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Effective Approaches for Teaching Revision

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Effective Approaches for Teaching Revision

by

Jerome James O'Neill

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A project submitted to the
Department of Education and Human Development of the
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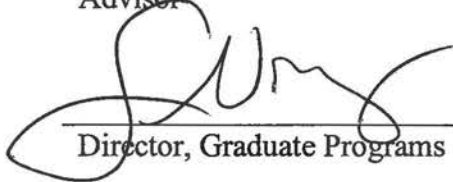
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Advisor

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Date



Director, Graduate Programs

8/11/08

Date

I dedicate this project to my family,
for all of their support
as I pursued this degree
and a career in education.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

a. Problem statement

In high schools nationwide, revision is a dirty word. Students do not want to revise their writing—they perceive it as a boring, painful, confusing process, a type of busywork created by sadistic English teachers. Meanwhile, their teachers do not want to teach revision, either because the topic bores them as much as it does their students or because the revision process appears too hard and time-consuming to explain and model effectively.

Such reluctance to explore the topic of revision would not be such a bad thing if revision were not such a fundamental skill. Students need to contemplate their writing and find ways to re-envision their ideas, to allow their thoughts to develop and change through the writing process. They will need such skills for college and other future writing, obviously. They will also need them for any type of life decisions during and beyond high school. Learning how to more thoughtfully approach problems, contemplate issues, and develop opinions are essential skills in our democratic society, and learning how to revise one's writing is an important way to develop such higher thinking abilities. Revision is, in fact, the heart of the writing process and the heart of the thinking process.

The standard model for teaching high school writing, where students turn in a first-draft piece of their work and then English teachers mark it up with corrections and comments, does not serve the students well. By and large, students ignore

teacher markups, or even resent them, focusing on the bottom-line of letter grades rather than on ways to continue, deepen, and improve their writing projects. When students do attempt revision, they usually make surface, cosmetic changes: fixing a comma or a few misspellings, or perhaps rewording a sentence or two. Given such a lack of education on this topic, it is time to examine ways to teach revision effectively and to incorporate such approaches into the high school English curriculum in ways that will benefit all students.

b. Significance of the problem

As mentioned, revision is rarely taught extensively, if at all, in high school classrooms, whether in English courses or other subjects. Students typically graduate with little knowledge of how to revise their work, a deficit which can cause them problems when they face more complex college writing assignments. Lack of revision skills may also cause students problems whether or not they attend college: All students will face work and life issues which require the ability to think deeply and flexibly. As Peter Elbow describes, "Writing is not just a recording of what you've already thought, but a way of building or creating new ideas on the basis of old ideas; that is, often you cannot start with the ideas you end up with because these ideas come to you only as a result of your writing or revising" (111). Students need to learn how to use writing to deepen their thinking, whether they are contemplating a personal issue, a work challenge, or a philosophical problem.

Many aspects of writing are fairly easy to teach: punctuation, spelling, grammar. However, once teachers move beyond mechanics, they often discover that

writing is one of the hardest things to teach. Faced with this challenge, teachers tend to shy away from delving more deeply into the writing process. Real writers revise their work again and again—why should students not get to experience the reality that writing well inherently involves revision?

Students need the empowerment to take risks with early drafts. They then need the security to know that they will have opportunities to revise and develop their thoughts before grading occurs. They need teachers to model specific techniques for how to revise different types of work. Finally, they need to understand that writing requires thinking and re-thinking, and that taking their time to come to a deeper sense of what they mean is a good thing, not a sign of weakness. Revision is about seeing deeper, not about making small readjustments or undertaking frustrating busywork just to please a teacher.

Ultimately, teaching revision is about teaching students how to become independent thinkers. By modeling how to approach revision, teachers not only give students a significant academic skill but also empower their classroom community and lead adolescents to become adults who can tackle the challenges of life.

c. Purpose

Teaching revision serves several important purposes. First, students learn to think more deeply as they become aware of how the revision process works. Kim Haimes-Korn describes this process by stating that “meaning for writers comes about through the acts of forming and reforming and when revision is seen as an act of invention rather than editing” (88). Students need to learn the difference between

revision, a re-seeing and re-thinking of what they are creating, and editing, the correction of conventional errors of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Revision can provide them with ways to probe issues and to learn about themselves and others more profoundly. It can also allow them to see issues from multiple perspectives and to better understand the thinking of fellow students and people in general. The capacity for how much revision can build student thinking is immense; the tragedy is how little it is taught to high school students.

