

Viewing *Carl on Camera: Introducing Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD

THE *Carl on Camera: Introducing Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD contains my professional development workshop that explores the fundamentals of conferring with student writers. You can use the *Carl on Camera: Introducing Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD to learn about conferring before you use *Strategic Writing Conferences* in your classroom. The DVD contains the following parts:

- Part 1: Introduction to Writing Conferences
- Part 2: Key Concepts for Writing Conferences
 - ▶ Conferences Are Conversations
 - ▶ Conferences Help Students Become Better Writers
 - ▶ Conferences Have a Predictable Structure
 - ▶ Show Students That You Care
- Part 3: The Teacher's Role in a Writing Conference
- Part 4: Assessment of Student Writing
 - ▶ Assessment Lenses
 - ▶ Traits of Good Writing
 - ▶ Exemplar Pieces
 - ▶ A Typical Pattern: The "All About" Story
 - ▶ Conference Notes and Records
- Part 5: Frequently Asked Questions about Conferring

You can also view the workshop as part of a course on the "how to's" of conferring. If you're a teacher, you could take this course yourself. If you're a literacy coach, you might lead this course with

teachers you're mentoring or as part of study group or inservice.

Whether you choose self-study or decide to build a course around the workshop, you could watch the entire workshop or go by topic. View just the parts that meet your own specific needs—or the needs shared by the teachers you coach. The following viewing guide to *Carl on Camera: Introducing Writing Conferences* is designed to help you focus on the essential points discussed in the workshop.

Part 1: Introduction to Writing Conferences

Before watching this part, reflect on or discuss these questions:

- ▶ How are your writing conferences going?
- ▶ Think about a recent writing conference that you had with a student. What went well in the conference? What would you like to improve?
- ▶ What do you need to learn to become better at conferring with students about their writing?

Part 2: Key Concepts for Writing Conferences

Before watching this part, get an image in your mind of an effective writing conference. You may want to view one or more of the conferences on the *Carl on Camera: Modeling Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD. In Part 2, I discuss my conference with Brendan (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 5, “Finding a Topic by Mining a Writing Territory”); this would be a good conference to view first.

After watching each of the following sections, reflect on or discuss these questions:

Conferences Are Conversations

- ▶ What is the tone of a writing conference?
- ▶ Why is it important to establish this tone?
- ▶ What contributes to the tone of a writing conference?
- ▶ What tone do you usually establish in your writing conferences, and why?
- ▶ What changes could you make to improve the tone of your conferences?

Conferences Help Students Become Better Writers

- ▶ What is the goal of a writing conference?

- ▶ What does it mean to “teach a child to be a better writer”?
- ▶ What is the difference between editing a child’s piece of writing and teaching him to be a better writer?
- ▶ Are you more of an editor in your conferences or a teacher? If you’re more of an editor, what changes could you make to change your goal?

Conferences Have a Predictable Structure

- ▶ What is the structure of a writing conference?
- ▶ What happens in each part of a writing conference?
- ▶ Do your conferences have this structure? If not, what can you start doing in your conferences?

Show Students That You Care

- ▶ Why is it important to show students that we care about them as people and writers in writing conferences?
- ▶ In what ways can we show students that we care about them as writers?
- ▶ What teachers in your life showed interest in you as a writer? What effect did this have on you?
- ▶ What can you start doing in your conferences to better communicate that your care about students as people and as writers?

◆ To explore this topic further, read Chapter 1 of *How’s It Going? A Practical Guide to Conferring with Student Writers* (Anderson, 2000).

Part 3: The Teacher’s Role in a Writing Conference

After watching each of the following sections, reflect on or discuss these questions:

Invite the Student to Set an Agenda

- ▶ How do we invite a student to set a conference agenda?
- ▶ How do you start your conferences?
- ▶ Are students regularly telling you what they’re doing as writers in the beginning of your conferences? If not, in what other ways could you start your conferences that might invite more student talk?

◆ Refer to the handout “The Roles of Teacher and Student in a Writing Conference” (page 37) when you view this part.

Ask Research Questions

- ▶ What kinds of research questions do we ask?
- ▶ How do we generate research questions?
- ▶ What kinds of research questions do you regularly ask students?

- ▶ Are there aspects of writing that you don't usually ask students about? What are they? What questions could you ask to nudge students to talk about these aspects?

Look at the Student's Writing

- ▶ How do we look at the student's writing during a conference?
- ▶ Do you usually have students read their entire piece aloud, or do you read their entire piece? How could you read student writing more efficiently?

Give Feedback

- ▶ What kinds of feedback do we give students in conferences?
- ▶ What is the appropriate tone of the feedback?
- ▶ What kind of feedback do you usually give students? Do you compliment students for what they're doing well? Do you clearly name what students need to work on to improve as writers?
- ▶ In what ways could you improve the tone of your feedback?

