Day 5 (60 minutes)

CONTINUING TO EDIT

Kids, it’s your responsibility to do most of the editing work. You are ready for an editing conference with me when you’ve done everything you can on your own.

Students are reminded to:

- Refer to the editing chart.
- Edit for spelling, punctuation, capitalization.
- Reread at least five times.
- Do your best.
- Have an editing conference.
- Get the rest “free” once you’ve done your best.

Students are expected to do all the editing work. We have agreed on (see a similar shared writing expectations chart on page 201). Once they have done that, and we verify it, they sign an editing conference. For the teacher or I will fix up the rest “for free” at that same editing conference. (See pages 238-234 and 346–349 for information on editing and editing conferences.)

Because this is the first time students are assuming responsibility for editing, we are not including peer editing. I want to see what they can do on their own and what I need to teach and demonstrate.

Students who are done early begin a new secret, story or free-choice writing.

Begin publishing. The class decides they want the stories word-processed. Cami edits a school volunteer to type them, after showing the volunteer a model of how they are to be done. However, he says, “Later in the year, on other writing projects, I had the students publish their final copies in their own handwriting. I didn’t want them to think someone would always type their final copies for them.”

Completing the anthology. Instead of illustrating their stories, the class decides to take pictures and put their photos on the page with their story. Cami uses his school digital camera and adds each student's photo to his/her story page. He has the classroom book printed in color and bound with a cover that is made by a student. (See DVD for sample pages.)

Each student receives an individual black-and-white copy, no dates the principal and other classes. The class receives "many great comments" from other students and teachers and especially from parents. Other classes are motivated to write similar stories.

Heart Poems

Plan at a Glance

Introduction

Free verse is the easiest and best way I know to turn all kids into successful, joyful writers. The unstructured form of free verse (beginning poetry), with its accompanying possibilities for using pictures and words instead of full sentences, seems to make writing easier for kids than more traditional forms. Additionally, kids love the choices poetry encourages for the shape, length, sound, and look of the poems on the page. Since rates that apply to other genres can be relaxed with poetry.

While poems can be about anything—family, friends, sports, small objects, satisfaction interests—I have found that when we write about what’s deep in our hearts and what really matters to us—what students have named "heart poems"—student engagement and the quality of writing are high.
These lessons take place in a grade 4 class three months into the school year. Students have already done some poetry writing but many are not enthusiastic about it. What seems to make them passionate the second time around is:

- Teacher modeling "heart" poems.
- Sharing many "heart" poems by other students.
- Conversations before writing.
- Celebrating students’ efforts.
- Publishing an anthology.

Lesson Framework

Not every action listed below is included with every piece of writing or in a prescribed order, but every step in the optimal learning model is always incorporated. Gradually releasing responsibility to students after showing them how (demonstration, shared demonstration, guided practice, independent practice) makes it likely they will be successful.

- Select a real audience and purpose for the writing.
- Read, examine, and discuss examples and characteristics of the genre or form (immersion, demonstration).
- What do you notice? (shared demonstration).
- Write a piece in front of students (demonstration) and/or write a piece together (shared demonstration).
- Talk before writing (shared and guided practice).
- Provide sustained writing time with feedback (guided and independent practice).
- Conference with students (guided and independent practice).
- Share, celebrate, and reflect.
- Revise drafts (guided and independent practice).
- Conference with students.
- Share, celebrate, and reflect.
- Proofread and edit.
- Publish.

Framework Summary

- Demonstrations (5–15 minutes) includes one or more of the following:
  - Sharing poems by others, such as discussing kids’ poems—includes mini lessons woven in as aspects of poetry.
Listen to this poem by Catherine: [See Catherine’s poem, “Middle.”] It was inspired by a poem her teacher wrote about being a middle child. I read the poem twice and show how it looks on the page. What did you notice? [We notice that she has thought about her white space (blank space around the words) and line breaks and that she changes the rhythm of the poem in her last two lines.] What makes it a heart poem? [She really tells us what’s in her heart.]

**TEACHING DEMONSTRATION—THINKING ALOUD, WRITING**

Choosing my topic (3 minutes): If I teach students and teachers to risk taking and write from their hearts, I have to model that. I write about things that were important to me when I was the students’ age, things that pulled at my heart. My only planning is getting down the topics I might write about:

- having my best friend move away, fighting with my sister, being a nervous test taker, being afraid of my father (until I was older).
- I’m going to write a poem in front of you because I want you to hear and see my thinking. I’ll get ideas for what to do when you write. While I’m writing, I hope you’ll see the possibilities for your own poems. One of the things I love about writing poems is to get to decide how it looks and sounds on the page, if I want to skip lines, how I use punctuation, and so on.