Second, revision gives students a sense of personal empowerment, an ability to think more deeply and re-envision their own lives more profoundly. According to Janet Angelillo, “Teaching children to revise their writing is a model for teaching them how to live: it teaches them to take a revisionist stance in everything they do, to expect and embrace change, and to position themselves to assess and solve problems in their world” (9). Revision as a process in the high school classroom is not about students writing for a teacher who will serve as an ultimate judge; it is about students learning to work with each other and with the teacher (and potentially with outside readers) to develop their thoughts. Revision not only develops thinking skills but also gives students ownership of their writing and a belief in the importance of their viewpoints.

Given that revision is so rarely taught and has earned itself a scary reputation, students need help to learn how to approach revision. Fortunately, the topic of revision, despite its often forbidding reputation, is teachable. Part of teaching revision is to provide students with a toolbox of strategies to give them possibilities

for reworking their ideas. A second, and significant, part of teaching revision is to develop students' metacognition, which allows them to learn how to think about their own thinking. A third major component of teaching revision is modeling and practicing how to give and receive feedback in a way that is constructive and healthy. Not only does this peer feedback approach help with writing revision, it also builds a sense of community in the classroom.

Building such self-reflective and interactive skills is a crucial challenge for any teacher working with students in adolescence, a time of huge changes and plenty of confusion. Teaching revision allows teachers to talk about the messy process of developing one's thoughts on paper. Such thinking is not a neat and tidy affair, and it should not be. By exploring ambiguities and contradictions, a teacher can allow high school students the freedom to express themselves without feeling at risk of being marked down for not having finalized their thoughts. It also allows them to feel supported as they develop opinions. Revision is not a tedious and superficial aspect of writing; it is a dynamic process fundamental to the experience of writing.

Finally, students today are growing up in an era where computers and other technologies allow us access to huge amounts of information, mountains of data which can feel overwhelming. Knowledge of revision can help students to focus on what they know, what they need to know, and how to obtain such information. By sorting through their own thinking, students can make better choices about how to pursue and evaluate sources of information which they will incorporate into their own writing and into their own life decisions.

d. Rationale

All writers on the topic of revision agree with Peter Elbow that, at least some of the time, “revising is hard work” (111). That said, revision is something that students can learn, even from a young age. Lucy Calkins and other researchers have demonstrated how revision can be taught even in the earliest grades when students are first learning how to write. In addition, the hard work of revision need not be painful work. In fact, it can be a great opportunity for playing with ideas and stretching one’s mind in surprising and enjoyable ways.

This project focuses on developing a curriculum for teaching effective revision techniques to eleventh-grade English Language Arts (ELA) students. Although the project maintains this specific scope for the sake of focus, the techniques described here could be applied to students in other middle-school or high-school grades, and they could be applied to other school subjects as well, such as social studies or science, whenever writing is involved. Indeed, the nature of revision fits well with designing experiments in a physics class or planning a trip to a foreign country in a Spanish class.

Barry Gilmore writes that “revision is a skill as much as a process, one that we learn from reading, writing, writing again, reading some more, and figuring out how to do it all better the next time” (2). Since learning how to revise takes time, any one high school class cannot turn students into master revisers. However, one year of instruction in revision can get students off to a good start, even if that is all they receive during high school. The techniques provided here are meant to give students

the beginnings for a toolbox of techniques which they can add to throughout their lives. In fact, a significant part of the philosophy behind teaching revision is helping students to see how their learning can grow and develop over time, just as their thinking and their essays can grow and develop during a semester or school year. By learning how to revise, students learn how to think.

Chapter 2 of this project provides an overview of the research on teaching revision, and it covers a broad range of writers: elementary, middle school, high school, college, and professional. The research cited includes work with both native English speakers and English Language Learners tackling different writing assignments.

