelling errors.
2. Have the child return to his/her seat and correct the errors.
3. Hold a second editing conference and make final corrections.
4. Have the child then make a final copy on a clean piece of paper.

Things to Write About

1. News Bulletin
Write a brief television news bulletin. The announcement may be serious or funny and should last between 30 seconds and one minute. Rehearse and memorize.
2. Radio Commercial
Prepare a 30-second radio commercial advertising an original product or service. Work alone or with a partner. Arrange to tape record it and be sure to include all necessary sound effects. Include a catchy jingle that people will associate with your product or service.
3. School Announcements
Write a list of announcements similar to those that are made over the school's public address (p.a.) system. Use wit and humor in creating them in order to amuse the audience. Practice reading the announcement several times so that the presentation will sound "official."
4. The Bully

Imagine that you are often picked on by a bully. If you tell anyone, things will only get worse. Think of three clever, nonviolent ways to put an end to the harassments. Write your plans and present them to your classmates.

5. Millionaire

You just won a million dollars! The only catch is that you have to spend it all in one week, or you'll forfeit the gift. How will you spend the money? Plan your week, and share it with your class.

6. 2001

What kinds of jobs will be available to people in the twenty-first century? Create a new position one that doesn't exist today because there isn't a need for it. Write a job description including educational and work experience requirements, salary, fringe benefits, and any other relevant information.

7. Hiccups

Think of five ridiculous ways to get rid of the hiccups. Make a chart listing these methods. Then choose a classmate to serve as your "guinea pig," and demonstrate your methods in class.

8. Pet Peeves

What habits in other people do you find particularly annoying? Share them with your class. Your approach may be serious or humorous.

9. Drive 'Em Crazy

Make a list of your five favorite ways to drive your parents crazy.

10. Three Wishes

If you were given three wishes, what would you wish for? Why?

11. Early Childhood Memory

Think of an early childhood event that you remember very clearly. Write down as many details about it as possible and relate the experience to your classmates. Supplement it with pictures or photographs of yourself at that age. Write the story, and practice telling it without reading from your paper.

12. New Holiday

Create a new holiday for Americans to celebrate. When will it be celebrated? What special food will be prepared? In what activities will people participate? Your approach may be serious or humorous. Organize your thoughts and share them with your classmates.

13. Circus

Your dad takes you to the circus. Tell about all the things that you saw and did there.

14. The Birthday Party

It is your best friend's birthday. You are planning a birthday party for your best friend. What are all the things you have to do to make it a good party?

15. The End of the Year Trip

Your teacher gives your class a choice of two places for an end of the year trip. One of the places is one you always wanted to go to. Where it is? How do you convince your teacher and your class to choose the one you want?

16. The Mystery Package

Suppose your doorbell rings. You open the door and there's a large package. A man walks away. What do you do?

17. A Camping Weekend

You are camping in the woods with two friends. It's very dark and quiet. All of a sudden, the silence is broken and you hear the roar of what is obviously a very angry, big bear. What do you and your friends do as the bear comes closer and closer to you?

18. A Trip for Two

Congratulations! You won the first prize in a raffle. The prize is an all expense paid trip for two. You may go anywhere you choose. Where would you go, who would you take, what would you do?

19. Gilligan's Island

Your boat crashed and you are the only survivor. You swim to an island. A crate from your boat washes ashore. What does it contain and how do you survive?

20. Going, Going, Gone

Your cruise ship has sunk. Competing for limited lifeboat space are: you, a nurse, a minister, a pregnant woman, a ten year old girl, an experienced sailor, a Nobel Prize winning scientist, a famous movie star, and the Secretary General of the United Nations. Only five people can get in the boat. Only five people will live. Write about who should be in the lifeboat and tell why they should be saved.

21. Crowd Control

You are a person in charge of over all security, lighting, and sound system for a rock group. The group is giving a concert in a Civic Center in a city near you. You're watching the crowd and you are wondering if more control is necessary. You also have an eye on the stage to oversee the special effects. Since you are one of the few people who understand the sound system, you're also listening. Describe what do you, see, and hear on a wild and frenetic Saturday night.

