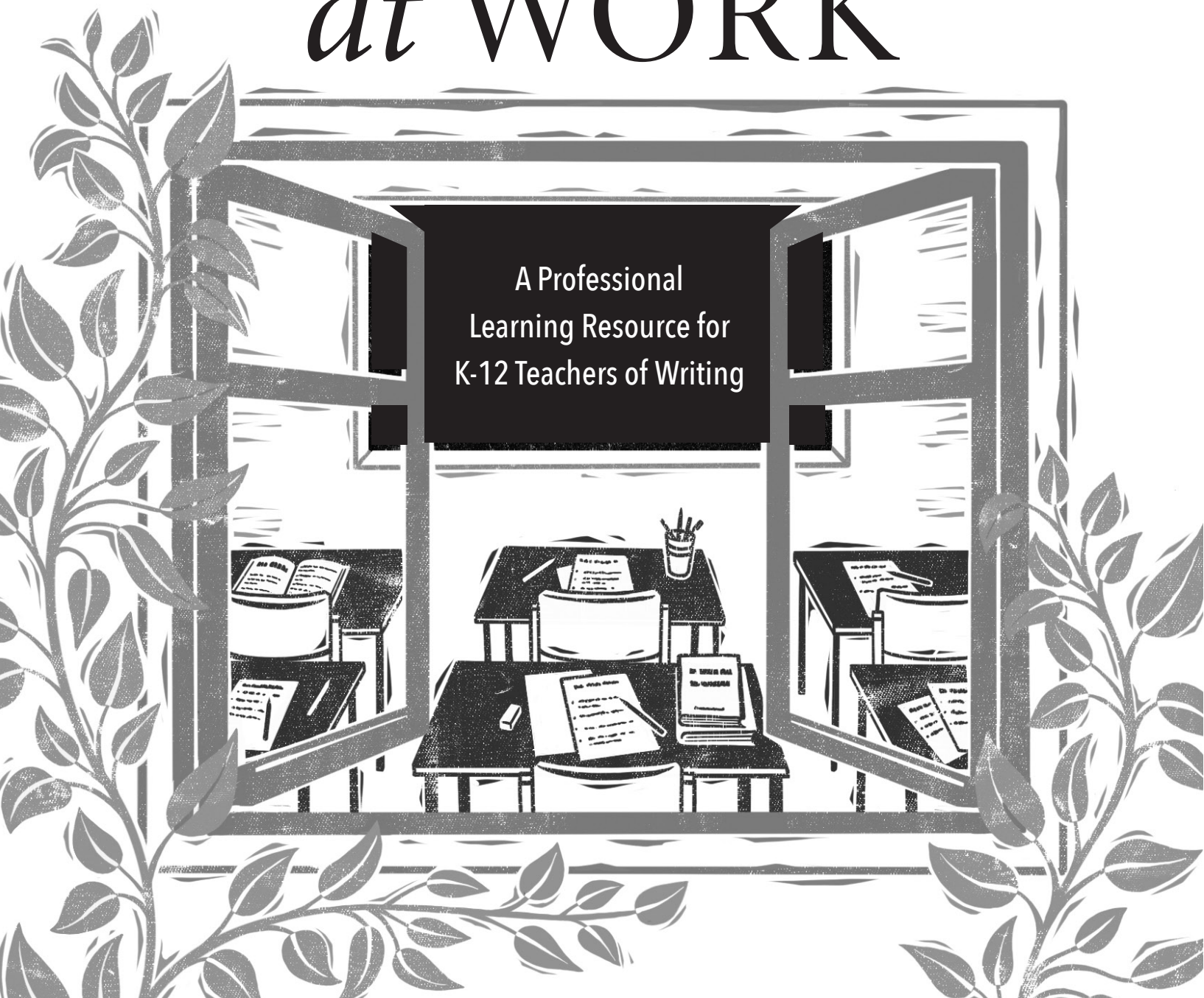
TEACHERS *at* WORK



A Chapter-by-Chapter Companion to
the Handbook **Making *it* Work**

Vermont Writing Collaborative

Teachers at Work

A Professional Learning Resource for

K–12 Teachers of Writing

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TABLE of CONTENTS

Welcome to

Teachers at Work

A Professional Learning Resource for K–12 Teachers of Writing

This activity-based guide has been created for professional learning sessions so that teachers can successfully implement Writing for Understanding instruction in their classrooms. The guide is designed to be led by a coach, department head, team leader, or anyone with an interest in or responsibility for working with writing instruction. Each lesson is keyed to a chapter in the *Making It Work* handbook and is designed to take roughly an hour.

Each chapter in this guide includes:

- A detailed Participant's Guide, stating the purpose of that session and giving clear directions for the activity
- All handouts needed for that session
- A detailed Leader's Guide, with sample responses for the session's activities

Teachers interested in additional tools or activities to use in professional learning can find more resources on our website.

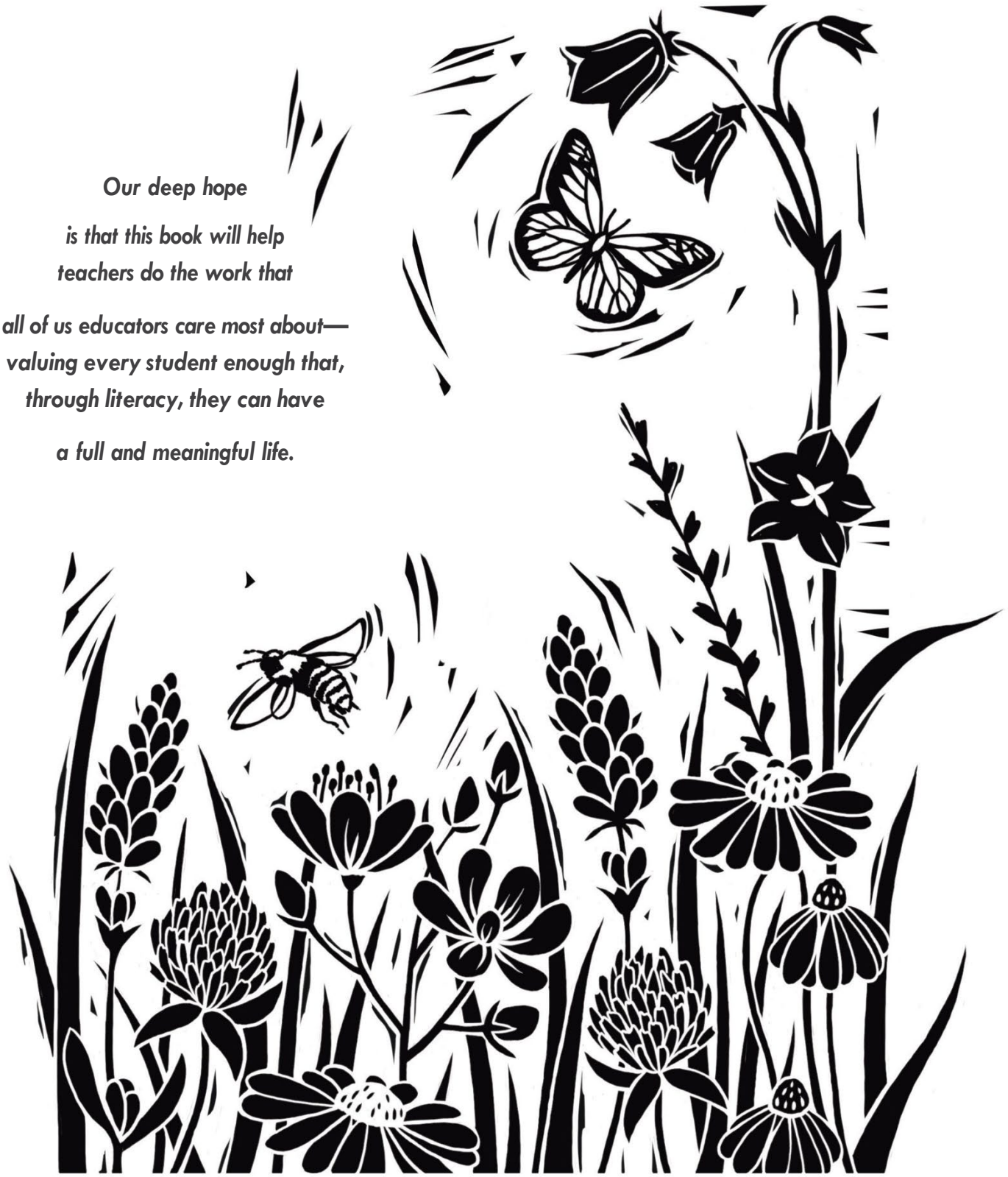
https://www.vermontwritingcollaborative.org

Our deep hope

is that this book will help
teachers do the work that

all of us educators care most about—
valuing every student enough that,
through literacy, they can have

a full and meaningful life.



Professional Learning Chapter 1

What Is Writing for Understanding?

Helping ALL Kids Write Effectively

Participant's Guide

Purpose

Before planning instruction with the Writing for Understanding approach, it is helpful to understand its fundamental premises. After reading Chapter 1 in *Making it Work*, you will divide into small groups. You will use a shared-read protocol to help you dig into the chapter. Finally, you will reflect on how various aspects of the Writing for Understanding approach might help your own students become thoughtful, proficient writers.

Directions

1. Within your small group, use the **Shared-Read Protocol** for your section of the *Making it Work* reading (either "The Bedrock: Everybody Matters" and "The Foundation: Habits of Mind" on pages 15–18 or the discussion of the pillars on pages 18–23). After you have completed the shared read in your small group, summarize what you think are the key takeaways from this part of the chapter to share with the full group.
2. Share the ideas that each small group considers key takeaways from the chapter.
3. Reflect: How might various aspects of the Writing for Understanding approach help your own students become thoughtful, proficient writers?

Shared-Read Protocol

1. Read your section of the text independently.

2. As you read, annotate passages that strike you as significant in some way, and choose one to share with your small group.

3. Use the following procedure to take turns sharing what you noticed:
   - The first person reads aloud the passage they chose, giving the page number so others can follow along, and explains why they chose it.
   - The rest of the small group discusses that passage for a few minutes.
   - Repeat until everyone has had a chance to share.
4. Within your small group, orally summarize key takeaways to share with the full group.

Professional Learning Chapter 1

What Is Writing for Understanding? Helping ALL Kids Write Effectively

Leader's Guide

Materials

- *Making it Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction*
- Copies of **Shared-Read Protocol**, one per participant

Advance Preparation

1. Make sure participants have read Chapter 1 of *Making it Work* before the session.
2. Copy the **Shared-Read Protocol**.
3. Try the activity yourself.

Leading the Activity

1. Introduce the activity by reading the Purpose aloud with the group. Distribute the **Shared-Read Protocol**.
2. Divide participants into groups of four to six and assign each group one section to reread and discuss (either "The Bedrock: Everybody Matters" and "The Foundation: Habits of Mind" on pp. 15–18 or Pillars" on pp. 18–23).
3. After twenty minutes or so, have groups present their observations from the shared read.
4. Invite participants to reflect on how various aspects of the Writing for Understanding approach might help their own students become thoughtful, proficient writers.

Professional Learning Chapters 2 and 3

Planning for Writing for Understanding: A Bird's-Eye View

Planning for the Big Picture: Central Idea and Focusing Question for the Finished Piece

Participant's Guide

Purpose

In this session, you will focus on Chapters 2 and 3 of *Making it Work.* First, you will work briefly with the "Writing for Understanding: Planner on a Page" on page 31 to help you internalize the planning steps of the Writing for Understanding approach. Next, you will have an opportunity to use student work to explore the first steps of backward planning for Writing for Understanding—identifying a Central Idea and Focusing Question for writing. With a partner, you will look at preselected pieces of student work and speculate on what the backward planning for the instruction that produced the piece might have looked like. Finally, you will reflect on how planning for a Central Idea and Focusing Question might help improve student writing.

Directions

1. Begin by reading page 30, which is the first page of Chapter 2, "Planning for Writing for Understanding: A Bird's-Eye View."
2. Now look at the "Planner on a Page" on page 31. This sequential schematic has been used as an organizational structure for *Making it Work,* with each step described in its own chapter. With a partner, use *Making it Work* to find the page number of the chapter that explores that step and write that number on the planner beside each step.
3. Next, you will work to better understand the ideas in Chapter 3, "Planning for the Big Picture." With a partner, choose a piece of student writing from the handout **Samples of Student Writing** and read it aloud.
4. Use the **Planning for Instruction: What Does the Student Work Tell Us?** recording sheet to discuss the teacher's possible thinking as they planned backward for the instruction that produced this student work. Record highlights of your discussion in the right-hand column on the sheet.
5. Repeat this process with a second piece of student work. Continue as time permits.

Reflect: How do you think backward planning for a Central Idea and Focusing Question might impact student writing?

Samples of Student Writing

Grade Two

The Lorax

The Lorax said he cares for the earth. The Lorax spoke for the fish. He said, stop putting your left over gunk in the water, because the humming fish can't hum with gunk in their gills. The Lorax spoke for the trees. He said, stop cutting the trees, because they give us air. The Lorax spoke for the Brown Barbaloots. He said, stop cutting trees, because the Brown Barbaloots eat the fruit on the tees. The Lorax cares for the earth.

Grade Four

Wow! I Am Glad We Have Zoos!

There should be zoos because they save animals and help people learn a lot about animals. Did you know thirty species of animals were saved because of zoos? Zoos give great care that most animals don't receive in the wild. I am so glad that there are zoos to save animals. What would we do without them?