Here are some things that pulled at my heart when I was your age. I briefly talk about each of my topics named above. I think I’m going to write about my dad. I’ll never forget how sad he was at me and my sisters for letting my mom wash the kitchen floor.

Writing the poem (5 minutes). Hmm, how should I start? Beginnings are important for getting the reader’s attention. I think I’ll call my poem, “Being Afraid of Dad.” [I write title.] I’m going to start the poem when Dad came home from work. I want to capture just that moment. Let’s see... [I write as I say it, then cross it out.]

**WHY IS YOUR MOTHER WASHING THE FLOOR?** It has to be all because his voice was so loud.

**YOU SHOULD BE DOING IT!** I’m unlearning you because the way he said it.

Let me see if I can figure that sentence. I reread last lines. I’m going to read it again. [After I read it again, I don’t know what I want to say next.]

I froze. [I continue speaking aloud as I write.]

Dad’s booming voice TERRIFIED me.
about their beginning, ending, how they want their words to sound and look on the page, and so on.

Teacher talk

- What do you want to say next?
- It sounds like a story. Let's make it sound like a poem. You would . . .
- Let's read it again and hear how it sounds so far.
- Do you want these words on one line, like this, or on two lines, like this?
- I'm going to suggest that you stick to the part about . . .
- Why is this a heart poem? Really put yourself into it.
- You may want to think about ending it now.

Neither student who volunteers seems to "get" the idea of heart poems. Michael talks about making chill and Katherine talks about getting candy on Halloween. So, I am surprised by the heartfelt writing of most of the students, in spite of what felt like inadequate examples.

Although we didn't do it for this lesson, sometimes I move from teacher-scaffolded conversations to student-to-student conversation. (Turn and talk to your partner about what you're thinking of writing about.) In this case, because the lesson had already gone on so long, I did not. However, if we had not gotten quality poems the first day, then on day 2 I would have had additional scaffolded conversations followed by partner talk.

WRITING THE FIRST POEMS (25 minutes)

Kids, really put yourself into your poem the way Bradley did and I did. If you're seeing things with nothing to say, you probably don't have the right topic.

Everyone gets right to work as teacher Darcy Ballantine and I walk about and have brief roving conferences, which mostly involve affirmation:
- I love your title.
- I like the way you're setting that up on the page.
- Your first line is a gem.

For the couple of students having to able getting started, Darcy or I have a quick conference and conversation to help them get going. For example, Garrett had copied another student's words from one of the scaffolded conversations, when Garrett said he didn't know what to write about, I looked at his red hair and asked, "What about your red hair? I bet you have some interesting stories about that," and that was enough to get him going. (See his poem and video clip with accompanying notes.)

Notice how Paige has been influenced by my poem "Being Far." She has taken my line in which my muse says "Ignore these names," and included it in her poignant poem, "Getting Braces," as "If they do, ignore them." She may also
Students bring their poems up to the area where the whole class gathers.

How many of you think you did a good job with your poem? (Almost all hands go up.) What made it easy for you to write poems this time?

Max: It’s fun to write about something that’s really important to you.

Time: You were leading us through how to do it.

Catherine: Actually, expanding from your heart.

Paige: Hearing other poems helped a lot.

Samantha: We didn’t really get deep into it until you showed us. Then it was kind of easy. You gave us examples. You made us think.

Danny: We just thought about other poems.

Garrett: We knew what to do.

Alex: For our first poem, we found out it was easy and fun, and we thought, ‘Wow! This is fun. We want to write more!’

**CELEBRATING POEMS IN WHOLE-CLASS SHARE (15 minutes)**

There are two chairs in our sharing area, one for the teacher and an ‘author’s chair’ for the writer. Students read their poems aloud, and moodily, we just celebrate—their efforts, language, risk-taking. After the author has read the poem, I read it again (holding the poem so students can see it) point out all the things the student has done well, and may make some teaching points.

In fifteen minutes, five students share. (See video clips for Max’s, Lathan’s, Paige’s, and Garrett’s conferences and accompanying notes.)

**TEACHING POINTS FROM DEMONSTRATIONS AND SHARING**

Had I planned to teach all the following strategies in one lesson, I would have ensued planning and thinking about it all. The ‘efficiency of context’ (pages 149, 152–154) makes lots of meaningful teaching possible. These teaching points were made on the first day and retaught and reinforced on subsequent days. (See also, video clips with notes.)