22. Celebrities

You are in a restaurant where you spot your favorite movie star/singer/athlete. He/she accepts an invitation to sit and talk to you. Write in paragraph form all the things you would say to this person. What do you enjoy or admire about this person's work? Are there any suggestions you would like to make? What do you hope to see this person do in the future?

23. Breaking Up is Hard to Do

You cared very much for someone, but you thought you had to break up the relationship.

24. Lonely

You felt excluded from a group or situation and knew you had to do something about it.

25. Good-bye

You experienced a loss of someone or something and had trouble getting on with your life.

26. Me

Tell your likes and dislikes

27. The Future

Tell what you want to be or do when you get out of school and why.

28. Emotions

Tell something that made you feel very excited or very sad and why.

29. Secrets

Tell something you never told anyone before.

30. I'm Different Because I'm Me

Tell what makes you special or different from everybody else.

C. READING TO WRITE

Goal: To develop, increase and maintain positive self-esteem and write in a manner which is modeled in readings. The students will actively participate in writing activities which relate to the reading selections.

Through reading the following selections orally the students will discuss plot, characters and most importantly writing style. I use selections so that they may be read in class and then discussed. The teacher focuses the class on the author's writing style and ability to relate their message tell his/her story and bring the reader into the same place the author is.

After reading and discussing the selection instruct the students to write in one of the styles mentioned on the following pages.

Reading Selections:

- * *Narrative* by Frederick Douglas
- The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* by Ernest Gaines
- * *Brothers and Keepers* by John Wideman
- * *Family Installments* by Edward Rivera
- * *Nigger* by Dick Gregory
- The Day I Learned Shame* by Dick Gregory
- * *The Me Nobody Knows* by Stephen M. Joseph
- My Bondage and My Freedom* by Frederick Douglas
- My Struggle* by Booker T. Washington
- * "Letter From Birmingham Jail" Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Reading Selections and Lesson Plans have been photocopied and placed at the Institute Office, 53 Wall Street.

Lesson Plan

The Me Nobody Knows

A. Reading Selection: "Helpless, What I was Through" pg. 32

Discussion: Drugs. How he felt after he was hooked. How he feels now, today. Is he alive? dead? clean? a junkie?

Writing Assignment: Your first encounter with drugs, or the first time you found out about drugs.

B. Reading Selection: Annette C Age 15 "Father" page 34

Discussion: Family. Specifically mothers and fathers or grandparents.

Writing Assignment: Write a sketch of either your mother or father.

C. Reading Selection: Lunch pg. 75

Discussion: Your favorite subject in school, or school.

Writing Assignment: Tell of your favorite subject.

Other Activities for Writing

1. Book Reports:

a.

Using construction paper fold as if it were to be used as a book cover. Fold in the front and back flaps. Have the students write a brief report on the book/story/excerpt read. Staple the pages on the inside of the book cover and then have students decorate the front of the cover complete with title, and author.

b.

Using notebook paper, the students write a complete report on the selection/book read and on an unlined white 8 1/2"x11" drawing paper the student draws a cover for their report complete with author and title.

Take My Place: Have the student imagine that they are in the place and time as the reading.

2. Given a situation have the child write how they would handle the situation. Upon completion have the students exchange papers and group share.

Inferences: Given a situation from a reading selection allow students to come to a conclusion.

3. Once they have completed read their endings aloud then complete the reading to determine the author's ending.

Change Style: Experiment with assorted writing styles. Change essays to poems. Poems to songs. Songs to plays. Plays to letters. Letters to monologues and so on.

4. Vocabulary Trip: Give the students a word they don't know and allow them to define it *before* using the dictionary.

D. CONFERENCING

Goal: To help student react to his/her own writing in order that he/she may diagnose possible writing problems

to solve them.

The student will actively participate in a conference with the teacher and discuss the writing in order to identify problems and the proper way to correct them.

In the conferences with the children the teacher's role is to

- a. Listen to the child
- b. Respond to content first
- c. Follow, NOT lead.
- d. Handle one problem at a time.
- e. Keep the conference short.

Conferences should last no more than five minutes. Any longer there is a tendency to lose the focus of the conference.