There should be zoos because zookeepers give so much care to the animals. There are no longer cages, and the fences are hidden, so the animals feels like they're in the wild. Zoos make sure to hide the animals' food so they can learn to hunt. Sometimes there's tinted glass so the animals can't see all the chaos going on. I am so glad the zookeepers give their time to care for the animals. Thank goodness we have zoos!

Without zoos, a lot of animals could have become extinct. Zoos are trying to solve the problem of extinction, and they're doing a great job! Animals such as red wolves were saved. Zoos take a male and a female so they can have babies. This makes more animals of its kind. When animals mate in zoos, their babies won't get diseases from the wild. Zoos are trying to stop extinction, and they're doing great.

When visiting a zoo, you can learn so much. You are able to see animals from faraway places without paying for a $200 plane ticket. Zoos are a great way to learn and have fun. Not

only do the customers learn at zoos, but the workers do, too—about animal behavior and how to make animal habitats better. Thank goodness zoos are here so we can learn a lot about different animals.

Zoos benefit both people and animals. We could help by going to a zoo and paying a fee to get in. When we do that, all the money goes to the zoo and animals. It is important that we have zoos to help kids learn while they are having fun and seeing the animals in person. With your help, zoos can support a lot of animals. So, with that said, the next time you do not know what to do, go to a zoo!

Grade Seven

Essay Question 1

Jean Baptiste de Lamarck and Charles Darwin were both naturalists that had theories about organisms getting helpful variations. Lamarck's theory was called the theory of acquired characteristics and Darwin's was called the theory of evolution by natural selection. Lamarck and Darwin's theories are the same and different in some ways.

Darwin and Lamarck's theories were very different. Darwin theory said that organisms get helpful variation before changes in the environment. He thought they got the variation by chance at birth. He explained that the reason giraffes had long necks was because some giraffes had a variation which was a longer neck. The giraffes with short necks could only get food on the ground so they had to compete for it so they died. The giraffes with the long necks did not have to compete because they could get the food up high and they survived and passed the long necks onto their young. Lamarck theory said that organisms got helpful variation after a change in the environment. He said that giraffes got long necks when the food on the ground ran out. The giraffes needed to eat food and there was food up high, so they stretched out their necks. They then passed it on to their young. Their theories are different because Lamarck thought that organisms changed out of need and after a change in the environment and Darwin thought organisms changed by chance when they were born and before there was a change in the environment.

Darwin and Lamarck's theories were very different, but they were also very similar. They both thought that organisms changed. They thought these changes could be very useful and could help them survive. The changes could then get passed down to the young. That is how Lamarck and Darwin's theories are similar.

Lamarck and Darwin's theories are both the same and different in some ways.

Planning for Instruction: What Does the Student Work Tell Us?

Read a piece of student writing. Discuss each of the questions below and briefly record your ideas about what the teacher may have been thinking as they planned instruction for this writing task.

Pages 37 and 38 in *Making it Work* offer examples of Central Ideas and Focusing Questions.

Title of Student Work*:*	
Question about Instructional Planning	**Teacher's Possible Thinking**
1. For what class or content area might this piece have been planned?	
2. What Central Idea or big understanding might the teacher have been after in this unit?	*Students will understand that*
3. What Focusing Question for Writing might the teacher have used to plan the instruction?	

Title of Student Work*:*	
Question about Instructional Planning	**Teacher's Possible Thinking**
1. For what class or content area might this piece have been planned?	
2. What Central Idea or big understanding might the teacher have been after in this unit?	*Students will understand that*
3. What Focusing Question for Writing might the teacher have used to plan the instruction?	

Professional Learning Chapters 2 and 3

Planning for Writing for Understanding: A Bird's-Eye View

Planning for the Big Picture: Central Idea and Focusing Question for the Finished Piece

Leader's Guide

Materials

- *Making it Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction*
- Copies of **Planning for Instruction: What Does the Student Work Tell Us?**, one for each participant
- Copies of **Samples of Student Writing**, one set per participant pair

Advance Preparation

1. Make sure participants have read Chapters 2 and 3 before the session.
2. Copy **Planning for Instruction: What Does the Student Work Tell Us?** and **Samples of Student Writing**.
3. Try the activity yourself. Use the Sample Responses as a guide, as needed. (*Do not* share with participants, please!)

Leading the Activity

1. Read the Purpose of the activity aloud.
2. Remind participants that the sequential schematic in Chapter 2 (page 31) has been used as an organizational structure for *Making it Work*, with each step described in its own chapter. Have participants work with a partner to find the page number of the *Making it Work* chapter that explores each step, and have them write the page number for each step on the planner.
3. Ask participants to consult their planners to note what step we are on in Chapter 3, and distribute both handouts.
4. Ask participants to complete the **Planning for Instruction** worksheet: have them work in pairs to choose two pieces of student work, discuss the pieces, and respond to the questions in the chart. If helpful, model the process using one of the pieces of student work to complete the recording sheet, or review the examples of Central Ideas and Focusing Questions on pages 37 and 38 in *Making it Work*.
5. After fifteen minutes or so, debrief by sharing observations as a full group.

6. Invite participants to reflect on how backward planning for a Central Idea and Focusing Question might impact student writing. Consider recording these observations on chart paper or a shared document.

Sample Responses

Title of Student Work: The Lorax	
Question about Instructional Planning	**Teacher's Possible Thinking**
1. For what class or content area/topic might this piece have been planned?	*Science: environmental unit*
2. What Central Idea or big understanding might the teacher have been after in this unit?	*Students will understand that it is important to take care of the earth.*
3. What Focusing Question for writing might the teacher have used for instruction?	*Why does the Lorax think it is important to take care of the earth?*

Comments:

Title of Student Work*:* Wow! I Am Glad We Have Zoos!	
Question about Instructional Planning	**Teacher's Possible Thinking**
1. For what class or content area might this piece have been planned?	*English Language Arts: supporting an opinion* *Social Studies: current events*
2. What Central Idea or big understanding might the teacher have been after in this unit?	*Students will understand that whether to have zoos is not a simple question, and people can have different points of view as long as they are supported by evidence.*
3. What Focusing Question for writing might the teacher have used for instruction?	*Do you think zoos are a good idea?*

Comments:

Title of Student Work*:* Essay Question 1	
Question about Instructional Planning	**Teacher's Possible Thinking**
1. For what class or content area/topic might this piece have been planned?	*Science: evolution*

2. What Central Idea or big understanding might the teacher have been after in this unit?	*Students will understand that Lamarck's theory and Darwin's theory have similarities and differences.*
3. What Focusing Question for writing might the teacher have used for instruction?	*Compare Lamarck's theory to Darwin's theory. How are they alike, and how are they different?*

Comments:

Reflect: How might backward planning for a Central Idea and Focusing Question impact student writing?

Responses will vary but may include:

- *The teacher is more likely to make sure students have the knowledge and understanding they will need before writing.*
- *The students will be more likely to be responding to a Focusing Question that the teacher has thought carefully about before instruction.*

Professional Learning Chapter 4

Planning for the Big Picture: Test-Drive

Participant's Guide

Purpose

Creating a test-drive of what the student's final writing piece should look like is a critical part of planning backward for instruction. The purpose of this session is to give you an opportunity to explore the importance of that test-drive in planning. To do so, you will look at an example of the tight relationship between the test-drive—which the student never sees but which guides teacher planning—and the *actual student work* that results from the teacher's instruction. Using the student work in the chapter, you will analyze the similarity between the test-drive and the student work. Finally, you will reflect on how the teacher might have used the test-drive to design specific instruction for the class.

Directions

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step.
2. With a partner, briefly review the chart **Compare: How Are the Test-Drive and Student Work Similar?** on the next page so you can see what you will be looking for.
3. Now, using your text, choose either the second-grade test-drive, "Rachel Carson," on page 47 or the eighth-grade test-drive, "Mesa Verde Today: Who Is Trying to Address the Problems?," on pages 48–49.
4. Read the test-drive you chose aloud with your partner.
5. Now read the student piece for the test-drive you chose (either "Louis Pasteur" on page 47 or "What is it (Everglades) Like Today?" on page 50).
6. Discuss and jot down what you notice about the similarities between the test-drive and the student writing, using the chart **Compare: How Are the Test-Drive and Student Work Similar?** to guide your thinking.
7. Now discuss with your partner any differences you may have noticed between the test-drive and the student piece.
8. If time permits, repeat the process with the second piece in the chapter.
9. Reflect: How might the teacher have used their test-drive to design specific instruction for their class?

Compare: How Are the Test-Drive and Student Work Similar?

Second-grade test-drive "Rachel Carson"

Feature of writing	**What it looks like in the test-drive "Rachel Carson"**	**What it looks like in the student piece "Louis Pasteur"**
Deep understanding of content		
Overall length		
Introduction and focus/claim		
Supporting evidence		
Transitions between ideas		
Conclusion		
Reflect: How might the teacher have used their test-drive to design specific instruction for their class?		

Compare: How Are the Test-Drive and Student Work Similar?

Eighth-grade test-drive "Mesa Verde Today"

Feature of writing	**What it looks like in the test-drive "Mesa Verde Today"**	**What it looks like in the student piece "What is it (Everglades) Like Today?"**
Deep understanding of content		
Overall length		
Problem–solution structure		
Supporting evidence		
Transitions between ideas		
Academic tone		
Reflect: How might the teacher have used their test-drive to design specific instruction for their class?		

Professional Learning Chapter 4

Planning for the Big Picture: Test Drive

Leader's Guide

Materials

- *Making it Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction*
- Copies of recording sheet **Compare: How Are the Test-Drive and Student Work Similar?**, one per participant
- If desired, copies of student writing from *Making it Work*, one set per participant pair

Advance Preparation

1. Make sure participants have read Chapter 4 of *Making it Work* before this session.
2. Copy the recording sheet **Compare: How Are the Test-Drive and Student Work Similar?**
3. Try the activity yourself. Use the Sample Responses as a guide, as needed. (*Do not* share with participants, please!)

Leading the Activity

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step. Distribute the handouts.
2. Divide participants into groups of two.
3. Model the beginning of the process using one of the pieces of student work.
4. After fifteen minutes or so, debrief by sharing observations as a full group. Participants do not need to analyze all the components listed on the chart. Complete as much as time allows. It is valid and appropriate for participants to notice a few differences between the test-drive and the student work. However, the most important takeaway from this activity is how similar the test-drive and the student work are, and the utility of the test-drive in planning instruction.
5. Invite participants to reflect on how the teacher might have used their test-drive to design specific instruction for their class. Consider recording these observations on chart paper or a shared document.

Sample Responses

Compare: How Are the Test-Drive and Student Work Similar?

Second-grade test-drive and student piece

Feature of writing	**What it looks like in the test-drive "Rachel Carson"**	**What it looks like in the student piece "Louis Pasteur"**
Deep understanding of content	*Understanding of role of DDT in Rachel Carson's work, key to understanding why she is an important scientist*	*Understanding of importance of both rabies vaccine and pasteurization of milk, key to why Pasteur is an important scientist*
Overall length	*About 96 words, 9 sentences*	*About 90 words, 7 sentences*
Introduction and focus (claim)	*We have been reading biographies in our class. To me, Rachel Carson is the most important person we read about.*	*We have been reading biographies. I think Louis Pasteor is the most important person we have read about.*
Supporting evidence	*Wrote* Silent Spring*, told how DDT was hurting birds' eggs*	*Vaccine for rabies; boiled milk to kill bacteria, made it safe to drink*
Transitions between ideas	*I think she's important because . . .* *Thanks to Rachel Carson*	*I think Louis Pasteor is the most important person we have read about because…* *Thanks to Louis Pasteor*
Conclusion	*Thanks to Rachel Carson, we passed laws to stop using DDT in sprays.*	*Thanks to Louis Pasteor, people can stay safe from rabies and milk is safe to drink.*

Sample Responses

Compare: How Are the Test-Drive and Student Work Similar?

Eighth-grade test-drive and student piece

Feature of writing	**What it looks like in the test-drive "Mesa Verde Today"**	**What it looks like in the student piece "What is it (Everglades) Like Today?"**
Deep understanding of content	*Names six specific problems faced by Mesa Verde National Park, describes groups trying to meet challenges broadly*	*Names five specific problems faced by Everglades National Park, describes groups trying to meet challenges broadly*
Overall length	*About 430 words*	*About 500 words*
Problem–solution structure	*Begins by naming problems using list format, then moves to solutions*	*Begins by naming problems using list format, then moves to solutions*
Supporting evidence	*Each problem is described concretely, with citation*	*Each problem is described concretely, with citation*
Transitions between ideas	*Includes appropriate transitions* "To help meet some of these challenges,"	*Includes appropriate transitions:* "These problems aren't being solved by one person. In fact, it is taking many, many people working together"
Academic tone	*Objective, formal, academic tone throughout*	*Objective, formal, academic tone throughout*

Professional Learning Chapter 5

Planning for Instruction: The Threads that Weave It All Together

Participant's Guide

Purpose

Instruction in the Writing for Understanding approach is tied together by three key threads: oral processing, accessibility, and along-the-way monitoring. The purpose of this session is to give you an opportunity to investigate what these threads are and how they can look at various grade levels. As you work through the remaining chapters of this handbook, you will see evidence of these threads at every step, so it's helpful to learn to recognize them now. In this chapter, you and a partner will use a chart to identify the threads and to reflect on how each of them might help your own students. Finally, with the full group, you will discuss the importance of these threads for equity—giving all students equal access to becoming proficient writers.

