

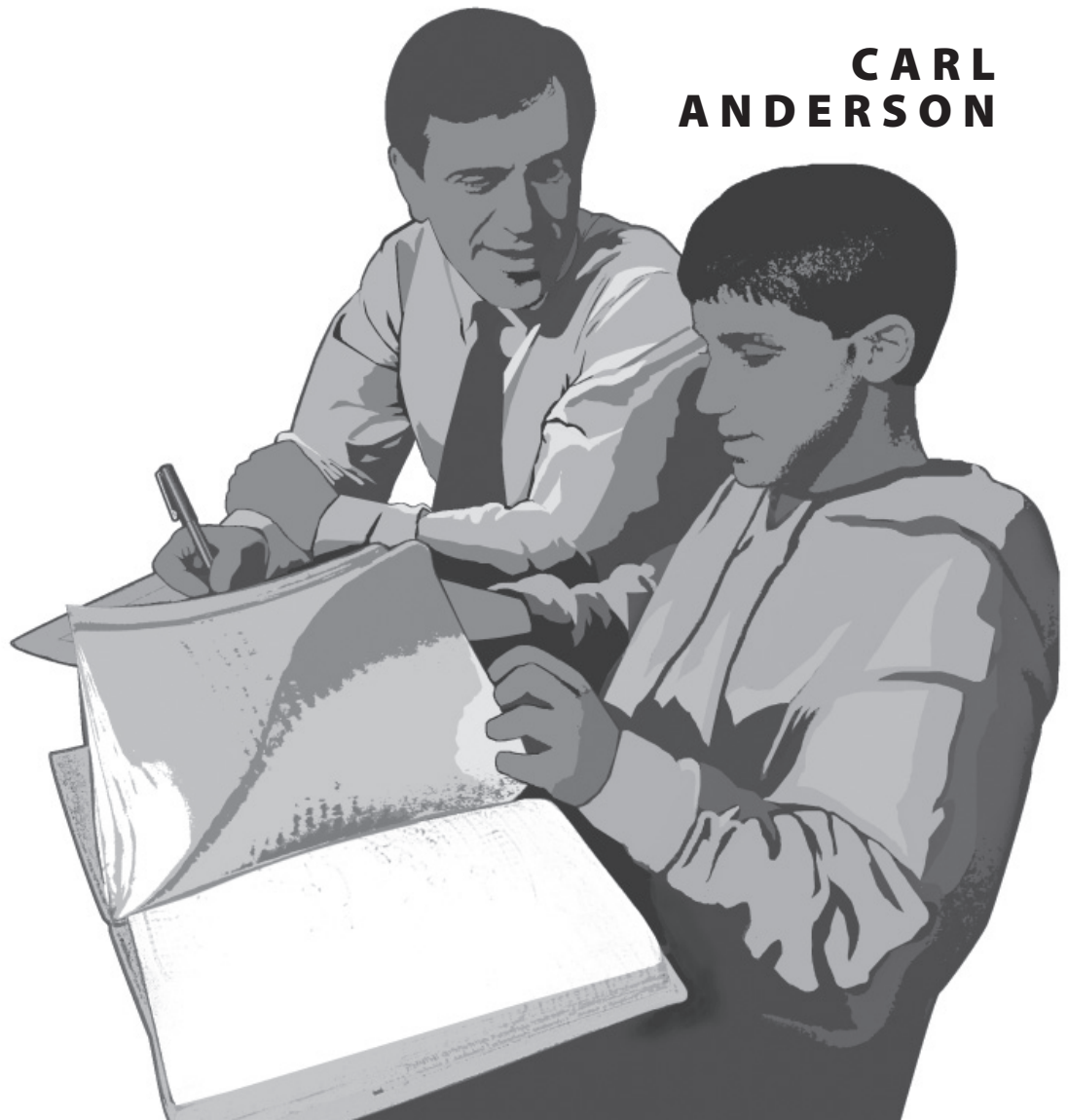
GRADES 3 – 6

Strategic Writing Conferences

Smart Conversations That Move Young Writers Forward

 finished projects

**CARL
ANDERSON**



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DEDICATION:

This book is dedicated to Artie Voigt.