Teach the Student

- ▶ In what ways can we teach in a conference?
- ▶ What are the components of the teaching move? What happens in each of the components?
- ▶ In what ways do you typically teach students in conferences?
- ▶ Think about your conference teaching moves. Which steps do your teaching moves contain? Which steps could you add to your teaching moves to make them more effective?

Coach the Student

- ▶ Why is it important for students to try what we teach them during the conference?
- ▶ How can we coach students as they try out what we've taught?
- ▶ In what ways could you improve your coaching of students in conferences?

Link to the Student's Work

- ▶ What is the purpose of the link?
- ▶ How do you bring your own conferences to closure? What else could you do to help students understand what you want them to do after the conference and to continue doing in future pieces of writing?

◆ To explore this topic further, read Chapter 2 of *How's It Going? A Practical Guide to Conferring with Student Writers* (Anderson, 2000).

Part 4: Assessment of Student Writing

◆ Refer to the handout “Developing an Assessment Lens” (page 38) when you view this section.

◆ Refer to the handout “The Traits of Good Writing” (page 39) when you view this section.

◆ Refer to Abby’s and Helaina’s pieces (page 40) when you view this section.

◆ To learn how to confer with a student who has written an all about story, read Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 3, “Revising by Focusing an ‘All About’ Story” or watch my conference with Cooper on *Carl on Camera: Modeling Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD.

After watching each of the following sections, reflect on or discuss these questions:

Assessment Lenses

- ◆ What is a writing pattern?
- ◆ How does recognizing writing patterns help us decide what to teach?
- ◆ Why is it important to have a set of assessment lenses?
- ◆ What is a lifelong writer?
- ◆ What does it mean to be an initiator of writing?
- ◆ What does it mean to write well?
- ◆ What does it mean to have an effective writing process?
- ◆ What are *your* assessment lenses? What other lenses could you look at students through to help you create a more complete picture of them as writers?

Traits of Good Writing

- ◆ What is meaning? Why is it such an important trait?
- ◆ What is structure?
- ◆ What is detail?
- ◆ What is voice?
- ◆ What are conventions?
- ◆ Which of these traits are you most comfortable with and regularly assess in students’ writing? Which traits are you less comfortable with and need to learn about in order to assess them in students’ writing?

Exemplar Pieces

- ◆ Why is it important to study exemplar pieces?
- ◆ After reading Abby’s piece, “When I Went On The Mountain Slide,” what did you learn about what she knows about writing well?
- ◆ After reading Helaina’s piece, “What’s Up in the Field of Grass?” what did you learn about what she knows about writing well?

A Typical Pattern: The “All About” Story

- ◆ Why do students write “all about” pieces?
- ◆ What should we teach students who write “all about” pieces?
- ◆ What other patterns do you regularly see in students’ writing? What do you teach students when you see these patterns?

◆ Refer to my record-keeping form (page 41) when you view this section. You can learn additional information about record keeping and find reproducible record-keeping forms in “An Overview of Conferencing” (pages 10–14).

◆ To explore the topic of assessing student writing further, read the following chapters in *Assessing Writers* (Anderson, 2004): If you’re interested in learning more about assessment lenses, read Chapters 2–5; the traits of good writing, Chapter 4; or record keeping, Chapter 6.

Part 5: Frequently Asked Questions about Conferencing

Conference Notes and Records

- ▶ How can setting instructional goals for students help you confer with them?
- ▶ How can keeping records of your conferences help you set up and follow through on your instructional goals for students?
- ▶ What record-keeping form do you use in conferences? Are you able to record your instructional goals for students in this form?
- ▶ Is there another form that might help you record your goals for students?

After watching this part, reflect on or discuss these questions:

- ▶ What are the advantages of conferring with students at their seats? At a special conferring table?
- ▶ Where do you confer with students? Where else could you confer with students that might create a safer tone in your conferences?
- ▶ When is the best time in the writing process to confer with students? Why?
- ▶ When do you confer with students? Is this the most effective time to confer with students, or do you need to rethink this?
- ▶ What are the advantages of your initiating conferences with students?
- ▶ Who initiates conferences in your classroom, you or the students? Are you getting to see all of the students in your classroom? If not, what can you do to ensure you confer with all of your students?
- ▶ What is the average length of conferences?
- ▶ How long are your conferences? If they regularly go beyond five to seven minutes, what can you do to shorten their length?

Final Discussion Questions

After watching the workshop, reflect on or discuss these questions:

- ▶ What new understandings of conferring have I gained from this workshop?
- ▶ How can I take what I learned and apply it to my own writing conferences?
- ▶ What is the first step I’ll take to improve my writing conferences?

The Roles of Teacher and Student in a Writing Conference

THE TEACHER'S ROLE	THE STUDENT'S ROLE
In the first part of the conference:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Invite the student to set an agenda for the conference.◆ Ask assessment questions.◆ Read the student's writing.◆ Make a teaching decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Set the agenda for the conference by describing her writing work.◆ Respond to the teacher's research questions by describing her writing work more deeply.
In the second part of the conference:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Give the student critical feedback.◆ Teach the student.◆ Nudge the student to "have a go."◆ Link the conference to the student's independent work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Listen carefully to the teacher's feedback and teaching.◆ Ask questions to clarify and deepen her understanding of the teacher's feedback and teaching.◆ "Have a go" with what the teacher taught.◆ Commit to trying on her own what the teacher taught.