Chapter 3 takes the core findings from this research overview to outline an eleventh-grade ELA curriculum incorporating revision into the writing process. For concision and clarity, the exercises provided discuss how to revise relatively short and personal writing assignments; however, these techniques could be applied to longer assignments in a variety of formats, such as research papers.

The curriculum includes lessons which incorporate visualization and auditory elements, computer technology, and communication skills, with the aim of providing students with different learning styles access to their own strengths in the revision process, a process which ultimately is a personal one. The lessons also connect student writing to literary models and allow students the opportunity to share their writing in different visual and oral formats.

As students learn how to revise, the greatest goal is to build their confidence about what they are creating, to feel sure of themselves and to accept that it is a good thing to make changes in their thinking as they explore topics. As a student quoted by Heidi Andrade said, “self-assessment... just eases your mind about doing your papers and stuff; it doesn’t make you so anxious” (60). Students need to learn that they can be their own constructive critics, that they can improve on their own work, and that teachers are not necessarily their final audience or ultimate judges.

Fiona Hyland emphasizes this point when she states that students benefit when “teachers... try not to control the feedback process too rigidly” (52). By incorporating peer revision into the classroom, the teacher allows students to think about writing for an audience that is not necessarily the English instructor. Ultimately, teaching revision is about helping students to become genuine, real-world writers, writers who can take risks and think for themselves. The following research review and research-based curriculum follow this objective for the benefit of all student writers.

e. Definition of terms

The following are definitions of key terms used throughout this project:

revision: a re-seeing or re-thinking of a piece of writing; an approach to writing where the student learns to probe his or her thoughts more deeply. Revision can allow students to learn more about themselves and about topics outside themselves.

drafting: writing multiple versions of a work in an effort to probe more deeply into a topic. Drafting and re-drafting are essential components of the revision process, helping students to see that writing is a process, not just a product.

editing: for the purposes of this paper, editing refers to making relatively small corrections, such as for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and other English language conventions, in contrast to revising, which involves larger and more fundamental changes. Editing typically becomes a focus near the end of the writing process as the students prepare for a final reader or for publication, although of course students can edit while revising the paper on a larger scale as well.

evaluation: assessing a piece of writing for various characteristics, based on a rubric, checklist, series of questions, or a listing of emotional responses. Learning how to evaluate one's own work helps with making decisions about revision; learning how to evaluate the work of others is a necessary step before learning how to provide appropriate feedback.

feedback: responses from peers, teachers, or other readers, which help the writer to see how his or her ideas are coming across and to give him or her a sense of direction for ongoing revision. Students need to learn how to give and receive feedback constructively and respectfully, but ultimately student writers have the final say on how they want to work with the feedback they receive.

peer revision: a subtype of feedback, where another student or group of students provides information on what is working and not working with a piece of writing.

Peer revision can take place in pairs or in small groups, and can take place live in the classroom or online on discussion boards.

f. Summary

Revision is a powerful skill which students too often do not learn about during high school. Literature on revision shows that revision can be taught effectively at all levels of education. This research also shows that the sooner students are exposed to revision techniques the better, since developing skill at revision takes time. By learning how to revise their writing, high school students become not only stronger writers but also stronger thinkers, ones better able to face life challenges. In addition, they learn to write in a more realistic way, since professional writers revise constantly and often many times before publishing their works for an audience. Not teaching students how to revise does them a disservice: It ignores the most important part of the writing process.

The next chapter provides an overview of how to effectively teach to a range of different writers. By surveying articles and books written by both academic researchers and writing instructors, this chapter lays the foundation for the revision curriculum described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Starting points: Two cheers for revision and a brief look at its history

Janet Angelillo, in her book Making Revision Matter, describes why revision is so important:

Revision is power. It gives all of us ways to find out what we think and want to say, and ways to work toward clarity, passion, and meaning. It gives us ways to make our thinking visible and to negotiate with words, because thinking is seldom clear and perfect in its infantile form. It gives us the power to know how and when to change. (9)

Angelillo posits revision as a powerful ability that goes beyond the writing process into the larger processes of life. She writes that “Ultimately, we must revise because, in writing and life, it is the journey that counts” (11). Teaching students how to revise provides them with a key life skill, a way to deal with challenges and changing circumstances. As Angelillo puts it, “Students who don’t know how to revise or who refuse to revise miss some of the very best thinking they can do” (189). Surely revision is a skill which should therefore be incorporated into the high school English classroom.