DEDICATED TO TEACHERS

firsthand
An imprint of Heinemann
361 Hanover Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801
firsthand.heinemann.com

Offices and agents throughout the world

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Anderson, Carl, 1960-
Strategic writing conferences: smart conversations that move young
writers forward / by Carl Anderson.

v. cm.

Contents: Topics

ISBN-13: 978-0-325-01201-8 (set)	ISBN-10: 0-325-01201-6 (set)
ISBN-13: 978-0-325-02629-9 (v. 1)	ISBN-10: 0-325-02629-7 (v. 1)
ISBN-13: 978-0-325-02630-5 (v. 2)	ISBN-10: 0-325-02630-0 (v. 2)
ISBN-13: 978-0-325-02631-2 (v. 3)	ISBN-10: 0-325-02631-9 (v. 3)

1. English language—Composition and exercises—Study and teaching
(Elementary) 2. Creative writing (Elementary education) I. Title.

LB1576.A61594 2009
372.62'3044—dc22

2008034944

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

13 12 11 10 09 ML 1 2 3 4 5



Introduction to Book 3

THE CONFERENCES IN Book 3: *Finished Projects* are designed to help students with *revising* and *editing*, the final stages of the writing process before publication. This book includes conferences that correspond to these stages, as well as two special conferences designed to help students continue writing and learning about the craft techniques after the school year is over.

Part 1: Revising

Students need to learn all about revision—how to make different kinds of changes to convey meaning clearly to readers. Some of these changes include adding to a draft, cutting scenes or sections, putting the parts in a different order, and selecting precise words. The conferences in Part 1: Revising help you teach students how to revise thoughtfully and effectively.

Part 2: Editing for Voice and Tone

During the editing stage of the writing process, writers often make changes to their drafts to enhance the voice and tone of a piece. Some of these changes involve punctuation but are made to show emotion or emphasis, not to “follow the rules.” The conferences in Part 2: Editing for Voice and Tone help you teach students to create or enhance voice and tone in their writing by using italics, full caps, and other punctuation. One of the conferences revisits the topic of word choice but focuses on how to create a more appropriate tone in a piece of writing by carefully selecting words.

Part 3: Editing for Clarity

Before publishing a piece of writing, writers edit their writing to correct any errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar that would interfere with their readers' understanding. Writers have a repertoire of different editing strategies to help them identify these errors. The conferences in Part 3: Editing for Clarity help you teach students effective editing strategies, such as reading aloud, using feedback from a partner, and using a checklist. They also teach students to identify and correct several kinds of common errors in punctuation and grammar.

Part 4: Planning Writing Beyond the School Year

Many students want to continue writing after the school year ends, when they no longer have the support of their teacher and classroom writing community. The two conferences in Part 4: Planning Writing Beyond the School Year help you teach students strategies for making plans for future writing and learning from mentor texts, strategies that writers use to sustain their writing independently.

Diagnostic Guide for Book 3: *Finished Projects*

The Diagnostic Guide is designed to help you locate a conference that addresses a student’s particular area of need. The guide lists areas of need that a student may have when he’s revising, editing, and planning his writing after the school year is over.

Part One: Revising

WHAT YOU FIND	CONFERENCES THAT CAN HELP	Page
The student...		
... has made few or no revisions to his draft.	1. Adding Text * 2. Using Blank Pages, Sticky Notes, “Spider Legs,” and “Add Ons” *	7 13
... has written a story in which she retells everything that happened during an event or a nonfiction piece in which she tells every single fact she knows about her topic.	3. Focusing an “All About” Story*	18
... has revised his draft by adding text, but the parts that he’s added onto are not the most important parts in the piece.	4. Focusing on Important Scenes *	21
... has written a draft that is confusing due to the order of its scenes or the inclusion of scenes that have little to do with the central message.	5. Reordering the Scenes or Sections 6. Cutting Scenes or Sections	26 29
... has used general, inexact words in his draft or title.	7. Using a Thesaurus and Dictionary 10. Writing an Effective Title	31 46
... has plunged into revising her draft without taking time to consider which parts are revision priorities or if a new meaning can be developed.	8. Making a Comprehensive Revision Plan 9. Developing a New Meaning	36 41
... has been working with a partner to revise a draft, but they are confused about how to give and receive feedback.	11. Using Feedback from a Partner *	51

A conference with an * is one of Carl’s Classics.