© 2009 by Carl Anderson from *Strategic Writing Conferences* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann). This page may be reproduced for classroom use only.

Adapted from *How's It Going? A Practical Guide to Conferencing with Student Writers* (Anderson, 2000).

Developing an Assessment Lens

Assessment begins with developing a vision for what you want a student to become as a writer. This vision becomes an assessment lens that helps you sift through information you gather about the student's writing. My vision is that each student will become a lifelong writer. What I look for when I assess a student is how he resembles a lifelong writer.

A lifelong writer demonstrates *initiative* as a writer when he:

- ▶ writes by choice for purposes that matter to him.
- ▶ writes for audiences that matter to him.

A lifelong writer *writes well* when he:

- ▶ communicates meaning in his writing.
- ▶ structures texts in ways that enable the reader to grasp his meaning.
- ▶ uses precise detail to develop parts of the structure.
- ▶ gives his writing an appropriate voice that enhances his meaning.
- ▶ uses conventions to guide the reader through the text and enhance the meaning.

A lifelong writer has a *writing process* that works when he uses:

- ▶ a repertoire of writing strategies to navigate the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing).
- ▶ strategies that enable him to write well time and time again.

The Traits of Good Writing

MEANING

- ▶ *Meaning* is what the author has to say or the “point” she wants to make about the topic.
- ▶ Meaning influences the decisions the writer makes while composing a text.
- ▶ Some students see writing as retelling instead of as communicating meaning.

STRUCTURE

- ▶ *Structure* refers to the parts of a text and the roles and interrelationships of these parts.
- ▶ The writer’s meaning helps her select the structure—which parts to include or focus on. The role of each part is to help develop the writer’s meaning.
- ▶ The writer decides which kinds of parts to include in a text.
- ▶ In narrative genres, the parts are ordered sequentially (by time); in non-narrative genres, logic binds the parts together.
- ▶ Leads, endings, and transitions guide the reader to create meaning.
- ▶ The writer weights some parts more than others because they play a more crucial role in developing meaning.

DETAIL

- ▶ *Details* are the particulars (or specifics) of a piece of writing.
- ▶ Every detail plays a role in developing what the writer wants to say about the topic.
- ▶ The writer uses a range of detail to develop meaning.
- ▶ Details are composed of specific words that describe exactly what happens in a narrative or that describe exactly the subject of a non-narrative.

VOICE

- ▶ *Voice* is the writer’s presence on the page. It’s the sense that there is a person behind the words.
- ▶ The writer uses voice to enhance her meaning.
- ▶ The writer creates voice in the way she writes sentences.
- ▶ The writer creates voice in the way she uses punctuation.
- ▶ The writer creates voice through choice of detail.

CONVENTIONS

- ▶ *Conventions* of written English are tools that help the writer communicate meaning.
- ▶ Students’ errors are either careless errors or signs that they are growing as writers.
- ▶ Students make predictable errors when they are on “syntactic thresholds,” that is, when they are learning to write more complex sentences.

When I Went On The Mountain Slide

One time in Smuggler’s Notch, I had my summer vacation. And one of the many adventures is when I went on the giant, twisty . . . mountain slide! And well, here’s my story.

With my family, I went to the mountain slide. I went to the changing room with my mom.

“Mom,” I said, “should I go on the mountain slide?”

“Sure! Only if you want to,” she said.

“But I don’t know if I want to or not,” I said.

“Well it’s up to you, you know,” she said.

I thought about it for a while, then looked up at the ceiling and twirled my finger on my nose. I was nervous because I never went on a water slide before.

When I got outside, the first thing I saw was the mountain slide.

I sighed. “Hmmm, should I go on the mountain slide?” I thought.

The second thing I saw was my dad and brother. “Hi!” they said, waving. I didn’t respond.

Then I said to my mom, “Mom, I’m going on.”

“Congratulations,” she said.

Then I went to the slide . . .

When I got to the top, I held my breath, then I let it out. The lifeguard who pushes you said to me, “Do you want to be pushed forward, backward, or twisty?”

“Twisty,” I said. And I really meant it!

I got in my tube and put my feet into the water. The lifeguard asked me some questions.

As I went down the slide, the water splashed into my eyes and I covered them so they wouldn’t get wet. My arms also got wet because they were sloshing around and around in the water like worms in a thunderstorm. And the water was cold on my arms.

“Wahoo!” I screamed. I went side to side, back and forth, because the water was going up on all sides of the pool. SPLASH!!!

As I got out of the water, my mom hugged me and congratulated me. “Well done.”

After that I said, “Can I go again?”