Similarly, Donald M. Murray’s book The Craft of Revision focuses on how “writing is a decision-making process” (viii). Murray extols the virtues of revising, seeing it as a chance to engage in exploration and discovery, where “writing leads to

more writing” (4). He also sees the benefits of revision when it comes to recovering memories of the past and gaining deeper awareness of the present moment (5). He describes how revision can be a “magnet for information,” allowing us to build on current knowledge (7). All of these qualities of revision are particularly important for adolescent writers, who are rapidly growing and learning to look at their world in new ways.

Jill Fitzgerald’s article “Research on Revision in Writing,” written in 1987, provides a look at the development of inquiry about revision through the 1970s and 1980s. During these decades, revision began to receive serious academic attention for the first time. Revision became a process worthy of exploration during a paradigm shift, when the field of writing instruction went “from a product-focused view of revision to an increasingly process-oriented one” (482). Revision was no longer just a brief, polishing step right before finishing a piece; instead, it was intrinsic throughout all the stages of the writing process, from conception to publication.

Fitzgerald advocates for much more research on a number of topics, including the effectiveness of different types of revision approaches, integration of revision into the full writing process, the mental revision process which occurs before the writer starts physically writing, and connecting revision to mental development and the acquisition of knowledge. Fitzgerald states that further research “could lead to a better understanding of the revision process, the circumstances under which revision aids learning, and ways we might better cultivate the development of revision abilities” (499). Although a need for more research continues to be evident over

twenty years later, what follows in this chapter is a review of the research that has emerged since Fitzgerald published her study.

Revision is all about attitude

Before students can become good at revision, teachers need to help them cultivate a good attitude. In his book Revision: A Creative Approach to Writing and Revising Fiction, David Michael Kaplan stresses that “*the purpose of writing a story is to rewrite it*. The purpose of a first draft is only to get us to the second; the purpose of the second, to get us to the third; the third to the fourth, and on and on and on...” (5-6, italics his). After all, Kaplan points out, “Tolstoy wrote *War and Peace* eight times (without a word processor yet!) and was still making revisions in the galleys” (6). High school students need to learn that they are real writers, and that real writers revise—and revise and revise again.

Kaplan discusses “revision reluctance” where writers believe (or simply wish) that the first draft should be the best, a romantic ideal that writing springs from inspiration (6). However, he stresses that we must overcome this attitude in order to move on. It is crucial to include opportunities for revision in the writing process so that students learn to accept it and even to enjoy it. The initial process of getting words on the page, after all, becomes much easier when the writer knows that later will come the opportunity to rethink and clarify them.

Continuing this theme, Brock Dethier’s article “Revising Attitudes” maintains that “in writing and revision, attitude is everything” (1). Students may “view revision as a bad joke that English teachers dreamt up to prolong the torture of homework”—

but in fact revision is part of being a real writer, and so is resistance to it (1).

Teachers are the ones who need to train students to cultivate a more positive attitude toward revision.

Dethier makes the point to his students that all writers are already revisers, playing with choices in their heads or as they type, making changes as they go along. He recommends that “with a positive attitude toward revision, you will listen to feedback with an open ear and not get so quickly offended when a reader tries to help” (1). He provides a laundry list of reasons to resist revision, including how “revision is trivial, the nitpicky correcting of superficial niceties,” “revision makes things worse,” and “revision is drudgery; only the first draft is creative” (2-3). He stresses that all writers feel these ways sometimes, but that with practice revision can become second nature. High school writers need to learn that their frustrations, as well as their elations, reside in all people who take writing and communicating seriously.