Part Two: Editing for Voice and Tone

WHAT YOU FIND	CONFERENCES THAT CAN HELP	Page
The student... ... emphasizes certain words, phrases, or sentences when he reads a draft aloud but hasn't signaled to readers to do this when they read.	12. Adding Italics or Full Caps 13. Using Exclamations and Ellipses 14. Using the Dash to Create Emphasis	57 61 65
... has overused punctuation marks in her draft such as the exclamation mark, ellipsis, or dash.	15. Using Punctuation Judiciously	69
... has created a tone in his draft through choice of words that does not match the intended audience or purpose of the draft.	16. Choosing Words	71

Part Three: Editing for Clarity

WHAT YOU FIND	CONFERENCES THAT CAN HELP	Page
The student... ... has made little attempt to edit her draft or has edited her draft by reading it to herself and numerous errors remain in it.	17. Reading Aloud * 18. Using Feedback from a Partner * 19. Using a Checklist *	77 80 82
... has written a draft in which he has used ending punctuation inconsistently or not at all.	20. Listening for Pauses *	85
... has written a draft that primarily uses simple sentences, rarely compound sentences.	21. Creating and Punctuating Compound Sentences	90
... has written a draft that overuses the word <i>and</i> .	22. Deleting "and"	94
... has incorrectly punctuated dialogue or complex sentences.	23. Punctuating Dialogue 24. Checking for Sentence Fragments	98 102
... has not used paragraphs consistently in his draft.	25. Creating Paragraphs *	106
... has sentences that lack clarifying details or short sentences that could be combined.	26. Adding Details Inside a Sentence	112

Part Four: Planning Writing Beyond the School Year

WHAT YOU FIND	CONFERENCES THAT CAN HELP	Page
The student... ... is unsure of how to continue learning about craft and writing after the school year is over.	27. Making a Writing Plan for the Future 28. Reading Like a Writer with a Self-Chosen Author	119 123

2

Revising Using Blank Pages, Sticky Notes, “Spider Legs,” and “Add Ons”

WHAT YOU FIND

The student who could be helped by this conference has revised a draft in which he has:

- made minor additions—a few words squeezed above a line here and there.
- written a sentence in the margin in just a few places.
- not left space on the page for adding text.
- not elaborated enough to help readers understand the topic or message.

CONFERENCE PURPOSE

Teach the student to use blank pages, sticky notes, “spider legs,” and “add ons” to add text to a draft.

MODEL TEXT

My revised draft “If Wishes Were Frogs” or another writer’s revised draft

MATERIALS

1 blank sheet of looseleaf paper

Sticky notes

“Spider legs” (strips of paper)

1 roll of Scotch tape

◆ I sometimes call this the *Field of Dreams* conference. In the film, a baseball fan builds a baseball diamond in his cornfield in the hope that Shoeless Joe Jackson will magically make an appearance. The character says over and over, “If I build it, he will come.” Likewise, if we build in more room for students to revise, they will revise more.

I SEE YOU HAVE FINISHED your draft. We’ve been talking about how writers revise by adding text in several places throughout the draft. Sometimes writers add words. I’m glad to see you’ve done that in a few places. Other times, they add sentences.

I want to help you add more text to your draft. I see that there isn’t much room left on your draft paper for adding text. If you’re going to add a sentence, even a few sentences, then you’re going to need more room.

Explain a Strategy

I want to tell you about four revision tools that give us more room to add to a draft: blank pages, sticky notes, “spider legs,” and add ons. The first one, blank pages, is a really simple thing we can do. Let’s tape a blank sheet of paper to the side of your draft. Reread your draft and look for more places to add text. When you find one, draw an arrow from the place in the draft where you want to add text to the blank sheet. Then write the text. You’ll have plenty of room to write sentences.