“Okay, fine,” she said.

I felt proud of myself. Now I can do it, I thought.

The End

Abby’s personal narrative

What’s Up in the Field of Grass?

When you think of grass, what comes to mind?

When asked, some people said they never even thought about it. “Green and onion, because of onion grass,” said Carrie Bennet. “I also associate it with the outdoors and nature.”

Nobody said anything about how important grass is, though. It’s one of those things you take for granted in life. You don’t really stop to think about or look at grass. Grass is used in so many ways, here are a few.

- Many animals, such as cows, eat grass and so do humans. Cows have little bugs in their stomachs to help them digest grass.

During the summer, cows chow on the green grass outside. In the colder seasons, farmers have to bring their cows hay, another type of grass.

Did you know that rice is grass? Yep, and sugar is made from a type of grass called sugarcane.

- Lots of little bugs depend upon grass as shelter. Spiders, beetles, crickets, grasshoppers and lots of other insects live among the thin, green blades. They use grass as a means of protection.

- Grass adds beauty to the world. Without grass, the world would be a desert of dark, brown dirt.

- Grass also helps prevent erosion. It keeps soil and sand tied to the ground. If we didn’t have grass then when a wind picked up, woosh, there would go your front yard.

Grass is essential in more ways than one. I don’t know where the world would be without it. Next time you pass a patch of grass, you should stop to think about how important it is, and be grateful that it’s there.

Helaina’s feature article

Assessment Notes for _____ Date _____

What am I learning about this student as a writer?	What do I need to teach this student?

T is the symbol for Teaching Point. **G** is the symbol for Instructional Goal.
 © 2005 by Carl Anderson from Assessing Writers. Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH.

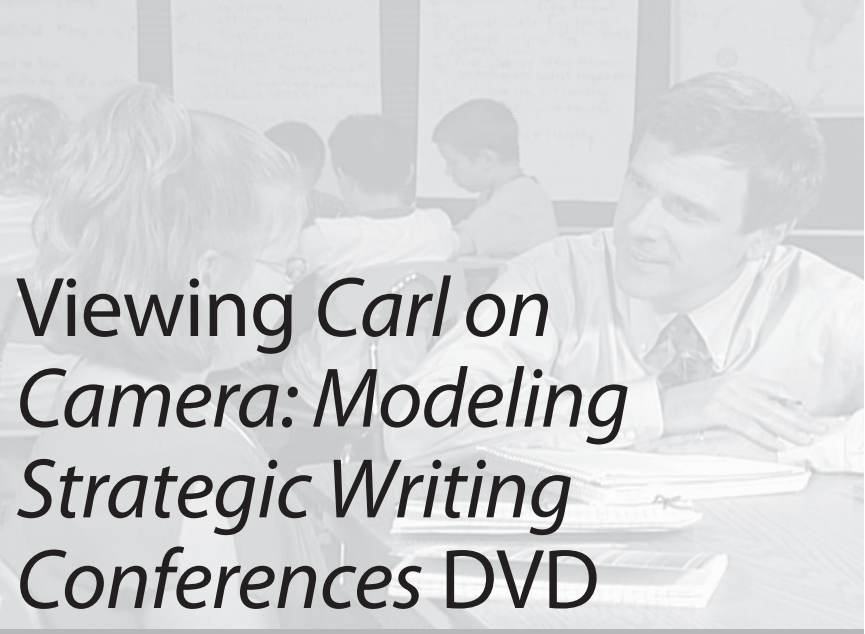
14 Strategic Writing Conferences: Teacher's Guide

Copyright © 2009 by Carl Anderson from Strategic Writing Conferences (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann). This page may be reproduced for classroom use only.

Assessment Notes For Syeda Dates 9/5-10/5

What am I learning about this student as a writer?	What do I need to teach this student?
<p>9/15 topic = "My vacation in D.C." - she's writing an "all about" entry in her writers notebook, events in time order - What's her point? She "likes to be with her cousin Amanda, who is like a sister." T write entries about small important moments, not the whole topic</p> <p>9/23 draft "Seeing Amanda in Washington D.C." - has written (mostly) about the parts of the trip connected to Amanda - is "adding detail" to her draft - wants to share her piece with "the class" T writing can go beyond the class into the world (to Amanda!)</p> <p>9/25 observe: peer conferring with Bonnie</p> <p>10/5 topic = "Getting My Brother Into Trouble" - she says she wants her piece to be about "how much I love getting my brother in trouble" - wants to share her piece with other kids with sibling's - eager to jump into her draft T write a plan before drafting</p>	<p>G Write to get a point across about a topic G Write about the parts of an experience that help you get your point across</p> <p>G write for audiences outside of "the class"</p> <p>G strategies for planning a draft</p>

T is the symbol for teaching point. **G** is the symbol for instructional goal.



Viewing *Carl on Camera: Modeling Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD

YOU CAN USE THE *Carl on Camera: Modeling Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD, which models eleven conferences, when you are learning how to do the conferences and/or when in a study group or inservice.

