

**Lesson 2: How does your mentor teacher see himself/herself as a teacher of writing? What were some key influences in her/his growth? Interview your mentor teacher in order to develop a profile. Here are some questions you might ask:**

How did you become a writing teacher? What changes did you make in the way you teach/approach writing?

What or who were the strongest influences on your teaching of writing?

What does being a writing teacher mean? How would you define your role? What is the students' role? What metaphor would you create to describe the writing teacher you would like to be?

How would you describe your "philosophy of writing," or your basic approach to teaching writing?

Would you describe yourself as "process" teacher? What processes do you teach?

Do you use a writing workshop?

How do you teach the mechanics and conventions (grammar, usage, punctuation, etc.)?

What do you think is the biggest hurdle or challenge in teaching writing?

What do you enjoy the most about teaching writing? The least?

**Lesson 4: Interview English teachers (at least three) at several grade levels about the focus of their writing instruction at the various grade levels:**

What are their objectives for writing? What concepts in writing or about writing do they teach?

What types of writing do they emphasize at various grade levels and why?

How do they take into account the Idaho standards for language arts in their writing curriculum? (Are they aware of the standards?)

Does the school have a writing curriculum or sequence? Grade-level objectives for writing? Does the district have a set of writing standards?

**Lesson 5: Interview your mentor teacher about his/her writing program. How similar or different is it from the kinds of programs described in your readings? Here are some questions you might ask:**

What do you do to create an atmosphere that supports writing?

Do you use a type of writing workshop? Why or why not? If so, how is it structured? What are the rules for the workshop?

Do students write regularly in class, in or out of a workshop setting? Do they write at predictable times?

What percentage of class time is devoted to drafting, conferring, revising, editing?

What is the balance of self-sponsored and assigned writing? Of expository, creative, and writing to learn?

Do students work on individual goals or on class goals?

Do students keep writers notebooks or journals?

Are students able to confer with each other on drafts? Do you have any procedure for peer conferring?

What kinds of records do you keep? How do you track student progress?

Do students keep a portfolio of their writing over the semester?

What resources (books, computers, etc.) are available to writers?

**Lesson 6: A “writing assignment” is writing assigned by the teacher. As Z&D describe it, an assignment “includes everything a teacher can do in the course of students’ writing a particular piece.” Interview your mentor teacher and take notes in your journal :**

What writing does he or she typically assign? If assignments are in writing, take a look at a selection of them.

How does he/she typically make the assignments? In writing?

Are assignments made in steps or all at once?

Are criteria for evaluation included in the assignment?

Is the purpose of the assignment given? Is the assignment placed in the context of other work?

Does the assignment specify the mode of writing and the audience?

What are typical time lengths for assignments?

What suggestions does your mentor teacher have for making assignments that are effective? Has he/she had ones that fell flat, and why?

**Lesson 7: Interview your mentor teacher about how he/she approaches the processes of prewriting, drafting, and revising in his/her class, and how he/she uses mini-lessons. If possible, observe and talk to students as they engage in prewriting, drafting, revising:**

What prewriting strategies does the teacher require, recommend, and/or teach? If he/she doesn't teach them, at what grade are students introduced to various prewriting strategies? You might ask about the specific strategies Z&D describe.

Does he/she allot class time for prewriting? For drafting? For Revising?

What procedures, structures are used for drafting and revising?

What role does the teacher play in these processes? Does he/she confer during drafting? Model methods for "getting unstuck"? Write while students write?

How does the teacher use mini-lessons in support of drafting or revising?

What are some of his/her favorite mini-lesson topics?

Does he/she have any tips for conducting effective mini-lessons?

What role do students play? Do they confer with and respond to each others' work in progress?

What are the expressed purposes for revision? How does the teacher define revision? How do students define it?

Do students see revising as "rethinking" or "correcting"? How much revision is focused on content? How much on editing?

Does the teacher use checklists?

What revision strategies does the teacher teach? Do students read aloud? Ask questions?

Who is the audience for revision? Who do students see as the audience for their writing?

**Lesson 8: Interview your mentor teacher and at least one other teacher about how they give students feedback during the writing process, either through conferences or in written comments on drafts. In addition, observe writing in progress in at least one class. If possible, review some drafts the teachers have made comments on and/or sit in on a teacher-student writing conference or peer conference. Take notes in your journal.**

Do the teachers confer with students when they are writing? What is the nature of the conference?

What do the teachers see as their role in giving feedback?

What is the nature of the feedback the teachers give? Using Z&D as a model, what role do you think the teachers are taking?

Do peers confer in class, in groups or pairs, during the writing process?

Do teachers or peers use guidelines or rubrics?

Do writers have “conferences with themselves”?

**Lesson 9: Discuss with your mentor how he or she evaluates student writing.**

Does he/she use a rubric or set of explicit criteria? Does he/she grade holistically? Use an analytic scale such as Washington State’s 6-trait scoring? What are his/her rationale behind the grading system he/she uses?

Does he/she use different rubrics or criteria for different types of writing?

Do students have input into how writing is graded?

Does he/she give split grades (content-mechanics)?

Do students play a role in grading? Do they grade their own or each others’ writing?

How do teachers track progress in writing over the semester? Do they use portfolios?

**Lesson 10: Interview your mentor teacher and a selection of teachers of subjects other than English in your school—science, math, social studies, art. . . .**

Which teachers use writing in their classes? Do some subjects use writing more than others?

How is writing used other than as a means of testing?

Do you see any of the kinds of writing Z&D mention?

How does your mentor teacher use writing in the service of literature instruction?

Does the school have a Writing Across the Curriculum emphasis? Has the school or district hosted any workshops in writing across the curriculum?

**Lesson 10: Interview your mentor teacher or another English teacher in your school who teaches memoir, poetry, or fiction.**

What elements of memoir, fiction, or poetry writing does he/she teach?

What elements of “creative” writing does your mentor teacher stress in expository writing?

What does he/she see as the role of “creative” writing in his/her class? In the curriculum?

If he/she has a great lesson for teaching one aspect of these genres, add the lesson to the Idea Exchange by mid week.

**Lesson 10: Interview your mentor teacher or another teacher who teaches research writing.**

How does he/she teach various research processes? In steps?

How does he/she help the students take ownership of their work?

How does he/she ensure that the task and writing are meaningful?

Does he/she teach other types of civic writing, such as petitions, editorials, persuasive essays, book reviews, interviews, etc.? If so, how?

If the teacher has students do these kinds of writing, how does he/she make them “real”? Are issues and events part of the English class? Do they arise from literature study? Other ways?

How do students publish their findings or ideas? (Do letters to the editor or petitions get sent? Who learns the fruits of research?)

**Lesson 11: Interview your mentor teacher and/or other English teachers.**

How do students publish their writing?

Do you encourage students to submit work to journals, newspapers, or other places either in or out of school?

Does the school have a literary magazine? What are its policies for accepting submissions?

Does the school have a newspaper that accepts submissions or solicits students opinions, essays, letters?

Do teachers post or display writing? Where? How?

Do teachers hold public or school “readings” of student writing, such as “Open mic” nights, poetry slams, or other forums?

Does the drama department or English classes perform student-written plays or show student-produced videos?