Directions

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* and identify where oral processing, accessibility, and along-the-way monitoring are addressed in the planning process.
2. Now, using Chapter 5 of *Making it Work*, reread the section "First Thread: Oral Processing" beginning on page 58.
3. With your partner, fill out the chart **The Threads that Weave It All Together** for that section.
4. Repeat the process for the next two sections of the chapter, "Second Thread: Accessibility" (page 60) and "Third Thread: Along-the-Way Monitoring" (page 62).
5. Discuss: Why are these threads so important for the value of equity—in other words, ensuring that all students have equal access to becoming proficient writers?

The Threads that Weave It All Together

Thread	What It Is	Examples	How might this thread help my students?
Oral processing			
Accessibility			
Along-the-way monitoring			

Reflect

How do these threads reflect the bedrock value of equity in Writing for Understanding?

Professional Learning Chapter 5

Planning for Instruction: The Threads that Weave It All Together

Leader's Guide

Materials

- *Making it Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction*
- Copies of recording sheet **The Threads that Weave It All Together**, one per participant

Advance Preparation

1. Make sure participants have read Chapter 5 of *Making it Work* before this session.
2. Copy the recording sheet **The Threads that Weave It All Together**.
3. Try the activity yourself. Use the Sample Responses as a guide, as needed. (*Do not* share with participants, please!)

Leading the Activity

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* and identify where oral processing, accessibility, and along-the-way monitoring are addressed in the planning process. Emphasize that these three threads are considered at all stages of the planning process.
2. Distribute the handout. Divide participants into groups of two.
3. Direct participants to reread the section "First Thread: Oral Processing" beginning on page 58 of *Making it Work* and fill out the chart **The Threads that Weave It All Together** for that section.
4. Explain that participants should repeat the process for the next two sections of the chapter, "Second Thread: Accessibility" (page 60) and "Third Thread: Along-the-Way Monitoring" (page 62).
5. After 20 minutes or so, debrief by sharing observations as a full group.
6. Invite participants to discuss why these threads are so important for equity—in other words, ensuring that all students have equal access to becoming proficient writers. Consider recording these observations on chart paper or a shared document.

Sample Responses

The Threads that Weave It All Together

Thread	What It Is	Examples	How might this thread help my students?
Oral processing	*speaking ideas before needing to write them; articulating in spoken language so student owns ideas*	*• turn and talk* *• Socratic seminar* *• various forms of oral rehearsal*	*• Students can remember their thinking by speaking it first, so writing is easier.* *• Students can make more sense of their ideas by collaborative conversation with others, leading to deeper understanding.*
Accessibility	*making sure students in particular class/setting get scaffolds they need for success while keeping endgame of proficiency in mind*	*• writing frames* *• intensive work with models* *• use of various types of visuals* *• pre-reading, extra opportunities to read*	*• ELL students will see the concept as a visual, which serves as a bridge to writing.* *• Students will use a model to see what the final piece of writing may look like.* *• Students will have the opportunity to build strong content knowledge by pre-reading with support.*
Along-the-way monitoring	*informally assessing, checking in during instruction to make sure all students understand and are successful*	*• fist to five* *• checklists during discussion* *• checking student notes, public notes* *• listening to student academic conversation*	*• Teacher who checks student notes will see what students do and don't understand.* *• Teacher who uses "writing in chunks" can catch what students can and can't do before the next chunk, then target instruction to needs.*

Reflect

How do these threads reflect the bedrock value of equity in Writing for Understanding?

Equity means that all students have a genuine opportunity to succeed and to become proficient—these threads help make that possible.

Professional Learning Chapter 6

Planning for Instruction: Building Knowledge for Writing from Deep Reading

Participant's Guide

Purpose

As you read earlier, knowledge and understanding are finding their place in the sun. Chapter 6 points out the critical importance of providing instruction that builds knowledge and understanding before writing, and one of the key ways to do that is through guided close reading of a rich and worthy text.

The purpose of this session is to give you an opportunity for an in-depth experience of what guided close reading-for-writing can actually look and feel like. Wearing a "student hat" and working with a partner, you will be guided through a close reading-for-writing as a student would be. (This will include lots of collaborative discussion!) Then you will put your "teacher hat" back on and work with an analysis of how the close read works. Finally, with your full group, you will discuss which aspects of the close reading-for-writing experience seem particularly important in building knowledge before writing.

Directions

1. Imagine that you are a student in Ms. Kelley's sixth-grade classroom. Put on your "student hat" and work with a partner to discuss and answer text-dependent questions about the poem "Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC." Record your responses on the **Guided Close Reading: Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC** handout and be prepared to share them with the full group.
2. Then put your "teacher hat" back on. Use the **Close Reading-for-Writing Reflections** chart to record your observations about how the close read was designed to support students in building their understanding of the poem.

Guided Close Reading: *Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC*

by Corey Cook

He says “I don't mean to startle
you, but could you read this

for me?” as he hands me a crumpled
piece of grey paper with a website

address written on it. I spell out
the address letter by letter, dot by

dot. He echoes each letter and writes
the address in large, legible characters

on the front page of a newspaper. “Thanks,
man. My eyes are no good. I can't read

print that small anymore,” he says as he
walks away. Back to his shopping cart

filled with a clutch of plastic grocery
bags. His head capped by a yellow

construction helmet with a single black
feather hanging from the back. A feather

that tries and tries and tries to take flight.

1. Read to Understand: *Let's listen to the poem "Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC."*

a) Read silently while this poem is read aloud. Make sure you concentrate on listening and thinking as you're reading and listening to the text!

b) Now that you've listened to and read this text once, reread the text aloud with a partner (very quietly, because everyone else will be reading, too).

c) Finally, read the poem silently to yourself. This time, you're going to stop and engage with the text as you read. You may want to make connections or comments; you may want to raise questions; you may want to paraphrase—basically, you are doing a careful reading of the text so that you build a better understanding of it. These "tracks" you leave on the text will help you think carefully and stay focused.

2. Read Closely*: Let's discuss.*

a) What questions did you raise about the text? Share them with a partner, and then we'll share with the whole group.

_____

_____

b) In line 8, the poet tells us that the man writes in "large, legible characters." What does the word *legible* mean?

_____

_____

c) In line 13, what do you think a "clutch of plastic grocery bags" is? What is the poet trying to tell us about the man with this detail? Discuss with your partner, and then we'll share as a group.

_____

_____

d) How many times does the poet repeat the word *tries* in the last line?

_____

_____

Why do you think he may have done that?

_____

_____

e) Draw the scene as thoroughly and with as much detail as you can. Go back to the poem as much as you need to as you draw. Then, of course, we'll share as a group.

3. Read to Analyze: *Let's read between the lines and analyze what the poem is really trying to say.*

a) Now let's think about this man. What is the man like? What does he seem to care about? Work with a partner to complete the chart below.

What is the man like? What does he seem to care about?	What's the evidence from the poem that makes me think so?

b) Hmmm . . . what do you think the last line of the poem means? Why do you think the poet gives this line its own separate stanza?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Prepare to Write: *Develop a focus/thesis statement for your writing.*

So, here's the big question . . . what do you think the poet is trying to tell the reader by using the image of the black feather at the end of the poem?

With your partner, discuss the question above and come up with an answer to the question. Your response should be a complete sentence that answers the question. This answer will be the focus/thesis statement for your writing. Writing a thesis statement can be challenging, so we'll share these and discuss our ideas until we all have something that works.

Write your thesis statement below:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Close Reading-for-Writing Reflections

Directions: Now, with a partner, put your "teacher hat" back on. Use the chart below to guide your discussion and record your observations about the "teacher moves" that students would experience as they were guided through building knowledge of the poem.

Teacher Moves	How did this support students in building understanding? Observations/Questions
1. Short, compelling text	
2. Backward designed from the writing task	
3. Supported first read	
4. Three identified purposes for reading	
5. Questions at each stage of reading that intentionally push students back to text	
6. Repeated reading all along the way	

7. Talking your ideas all along the way (and listening to others' ideas)	
8. Capturing the knowledge in notes all along the way	
So, what have students gained after a strong shared reading-for-writing experience like this?	

Professional Learning Chapter 6

Planning for Instruction: Building Knowledge for Writing from Deep Reading

Leader's Guide

Materials

- *Making It Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction*
- Copies of **Guided Close Reading: Standing on a Sidewalk in NYC** and the chart **Close Reading-for-Writing Reflections**, one per participant

Advance Preparation

1. Make sure participants have read Chapter 6 of *Making It Work* before this session.
2. Copy the **Guided Close Reading: Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC** and the **Close Reading-for-Writing Reflections** chart. This guided close reading is the first step in a full Writing for Understanding sequence of instruction. To help participants better understand how the knowledge built during close reading supports writing, we have included a sample of a piece written after the full sequence of instruction. Using this piece is optional; if you choose to share and discuss **A Metaphorical Feather**, make copies of that as well.
3. Try the activity yourself. Use the Sample Responses to guide you as needed. (*Do not* share with participants, please!) You may find that it is preferable to take two sessions for this activity. Guided close reading can be challenging, and it is key to the concept of knowledge building before writing that is fundamental to the Writing for Understanding approach, so you want to provide plenty of time.

Leading the Activity

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making It Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step. Distribute the handouts.
2. Divide participants into groups of two.
3. Going question by question, lead participants, wearing their "student hats," through the **Guided Close Reading: *Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC*** handout. This is a highly guided, teacher-lead, full group experience. Make sure to ask participants to share their responses after each question—this is time consuming, but well worth it!
4. After the "student hat" experience, ask teachers to put their "teacher hats" back on and work in pairs or small groups to reflect on how the design of the close read supports students in understanding the text. Have participants record their observations and questions on the chart

Close Reading-for-Writing Reflections. Encourage participants to deepen their understanding of each concept by referring to *Making It Work*.

5. To debrief, invite participants to discuss the aspects of the experience that struck them as particularly important in building student knowledge before writing while always keeping the final writing piece in mind.

6. *Optional Activity:* Have participants read **A Metaphorical Feather**, a sample of the writing piece assigned after the close read was completed. Lead a discussion about how the knowledge built in the close reading is reflected in the writing. Consider recording these observations on chart paper or a shared document.

Guided Close Reading: *Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC*

by Corey Cook

He says "I don't mean to startle
you, but could you read this

for me?" as he hands me a crumpled
piece of grey paper with a website

address written on it. I spell out
the address letter by letter, dot by

dot. He echoes each letter and writes
the address in large, legible characters

on the front page of a newspaper. "Thanks,
man. My eyes are no good. I can't read

print that small anymore" he says as he
walks away. Back to his shopping cart

filled with a clutch of plastic grocery
bags. His head capped by a yellow

construction helmet with a single black
feather hanging from the back. A feather

that tries and tries and tries to take flight.

1. Read to Understand: *Let's listen to the poem "Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC."*

a) Read silently while this poem is read aloud. Make sure you concentrate on listening and *think* as you're reading and listening to the text!

b) Now that you've listened to and read this text once, reread the text aloud with a partner (very quietly, because everyone else will be reading, too).

c) Finally, read the poem silently to yourself. This time, you're going to stop and engage with the text as you read. You may want to make connections or comments; you may want to raise questions; you may want to paraphrase—basically, you are doing a careful reading of the text so that you build a better understanding of it. These "tracks" you leave on the text will help you stay focused and will help you think carefully.

2. Read Closely*: Let's discuss.*

a) What questions did you raise about the text? Share them with a partner, and then we'll share with the whole group. *Answers will vary*

b) In line 8, the poet tells us that the man writes in "large, legible characters." What does the word *legible* mean? *Able to be read, easy to read*

c) In line 13, what do you think a "clutch of plastic grocery bags" is? What is the poet trying to tell us about the man with this detail? Discuss with your partner, and then we'll share as a group.

A group of plastic bags, perhaps a collection

Man seems to be poor, seems to have his belongings in plastic grocery bags in a grocery cart, perhaps even homeless (students may have seen homeless people with all their possessions in cheap bags in a grocery cart).

d) How many times does the poet repeat the word *tries* in the last line? *3 times*

Why do you think he may have done that? *He must want us to see that the feather is making a big effort to fly and keeps on trying even when it appears to be unsuccessful.*

e) Draw the scene as thoroughly and with as much detail as you can. Go back to the poem as much as you need to as you draw. Then, of course, we'll share as a group.

Drawings will vary.

Teacher may want to note how often students are going back to the text as they draw, even ask them for an estimate of how many times they checked back in with the text (to help make the point to students about the value of rereading).

3. Read to Analyze: *Let's read between the lines and analyze what the poem is really trying to say.*

a) Now let's think about this man. What is the man like? What does he seem to care about? Work with a partner to complete the chart below.

What is the man like? What does he seem to care about?	What's the evidence from the poem that makes me think so?
Answers will vary but may include: *• polite* *• poor* *• old* *• strange, maybe a bit mentally ill* *• wants to improve his life, has not given up*	*• polite: "I don't mean to startle you" and "thanks, man" show he cares about how he interacts with other people* *• poor: all his possessions are in a grocery cart in plastic bags, doesn't seem to have glasses that would help him see* *• old: "My eyes are no good. I can't read print that small anymore"* *• strange: wears a yellow construction helmet with a feather* *• wants to improve life, has not given up: is trying to use a website, maybe to look for a job, "echoes each letter" as poet reads address, writes carefully in "large, legible letters"*

b) Hmmm . . . what do you think the last line of the poem means? Why do you think the poet gives this line its own separate stanza?