Use the DVD When You're Learning How to Do the Corresponding Conferences

When you are learning to do a conference that is modeled on the DVD, view the conference first to get a feel for how it looks and sounds “in action.” The DVD can be an invaluable resource when you're working to add a conference to your teaching repertoire. The conferences that appear on the DVD are indicated on the conferences in the three conference books.

The eleven conferences featured on the DVD can also help you learn how to do the other conferences. By getting a feel for the pacing of these conferences, you will have a better understanding of how the other conferences go.

The Eleven Conferences Modeled on the DVD

Book 1: *Topics*

Conference Number	Conference Title	Page
4	Finding a Topic by Brainstorming Writing Territories	22
5	Finding a Topic by Mining a Writing Territory	26
16	Developing a Topic by Reflecting on Its Significance	88

Book 2: *Drafts*

Conference Number	Conference Title	Page
8	Getting Started by Writing a Detailed Plan	34
21	Crafting a Scene with Precise Details: Actions, Dialogue, and Thoughts	99
24	Crafting a Scene by Describing Character Actions	111

Book 3: *Finished Projects*

Conference Number	Conference Title	Page
1	Revising by Adding Text	7
3	Revising by Focusing an “All About” Story	18
4	Revising by Focusing on Important Scenes	21
17	Editing for Clarity by Reading Aloud	77
22	Editing for Clarity by Deleting “and”	94

Use the DVD in a Conferring Study Group or Inservice

You can also view the conferences on the DVD as part of a course on the “how to’s” of conferring. If you’re a teacher, you could take this course yourself. If you’re a literacy coach, you might lead this course with teachers you’re mentoring or as part of study group or inservice.

Whether you choose self-study or decide to build a course around the eleven model conferences, you can explore the conferences either sequentially or by topic. View just the ones that meet your own specific needs—or the needs shared by the teachers you coach. To view the writing conferences by topic, refer to the list of conferences that appears at the beginning of the sections that follow.

Topic 1: What Is the Tone of a Writing Conference?

Model Conferences

- ▶ Brendan (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 5, “Finding a Topic by Mining a Writing Territory”)
- ▶ Ashley (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 16, “Developing a Topic by Reflecting on Its Significance”)
- ▶ Kansas (Book 2: *Drafts*, Conference 24, “Crafting a Scene by Describing Character Actions”)

Writing conferences are, first and foremost, *conversations* between a teacher and a student about writing. When conferences have a conversational tone, the student feels comfortable and is more willing to share what he’s doing as a writer. This information helps you identify the student’s area of need and make an accurate decision about what to teach. The student is more receptive to what you teach when he feels comfortable with you in a conference.

To help you get a sense of the conversational tone of a writing conference, watch the conference with Brendan (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 5). As you watch the conference, pay attention to the following aspects:

- ▶ I sit side by side with Brendan. As I talk and listen, I look at Brendan throughout the conference.
- ▶ I show curiosity about Brendan as a writer by asking what he is doing and asking other questions.
- ▶ I listen carefully to what Brendan tells me and restate what I hear.





◆ For further information about tone, view Part 2, “Conferences Are Conversations” and “Show Students That You Care” of *Carl on Camera: Introducing Strategic Writing Conferences* or read pages 6–7 of *How’s It Going? A Practical Guide to Conferencing with Student Writers* (Anderson, 2000).

- ▶ I maintain a positive tone. I point out what I think Brendan is doing well as a writer.
- ▶ Brendan is comfortable talking with me, right from the beginning of the conference. He is willing to tell me that he’s having some trouble as a writer: He doesn’t know what to write about. Brendan is visibly excited when I tell him that I’m going to teach him a strategy for finding a topic to write about.

After viewing the conference with Brendan, you can continue to explore the tone of writing conferences by viewing any of the other conferences on the DVD. You might continue with the conferences with Ashley (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 16) or Kansas (Book 2: *Drafts*, Conference 24). As you watch the conferences, ask yourself the following questions to help you think about their tone:

- ▶ How does the way that Carl and the student sit together help the student feel comfortable with the conference?
- ▶ In what ways does Carl demonstrate curiosity about what the student is doing?
- ▶ In what ways does Carl listen carefully to what the student tells him?
- ▶ In what ways is Carl positive about what the student is doing as a writer?
- ▶ In what ways does the student show that he/she is comfortable with the conference?

Once you have watched one or several conferences, it’s time to apply what you’ve learned to your own conferences. As you confer with students, try to create a conversational tone. Try some of the teaching moves you saw in the conferences, and look for signs that your students are comfortable with you. It can be helpful to have a colleague with you as you confer, to give you feedback later about the tone.

Topic 2: What Is the Goal of a Writing Conference?