Again and again, a key to teaching revision is to convince students that all writers revise and high school students are genuine writers themselves. In her introduction to the collection Acts of Revision: A Guide for Writers, Wendy Bishop describes types of writers: the single drafter, who tries to write the perfect paper on the first pass; the dedicated reworker, who edits and tweaks; the pragmatic writer, who gets words on the page and worries about how they sound later; and the romantic writer, who prays for an inspirational first draft (vi). Bishop does not create a hierarchy of writers—all of these writing personality types can be effective to an

extent. But by delving into how writers can have different philosophies, she shows the possibility that students can learn to write in new ways. By discussing with students how different writers operate, a teacher can open doors for students, showing them that they can have a positive and flexible attitude to the writing process and to the revision process specifically.

Kelly Gallagher's book Teaching Adolescent Writers provides a good amount of advice about how to instill a positive attitude among students and boost their enthusiasm for writing in general. After all, "job one is to get students interested in writing" (93). Gallagher sees writing as an area which is given all too little attention in American schools, as well as an area which students implicitly are taught to dislike as drudgery.

One of Gallagher's strategies is to allow students to write about what they are interested, which "creates two immediate benefits." First, "choice fosters a feeling of ownership in the writer," which makes them more likely to work harder on an assignment. Second, "choice drives better revision," because "the number-one determiner in whether a student of mine will spend meaningful time revising a first draft is whether she cares about the paper" (91).

Finally, in the field of revision Lucy Calkins stands as a major figure, teaching and writing about the process for decades. Her book The Craft of Revision, written with Pat Bleichman, continues her focus of working with children in elementary school, but her extremely clear and detailed lessons can be modified to work with older writers.

Calkins begins her book by describing how she introduces her students to the idea of revision. After her students write one of their first stories of the year, she asks them if they are proud of what they have written. They inevitably respond with enthusiasm. She then tells them the next step: “What writers do when we really like what we’ve written is we revise” (1). Although her second-graders are at first skeptical of her approach, she continues the lesson with great enthusiasm, having them help her revise a story which she has previously written. By starting her discussion of revision as if it is the most natural and exciting next step, she plants the seeds for children to accept and enjoy this process.

Building the revision toolbox

Fortunately, there are many ways to build this positive attitude toward revision. This section focuses on some of the many techniques available for teaching revision and building students’ toolboxes. Since the following references offer numerous techniques, this section highlights some specific ones and more appear in Chapter 3’s curriculum.

In “I’ll Do It My Way: Three Writers and Their Revision Practices,” Stephanie Dix provides a detailed look at how three different young writers approach revision for a number of different assignments. Although this article does not discuss the teaching of revision skills, it does promote the idea that all students are individuals and may benefit from different approaches. Teachers need to keep in mind the importance of providing options for students so that they can then choose the techniques which work best for them.

Specifically, Dix describes a student writer who incorporates revision throughout his writing process, a student who writes and rewrites a detailed skeleton of her work before she builds up to a full draft, and a student who makes many decisions very early on and then writes a full draft from this brainstorm. Dix notes that “the students’ diverse ways of learning to write provides another challenge for the classroom teacher” (572). Teachers need to encourage students to revise, and they need to be open about *how* students chose to revise.

With these goals in mind, many options exist for incorporating revision into the curriculum. In her article “Interior Design: Revision as Focus,” Shelly D. Smede describes how she leads students through focused revision days in her eighth-grade classroom. For her, “one thing was clear; few of my students would revise on their own time” (118). By providing set days for revision work and checklists to guide them through the steps of revision, Smede taught her students how to evaluate and modify their writing, leaving the final choices up to them.

On a more conceptual level, David Peter Noskin discusses in “Teaching Writing in the High School: Fifteen Years in the Making” how he helps his students “to make the important transition from creating to analyzing” (35). Both of these skills are part of the writing process, and learning revision skills can help students to separate these tasks and clarify them. Noskin also discusses how he works with model student essays, displaying them on an overhead and then discussing particular aspects for revision, such as crafting good introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Students can then revise their own work based on what they learned by

revising these models as a full class (37). As noted by many of these researchers and writers, modeling is crucial to help students play with revising texts by others before they begin the challenge of revising their own work.