It might mean that the feather is stuck onto the helmet but seems to have a mind of its own. It tries to free itself, to "take flight," over and over again.

The poet must want us to see how important this idea of "trying to fly" is, so gives it its own stanza.

4. Prepare to Write: *Develop a focus/thesis statement for your writing.*

So, here's the big question . . . what do you think the poet is trying to tell the reader by using the image of the black feather at the end of the poem?

With your partner, discuss the question above and come up with an answer to the question. Your response should be a complete sentence that answers the question. *This answer will be the focus or thesis statement for your writing. Writing a thesis statement can be challenging, so we'll share these and discuss our ideas until we all have something that works.*

Write your thesis statement below:

Answers will vary. For example: The feather is like the man. The feather is trying hard to be free, just as the man is trying to make his life better.

The teacher could introduce the concept of metaphor here: an image or figure of speech that helps us understand a complicated idea.

Close Reading-for-Writing Reflections

Directions: Now, with a partner, put your "teacher hat" back on. Use the chart below to guide your discussion and record your observations about the "teacher moves" that students would experience as they were guided through building knowledge of the poem.

Teacher Moves	How did this support students in building understanding? Observations/Questions
1. Short, compelling text	● *Compelling text is engaging* ● *Short, rich text holds readers' attention*
2. Backward designed from the writing task	● *Instructional close read moved students to the end game: a piece of writing* ● *Teacher resisted asking too many questions by keeping the final writing in mind*
3. Supported first read	● *Teacher reads the text aloud at first* ● *Reading text aloud establishes a basic understanding for all students* ● *All students are in the game of building knowledge*
4. Three identified purposes for reading	● *Each successive read addresses a deeper layer of meaning* ● *Students were ready for the analysis on the third read*
5. Questions at each stage of reading that intentionally push students back to text	● *Text-dependent questions drive students back to the text for the answer* ● *Writing piece requires evidence from the text* ● *Not all possible text-dependent questions are chosen*
6. Repeated reading all along the way	● *Repeated reading strategy builds fluency, especially for disfluent readers* ● *Repeated readings help all students build deep understanding of the text before writing*

7. Talking your ideas all along the way (and listening to others' ideas)	● *Frequent conversations lead to more nuanced understanding (conversation in community)* ● *Oral language precedes written language* ● *Conversation lays groundwork for a piece of writing*
8. Capturing the knowledge in notes all along the way	● *Notes capture the students' thinking* ● *Gels student's thinking and provides written record*

So, what have students gained after a strong shared reading-for-writing experience like this?

• *Deep, thorough knowledge of the text through carefully designed questions, working in chunks, constant oral processing, and taking notes*

• *A richer body of content knowledge that students can bring to the next text*

• *An approach to reading that says rereading helps*

• *Ultimate goal: students read carefully and thoughtfully, develop understanding, and show that understanding in clear writing on their own*

Additional Activity: Sample of Finished Writing Piece

Guided close reading is only the first step in a full Writing for Understanding sequence of instruction. Below you will find a sample of a piece written after the full sequence. Where do you see evidence of close reading in the writing?

Focusing Question: What do you think the poet is trying to tell the reader by using the image of the black feather at the end of the poem?

A Metaphorical Feather

The poem "Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC" by Corey Cook describes a very brief encounter that the narrator has with a man on a New York sidewalk. The man has a shopping cart with bags in it, and he wears an unusual construction helmet with a black feather hanging from the back. In the poem, the feather is much like the man himself. The feather seems to be trying to be free, just as the man is trying to make his life better.

The feather hangs from the helmet, but it seems to want to catch the wind. Not only does it try to "take flight", but this happens repeatedly - the poet tells us it "tries and tries and tries." Even though it is attached to the helmet, the feather seems to want something more, perhaps some freedom. Even though it is not easy, the feather is persistent enough to keep trying.

Like the feather, the man too seems to want more from life. We can see that he is down and out, maybe even homeless, and probably old with eyes that are "no good." He seems to have very little, with some plastic grocery bags in a shopping cart. But the man is trying for more. He stops the narrator and speaks politely to them, asking for help. The man seems to be looking for a job or some sort of connection, and he works hard at writing down the website information the narrator gives him. He "echoes each letter" and writes in "large, legible letters." The man seems to be trying to do what he can to help himself gain a better life.

Using the feather at the end of the poem as a metaphor for the man helps us see what the poet wants us to see - that this man, with so much apparently against him, is still trying for a better life.

Professional Learning Chapter 7

Planning for Instruction: Teaching Structures

Participant's Guide

Purpose

Providing a structure that students can use for writing is an essential aspect of Writing for Understanding instruction. One of the most useful and flexible structures is the Painted Essay®, and the purpose of this session is to give you a concrete experience of the Painted Essay and how it works in the classroom. Wearing a "student hat," you will reread the scenario at the beginning of Chapter 7 on pages 81–82 and follow the lesson plan on pages 89–92 to create your own Painted Essay graphic. Your facilitator will guide the process, as the teacher does in the scenario. If time permits, you may participate in a follow-up activity where you "paint" some student work. Finally, you will have an opportunity to discuss with your full group how you might use or modify the Painted Essay in your own classroom.

Directions

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step.
2. Have ready a blank Painted Essay and coloring materials (watercolors, colored pencils, or crayons).
3. Follow the guidance of your facilitator to "paint" the blank essay.

Reflect: How might you use or modify the Painted Essay in your own classroom?

The Painted Essay®

Introduction	
context	
focus	
point 1	point 2

Proof Paragraph 1
evidence and reasons to support point 1

transition
Proof Paragraph 2
evidence and reasons to support point 2

Conclusion
What? So What?

Professional Learning Chapter 7

Planning for Instruction: Teaching Structures

Leader's Guide

Materials

- *Making it Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction*
- Blank copies of the Painted Essay (page 93), one per participant (on card stock, if possible)
- Set of red, green, yellow, and blue watercolors, colored pencils, or crayons, one per participant.

Optional: You may also want to ask participants to color-code one or two pieces of student work from the Vermont Writing Collaborative informative/explanatory or argument benchmarks found on our website. If you do, make sure to have copies ready. Not all benchmarks are in Painted Essay form; be sure to choose a piece from Grade 3 or higher and to color-code the piece yourself before choosing.

https://www.vermontwritingcollaborative.org/projects-and-resources/

Advance Preparation

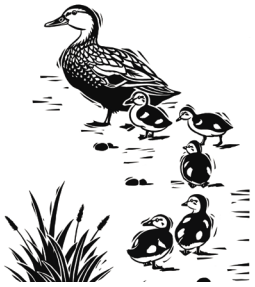
1. Make sure participants have read Chapter 7 of *Making it Work* before this session.
2. Copy the Painted Essay.
3. Try the activity yourself, following the steps in the lesson on pages 89–92.
4. If you are asking participants to "paint" some student work, do so yourself beforehand as well. Remember that the Painted Essay is a flexible tool, so the work may not follow exactly the four-paragraph structure that participants just painted, particularly if the work is from the upper grades.

Leading the Activity

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step. Distribute the Painted Essay and painting materials.
2. Divide participants into groups of two.
3. Following the instructions on pages 89–92, guide participants (as students) through painting the essay.

4. If you are asking participants to “paint” some student work, do that now.
5. To debrief, invite participants to discuss how they might use or modify the Painted Essay in their own classroom. Consider recording these observations on chart paper or a shared document.

Professional Learning Chapter 8



Planning for Instruction: Using Models

Participant's Guide

Purpose

In Writing for Understanding, a model is a practical, useful way of showing students what proficient writing can look like. The purpose of this session is to help you synthesize your understanding of the key features of using models in Writing for Understanding instruction before writing. You will have the opportunity to read a mentor conversation with a new colleague about using models. As you prepare (orally and with notes), you'll almost certainly find it helpful to go back to the text and do a bit of rereading!

Directions

1. Be sure to check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step.
2. Imagine that you are the mentor for a new teacher at your school. Your job today is to help them understand two key ideas: why writing models are important, and what are some key features of writing models that make them so useful for students.
3. First, talk with a partner about what key ideas you need to address in that conversation. Refer to pages 96–102 in *Making it Work* as you discuss models with your partner. Use your **Notes for Models Conversation** worksheet to jot down ideas. Remember that your colleague is probably new to thinking about models, so it's helpful to consider what questions or concerns they are likely to have.
4. Then, independently, cull your notes to make a list of points that you think would be important to include in that conversation with your new colleague. As you do, consider the concerns or questions that your colleague is likely to have, so that you can address them as needed in your list.
5. Finally, discuss your ideas with your partner. Is there anything you or your partner might want to add?

Notes for Models Conversation

Why Models Are Important	
Reasons to include	Questions or concerns my colleague may have
Key Features of Useful Models	
Features to include	Questions or concerns my colleague may have

Professional Learning Chapter 8

Planning for Instruction: Using Models

Leader's Guide

Materials

• *Making it Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction*

• Copies of **Notes for Models Conversation**, one per participant

Advance Preparation

1. Make sure participants have read Chapter 8 of *Making it Work* before this session.
2. Copy the **Notes for Models Conversation**.
3. Try the activity yourself, using *Making it Work* pages 96–102. Use the Sample Responses to guide you as needed. (*Do not* share with participants, please!)

Leading the Activity

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step. Distribute the **Notes for Models Conversation** handout.
2. Divide participants into groups of two.
3. Explain that participants will imagine that they are the mentor for a new teacher. Their job today is to help their mentee understand two key ideas: why writing models are important, and what are the key features of writing models that make them so useful for students.
4. Direct participants to work in their small groups to take notes on their **Notes for Models Conversation** handout. Encourage participants to refer frequently to *Making it Work* pages 96–102.
5. Next, ask participants to work independently to make a list, using their notes, that captures what they would want to make sure to share with a new colleague. Remind them that it will be helpful to consider what questions or concerns their new colleague is likely to have.
6. Have participants discuss their ideas with each other and encourage them to revise their ideas if they think that might be helpful. You might want to have them switch partners for this sharing part of the activity.

7. To debrief, invite participants to share with the full group any experiences they may have had with writing models and/or ask questions they might have about the process. Consider recording these observations on chart paper or a shared document.

Sample Responses

Responses will vary but may include:

Notes for Models Conversation

Why Models Are Important	
Reasons to include • *People learn by imitating models* • *Kids see clear example of proficient writing* • *Supports transfer to independence* • *Research confirms effectiveness of models* • *Can be used effectively with whole class*	Questions my colleague may have about these reasons • *This seems like kids will be copying; is that a good thing?* • *How is a model different from a test-drive?*
Key Features of Useful Models	
Features to include • *Usually written by teacher* • *Similar in structure to what students will write, different content* • *Similar type of thinking about content* • *Similar length, sentence structure* • *Well-written, maybe just a bit above grade level, but very clear* • *Used in a guided way during instruction*	Questions my colleague may have about these features • *What does "similar type of thinking" (page 100) mean?* • *Why is it okay for the model to be a bit above grade level?* • *Why does the content of the model need to be different?*

Reflect: How did the structure of this graphic organizer help you think through potential concerns colleagues might have about using a model?

- *Simple and specific*
- *Directly pushed me to think about my colleague's possible perspective*
- *Helped me to articulate the values of using a model*
- *Pushed me back to the book (the chapter on models) to clarify my own understanding*

Professional Learning Chapter 9

Planning for Instruction: Gathering Evidence

Participant's Guide

Purpose

In Writing for Understanding instruction, teachers often create a good note-catcher to help students do the thinking and gather the evidence they will need to be successful when they write. The purpose of this session is to explore the relationship between proficient student writing and the specific note-catchers students use instructionally as a bridge to that writing. You will more closely examine two note-catchers used for the second-grade writing described in this chapter. Finally, you will have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the role of gathering evidence in helping all students write proficiently.

Directions

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the questions the teacher will address and plan for in this step.
2. With your partner, reread the narrative scenario aloud (pages 107–108).
3. Look at the two teacher-made note-catchers for gathering evidence on the handout **Note-Catchers for Osprey Unit**. The **First Osprey Note-Catcher** is the note-catcher Mr. Wilson made for his full class of second graders who were studying whether humans should help the ospreys. Discuss with your partner the purpose of this first, full-class note-catcher for this writing task.
4. Now, read the student pieces on page 110 aloud. Notice that the students have answered the Focusing Question differently, one saying "Yes, Meeri should help the ospreys," and one saying, "No, she should not help them." In each piece, identify the evidence used to support the student's opinion.
5. Now, transfer the evidence from both pieces, in brief notes, to the first, full-class note-catcher. Be sure you are filling in the correct column.
6. Finally, go back to the **Second Osprey Note-Catcher** on the handout **Note-Catchers for Osprey Unit**, which students completed individually. Discuss what you notice about how the design of the second note catcher helped the students gather evidence for use in their own writing.
7. If time allows, discuss with the full group how teachers may use note-catchers both for student instruction and for independent writing. (Remember, Writing for Understanding is a flexible approach!)