Model Conferences

- ▶ Trevor (Book 2: *Drafts*, Conference 21, “Crafting a Scene with Precise Details: Actions, Dialogue, and Thoughts”)
- ▶ Cooper (Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 3, “Revising by Focusing an ‘All About’ Story”)
- ▶ Allison (Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 4, “Revising by Focusing on Important Scenes”)

In a writing conference, the teacher focuses on teaching one writing strategy or craft technique, with the goal that the student will add it to his writing repertoire. You want the student to use the strategy again when he composes in the future. Don’t try to “fix up” everything that could be improved in the student’s writing; you are the student’s teacher, not his editor.

To help you understand this important conferring concept, watch the conference with Cooper (Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 3). Notice that even though Cooper has written a draft that’s several pages long, she is taught just one thing: how to focus a piece of writing. I don’t review Cooper’s draft with her, page by page, and make a series of suggestions that would improve every aspect of it. Instead, I teach Cooper a strategy for focusing that she will hopefully use the rest of her life. (If you’re wondering when I would focus on the other areas of need, the answer is in future writing conferences.) Every conference in *Carl on Camera: Modeling Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD has the same precise focus on teaching just one writing strategy or craft technique (see “The Singular Focus of Each Model Conference” table, page 47). For ex-





ample, the conference with Trevor (Book 2: *Drafts*, Conference 21) focuses on how to write precise narrative detail, and the conference with Allison (Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 4) focuses on the strategy of identifying and revising one important scene. As you watch these two conferences, ask yourself:

- ▶ What is the one writing strategy or craft technique that Carl teaches?
- ▶ How can the student use the one strategy Carl teaches in future writing?

The Singular Focus of Each Model Conference

Model Conference	The One Strategy or Craft Technique Taught
Ivan Book 1: <i>Topics</i> , Conference 4	Identify and use “writing territories,” topics he is passionate about.
Brendan Book 1: <i>Topics</i> , Conference 5	Find topics and create a web to discover many ways to write about a single writing territory.
Ashley Book 1: <i>Topics</i> , Conference 16	Develop a topic by reflecting on its significance.
Michael Book 2: <i>Drafts</i> , Conference 8	Make a detailed plan for a narrative piece before starting to write.
Trevor Book 2: <i>Drafts</i> , Conference 21	Write a scene with precise narrative details— actions, dialogue, and thoughts.
Kansas Book 2: <i>Drafts</i> , Conference 24	Write character actions with precision.
Cameron Book 3: <i>Finished Projects</i> , Conference 1	Revise a draft by adding details that elaborate on the topic.
Cooper Book 3: <i>Finished Projects</i> , Conference 3	Revise an “all about” story by focusing on an important scene.
Allison Book 3: <i>Finished Projects</i> , Conference 4	Identify scenes that especially convey the message, and revise these scenes first.
Haley Book 3: <i>Finished Projects</i> , Conference 17	Edit a draft for spelling and punctuation errors by reading aloud.
Dillon Book 3: <i>Finished Projects</i> , Conference 22	Know when to use the conjunction and —and when not to.

◆ For further information about focusing a conference on just one strategy, view Part 2, “Conferences Help Students Become Better Writers,” of *Carl on Camera: Introducing Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD or read pages 7–14 of *How’s It Going? A Practical Guide to Conferencing with Student Writers* (Anderson, 2000).

Topic 3: What Is the Structure of a Writing Conference?

Once you have watched one or several conferences, it’s time to try out what you’ve learned in your own conferences. As you confer with students, focus on teaching just one writing strategy or craft technique. Resist the urge to walk through the student’s writing with her, pointing out several things that she could do to improve it. After you confer, ask yourself, “What’s the one thing that I taught in this conference that the student can use again and again, from now on?” It can be helpful to have a colleague with you as you confer, to give you feedback later about your success in teaching just one strategy.

Model Conferences:

- ▶ Ivan (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 4, “Finding a Topic by Brainstorming Writing Territories”)
- ▶ Kansas (Book 2: *Drafts*, Conference 24, “Crafting a Scene by Describing Character Actions”)
- ▶ Haley (Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 17, “Editing for Clarity by Reading Aloud”)

Writing conferences have two parts (see “The First Part of the Writing Conference: Identifying the Student’s Needs” and “The Second Part of the Writing Conference: Teaching the Writing Strategy or Craft Technique,” pages 5–7). In the first part, we identify an area of need that a student has as a writer. In the second, we teach the student a writing strategy or craft technique that addresses the area of need.



To see the two-part conference structure, watch the conference with Haley (Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 17). In the first part of the conference, I find out that Haley needs to learn a more effective editing strategy to help her locate the errors in her writing. The strategy she relies on, editing by reading her draft to herself silently, is not the most effective editing strategy. Then, in the second part of the conference, I teach her one of these more effective editing strategies: reading her writing aloud for errors.



Watch the conference with Haley again. This time, look at the two parts of the conference in more detail. Notice *how* I find out Haley's area of need in the first part of the conference. I begin with an **open-ended question** that invites Haley to say what she's doing as a writer. Then I ask several **follow-up questions** to get more information about how Haley edits her writing. I **look at her writing** to gauge how effective her editing has been.



