

# Get To KNOW Your Students Through Interactive Writing Centers

## OVERVIEW

### Writing Center #1      Code **(T)**      Teacher Circles the Group

The purpose of this group is for teacher observation of students during a writing assignment. Giving feedback to the student is immediate.

#### **DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS:**

- The teacher engages in directed teaching with this group
- During this observation time, the teacher is constantly correcting the student's writing on a 1: 1 basis. Individual attention per student builds a strong bond of trust. A positive environment is essential for students to progress in their writing skills.
- This is the center where the teacher informs her/his instructional plan for each student.
- As the teacher helps each student, notes are taken about each student's strengths and needs.
- Spelling is to be dealt with in a positive manner. When a student misspells a word, write the correct word directly above the misspelled word in pencil (Cramer, 1998). Align the correctly spelled word with the student's spelling and noting the letters which were correctly used. Then point out the "adjustments" (correct letters) necessary for the spelling. The process points out "what's right" so that the student can visually see how many letters are correct and which ones need to be adjusted. This promotes a positive learning experience.
- Here is an example: caterpillar  
katerrpillar

The emphasis on spelling for this section is to build confidence in the fact that spelling can be "fixed" later, so keep on writing! Therefore, the initial thought process of writing is not lost.

- Punctuation, sentence structure and grammar are also adjusted during this group time
- Staying on topic

**EVALUATION:** The assessment of the each student's work is done! While circling/observing this group, the teacher has evaluated each student and discussed adjustments with the student individually.

#### **DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS:** (on a wall chart and diagram included in the article)

- A. Teacher circles around this group to help each of you with your writing
- B. Teacher will stop you many times to ask you what you are thinking
- C. Teacher will help you with spelling, BUT YOU HAVE TO TRY FIRST
- D. This center may ask the teacher questions, about the writing assignment, in a soft voice
- E. Use good penmanship

## Writing Center # 2      Code (P)      Presentation Group

This group will write independently. Each of the students in this group understand that they will read their writing assignment aloud (Hillocks, 1995; Pope & Prater, 1990) to the other three (3) centers student groups at the end of the designated time period.

An additional component of this center, is the "bonding" which occurs as the students listen to each other's stories (Graves, 1994).

### **DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS:**

- During the writing period this group is writing to a prompt/topic with no interruptions
- After the writing period is over, this group will take turns reading what they wrote in front of the class or from their seats
- This part of the activity can sometimes lend itself to some students not listening attentively. During this time, the teacher has a blank overhead transparency and while this group is giving their presentation makes questions based on the presentations. At the end of the presentations, the teacher has created a quiz for the students. This is a validation tool promoting listening skills for the listening standards.
- This proofreading strategy is practiced to encourage students to re-read all writings
- Audience skills are also practiced during the presentation stage of this writing exercise (Lin, Monroe & Troia, 2007)
- IF the student doesn't complete the writing assignment then the student may finish the presentation in verbally.

**EVALUATION:** An Oral Inventory assessment tool may be used to evaluate the student's presentation.

Another option is to cite two (2) positive facts about the student's presentation and write them on a large post-it (Bucak, 2007). At the end of the presentation the note is placed on the student's writing/presentation paper. In my experience, students appreciate this personal-type of positive evaluation.

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### **DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS:**

- A. Each student writes independently
- B. At the end of the writing period be prepared to read what you wrote
- C. Please use your "presenter" voice
- D. Please hold the paper downwards away from your face while you are reading
- E. Remember your audience!
- F. Use good penmanship

## Writing Center # 3

Code (TD)

## Teacher Desk Group

This center builds on a particular convention that has become a consistent general need for the whole class.

### **DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS:**

- During the writing period this group is writing to the prompt with no interruptions
- This group has one Teaching Point to focus on while writing (capitalization, indenting paragraphs, run-on sentences, quotation marks, etc.)
- The Teaching Point is determined by observation of the students' writing needs as a whole. Evaluating the writing for a priority need has the student focus on one writing skill. This provides the student with targeted practice for better internalization of a key writing component.
- At the end of the Presentation Groups readings, this group takes their writing to the Teacher's Desk for evaluation of the one teaching point. The evaluation can be done with the student or left at the teacher's desk to review later.

**EVALUATION:** At the end of the Presentation Groups readings, this group takes their writing to the Teacher's Desk for evaluation of the one teaching point. The evaluation can be done with the student or left at the teacher's desk to be reviewed/graded later.

### **DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS:**

- A. Each student will write independently
- B. Teacher will note on the board a writing skill that she will be looking for in your writing assignment
- C. After the presentation group has finished reading their writing assignments, each student will wait for the teacher's direction to bring the writing assignments to the teacher's desk for evaluation
- D. Use good penmanship

## Writing Center # 4 Code **I/R** Independent and Responsible Group

This center is dedicated to having a time of writing that establishes a "risk free" environment. The focus is to make this a pleasurable and relaxing writing experience in a school setting.

### **DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

- During the writing period this group is writing to the prompt with no interruptions
- This group practices "pushing themselves" to write as much as they can during the writing time period.
- This group exercise builds a stress-free environment so that students can experience writing as recreational and fun. Students in this group will not present, have the teacher "circle" around nor have to place anything on the teacher's desk. It is a "free write" time for the students with no pressure.

**EVALUATION:** The teacher will periodically collect the journals/notebooks from each student and review the written samples in the I/R Group. When reviewing this sample, a simple comment or a stamp may be utilized to acknowledge that it was read.

### **DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS:**

- A. Each student writes independently
- B. You will not interrupted so you will write more than any other group
- C. You will be asked to show your writing assignment to the class
- D. Teacher will review your writing assignment at the end of the week
- E. Use good penmanship

After all the groups are initially explained, students will have to note the code for the assigned group on her/his paper with their name and date.