Note-Catchers for Osprey Unit

First Osprey Note-Catcher *(done with whole class)*

Focusing Question: Should Meeri help the ospreys find a good home?			
Possible Answer: Yes, Meeri should help the ospreys.		**Possible Answer: No, Meeri should not help the ospreys.**	
Reasons	**Evidence**	**Reasons**	**Evidence**

Second Osprey Note-Catcher *(done by individual student)*

Focusing Question: Should Meeri help the ospreys find a good home?
Now that I've thought about it, my focus is…….
First Reason and Evidence
Second Reason and Evidence
Third Reason and Evidence

Professional Learning Chapter 9

Planning for Instruction: Gathering Evidence

Leader's Guide

Materials

- *Making it Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction*
- Copies of **Note-Catchers for Osprey Unit**, one per participant
- If desired, copies of student writing

Advance Preparation

1. Make sure participants have read Chapter 9 of *Making it Work* before this session.
2. Copy the handout **Note-Catchers for Osprey Unit**.
3. Try the activity yourself. Use the Sample Responses as a guide, as needed. (*Do not* share with participants, please!)

Leading the Activity

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process and review the questions the teacher will address and plan for in this step. Distribute the **Note-Catchers for Osprey Unit** handout.
2. Divide participants into groups of two.
3. Direct participants to read aloud the scenario on pages 107–108.
4. Ask participants to review the handout **Note-Catchers for Osprey Unit**. Have them discuss the purpose of the first note-catcher, making sure they notice that this first one is the note-catcher Mr. Wilson made with his full class of second graders who were studying whether humans should help the ospreys (as described in the scenario).
5. Now, ask participants to read aloud the student pieces on page 110 of *Making it Work*. Make sure they notice that the students have answered the Focusing Question differently, one saying "Yes, Meeri should help the ospreys," and one saying, "No, she should not help them."
6. Have participants mark the evidence in each piece of student writing. Point out that the evidence these students used must have come from the full-class chart. Ask participants to work in pairs to transfer that evidence in note form to the first, full-class note-catcher. Be sure they are filling in the correct column. If helpful, model the first note transfer.

7. Finally, go back to the second note-catcher on the handout **Note-Catchers for Osprey Unit**, which students completed individually. Discuss how the design of the second note catcher helped the student-writers gather evidence for use in their own writing.

8. To reflect, ask participants as a full group to discuss ideas for how teachers can use note-catchers instructionally with students. Encourage participants to refer to Making it Work during the discussion. Consider recording these observations on chart paper or a shared document.

Sample Responses

First Osprey Note-Catcher *(done with whole class)*

Answers will vary but could include:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Focusing Question: Should Meeri help the ospreys find a good home?</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Possible Answer: Yes, Meeri should help the ospreys.</th><th colspan="2">Possible Answer: No, Meeri should not help the ospreys.</th></tr>
<tr><th>Reasons</th><th>Evidence</th><th>Reasons</th><th>Evidence</th></tr>
<tr><td>• signs will protect ospreys
• lets people watch more birds
• ospreys need place to nest
• so they don’t become extinct</td><td>• Meeri put up signs about boats, kept boats away
• lots of people liked watching ospreys
• put up poles, ospreys nested
• if they can’t nest anywhere, they will become extinct</td><td>• wild animals can take care of themselves
• can’t get too comfortable around people</td><td>• ospreys have instinct to survive
• ospreys could go to dangerous places like cities and be killed</td></tr>
</table>

Reflection

Responses will vary but could include:

- *Teacher could help students make their own note-catchers, once they know how.*
- *Students could work on note-catchers in pairs.*
- *Class could fill out part of note-catcher together and do part independently.*

Professional Learning Chapter 10

Planning for Instruction: Composing, Student Planner

Participant's Guide

Purpose

In Writing for Understanding, there is a tight relationship between the model and the student planner: both help delineate "chunks" that can be useful for instruction. In this session, you will have an opportunity to explore this relationship. Working with a partner, you will use the teacher-written model for the eighth-grade student essay found in this chapter, deconstructing the chunks onto the student planner. Finally, you will reflect with the full group on the following question: Why is the relationship between model, student planner, and the chunking approach so important for student proficiency?

Directions

1. First, reread the eighth-grade student essay on Kennedy's perspective on integration in *Making it Work* on pages 127–128.
2. Now read the **Model: Student Perspective**, about the four Greensboro sit-in activists that the student used when they wrote their essay.
3. With your partner, briefly discuss the relationship you notice between the student essay and the model.
4. Now, using the student planner **Planning My Historical Perspectives Essay**, deconstruct in note form the chunks you see in the model and write those notes down on the planner. If it helps, look back at the filled-out student planner on page 126 of *Making it Work*.
5. Reflect with the full group: Why is this close relationship between model, student planner, and the chunking approach so important for student proficiency?

Model: Student Perspective

Note that paragraphs are numbered for easy reference.

Focusing Question: What was the perspective of the four Greensboro students on integration? How does the language of the text develop that perspective?

Student Perspective

1 In 1960, five years after the Montgomery bus boycott had forced the public buses in Montgomery, Alabama to integrate, a group of four black college students in North Carolina decided that the segregation of public lunch counters needed to end. They decided to try to be served at the local Woolworth's store along with the white customers, and vowed to stay at the counter until they were served. The movement gained support from other Black students and some whites as well—and some significant resistance on the part of the store owners and other white people. Eventually, the movement was successful, and the lunch counters were integrated.

2 In this article, "Bigger Than a Hamburger," author Harvard Sitkoff describes the movement from the perspective of the four students, Blair, McCain, McNeil, and Richmond. From their perspective, integration of the lunch counters was the right thing to do and needed to be done in the right way. Their perspective is that one could fight for integration with determination and with non-violence to create real social change. This perspective shows up in the language used in two different places in the essay.

3 The first place where this perspective of determination to fight for integration shows up is when the young men are first thinking about what they can do to hurry the pace of integration in the South. They are talking in their dorm one evening about how hard it is for people of color to be served at public lunch counters. They are angry about how slowly integration seems to be happening.

4 Mc Neill speaks up. "Let's have a boycott," he says. "We should go in and ask to be served and sit there until they do" (p. 59). The next day, the four friends go to the local Woolworth's and politely ask to be served a cup of coffee. When they are refused, they continue to sit there until the store closes.

5 Here the perspective of the young men is clear. They are impatient with the lack of integration and believe it to be wrong. The language of "let's sit there until they do" shows how impatient and determined they are. They are very willing to take personal action but also determined to do so in a polite, non-violent way. The writer tells us that the students "politely" ask for a cup of coffee. This shows their perspective of wanting to do what is right, to integrate the lunch counters, in a non-violent way, in a quest for justice.

6 The second place where the students' perspective of determination to right the wrong of segregation in a non-violent way shows up is the next evening when they meet to decide how to continue the movement they have begun. Now a group of fifty, they vote to continue the boycott until they are served, and the author writes that they "would remain passive, never raise their voices, never indulge in name-calling. The movement would be one of non-violence and Christian love" (p. 60).

7 Again, the students' perspective of determination to create integration of the lunch counters but always in a way that is peaceful and kind, is clear. Language such as "never indulge in name-calling" shows how positive and hopeful the students' perspective is—the students come from a belief that segregation is wrong, integration is right, and they can bring about a change for the better in a positive, kind, and loving way. By describing this action as one of "Christian love," the author makes clear that from the students' perspective, this action is the right thing to do. It is the best way to make integration actually happen and make life better for Black Americans.

8 Overall, this article about the perspective of Greensboro students integrating the lunch counters gives us a sense of how difficult it was to bring about integration in the South, as well as how determined many ordinary people were to make integration happen in a positive way. These students were not national leaders when they took action—they were simply young adults who were moved, by the big events of their time, to act. The four students came from the perspective of determination to integrate the lunch counters, and to take the high road in doing so—by being polite, patient, and loving. Through illuminating that perspective, the article helps us see what remarkable actions some people were willing to take to make a more equal America.

Planning My Historical Perspectives Essay

In this essay, I am going to analyze a primary source text. I will answer the following question:

Focusing Question
What was the perspective of the four Greensboro students on integration? How does the language of the text develop that perspective?

Introduction **What does my audience need to know to make sense of the essay they are about to read?** • title and author • context: brief summary of text
Thesis Statement **What thoughtful statement am I making that answers both parts of the Focusing Question?**
First Evidence Chunk **What evidence from the text supports my thesis and shows the writer's perspective?**

Evidence from text	Analysis of evidence: how language shows perspective
Second Evidence Chunk **What evidence from the text supports my thesis and shows the writer's perspective?**	
Evidence from text	Analysis of evidence: how language shows perspective

Third Evidence Chunk **What evidence from the text supports my thesis and shows the writer's perspective?**	
Evidence from text	Analysis of evidence: how language shows perspective
Conclusion and Drawing Conclusions **What is my main point?** **What does this essay suggest about the importance of understanding historical perspective?**	

Professional Learning Chapter 10

Planning for Instruction: Composing, Student Planner

Leader's Guide

Materials

- *Making it Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction*
- Copies of **Model: Student Perspective** and **Planning My Historical Perspective Essay**, one per participant

Advance Preparation

1. Make sure participants have read Chapter 10 of *Making it Work* before this session.
2. Copy the **Model: Student Perspective** and **Planning My Historical Perspective Essay**.
3. Try the activity yourself. Use the Sample Responses to guide you as needed. (*Do not* share with participants, please!)

Leading the Activity

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the questions the teacher will address and plan for in this step.
2. Distribute the **Model: Student Perspective** and **Planning My Historical Perspective Essay** handouts.
3. Divide participants into groups of two.
4. Ask participants to first read the eighth-grade student essay on Kennedy's perspective on integration on pages 127–128 in *Making it Work*.
5. Next, ask participants to read the **Model: Student Perspective** on the Greensboro sit-in protests. Participants should briefly discuss the relationship they notice between the student essay and the model.
6. Now, using the student planner **Planning My Historical Perspectives Essay**, ask participants to deconstruct in note form the chunks they see in the **Model: Student Perspective** onto the planner. If helpful, encourage them to look back at the student planner on page 126 of *Making it Work* for a model.
7. To debrief, invite participants to reflect with the full group on why this relationship among model, student planner, and writing instruction in chunks is so important for student proficiency. Consider recording these observations on chart paper or a shared document.

Sample Response

Planning My Historical Perspectives Essay

In this essay, I am going to analyze a primary source text. I will answer the following question:

Focusing Question
What was the perspective of the four Greensboro students on integration? How does the language of the text develop that perspective?

Introduction **What does my audience need to know to make sense of the essay they are about to read?**
Title and author: "*Bigger Than a Hamburger*" *by Harvard Sitkoff* Context (brief summary of text): *1960 Woolworth's lunch counter, four black college students sit there until served*
Thesis Statement **What thoughtful statement am I making that answers both parts of the Focusing Question?** *Their perspective is that one could fight for integration with determination and with nonviolence. This perspective shows up in the language used in two different places* in the essay.
First Evidence Chunk **What evidence from the text supports my thesis and shows the writer's perspective?**

Evidence from text	Analysis of evidence: how language shows perspective
"Let's have a boycott," he says. "We should go in and ask to be served and sit there until they do" (p. 59).	*Patient, determined, polite, non-violent*

Second Evidence Chunk **What evidence from the text supports my thesis and shows the writer's perspective?**

Evidence from text	Analysis of evidence: how language shows perspective
"…would remain passive, never raise their voices, never indulge in name-calling. The movement	*Determined to do right, peaceful*

would be one of non-violence and Christian love" (p. 60)	
Third Evidence Chunk **What evidence from the text supports my thesis and shows the writer's perspective?** *Model does not include a third chunk*	
Evidence from text	Analysis of evidence: how language shows perspective
Conclusion and Drawing Conclusions **What is my main point?** *Perspective of peaceful, determined* **What does this essay suggest about the importance of understanding historical perspective?** *Article helps us see what remarkable actions some people were willing to take to make a more equal America.*	

Reflect with the full group on why this relationship among model, student planner, and the chunking approach is so important for student proficiency.

Responses will vary but may include:

- *Students have clarity on what the task requires.*
- *Being able to use the structure of the model to help fill out the planner for their own essay is a form of support for what may be a complex writing task for many students.*
- *Writing in chunks makes the writing task both clear and manageable.*

Professional Learning Chapter 11

Planning for Instruction: Gradual Release of Responsibility

Participant's Guide

Purpose

Planning for gradual release of responsibility to students with an eye to helping them become proficient is an important feature of the Writing for Understanding approach. It can take many forms, and in this session, you will have the opportunity to explore some of the myriad ways gradual release of responsibility can be structured. You will work with a partner to unpack the scenario at the beginning of the chapter on Ms. Goldberg's class. How has she already incorporated gradual release of responsibility into her planning? Finally, you will reflect on other ways gradual release of responsibility can be incorporated into lessons and how it can promote equity in the classroom, and why it is so important for teachers to keep proficient independent writing as the goal.

Directions

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step.
2. Reread the scenario on pages 137–138 of *Making it Work*.
3. Your leader will guide you through a close reading of the scenario, using the handout **What Might Gradual Release of Responsibility Look Like**? With a partner, you will unpack the scenario for evidence of gradual release of responsibility.
4. Take turns sharing your notes with the full group.
5. Finally, reflect with the full group: What are some other ways gradual release of responsibility might be structured? Why is it so important for teachers to always keep proficient independent writing as the goal? Why is gradual release of responsibility an important component of equity for all students?

What Might Gradual Release of Responsibility Look Like?

1 "Ms. Goldberg, reading *Love That Dog* makes me want to write a poem! Can't we do that today?"