In the second part of the conference, notice *how* I teach Haley a writing strategy. I start by giving **feedback** about Haley's editing. Then I **teach** Haley the strategy of reading a draft aloud to look for errors. After I have Haley **try out** this strategy briefly, I **link** the conference to Haley's independent work. I let her know that I expect her to continue using the strategy when the conference is over, both with the draft she's working on and with future drafts.

You can continue to explore the topic of the structure of a writing conference by viewing several other conferences on *Carl on Camera: Modeling Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD. Although all the conferences follow the same two-part structure, two good ones to watch are the conference with Ivan (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 4), in which I teach a strategy for finding a topic to write about, and the conference with Kansas (Book 2: *Drafts*, Conference 24), in which I teach how to write specific details. As you watch the conferences with their structure in mind, think about (or discuss) the following questions.

After viewing the first part of the conference:

- ▶ What area of need did Carl identify?
- ▶ What steps did Carl take to identify this area of need?

After viewing the second part of the conference:

- ▶ What writing strategy or craft technique did Carl teach?
- ▶ What steps did Carl take to teach the strategy or craft technique?

◆ For further information about the structure of a writing conference, view Part 2, “Conferences Have a Predictable Structure,” and Part 3, “The Teacher’s Role in a Writing Conference,” of *Carl on Camera: Introduction to Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD or read pages 14–17 and 25–68 of *How’s It Going? A Practical Guide to Conferring with Student Writers* (Anderson, 2000).

Topic 4: What Is Effective Teaching in a Writing Conference?

Once you have watched one or several conferences, it’s time to try out what you’ve learned in your own conferences. As you confer with students, keep the two-part structure of the conference in mind. Try following the steps in each conference part. It can be helpful to have a colleague with you as you confer, to give you feedback later about the structure of your conference.

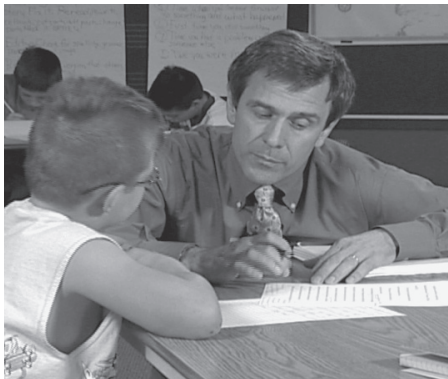
Model Conferences

- ▶ Ashley (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 16, “Developing a Topic by Reflecting on Its Significance”)
- ▶ Kansas (Book 2: *Drafts*, Conference 24, “Crafting a Scene by Describing Character Actions”)
- ▶ Cameron (Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 1, “Revising by Adding Text”)

There are several important teaching “moves” in the **teach** step of a writing conference. They are to explain *what* you are teaching the student, *why* it’s important for the student to learn the strategy or technique, and *how* to do the strategy or technique.

To see effective teaching, watch the conference with Kansas (Book 2: *Drafts*, Conference 24). I begin the **teach** part of the conference by **naming** what I’m going to teach: “to write precise actions.” Then I discuss **why** it’s important to learn how to write precise actions and explain **how** to write precise actions: by envisioning different kinds of body actions. I share examples from the model text *Fireflies!* by Julie Brinckloe (1985).





◆ For further information about effective teaching during a conference, view Part 3, “The Teacher’s Role in a Writing Conference,” of *Carl on Camera: Introduction to Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD. If you’re leading a study group or inservice on conferring, you may view the DVD when you explore Topic 4.

You can continue to explore the topic of effective teaching by viewing several other conferences. Although all of conferences model the same effective teaching moves, two good ones to watch are the conference with Ashley (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 16), in which I teach how to reflect on the meaning of topics, and the conference with Cameron (Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 1), in which I teach how to revise by adding to a draft.

In some conferences, I don’t explicitly explain why it’s important to learn the strategy. This is because I’m teaching in response to an area of need specifically named by the student. For example, in the conference with Ivan (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 4), Ivan complains that he’s not sure what to write about. Why did I decide to teach him to brainstorm writing territories? To have topics to write about, of course.

As you watch the conferences with effective teaching in mind, think about (or discuss) the following questions:

- ◆ What writing strategy or craft technique did Carl name and then teach?
- ◆ What did Carl say to explain why it is important to learn this strategy or technique?
- ◆ What did Carl say in order to explain how to do the strategy or technique?

Once you have watched one or several conferences, it’s time to try out what you’ve learned in your own conferences. As you confer with students, keep the effective teaching moves in mind. It can be helpful to have a colleague with you as you confer, to give you feedback later about how effective your teaching was.

Topic 5: How Do We Use a Model Text in a Writing Conference?