Another revision tool we can use is sticky notes. We stick a note where we want to add a few words or sentences and write the text on the note. Or we can use “spider legs.” That’s a cool name, right? A “spider leg” is a strip of paper that we tape to the side of the draft, next to the place where we want to add text. We call them “spider legs” because after we have added a few strips to the draft, it looks like it has lots of legs like a spider.

We can also add using “add ons.” An “add on” is a letter or number that shows us where in the draft we want to add text.

If Wishes Were Frogs

by Carl Anderson

All the way in the car to Long Pond in Cape Cod, Haskell kept saying, "I want to find frogs, I want to find frogs, I WANT TO FIND FROGS!" When we finally arrived, I was relieved—and a bit worried, too. What if we didn't find any frogs? I thought. I would have one very disappointed three year old boy!

We started to walk along the shore, looking in the ^{thick pond grass} ~~rocks~~ and under lily pads. For five minutes, we saw no frogs. (A)

Suddenly, Haskell cried, "I see one!" We splashed our way over to it, only to discover that it was a piece of wood. ^{it's} Haskell was disappointed. He looked up at me, and said, "I know you'll find one, dad, I know it." (B)

We walked further along the shore, to a place where several trees and bushes ^{were} overlooked the water. I said to Haskell, "Be very, very quiet, so we don't scare them away." Slowly, we tiptoed towards the trees and bushes.

Suddenly, I saw a pair of eyes poking out of the water. A frog! I whispered to Haskell, "I see one!" He said loudly, "WHERE?" (C) The frog jumped away to safety, before Haskell got to see him.

We continued walking. All of a sudden, Haskell said, "There's one!" He pointed at a small frog, almost completely hidden in the water. We stared at the frog for a few moments, until it decided to hop away from us. ^{he} Haskell said happily, "We can go back now."

Later on in the car, Haskell recounted the story of searching for frogs to his mom and big sister. As I listened to him, I was thinking about how very much I wanted to make Haskell's wishes come true. On this day, at least, I was able to do that.

- (A) Haskell, determined, continued to search.
- (B) I don't think a baseball player batting at the bottom of the ninth inning with the bases loaded could feel more pressure than I did at that moment!
- (C) Haskell looked and looked, but he couldn't see the frog.
- (D) Haskell's face was radiant.

◆ You can just as easily have this conference with students who are writing nonfiction. Use a revised draft of a nonfiction piece instead of a narrative one.

When we find a place in a draft that we want to add text to, we write a small letter or number. Then, on another sheet of paper, we write the letter or number followed by the sentences we want to add. That's what I did in the draft of my story, "If Wishes Were Frogs." See how I wrote A after the sentence, "For five minutes, we saw no frogs," and B after the sentence, "He looked up at me, and said, 'I know you'll find one, dad, I know it.'"? Then, on a blank part of the paper at the end of the draft, I wrote A and B and wrote the sentences I wanted to add. When I wrote my final draft, I included these new sentences.

Coach the Student

I'd like you to reread your draft and find a place where you want to say more.

- ◆ You stopped at this section. What do you want to add to it?
- ◆ Which revision tool (blank pages, sticky notes, "spider legs," or "add ons") do you want to use to add text to your draft? Now you will have the room you need to say more in your draft.

Link to the Student's Writing

You now have the room you need to add new sentences. I bet that after you write them, you're going to reread and find several more places to add text. Remember that by using a revision tool, you can add as much as you want to your draft—today and in the future.

FOLLOW-UP

In future conferences, nudge students to use whatever revision tool they haven't yet tried. By learning to use several of them, they are more likely to find one or two that truly work well for them. They'll develop their own personal "revision toolbox."

SOURCES

I first learned about "spider legs" from Nancie Atwell, who writes about them in *In the Middle: New Understandings about Writing, Reading, and Learning* (1998).

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