2 A chorus of fourth and fifth grade voices second Paula's question. "Me too, Ms. Goldberg. Can we write poems today instead of, maybe, say, spelling?"

3 Ms. Goldberg grins at the twenty-three fourth-and fifth-graders surrounding her. "I'm so glad you feel inspired by all these poems we've been reading about," she declares." And of course we're going to write some poetry of our own. I think we've learned a lot about how important poetry is from Jack in *Love That Dog* ."

4 "And from the bat in *The Bat Poet,* Ms. Goldberg," interrupts Julio. "That bat wrote GREAT poetry!"

5 "You're right, you're right," laughs Ms. Goldberg. "Writing poetry is a wonderful thing to do. So, I promise—I promise!—we'll take some time right after recess for poetry writing. Right now, though," she went on, "we're going to do some more work writing about *Love That Dog* . Come join me on the rug."

A. With your partner, reread paragraphs 1–6. What do you notice about the *Bat Poet* essay the class has already written?

B. How had the class gathered evidence for that *Bat Poet* essay?

C. How many Painted Essays has the class written so far this year?

Explain: In what way(s) are these examples of Gradual Release of Responsibility on the part of the teacher's planning?

6 When the students are seated on the rug, Ms. Goldberg begins. She reminds them that when they wrote about *The Bat Poet* a few weeks ago, their focus was on what the bat had learned about how important poetry was. They gathered evidence together (the large charts of public notes still hung on the wall), and each student wrote a painted essay with just a bit of support (their third one of the year).

7 "Now, this time," she says, "we're going to think about poetry with a slightly different focus, because we have a different book. This time, we're going to think about how Jack's feelings about poetry change over the course of the book—I wonder, what thoughts do you have about that? Take a moment and chat with your elbow partner about that….Mariaelena? Any ideas?"

8 "Well," responds Mariaelena, "he really didn't like poetry all that much at first…"

9 "But by the end, he likes it a lot," adds Charlie. "Me, too," he says pointedly. "That's why I'd rather be writing a poem now."

10 "I know, I hear you about that," laughs Ms. Goldberg, "and we will. But first I want to explain to you what we'll do this time around, with this essay we're beginning. Part of it will be very familiar to you, so you will get to do that part independently. And part of it is going to be new, so we need to learn how to do that together."

D. With your partner, re-read paragraphs 7-12. Here Ms. Goldberg is telling the students about something new they will be doing. .What is going to be new for these students?

E. Why is Ms. Goldberg concentrating her instruction on new skills and not guiding the entire essay?

Explain: In what way(s) are these examples of Gradual Release of Responsibility on the part of the teacher's planning?

11 "What's new about this one?" asks Josh.

12 "We're going to learn a new skill called an evidence sandwich. It's a way of using evidence a bit differently from what we've done before."

13 Ms. Goldberg pulls out a peanut butter sandwich, which captures the attention of every student. Using the sandwich to demonstrate, she helps students name the parts: the filling (most important), then the two pieces of bread surrounding the filling and turning a plain spoonful of peanut butter into a sandwich.

14 "When we write about how Jack's feelings change about poetry in *Love That Dog*, we're going to write an evidence sandwich that is something like this peanut butter sandwich—only with words."

15 Samantha looks confused. "I don't get it," she says. "How can words be a sandwich?"

16 "I'll show you," promises Ms. Goldberg.

F. With your partner, reread paragraphs 13–17. Here Ms. Goldberg is using a model as a key part of her instruction. What is that model like? How does she use it with the students?

17 For the next twenty minutes, Ms. Goldberg shows the class what an evidence sandwich looks like. With her guidance, the students analyze a teacher-written model (a painted essay) about a character's feelings changing (in this case, about music) with all the evidence written in an evidence sandwich format. Working in pairs and with frequent feedback, the students label the filling (the evidence) and the bread (the context and the analysis), speaking their thinking aloud as they go. The five EL students in the room are each partnered with a classmate for whom language is not a barrier, and Ms. Goldberg checks in frequently. Two other students, Victor and Shoshanna, both strong writers, are given the opportunity to create evidence sandwiches with more analysis (the bottom slice of bread).

18 After about ten minutes Samantha raises her hand. "Actually, this isn't so hard," she informs Ms. Goldberg. "I think I can write this about Jack and his feelings about poetry changing."

19 "I'm so glad to hear that," Ms. Goldberg answers. "So, here's your job. I'm going to give each of you a note-catcher. You'll see it looks pretty familiar, with two columns—only this time, the yellow column is for evidence about how Jack feels about poetry at first, and the blue column is for how he feels about it by the end."

20 "Are we going to fill this out together?" wonders Josh. "I think I could do this by myself, since we already read the book together."

G. During the lesson, Ms. Goldberg is quite intentional about how she pairs students. What does that look like?

Explain: In what way(s) are these examples of Gradual Release of Responsibility on the part of the teacher's planning?

H. With your partner, reread paragraphs 18–22. What type of note-catcher does Ms. Goldberg provide? How will the students use it?

I. What kind of instruction/practice does Ms. Goldberg plan to provide for the evidence sandwiches?

21 "I think so, too," says Ms. Goldberg. "I think you're ready to do this part on your own. Then, tomorrow or the next day, before you write, we'll practice putting some of your evidence into evidence sandwiches - so you can also do those on your own. How does that sound?"

22 "It sounds okay," acknowledges Charlie. "And Ms. Goldberg—NOW can we write that poem?"

Professional Learning Chapter 11

Planning for Instruction: Gradual Release of Responsibility

Leader's Guide

Materials

- *Making it Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction*
- Copies of **What Might Gradual Release of Responsibility Look Like?** handout, one per participant

Advance Preparation

1. Make sure participants have read Chapter 11 of *Making it Work* before this session.
2. Copy the **What Might Gradual Release of Responsibility Look Like?** handout.
3. Try the activity yourself. Use the Sample Responses as a guide, as needed. (*Do not* share with participants, please!)

Leading the Activity

1. Introduce the activity by reading aloud the purpose. Ask participants to check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step.
2. Distribute the **What Might Gradual Release of Responsibility Look Like?** handout.
3. Divide participants into groups of two.
4. Have participants reread the scenario on pages 137–138 of *Making it Work*.
5. Use the close reading handout **What Might Gradual Release of Responsibility Look Like?** to lead the group in unpacking the scenario. Work one question at a time, prompting pairs to discuss each question and briefly record responses on the handout. When you reach the question in bold that begins with **Explain**, pull the full group together and discuss their responses so far. Encourage participants to add insights from the discussion to their own notes. (Remind participants that this is NOT a quiz—it is a deep-reading experience to build knowledge!)
6. Finally, reflect with the full group: What are some other ways gradual release of responsibility might be incorporated into lessons? Why is it so important for teachers to always keep proficient independent writing as the goal? Why is gradual release of responsibility an important component of equity for all students? Consider recording these observations on chart paper or a shared document.

What Might Gradual Release of Responsibility Look Like?

1 "Ms. Goldberg, reading *Love That Dog* makes me want to write a poem! Can't we do that today?"

2 A chorus of fourth and fifth grade voices second Paula's question. "Me too, Ms. Goldberg. Can we write poems today instead of, maybe, say, spelling?"

3 Ms. Goldberg grins at the twenty-three fourth- and fifth-graders surrounding her. "I'm so glad you feel inspired by all these poems we've been reading about," she declares." And of course we're going to write some poetry of our own. I think we've learned a lot about how important poetry is from Jack in *Love That Dog*."

4 "And from the bat in *The Bat Poet,* Ms. Goldberg," interrupts Julio. "That bat wrote GREAT poetry!"

5 "You're right, you're right," laughs Ms. Goldberg. "Writing poetry is a wonderful thing to do. So, I promise—I promise!—we'll take some time right after recess for poetry writing. Right now, though," she went on, "we're going to do some more work writing about *Love That Dog*. Come join me on the rug."

A. With your partner, reread paragraphs 1–6. What do you notice about the *Bat Poet* essay the class has already written?

About poetry, so general topic will be familiar.

B. How had the class gathered evidence for that *Bat Poet* essay?

Class gathered evidence together, displayed the evidence in public notes accessible to everyone.

C. How many Painted Essays has the class written so far this year?

Three Painted Essays so far this year.

Explain: In what way(s) are these examples of Gradual Release of Responsibility on the part of the teacher's planning?

Topic is familiar but not identical.

Gathering evidence (where students show understanding) was still supported, making sure no one was left behind .

The support on the Painted Essay structure of the three earlier essays seems to have been gradually lifted .

6 When the students are seated on the rug, Ms. Goldberg begins. She reminds them that when they wrote about *The Bat Poet* a few weeks ago, their focus was on what the bat had learned about how important poetry was. They gathered evidence together (the large charts of public notes still hung on the wall), and each student wrote a painted essay with just a bit of support (their third one of the year).

7 "Now, this time," she says, "we're going to think about poetry with a slightly different focus, because we have a different book. This time, we're going to think about how Jack's feelings about poetry change over the course of the book—I wonder, what thoughts do you have about that? Take a moment and chat with your elbow partner about that….Mariaelena? Any ideas?"

8 "Well," responds Mariaelena, "he really didn't like poetry all that much at first…"

9 "But by the end, he likes it a lot," adds Charlie. "Me, too," he says pointedly. "That's why I'd rather be writing a poem now."

10 "I know, I hear you about that," laughs Ms. Goldberg, "and we will. But first I want to explain to you what we'll do this time around, with this essay we're beginning. Part of it will be very familiar to you, so you will get to do that part independently. And part of it is going to be new, so we need to learn how to do that together."

D. With your partner, re-read pp. 7-12. Here Ms. Goldberg is telling the students about something new they will be doing. What is going to be new for these students?

Using evidence sandwiches to supply evidence in the upcoming essay.

E. Why is Ms. Goldberg concentrating her instruction on those new skills and not guiding the entire essay?

Students have not used evidence sandwiches before. Ms. Goldberg needs to give close direct instruction for that aspect of the essay and can release responsibility to students for other features of the essay.

Explain: In what way(s) are these examples of Gradual Release of Responsibility on the part of the teacher's planning?

Teacher recognizes that a move to greater independence is not "all or nothing." She wants to make sure students get support (here, direct instruction) where they need it, but they are encouraged to be more independent where they can be.

11 "What's new about this one?" asks Josh.

12 "We're going to learn a new skill called an evidence sandwich. It's a way of using evidence a bit differently from what we've done before."

13 Ms. Goldberg pulls out a peanut butter sandwich, which captures the attention of every student. Using the sandwich to demonstrate, she helps students name the parts: the filling (most important), then the two pieces of bread surrounding the filling and turning a plain spoonful of peanut butter into a sandwich.

14 "When we write about how Jack's feelings change about poetry in *Love That Dog*, we're going to write an evidence sandwich that is something like this peanut butter sandwich—only with words."

15 Samantha looks confused. "I don't get it," she says. "How can words be a sandwich?"

16 "I'll show you," promises Ms. Goldberg.

F. With your partner, reread paragraphs 13–17. Here Ms. Goldberg is using a model as a key part of her instruction. What is that model like? How does she use it with the students?

The model is a Painted Essay about a character changing (just as their upcoming essay is), although about music and not poetry. It uses evidence sandwiches so students can get a good visual understanding of what that technique looks like.

She works with the full class, helping them label the parts of the evidence sandwich, doing lots of talking as they go.

She makes sure that within this activity students get individual support as needed.

17 For the next twenty minutes, Ms. Goldberg shows the class what an evidence sandwich looks like. With her guidance, the students analyze a teacher-written model (a painted essay) about a character's feelings changing (in this case, about music) with all the evidence written in an evidence sandwich format. Working in pairs and with frequent feedback, the students label the filling (the evidence) and the bread (the context and the analysis), speaking their thinking aloud as they go. The five EL students in the room are each partnered with a classmate for whom language is not a barrier, and Ms. Goldberg checks in frequently. Two other students, Victor and Shoshanna, both strong writers, are given the opportunity to create evidence sandwiches with more analysis (the bottom slice of bread).

18 After about ten minutes Samantha raises her hand. "Actually, this isn't so hard," she informs Ms. Goldberg. "I think I can write this about Jack and his feelings about poetry changing."

19 "I'm so glad to hear that," Ms. Goldberg answers. "So, here's your job. I'm going to give each of you a note-catcher. You'll see it looks pretty familiar, with two columns—only this time, the yellow column is for evidence about how Jack feels about poetry at first, and the blue column is for how he feels about it by the end."

20 "Are we going to fill this out together?" wonders Josh. "I think I could do this by myself, since we already read the book together."

G. During the lesson, Ms. Goldberg is quite intentional about how she pairs students. What does that look like?

Here, five students are paired with students who do not need language support. Two stronger students are given the opportunity for more depth in analysis.

Explain: In what way(s) are these examples of Gradual Release of Responsibility on the part of the teacher's planning?

The teacher recognizes that at this stage of the writing, most students need adequate direct instruction before they can be expected to be independent.

She provides for additional support for some students.

H. With your partner, reread paragraphs 18–22. What type of note-catcher does Ms. Goldberg provide? How will the students use it?

The note-catcher uses familiar Painted Essay format (yellow, blue). She plans to release this responsibility to do on their own, since the format is so familiar.

I. What kind of instruction/practice does Ms. Goldberg plan to provide for the evidence sandwiches?

Students will practice these before trying to write them on their own.

Explain: In what way (s) are these examples of Gradual Release of Responsibility?