- Think about their audience when they write.

**Heart Poems**

- Have a good title.
- Read with expression.
- Think about opening lines.
- Think about white space.
- Use humor (to entertain).
- Put themselves into a poem (no evil).
- Craft an ending (see the poem feels and sounds like it’s own).
- Get ideas from sharing and listening to peers.
- Clarify their ideas through talking with peers.
- Move things around (taste, cut, and paste).
- Read poem aloud to hear how it sounds and where to put line breaks.

**CONTINUING TO CELEBRATE, TEACH, AND WRITE POEMS**

To ensure we celebrate everyone’s efforts, we begin with whole-class share—affirming, celebrating, and teaching. Although sharing is time consuming, the power of sharing kids’ poems is electric. When students write, the influence of hearing classmates’ ‘heart poems’ is evident.

Katherine, a struggling reader and writer, who is not a risk-taker, writes ‘My Lovable Sister,’ remarkable for its honesty and grit, and quite a leap from her first poem on Halloween candy.

During whole-class share, in addition to celebrating, I model some of the teaching points and listed line breaks, precise language, rhymes that fit the poems, endings with satisfying closure, inserting humor, and so on.

Katherine’s draft and final of ‘My Lovable Sister’ with teacher, Darcy Ballentine, listens and celebrates.
Day 1 (50 minutes)

**WRITING POEMS**

Students continue writing poems and revising their poems. Revision is minimal. Our focus remains on the joy and freedom of writing from our hearts. I affirm students for getting ideas from each other's poems and making a new poem of their own. Inspired by Bralley's poem, Alex writes her own heartfelt poem about being afraid kids will make fun of her when her nose grows. Coco writes longingly about losing his puppy. Cassie writes about her invisible friend. Tina writes how she hates being short. (See part of published anthology on DVD.)

Day 2 (40 minutes)

**SELECTING A FAVORITE POEM**

By now, everyone has written at least five poems. Darcy reminds her class it's time to pick a poem to publish for our anthology. Each student carefully reads through each draft and chooses her or his favorite.

**EDITING POEMS**

As described on pages 160-165, we establish editing/publishing expectations and go through the editing process. Students willingly take on this task, and editing conferences go quickly, averaging just a few minutes each. Poems are short, students only have to edit one, and they know their final copy will go into a beautiful anthology that will be read by many.

**CREATING A RUBRIC** (20 minutes)

Teachers say, "It always comes down to this. We have to give a grade for the report card." Although I am not a fan of grades, especially for poetry, it is possible to fairly grade poetry writing if you use an accurate, child-friendly rubric. See page 322 and Appendix F for how we created such a rubric with much input from students.

Day 5 (60 minutes)

**PUBLISHING A POETRY ANTHOLOGY**

Examine anthologies. This can be done at any time in the poetry writing process. Have students examine a variety of anthologies. Until you have samples of student anthologies, look at commercially published anthologies. As a class, make decisions about organization, title page, table of contents, dedications, acknowledgments, author and illustrator index, illustrations. (See Kid's Poems Teaching Third and Fourth Graders to Love Writing Poetry, Scholastic, 2000, for more specifics.) See DVD for excerpts from their published anthologies, which included a table of contents, a page for each poet, and their favorite poems.

**WRITING ABOUT THE AUTHOR** (50 minutes)

Writing the author profiles (which accompanied each child's photo) followed the optimal learning model, including demonstrations and scaffolded conversations. Darcy first showed examples written by other fourth graders and wrote her own profile while thinking aloud in front of her students.

The whole process went fairly quickly. Taking the pictures and revising and editing the rough drafts required two days, two fifty-minute sessions to complete.

**Putting the anthology together (one week, 50-minute periods)**

Students finished up all the pieces including finalizing author profiles. Darcy listed each of the parts of the anthology the class had decided to include, and students signed up in groups for the section they wanted to work on, such as title page, cover, dedication, table of contents, and index. Students designed each of these pages using other anthologies as models.

**Celebrating** Students were thrilled with their efforts and at being able to read and have a copy of everyone's poems. Each student received a bound black-and-white copy of the anthology and proudly shared it with their family. The school library and other fourth grades received copies as well. The original was proudly displayed in the classroom library, where it became a favorite for independent reading throughout the school year. See DVD and pages 338-342. Students worked hard to publish the anthology error-free.