

Writing in Response to Reading: Focused Teaching

To begin:

- Assess students using some form of standardized assessment.
- Fill out an analysis sheet and use it on an ongoing basis to determine your teaching focus.
- Show students the rubrics and explain to them what is expected.
- Show students their own graded assessments to analyze it for themselves.

Planning lessons:

- Determine the area of greatest need and begin working on that skill. You may even need to subdivide the group at times to meet the needs of individual students.
- Choose a book that will be well suited for that skill.
- I often choose a book that is a level or two below their independent level to begin with. This allows them to focus explicitly on writing their answers and not get bogged down on accuracy or meaning. As they progress, I slowly move them into harder material.
- I usually choose books that are shorter in length so we can focus on the specific skill, and then move on to a new book for more practice or for a new skill.
- Read through the book ahead of time and ask yourself, “How do I figure this out myself?” Write out specific clues and key words that helped you find the answer.

During lessons:

- Be explicit in your directions and expectations.
- Share your clues and key words and ask them to add to the list.
- Give each student a notebook and expect them to use it. The types of notes taken will be different depending on your focus. As they are reading, you might use a notebook yourself, and do the same activity. You will be modeling behavior as well as taking notes that you can share with the group.
- Always remind them to write two parts:
 - 1) **What they are thinking.**
 - 2) **The part of the book that made them think that.**
- Give the students time to read the whole book or section you are working on.
- Come together as a group to share what you have written. Sometimes you might share first to set an example for the others. Sometimes you’ll want to share yours after the others have had a turn, so that they will not depend on you instead of trusting themselves.
- Check each students’ answers to be sure that they have explained their answer thoroughly, and supported it with evidence from the book.
- Take notes of each students’ strengths and weaknesses.

After the lesson:

- Analyze your notes. Decide if the group needs to continue working on the same skill or to move to a new skill.
- If it’s time to move on to a new skill, check your analysis sheet for the next lesson focus.