

The Pen and Are



Developed by:

Indiana WRITING PROJECT

A local site of the National Writing Project

Hello friends,

One of the most enjoyable (and difficult) parts of the writer's workshop is conferencing with students about their writing. We like nothing better than chatting with each writer and moving the writer forward in his/her writing journey. But we found knowing what to say and how to say it in a nonthreatening way is not always easy. Selecting the one skill, one topic, or one craft that will best help a writer in a given moment takes practice and quick thinking all while remembering that the conference is to help the writer--not the writing.

It appears that we, as teachers, wander around the classroom randomly stopping to speak with students about their work, but in reality, we are purposefully seeking out students we know need some assistance from us. This assistance may take the form of encouragement, direction on where to go next, how to solve a writing block, fine tuning a craft, or listening to a perplexing section of a story. We may spend a minute with one student talking about how to create a visual picture and spend five to seven minutes with another crafting an effective beginning--every conference is different and unique to the writer. That is what we love! And we discovered this is where meaningful teaching occurs.

One thing that we noticed while conferencing with students at their seats is that their neighbors listen in during the "private" conference--Wow! So instead of reaching one student, because of eavesdropping students, we were speaking to several at a time. That was a revelation to us. So, moving to the other side of the room, we repeated the process with another "neighborhood" of students; targeting one student with which to conference and don't you know, the neighborhood all listened in, too. In our minds, this solidified the idea of conferencing with students where they are working rather than calling them back to a table, taking them from their comfortable working area.

Our best advice to you is to give yourself permission to grow as a writing coach as your students grow as writers. The more you talk with your students about individual writings, the more confidence you will gain! Give it a go!

Until next month,

Shirley and Susan

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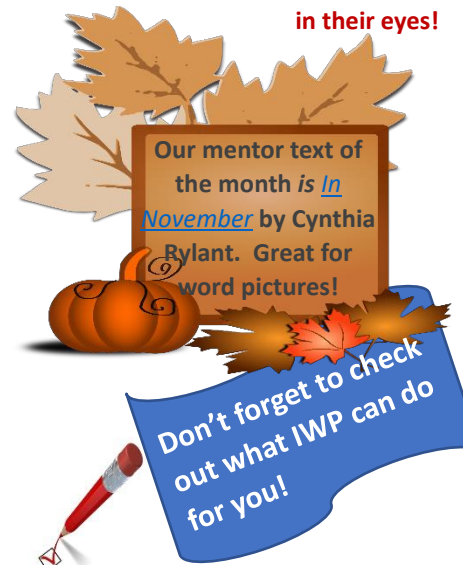
*Our goal is to promote
teachers helping
teachers.*

[Carl Anderson on
Strategic Writing
Conferences](#)

Be sure to open in full screen

[Penny Kittle: 3
Writing
Conferences](#)

**Are you writing with your students?
Give it a try! Your students will be
interested in your writing and you
will become even more of an expert
in their eyes!**



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