Part of selling revision to a classroom of teenagers is to make the process a fun challenge rather than a dreary one. In “Almost a Game: Enabling Restrictions in Sentence Variety Exercises,” Tom C. Hunley presents an exercise from a freshman college composition class, reworking student paragraphs based on a variety of rules about sentence types. His artificial, game-like exercise helped most students gain some variety and power in their writing styles, although he does report that they were not all happy going through the process. Nevertheless, Hunley found that the exercise opened students’ minds to “the wide array of stylistic options that English offers” (12) by exposing them to different types of sentence structures. This exercise could be particularly helpful for high school writers, since it incorporate aspects of language structure (such as defining and creating compound and complex sentences). Most importantly, “emphasizing the game-playing aspects of sentence variety exercises is important” (12). Students need to learn how to revise their own writing, but there is no harm attempting some revision exercises simply for the sake of playing with language possibilities.

In a similarly playful manner, Kim Haimen-Korn writes in “Distorting the Mirror: Radical Revision and Writers’ Shifting Perspectives” about the need for some “chaos” in the writing process (88). She maintains that students need to “step out of

[their] writing comfort zones” (89) in order to produce original, fresh, truthful writing.

In order to conjure such chaos in the classroom, she suggests transforming the genre of a piece of writing, turning an expository essay into a collection of letters or taking a personal narrative and giving it an outsider’s point of view (89). By engaging in such exercises, which are like “distorted mirrors” in “sideshow carnivals,” students “begin to imagine the ways [they] are seen by others and the ways [they] might see [themselves] as whole or in parts” (95). Once again, such a revision strategy is particularly powerful, and appropriate, for adolescent writers who are exploring their identities.

Taking on different perspectives is a powerful way to revise writing, particularly personal essays. Hans Ostrom’s article “The Masks of Revision,” creates characters out of the revision process itself. For example, students can adopt the Mask of the One Who Cares, reading aloud a piece with care and attention and attending to any areas which seem troublesome (31). Alternatively, they may choose instead to revise more aggressively, putting on the Mask of the One Who Is Difficult to Please (32).

Other revision strategies include the Mask of the One Who is Not Alone, where the writer imagines a specific audience and their responses; the Mask of the One Who Loves Details, where students look at the small aspects of writing, the sentence structures, word choices, and punctuation; and the Mask of the One Who Likes Surprises, where students shake up the predictable aspects of a writing piece

(33-36). Ostrom emphasizes that “revision, in any event, is a performance” (36)—and a performance that students can engage in with some distance, allowing the masks to give them the freedom to reconsider their original words.

Wendy Bishop’s article “Revising Out and Revising In” begins by stating that “drafting recklessly makes writers feel rich, keeps them from hoarding; trusting that they have more ideas to come, they develop *flexibility*” (15, italics hers). By writing more than they will need, students can then decide later where to focus. Bishop points out to her students that “you don’t take three days’ worth of food on a three-day camping trip, you take extra,” and similarly students need to overdraft in order to make revision easier later (16).

Bishop provides numerous approaches for overdrafting. For example, students can choose five “provocative words” from their texts and then freewrite about each of them. Students might also find five media images related to their essays, using family photos, advertisements, or songs, and then freewrite about how they relate to their texts (22). For the sake of revision, students may create characters in their heads, writing “a memo from the boss of revision to your draft” (25). All of Bishop’s approaches can jumpstart the flow of ideas.

Barry Gilmore’s book “Is It Done Yet?”: Teaching Adolescents the Art of Revision provides a plethora of techniques, many of which appear in Chapter 3’s curriculum. His outlook is that “the writing teacher’s job, ultimately, is not to revise for students but to teach students how to revise for themselves” (2) and he maintains that “revision can’t take place only after grades are assigned” (8)—students must

have the opportunity to rework their writing before the teacher marks up their papers and provides a numerical evaluation.

One of Gilmore's techniques is to teach students reverse outlining. To engage in this exercise, they examine a short piece of their writing, jotting down the function of each sentence. They then ask themselves a series of questions. Would rearranging the sentences work better? Could they try a different opening? A different ending? How could they expand on their examples? Using this microscope approach on a small piece of writing can help students learn flexibility, that their writing is not set in stone and that multiple possibilities exist for changing their words (18).