POSSIBLE TYPES OF QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES USED DURING CONFERENCES

- A Tell me about your piece of writing.
- B What part do you like the best? Why?
- C Can you tell me more about it?
- D Ask questions about any part that is not clear to you.
- E Do you have enough information?
- F Do you have too much information?
- G How did you feel when this happened? Did you write your feelings?
- H Why did you choose this subject to write about?
- I Do you have more than one story?
- J What did you learn from this piece of writing?
- K What do you intend to do with the next draft?
- L What surprised you in the draft?
- M How does this draft sound when you read it out loud?
- N What is this important to you?
- O How does this piece compare to other pieces you have written? Why?
- P What kinds of changes have you made from your last draft?
- Q Underline the part that tells you what the draft is about?
- R Circle the part that is the most exciting.
- S What do you think you can do to make this piece better?
- T What problems did you have or are you having?

- U What is the most important thing you are trying to say?
- V What works so well you'd like to try to develop it further?
- W How do you feel about your story?
- X Tell them what you liked about it.
- Y Are you happy with your beginning and ending?
- Z Explain how your title fits your story.
- AA What are your action words? Can you add others?
- BB What do you need help on?
- CC What questions did your conference partner have for you?
- DD Where is this piece of writing taking you?
- EE Did you tell about something or did you show us by using examples?
- FF Can you think of a different way to say this?
- GG Does the beginning of your piece grab the reader's attention?
- HH What questions do you have of me?

A Few Suggestions

1. Short conferences are more effective than long conferences.
2. Frequent conferences are more effective than infrequent conferences.
3. Try to limit the student's response and yours to one concern. We learn most quickly if we take one step at a time.
4. If you don't know how to respond, draw more about process out of the student or encourage the student's opinion of the text.

PUBLISHING

WHY PUBLISH?

It has become obvious that the majority of students work best when a reward is offered. The student's reward for writing is the published piece at the end of each quarter. They will see their work in a form they have never thought. Within the class the teacher may decide to create a class library, or display the books in the main office at their school.

WHEN TO PUBLISH?

1. *Students who have been doing writing before :*

About every 8 weeks; when they've done a fair amount of writing. Writers produce thousands of words before they find 50 words to satisfy them. The student chooses the piece of writing to be published. She should summarize for you (and show you if you don't know for certain that the writings exist) the major pieces of writing she has completed and tell you why she chose this particular piece of writing for publication. Reasons may vary and any *specific* reason is acceptable.

2. *Students new to writing process :*

When you get a sense that she has worked hard on a piece. The piece seems to hang together around a theme, however loosely, then you suggest that this piece may be good enough to be published when she's completed the revisions you have discussed.

3. *Readiness and early first graders :*

These students may publish books which are more like picture books with labelling (a la Richard Scarry). Or when you feel a student has been working hard, you suggest that she pick her favorite 5 or 6 (or whatever) pages to be published in a book. These may be unrelated sentences, one per page which will be illustrated.

The guidelines are here, but the students are treated as individuals and exceptions occur.

No book should ever be published without some revision work. We want to send the message that publishing is hard work. Only the best work (at this point in time for this child) is published. Revision for young students may be adding a word or to or a letter or two.

FINAL MANUSCRIPT

Not necessarily recopied, but *must* be readable

Insertions, additions should be clearly marked

Author should edit for what you feel she is capable of editing.

Teacher must do final editing for typist: spelling, punctuation, capitals, usage. Do not do editing of sort which is qualitative. i.e., word choice: very, thing; organization.

Readiness and Grade 1: It's OK to leave me in as part of a compound subject. (Me and my brother went . . .) Also, it's OK to have 79 words connected by *and* . Teacher must punctuate and capitalize where appropriate.

PUBLISHING FORM

Needs to be readable by typist.

Needs to be edited by teacher for spelling and clarity.

Counting Words: Do not include the title, author, dedication, About the Author.

Author.

Exactness is not necessary.

Pictures: Cut white paper to the dimensions below and give to the student. For both sizes the 5-inch sides are the top and bottom.

