

## **Writing, Grades 4-6**

### **Assessment**

Learning to write is a complex and challenging process. It involves thinking, planning, and problem solving.

This writing course focuses on the writing process for one specific genre: personal narrative. As the students advance through each component of the writing process, Mr. Garvin will monitor their progress to ensure that they fully understand the attributes, structure, and nuance of writing a personal narrative; more importantly, he will evaluate his students' overall progress as writers.

### **Teacher Conferencing**

Conferencing with your students one-on-one provides the ideal environment for informally assessing students. Teacher-student conferences are one-on-one collaborative conversations that help students learn to evaluate, edit, and change their writing. During conferences, focus attention on specific aspects of your students' writing by asking a series of simple questions:

- What do you want to write about?
- What words would you like to use to write about that?

Remember to comment positively on some aspect of the writing. For example:

- Your idea is fascinating. How can you get the reader to feel that sense of fascination?

Teachers may initiate conferences, but students should be encouraged to call conferences as they need them. Writing conferences are an excellent opportunity for teachers to examine and evaluate how their students make decisions about their work and to guide students as they learn to take responsibility for their writing development and completion.

### **Writing Seminar**

The purpose of Writing Seminar is for students to discuss their work in progress and to share ideas for improving it. Writing Seminar can take place during a writing lesson when several students share a particular aspect of their writing. Students should also be encouraged to hold Seminar during Workshop. During Seminar, students meet in small groups to read and discuss one another's writing. One student reads a piece in progress. Other students comment on the writing and ask questions about the ideas behind the writing. The student whose work is being critiqued writes down the comments made by his or her classmates and decides how to use these comments to make the writing better.

Writing Seminar provides a perfect avenue for gauging students' growing understanding and skill as writers. Students discuss each phase of a writing project and become more adept at using the constructive criticism of their classmates to improve their writing. As you listen to each student present his or her work, note how well they have incorporated the different aspects of writing they have learned about. Note also the growing maturity of the audience's comments.

### **Writing Folders and Portfolios**

As they write, students should keep their drafts and final pieces in a Writing Folder. These folders serve as a detailed record of your students' growth; they enable you to compare one piece of writing to another, identify students' strengths and weaknesses, and reflect on their writing and how it changes and develops over time. Students can also go back and work on pieces in progress that were started and never completed.

In addition to the Writing Folder for works in progress, each student should keep a portfolio—samples of completed work throughout the year. These may be samples of best work for a marking period, most interesting writing attempt, personal favorite work, and the like.

### **Formal Assessment**

In addition to informally monitoring your students' progress throughout the year, formal writing assessments are located in the **Unit Assessment** books that accompany **Open Court Reading** and **SRA Imagine It!**. These assessments also include rubrics designed to help you effectively and accurately evaluate your students' progress. In addition, rubrics are included at the end of each five-day writing assignment in the **Teacher's Edition**.