Students are given support on what is still quite new as well as provided the opportunity to be independent on what is more familiar.

21 "I think so, too," says Ms. Goldberg. "I think you're ready to do this part on your own. Then, tomorrow or the next day, before you write, we'll practice putting some of your evidence into evidence sandwiches - so you can also do those on your own. How does that sound?"

22 "It sounds okay," acknowledges Charlie. "And Ms. Goldberg—NOW can we write that poem?"

Professional Learning Chapter 12

Planning for Instruction

Assessment: Looking at and Learning from Student Work

Participant's Guide

Purpose

Learning from student work is an important part of the Writing for Understanding approach. Frequently, one problem that shows up in student writing is lack of sufficient understanding of the content the student is trying to write about. Since showing understanding is the premise of what it takes to write effectively, this is an important place to begin!

In this session, you will work in a full group, exploring several sets of independent writing. Focusing on the "shows a solid understanding of content" criterion on the checklist on page 155, you will work in a small group to analyze the writing piece against a benchmark and to discuss what appropriate instructional steps might come next for students. Finally, the full group will reflect on the importance of instruction for understanding in writing.

Directions

1. Check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step.
2. In the full group and led by your facilitator, role-play the assessment conversation of the ninth-grade team working with personal narrative essays. With a partner, take the parts of Ms. Robinson and Mr. D'Amato in the **Writing Assessment Conversation** handout as they analyze the understanding shown in the student work (including reading the **Grade Nine Narrative Essays**). As you read, note on the student essays what Ms. Robinson and Mr. D'Amato are noticing.
3. Finally, discuss the **Evidence of Understanding Chart**, both the observations on solid understanding in these pieces and the instructional possibilities that Ms. Robinson and Mr. D'Amato have brainstormed.
4. Now review the remaining sets of student work (second grade, fourth grade, and middle school), focusing only on the "shows a solid understanding of content" criterion. Use the **Evidence of Understanding Chart** for each to discuss and record the evidence of understanding (or lack thereof) in each piece, and then brainstorm possible instructional strategies.
5. Reflect: What does this show you about the importance of instruction for understanding in writing?

Grade Nine Narrative Essays

For this independent writing task, the student was instructed to describe a personal event that was important to them in some way, and then reflect on that importance. The reflection should include both the personal impact of the event and an understanding of a "bigger idea" to which the event has led the writer.

Violin Lesson

In first grade, towards the middle of the year, I started learning how to play the violin. Once a week, after school, I would walk up the long sandy driveway and up the slippery, rickety, wooden steps to the top floor of the red brick apartment my teacher lived in. At first, I didn't like the lessons very much, because I didn't know that practicing was part of the learning experience, and I was lazy. But after a while, I came to enjoy the lessons, and came to respect my teacher.

I remember a particular class, a couple years into my lessons, that I had to prepare for during the previous week. My teacher had taught me a small piece, just a simple song, really, and had asked that I play the whole thing for her at my next lesson. That whole week I practiced every day, and tried my best to work out the squeaky notes and tricky rhythms of the song. I was feeling very confident about it, and was ready to play the whole thing at my next class. I eagerly ran up the driveway, and quickly, but cautiously scampered up the steps, and soon found myself in the music room of the apartment. I took out my little violin and, trying my absolute best to not make any mistakes, played the song for my teacher. In my opinion, it went well; I knew it as soon as I lifted my bow from the string. But what my teacher said next surprised me. "Why did you play so quietly?," she asked. I assured her that that wasn't my intention, and that in order for the notes to be perfect, measures had to be taken. My teacher then did something even more unexpected. She picked up her own violin and began to play the same piece, with flaws that even I could spot, however she played it so comfortably and confidently that I enjoyed hearing it, despite the errors. She then looked at me over her glasses and said "It's better to play strong and wrong than to execute the piece weakly but perfectly."

To be told that you were weak may have offended other young children, but I was so impressed with that advice that I didn't take offence. I always remembered that lesson, and now, every time I play my violin, I think about what my teacher told me. I play as well as I can, but never with a hint of shyness of cautiousness. And I use that piece of advice in other situations every day. Whether it is at school, when I'm not sure I have the answer but I raise my hand anyway, or during a sports practice, where I try a new throw even if I'm not sure if it will work out, I always feign confidence and hope that that's what others will see.

In almost every situation, taking a risk and failing is better than quietly doing an almost perfect job. There is always an opportunity to take risks in life. And nobody is perfect. People fail sometimes. But everyone is capable of truly magnificent things, and having the courage to take that chance of failing – and yet still doing the absolute best you can do with pride – that can make all the difference.

Basketball

I've been participating in sports for years, since elementary school. Every year, we play bowling, snowshoeing, and bocce ball. I enjoy playing these sports. This year, in addition to those sports, is the second year we've played basketball. I wasn't planning on participating in that. Unlike the other sports, basketball is fast-thinking, which I'm not so good at. Last year, I played it, but I recall not enjoying it.

This year, I was hesitant to join the basketball team, remembering how I wanted out last year. However, _____encouraged me to try it out, to at least come to the practices. I decided that was a good compromise, and proceeded to participate in the basketball practices, still quite uncertain about continuing.

After one of the practices, I expressed my uncertainty about continuing to _____. He encouraged me to continue, but he said meant no pressure. Then he pulled out his phone to show me something on it. He showed me the lock screen. The first thing I noticed was a missed call notification from an unrecognized number. But that wasn't what he was trying to show me.

What he was trying to show me the wallpaper, which had the phrase "the more you practice, the better you get." Some of the words were cut off by the ends of the screen. Anyway, I totally agreed with that message, but as I went home that day, my questions were: did I really enjoy basketball, and was it worth participating in an optional activity that I didn't really enjoy?

Pretty soon, we had our first basketball game. I was still uncertain about playing. I was really considering sitting out and watching. But everyone encouraged me to play, and so I ended up putting on a uniform and playing with the team. As it turned out, I'm pretty good at basketball, as the coaches and team members told me. They were right: I wasn't as bad at it as I remembered. I was good at dribbling the ball, passing it, and getting it closer to the basket. However, my weakness was playing defence. It was tricky to stay with the person I was guarding and block the ball. But, I could get better at that by practicing it more.

After the game, I was glad I'd played. It felt pretty good to be on the team. People were telling us it had been a good game. Apparently I was good at basketball, and people wanted me on the team, so I decided to continue participating for the rest of the season, even though it wasn't my favorite sport. What I've learned is that you should give activites a good long chance before you decide not do them. Be open to the options.

Writing Assessment Conversation

Below is a script of the conversation between Ms. Robinson and Mr. D'Amato as they analyze the "solid understanding" in each of these two independent pieces.

As we know, Ms. Robinson and Mr. D'Amato are both ninth-grade English teachers. They have led their students through a three-week unit on personal narrative essays and are eager to see how their students fared. Students have chosen their own topics: some have written about sports, some about family, some about music, some about deer hunting, and more.

We also know that Mr. D'Amato is a new teacher and feels some trepidation about this task. Let's take part in their conversation.

Ms. Robinson: So, Tom, first let's remember that the most important thing we are after here in this essay is that our kids show that they have a good solid understanding of what they are writing about. That means right now we're going to focus on that first criterion, "shows solid understanding."

Mr. D'Amato: Yup, got that…. But I have a question.

Ms. Robinson: Sure, what is it?

Mr. D'Amato: I can see what understanding would look like in, say, a research paper. A kid who writes that alligators live in Ohio—let's just say—does not have any understanding of what they are writing about. But what does "solid understanding" of a personal experience look like?

Ms. Robinson: That is a GREAT question! So, remember that benchmark we chose? The one about the violin lesson?

Mr. D'Amato: Got it right here.

Ms. Robinson: Me too. Let's just take a moment to reread it.

They read "Violin Lesson" aloud.

Mr. D'Amato (with a sigh): This is a good piece of work in so many ways—how do we figure out where it shows understanding?

Ms. Robinson: You're right, the writer does a good job describing the long-ago violin lesson. But the real *understanding* comes later in the piece, when the writer describes how that experience affected her and what she learned from it.

Mr. D'Amato: You mean in the last two paragraphs, right?

Ms. Robinson: Exactly! Notice what she does there. First, she talks about how she wasn't offended at the time by her teacher's advice, then she goes on to talk about how she has applied that advice.

Mr. D'Amato: Yeah, she really expands on that—she's applied it to her violin playing, but also to other parts of her life, she says.

Ms. Robinson: And then look what she does in the final paragraph….

Mr. D'Amato: Yup, I see. She goes beyond herself to a kind of bigger understanding about the world.

Ms. Robinson: She sure does. And that "bigger understanding" —about risk, failure, and trying anyway—is a pretty strong idea. I'd say this piece is what we mean by "shows a solid understanding of content" for a personal narrative essay in high school.

Mr. D'Amato: Okay, I think I get it! Now, about this "Basketball" piece. I think a lot of kids in my class wrote pieces that are quite a lot like this one, so I want to make sure I get this right.

They read "Basketball" aloud.

Ms. Robinson: Okay, what do you think?

Mr. D'Amato: I think I need some chocolate first so I can give this my undivided attention!

They each munch on a chocolate.

Mr. D'Amato: Okay, ready. Can I tell you what I'm thinking here?

Ms. Robinson: Please, be my guest!

Mr. D'Amato: Well, his description of the basketball game isn't as strong as the violin lesson….

Ms. Robinson: True. But remember, that description stuff is going to be more about narrative craft. Right now we're just looking for depth of understanding, remember?

Mr. D' Amato: Oh, right! So that means we should look in the reflection, towards the end of the essay.

Ms. Robinson: Take a look at the last two paragraphs of this basketball piece.

Mr. D'Amato: Yes, okay….I can see that the writer is talking about what he learned about himself as a basketball player—that he's better than he thought, even though he has to practice defense more. That seems like reflection to me, don't you think?

Ms. Robinson: Well, yes—so how do you think that compares to the violin benchmark?

Mr. D'Amato (reading the benchmark again): Hmm…this basketball reflection is not as strong. He reflects, but it's pretty limited and concrete—just "I'm not too bad a basketball player."

Ms. Robinson: And how about his final paragraph—that "big idea" reflection that this personal narrative essay is supposed to do?

Mr. D'Amato: He says basically, "Give new ideas a real chance, and be open to the options." It's reflection, in a way, but pretty basic—like a bit of friendly advice, not a deeper understanding of the world.

Ms. Robinson: I agree. It would probably be good for fifth grade, but this is ninth grade. Do you think we'd call this "developing" on the checklist?

Mr. D'Amato: Yes, for sure. And like I told you; I think by the time we're done here, we'll have a lot of kids who are "developing" in the criterion of "shows solid understanding."

Ms. Robinson: Yes, I think we will too. So, here's the real question: now that we know a bunch of our kids are not yet showing proficient understanding on these essays, what shall we do about it, going forward?

Mr. D' Amato: Hmm…maybe we can't do anything about it. Maybe that's just where they are.

Ms. Robinson: Maybe…but if there's one thing we've learned over these past few years, it's amazing what kids can do when you actually try to teach them!!

Mr. D'Amato: Great! So, what might teaching actually look like?

Ms. Robinson: Well, for one thing, we might do more work with models. You know, show them pretty specifically what "solid understanding" can look like in writing like this. And by "show them," I do mean to spend some significant time with the models.

Mr. D'Amato: If we could find models (or even write them!) that show different forms of reflection, I bet that would be really helpful.

Mrs. Robinson: That's such a good idea. After all, reflection might be something like "pondering" or "realizing" or "wondering" or "connecting" —all of those could be helpful.

Mr. D'Amato: They sure would. And I wonder if it would help to spend more time in class on the reflection part of this essay. We could even put them in some sort of writers' circle and take turns doing some oral reflection.

Ms. Robinson: That sounds like a good idea to me. And remember, reflection can be tough. Maybe we could even be ready to help with some probing questions, like "Is there any place else in your life where you've seen yourself using this idea?" or "What might have happened to you as a person if this event had not happened to you?"

Mr. D'Amato: That last "big idea" level of reflection is pretty hard. I wonder if it would help to directly ask kids, maybe in that writers' circle, something like, "How might this new understanding you have for yourself also be true for other people in other situations?" They could listen to each other—you know, have a real conversation.

Ms. Robinson: You know, Tom, what I like about these ideas is that they can mostly be done in a full group, and we have lots of kids who need this kind of help. So let's keep thinking—I do think we're on the right track!

Evidence of Understanding Chart: Grade Nine Narrative Essays

Directions: Analyze for evidence of complete and incomplete understanding, and then brainstorm possible instructional approaches.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Focusing Question: Describe a time when you felt you learned something significant. Describe the learning and its importance to you.</td></tr>
<tr><td>What does “solid understanding of content” look like in “Violin Lesson” (the benchmark)?

• Deep reflection on how the violin lesson affected writer’s life (not offended, applies what she learned to other areas of her life: school discussions, sports practices)

• Thoughtful reflection on big idea beyond herself: taking risks and maybe failing is preferable to quietly doing a good job; failure is always a possibility, but courage to try and do the best one can is worth it</td><td>What does lack of “solid understanding of content” look like in “Basketball”?