1/2 page picture = 3 1/2 inches x 5 inches

full page = 5 inches x 8 inches

If there are to be pictures on each page or facing each page, then the author will wait until the text is typed so she can match the illustrations with the text. Before the illustrations and typed text are returned to Mrs. Flemming, the author will put numbers on the back of each illustration (use pencil rather than marker which may come through). These numbers will tell the typist where to place the illustrations. If there are only a few illustrations, then the manuscript needs to be marked with a number to indicate where the illustrations will be placed in the text. On the back of each illustration the author will put a number corresponding to the number in the text to tell the typist where to include the illustration. These illustrations will be turned in with the manuscript.

Do not use crayon.

Type Size: Encourage Readiness and First Grade students to use large type, but it is their decision.

Write About the Author : Again, final editing done by teacher.

As authors live, they change, have new experiences and insights, and know how to write better. Therefore, in each book the About the Author page will be different.

BOOKS WITH MINIMAL WORDS : These books will be a different size. Generally the illustrations can be drawn directly on the page after the words have been typed.

TYPING A MANUSCRIPT

1. Read the form for publication which has been completed by the author
2. Estimate the number of pages needed.
 - a. Small type 100 words per whole page.
 - b. Large type 80 words per whole page.
3. Add 3 pages to the above estimation for the title page, dedication page and About the Author page.
4. Divide this number in half = the number of sheet of paper you need.
5. Fold each sheet individually.
6. Put the sheets together in book format.
7. With light pencil, mark: *Type only on the right page.*
 - a. the title page with a T;
 - b. the dedication page with a D;
 - c. the page numbers for the story;
 - d. the About the Author page with an A;
 - e. where to begin typing if pictures are to be included; 4" down from the top for pictures on bottom.
 - f. where to stop typing on each page.

- Take the sheets of paper apart. Put in the typewriter the
8. title page and type the title, *by* , and the Author's name. These should all be centered.
 9. At the bottom of the page, type: PES Publishing Co. (centered)
month year
 10. Continue typing the text. Do *NOT* type misspellings or mis-punctuations.
 11. Use correction materials. Proofread each page before you take it out of the typewriter.
 12. If in doubt about a word, ask the child's teacher or the child.
 13. After typing, use the rubber cement to glue in the pictures if there are some.
 14. Bind the text into its cover or place the typed text in the book cover and put it in the box for binding.

Publishing Endnotes

Be sure the student has selected a piece to be published and articulates why this piece has been chosen. This piece must be revised and edited before being published.

Be sure there is a title.

Will it be dedicated to anyone?

Has the author written About the Author information?

Does the author want illustrations?

What size type will be used?

Have the author choose three colors for the cover?

Student Reading List

Chapman, Abraham, *Black Voices* , Mentor, New York, 1971.

Black Voices is an anthology from which I took the following short stories.

Nigger , *The Day I Learned Shame* , *My struggle* , by Frederick Douglass.

My Education, by Frederick Douglass.

Betsy , by Richard Wright

Homeboy, by Malcolm X.

Douglass Frederick, *Narrative*, Signet Classic, New York, 1968.

An autobiography of Frederick Douglas' life growing up black. Easy reading and keeps the interest.

Joseph, Stephen M., *The Me Nobody Knows-children's voices from the ghetto*, Avon Books, New York, 1969.

A series of students writing from a public school in New York published by their teacher.

King Jr., Martin Luther, "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

Rivera, Edward, *Family Installments*, Penguin, New York, 1982.

An autobiography of a Hispanic American growing up in America.

Wideman, John Edgar, *Brothers and keepers*, Penguin, New York, 1984.

Written by a black man about his life and the opposing life of his fallen brother.

Teacher Bibliography

Christ, Henry I, *World Biographies*, Globe, New York, 1987.

Christ, Henry I, *American Biographies*, Globe, New York, 1987.

Both books written contain short readings depicting the life and endeavors of famous people.

Dennis, Ethel R, *The Black People of America*, Readers Press, Ct, 1970.

Written of influential blacks in and around Connecticut.

Hughes, Langston, *Famous Music Makers*, Dodd Mead and Co, New York, 1955.

Tells of those blacks in the music world.

Reasons, George and Patrick, Sam, *They Had a Dream Vol. I-III*, Los Angeles Times Syndicate, Ca. 1970.

Depicts famous black Americans and their endeavors in a single page.

Like a Who's Who among black Americans.

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>