Model Conferences

- ▶ Ivan (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 4, “Finding a Topic by Brainstorming Writing Territories”)
- ▶ Kansas (Book 2: *Topics*, Conference 24, “Crafting a Scene by Describing Character Actions”)
- ▶ Cameron (Book 3: *Drafts*, Conference 1, “Revising by Adding Text”)

When you **teach** during a writing conference, it’s important to use a model text to help the student “see” what the strategy or technique looks like when an experienced writer uses it. It helps the student envision using the strategy herself. Also, when you use a model text, you give the student guided practice “reading like a writer”—the habit that writers have of learning from other writers when they read their writing (see Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 28, “Reading Like a Writer with a Self-Chosen Author”).

You can use a published piece of writing, such as a picture book, excerpt from a memoir or novel, or an article from a magazine or newspaper, as a model text. Or you can use an example of your own writing, such as an entry from your writer’s notebook or a draft you have written.

In many of the conferences in *Carl on Camera: Modeling Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD, I use a model text to teach the student, and you can watch them to see how I use the text to teach in these conferences.

To see how a model text is used, view the conference with Kansas (Book 2: *Drafts*, Conference 24). I use Julie Brinckloe’s *Fireflies!*, a

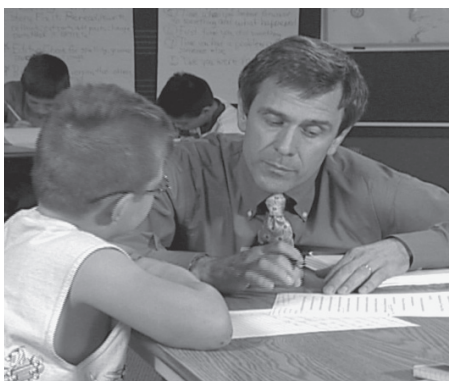


Model Texts Used in Conferences

Conference	Model Text
Ivan Book 1: <i>Topics</i> , Conference 4	Entry from Carl's writer's notebook
Brendan Book 1: <i>Topics</i> , Conference 5	Entry from Carl's writer's notebook
Ashley Book 1: <i>Topics</i> , Conference 16	Entry from Carl's writer's notebook
Michael Book 2: <i>Drafts</i> , Conference 8	Carl's plan for a piece of writing
Trevor Book 2: <i>Drafts</i> , Conference 21	Excerpt from Jean Little's <i>Little by Little</i>
Kansas Book 2: <i>Drafts</i> , Conference 24	Excerpts from Julie Brinckloe's <i>Fireflies!</i>
Cameron Book 3: <i>Finished Projects</i> , Conference 1	Carl's draft "Anzia's Last First Day of School at P.S. 321" with revisions
Allison Book 3: <i>Finished Projects</i> , Conference 4	Donald Crews' <i>Shortcut</i>
Dillon Book 3: <i>Finished Projects</i> , Conference 22	Excerpt from Jean Little's <i>Little by Little</i>

well-known picture book, to teach Kansas how to write precise actions in her narratives. As you watch the conference with the use of model texts in mind, notice that:

- ▶ I have the book *Fireflies!* with me for the conference. When I want to use the book as a model, it is right there for me. I don't have to walk elsewhere in the classroom to search for it, wasting valuable time. (In fact, I usually carry around several of my favorite model texts when I confer.)
- ▶ I put *Fireflies!* right between Kansas and me so that she can easily see the text as I refer to it.
- ▶ To explain how to write precise actions in a narrative, I read a few short excerpts of *Fireflies!* aloud while Kansas follows along. I am very familiar with the text and locate these excerpts easily during the conference.



◆ For further information about using model texts in conferences, read pages 109–137 of *How's It Going? A Practical Guide to Conferencing with Student Writers* (Anderson, 2000). If you're leading a study group or inservice on conferencing, you may want to view the DVD and/or read this section of *How's It Going* when you explore Topic 5.

- ▶ I use the excerpts from *Fireflies!* as examples of how to write precise actions. I connect the examples to Kansas' bicycle story by having her imagine the specific actions she made in the story (what she did with her feet, hands, and face).

You can continue to explore the topic of using a model text in a conference by viewing several other conferences on *Carl on Camera: Modeling Strategic Writing Conferences* DVD. To see how other kinds of model texts are used, view the conference with Ivan (Book 1: *Topics*, Conference 4), in which I use an entry from my writer's notebook, and the conference with Cameron (Book 3: *Finished Projects*, Conference 1), in which I use a draft of my own writing—with revisions marked. As you watch the conferences with model texts in mind, think about (or discuss) the following questions:

- ▶ How does Carl position the text so that both he and the student can view it?
- ▶ How does Carl use the text to explain the writing strategy or craft technique that he is teaching?

Once you have watched one or several conferences, it's time to try using model texts in your own conferences. Since many of the conferences in *Strategic Writing Conferences* include a sample model text, you could start by using one of them. Or if you would like to use a favorite book or some of your own writing samples instead, go ahead. Whatever model texts you choose, keep in mind how the texts are positioned and referred to during your conferences. It can be helpful to have a colleague with you as you confer, to give you feedback later about how effectively you taught using the model text.