• Some reflection on how basketball game affected writer’s life (realized he’s pretty good at basketball, needs to practice defense more) but limited to basketball, no application to other areas of his life

• Basic reflection on big idea beyond himself: people should not limit themselves, should try new options—concrete and basic, like bit of friendly advice</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">What instructional strategies might a teacher use to address the problems in understanding for students like the “Basketball” writer?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Work closely with models that show what deeper personal reflection can look like; students need to see what this can look like in ninth-grade writing (or even higher); deconstruct the thinking in these models; show different types of reflection

• Give full class partly written piece (by teacher), work together to group create the reflection portion (personal reflection, big idea)

• Use writers’ circles to orally work with reflective portions of students’ own pieces, with teacher taking active part using prompting questions to help students think more deeply about event they are writing about</td></tr>
</table>

Student Writing Samples

Grade Two Opinion/Argument

Prompt: Should Meeri help the ospreys?

For this writing task, the second-grade student should show an understanding of the issue by stating an opinion and giving a couple of reasons to support that opinion, with specific evidence from the text.

Student 1 (Benchmark)

Meeri Helps the Ospreys

Our class read the book Meeri meets the Osprays. Because Meeri was trying to find a good home for the osprays. I think that Meeri should help the osprays because netre needs a hand. Meeri called the power comepony. to put up nesting platforms so the osprays can rise a famaly.

Also some people want osprays to nest and have chicks so endangered birds don't become extinct because some people love waching birds. I think we should help netre when a bird is trying to rise a famaly.

Student 2

Ospreys Need Homes

My class has been reeding a book about Meeeri. Meeri should help the ospreys find a good home. Meeri should help the ospreys because the ospreys need help. They need help a lot. I think we shud all help birds. Not just ospreys.

The ospreys need to have a home. Meeri should help them. It woodent be that hard. It's bad not to help birds. I try to help birds, I also helped a cat once.

Evidence of Understanding Chart: Grade Two Opinion/Argument

Direction: Analyze for evidence of complete and incomplete understanding, and then brainstorm possible instructional approaches.

Focusing Question: Should Meeri help the ospreys?	
What does "solid understanding of content" look like in "Meeri Helps the Ospreys" (the benchmark)?	What does lack of "solid understanding of content" look like in "Ospreys Need Homes"?
What instructional strategies might a teacher use to address the problems in understanding for students like the "Ospreys Need Homes" writer?	

Grade Four Informative

Prompt: What are some things you can do to conserve water?

For this writing task, the fourth-grade student should name the problem (need to conserve water), and then focus on giving specific, accurate ways to do that.

Student 1 (Benchmark)

Conserving Water

Conserving water is a great way to help the earth. Without our water, plants, humans, and animals, would not be able to live. We need to save water because we will eventuly run out of it. Then we will have to use and drink saltwater. It is extremly expensive to filter salt water. This why we need save water. What can you do to save water?

One way you can save water is by getting a rain barrel. Rain barrels collect water so that you can water your plants with recycled water. Recycled water is better for plants because it is more naturail. Recycled water also have good nutrients.

Another way you can save water is by getting an airrating facet and shower head. These items use less water but make it feels the same because of more pressure. One more way you can save water is when you go in the sprinkelers in the summer, make sure it is in a spot where it is watering the lawn.

One ways my family saves water is by turning off the water when you brush your teeth. Water is the most important natural resorce of all with out water, we would die. If we ran out of water, as I said, we would die. So if you think dieing is bad, try to conserve water as best you can.

Student 2

Please Save Water

We all need water to live, if we don't save water we might not have enough, and some people already don't have enough water. It is important to save water.

Human beings use water every single day. All of us use hundreds of gallons of water. Without water we would be so miserable. We would feel thirsty all the time. It would be hard to keep focused on our schoolwork without water. Then we wouldn't learn anything. If we all use less water, then we'll have enough.

Animals need water too, not just people. So do plants like trees and grass. If we didn't have enough water, it would be like living in a dry and scorching desert all the time. This could probably happen in a single summer! The grass would get brown and dry up. Then the animals like cows and sheep would not have enough to eat, and could even starve to death. We should save water so these things don't happen.

We should all do what we can to save water.

Evidence of Understanding Chart: Grade Four Informative

Direction: Analyze for evidence of complete and incomplete understanding, and then brainstorm possible instructional approaches.

Focusing Question: What can you do to save water?	
What does “solid understanding of content” look like in “Conserving Water” (the benchmark)?	What does lack of “solid understanding of content” look like in ”Please Save Water”?
What instructional strategies might a teacher use to address the problems in understanding for students like the “Please Save Water” writer?	

Middle School Informative

Prompt: In the poem "Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC," what do you think the poet is trying to tell the reader by using the image of the black feather at the end of the poem?

For this writing task, the middle school student should show understanding that the feather is like the man in the poem. They should cite specific quoted and paraphrased evidence that shows understanding of the metaphor.

Student 1 (Benchmark)

A Metaphorical Feather

The poem "Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC" by Corey Cook describes a very brief meeting that the narrator has with a man on a New York sidewalk. The man has a shopping cart with bags in it, and he wears a strange construction helmet with a black feather hanging from the back. In the poem, the feather is a lot like the man himself. The feather seems to be trying to be free, just as the man is trying to make his life better.

The feather hangs from the helmet, but it seems to want to catch the wind. The poet says the feather wants to "take flight". The poet says that it "tries and tries and tries." This means that even though it is attached to the helmet, the feather seems to want something more. Maybe it wants freedom. Even though it is not easy, the feather keeps trying.

Like the feather, the man too seems to want more from life. The poet says he has eyes that are "no good." This means he is probably old. The man seems to have very little, just some plastic grocery bags in a shopping cart. But the man is trying for more. He stops the narrator and speaks politely to them, asking for help. The man seems to be looking for a job or some sort of connection, and he works hard at writing down the website information the narrator gives him. He "echoes each letter" and writes in "large, legible letters." The man seems to be trying to do what he can to help himself gain a better life.

Using the feather at the end of the poem as a metaphor for the man helps us see that this man, with so much apparently against him, is still trying for a better life.

Student 2

Help the Man

We read a poem called "Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC" by Corey Cook. The poem is about a man on the street who seems like he might be kind of weird, or maybe homeless. He has a feather on his helmet.

I think the poet should try to help the man. He should see that anyone who goes around wearing a feather can't be all there. People like this are everywhere. The man does not know how he should look. It's like he is only half in the real world but he probably doesn't even realize it.

The poet should try to help the man. I know it's hard to help people like that, but at least he could try. Maybe he could call the police or find a food kitchen or something for the man, or get him a new hat that doesn't look so weird. He doesn't have to give him money, but it's the right thing to do to help another human being.

In conclusion, if you see someone with a feather on their hat, think of a way to help

Evidence of Understanding Chart: Middle School Informative

Direction: Analyze for evidence of complete and incomplete understanding, and then brainstorm possible instructional approaches.

Focusing Question: In the poem "Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC," what do you think the poet is trying to tell the reader by using the image of the black feather at the end of the poem?	
What does "solid understanding of content" look like in "A Metaphorical Feather" (the benchmark)?	What does lack of "solid understanding of content" look like in "Help the Man"?

What instructional strategies might a teacher use to address the problems in understanding for the "Help the Man" writer?	

Professional Learning Chapter 12

Planning for Instruction

Assessment: Looking at and Learning from Student Work

Leader's Guide

Materials

- *Making it Work: A Handbook for Writing for Understanding Instruction,* for reference
- copies of **Grade Nine Personal Reflections**, one per participant
- copies of the script **Writing Assessment Conversation**, one per participant
- copies of the completed **Evidence of Understanding Chart: Grade Nine Personal Reflections**
- set of **Student Writing Samples** (**Grade Two Opinion**, **Grade Four Informative**, and **Middle School Informative**) and an **Evidence of Understanding Chart** for each set, one per pair

Advance Preparation

1. Make sure participants have read Chapter 12 of *Making it Work* before this session.
2. Copy the **Grade Nine Narrative Essays**, script of the **Writing Assessment Conversation**, and the completed **Evidence of Understanding Chart: Grade Nine Narrative Essays**, one per participant
3. Copy the sets of student work, **Student Writing Samples** (including an **Evidence of Understanding Chart** for each set), one per pair
4. Try the activity yourself. Use the Sample Responses to guide you as needed. (*Do not* share with participants, please!)

Leading the Activity

1. Ask participants to check the planner on page 31 of *Making it Work* to see where this step falls in the planning process, and review the question(s) the teacher will address and plan for in this step.
2. Distribute the handouts.
3. Divide participants into groups of two.

4. Direct participants to read the **Writing Assessment Conversation between Ms. Robinson and Mr. D'Amato** aloud in pairs. (This will include reading the **Grade Nine Narrative Essays**). As participants read, ask them to note on the student essays what Ms. Robinson and Mr. D'Amato are noticing.

5. After reading, discuss the completed **Evidence of Understanding Chart: Grade Nine Narrative Essays** with the group. Make sure everyone understands the analysis of the depth of understanding shown in the two pieces and the possible instructional strategies the teachers are considering. (Participants may have ideas to add here)

6. Next, ask participants to work with a partner on either the second grade, fourth grade, or middle school set of student pieces. They may choose to start wherever they like. Ask participants to use the blank Evidence of Understanding Chart for each set of pieces to fill in their analysis and their instructional ideas.

7. After each group has worked on their own set, have the groups share their ideas.

8. To debrief, invite participants to share their understanding of why building understanding is such an important part of writing instruction at every grade level. Consider recording these observations on chart paper or a shared document.

Sample Responses

Evidence of Understanding Chart Grade 2

Direction: Analyze for evidence of complete and incomplete understanding, and then brainstorm possible instructional approaches.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Focusing Question: Should Meeri help the ospreys?</td></tr>
<tr><td>What does “solid understanding of content” look like in “Meeri Helps the Ospreys” (the benchmark)?

• States an opinion in response to Focusing Question

• Gives two reasons that make sense (nature needs a hand, and ospreys could become extinct if they can’t lay eggs)

• Gives specific, accurate evidence from text (called power company to put up nesting platforms)</td><td>What does lack of “solid understanding of content” look like in “Ospreys Need Homes”?

• States an opinion in response to the Focusing Question but does not give reasons to support

• Repeats opinion over and over

• Does not include specific evidence from text to support

• Loses track of focus about helping ospreys (helped a cat once)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">What instructional strategies might a teacher use to address the problems in understanding for students like the “Ospreys Need Homes” writer?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Create full-class public notes, tying reasons for helping or not helping and giving specific evidence for each

• Guide process of choosing opinion, reasons, and evidence more closely

• Have students orally rehearse piece before they write it

• Chunk writing, describing just one reason (with evidence) at a time</td></tr>
</table>

Evidence of Understanding Chart Grade 4

Direction: Analyze for evidence of complete and incomplete understanding, and then brainstorm possible instructional approaches.

Focusing Question: What can you do to save water?	
What does "solid understanding of content" look like in "Conserving Water" (the benchmark)? • *Strong connection between importance of water and need to conserve it (intro and conclusion)* • *Gives several specific ways to save water (rain barrel, aerating shower head, moving sprinkler, turning off water when brushing teeth)* • *Explains why these ways of saving water are helpful* • *Precise language (conserve, aerating, filter, natural resources) shows deep understanding of ways to save water*	What does *lack of* "solid understanding of content" look like in "Please Save Water"? • *Does make connection between importance of water and need to save it (intro, conclusion) but does not describe ways to save water* • *Focuses on how much people, plants, and animals need water, not how to save water* • *Has some precise language (scorching desert, starve to death), but not about ways to save water*
What instructional strategies might a teacher use to address the problems in understanding for students like the "Please Save Water" writer?	
• *Create full-class public notes, giving specific ways to save water and why these might be helpful* • *Guide process of choosing evidence more closely to develop focus* • *Have students orally rehearse piece before they write it (perhaps in a simulation of some sort)* • *Chunk writing, describing just one way to save water (with explanation) at a time*	

Evidence of Understanding Chart Middle School

Direction: Analyze for evidence of complete and incomplete understanding, and then brainstorm possible instructional approaches.

Focusing Question: In the poem "Standing on the Sidewalk in NYC,**"** what do you think the poet is trying to tell the reader by using the image of the black feather at the end of the poem?

What does "solid understanding of content" look like in "A Metaphorical Feather" (the benchmark)? • *Recognizes the feather is in the poem as a metaphor for the man* • *Gives specific evidence from the poem for both parts of the metaphor (the feather, the man)* • *Explains/elaborates how chosen evidence supports thesis (the feather is like the man)*	What does *lack of* "solid understanding of content" look like in "Help the Man"? • *Sees the man as "weird," misses his effort to improve his life* • *Does not recognize the metaphor that the feather is like the man* • *Shows empathy for the man in the poem, but focuses on how important it is for the poet to help the man (food kitchen, new hat)*
What instructional strategies might a teacher use to address the problems in understanding for the "Help the Man" writer?	
• *Direct instruction about metaphors and how they function - practice describing both sides of a metaphor* • *Create full-class public notes, including what the feather is like and what the man is like* • *Use a model that shows how to write about a specific metaphor in a poem* • *Have students orally rehearse piece before they write it* • *Chunk writing, describing just one side of the metaphor (with evidence) at a time*	

Reflection

What does this work show you about the importance of instruction for understanding in writing?

Responses will vary but may include:

- *Without understanding, students cannot possibly write effectively about the question.*
- *Instruction in understanding before writing takes time but is well worth it.*
- *Without emphasis on understanding, students could see writing as a structure and craft exercise in which accuracy and understanding may not even matter.*

By the time we ask students to write independently,
they are well-positioned to say to themselves,
"Hey, I can do this."