Gilmore also suggests drawing a picture based on a piece of writing. He believes that "drawing... offers an entry point—a place to start other than an abstract or overly generalized introductory sentence" (19). Additionally, Gilmore works extensively with student metacognition. His students examine their own writing evolution, asking themselves how their writing has improved, what aspects of their writing need more work, and what they enjoy most when writing (101-102).

Another book which provides a treasure trove of techniques is Georgia Heard's The Revision Toolbox: Teaching Techniques that Work. Again, a number of her suggestions appear in Chapter 3's curriculum. Heard makes the point that "many beginner writers believe that revising and editing are the same thing" and they need direct and indirect instruction in order to learn the difference (1). She notes that students also often need to learn that "revision doesn't necessarily take place after

[they have] finished a piece of writing, but instead revision will likely occur throughout the writing process” (1).

Among her many suggestions, Heard recommends having students create their own thesauruses, lists of word that they can later use to replace more overused words in their writing pieces (5). On a larger scale, she suggests having writers play with flashbacks and other timing changes, slowing down or speeding up the pace of a story to create different effects for readers (31-34).

Heard also emphasizes questions for students to ask throughout the writing process, such as “What am I really trying to say?” and “What is this piece of writing really about?” She then has students respond to their own questions by freewriting in order to guide the piece along (77-78).

Finally, Heard describes how to create revision centers in the classroom, each area providing an opportunity to play with different specific aspects of revision, such as word choice, structure, voice, and sentence ordering. She recommends providing a mini-lesson on each center before allowing the students to rotate through them, and then reconvening the full class for a final five minutes to share their experiences at the centers (91-101). Such activities keep students in motion and in communication about their revision discoveries.

The crucial ingredients of evaluation and feedback

Obviously a major aspect of the revision process comes from reader evaluation and feedback. Several sources describe how to be more effective with

three forms of evaluation and feedback: teacher to student, student to self, and student to other student.

Looking at the issue of effective teacher feedback, Hedy McGarrell and Jeff Verbeem in “Motivating Revision of Drafts through Formative Feedback” define the differences between formative feedback, given during the writing process, and evaluative feedback, given at the end of the writing process. The authors determine that formative feedback increases student motivation to delve deeper and grow as thinkers and communicators. This article provides useful data for all teachers who want to re-examine their feedback practices. By probing student ideas and avoiding initial judgments, teachers can effectively pursue more profound student learning. As the authors write, “formative feedback addresses writers at a level where their own communicative purposes are the primary consideration. It often takes the form of probing questions, focuses on content, avoids judgment, and is personalized” (236). Such feedback can be extremely helpful at urging students to deepen their thoughts in revised drafts.

Fiona Hyland’s article “ESL Writers and Feedback: Giving More Autonomy to Students” provides two case studies of student-teacher interactions which demonstrate how teacher feedback can be totally at cross-purposes with the goals of students and therefore can unintentionally stifle their development. Although the students and teachers were working in college-level ESL settings, the dynamics could occur in any teaching situation. Hyland provides a wake-up call to make sure that teachers have adequate skills to realize when communication is working and when it

is not. Hyland describes the political landscape of the classroom: “teacher interventions are made within the classroom context where the relationships between teachers and students are both complex and unequal in terms of power” and therefore “teachers should... try not to control the feedback process too rigidly” (52). Teachers need to make sure students have the freedom to decide how to pursue the development of their writing pieces and do not follow teacher suggestions blindly merely for the sake of a grade.

Jessica Williams’s article “Tutoring and Revision: Second Language Writers in the Writing Center” probes a similar dynamic, looking at the interactions between tutors in a writing center and English Language Learners. Following the transcripts of tutoring sessions from the writing lab, Williams concludes that writing tutors could be more effective by demonstrating how revisions can work rather than by trying to make the students guess how to improve, an approach commonly pursued by tutors but one which can be slow and frustrating for both sides. Williams also notes that making a written plan for revisions with the student greatly helps with student follow-through. Finally, on the basis of the study, Williams concludes that revisions do not always lead to better papers, and she calls for more long-term studies to look at how student writing develops over one or more academic years and through multiple, varied writing assignments (195-196).

Moving on to the dynamic of students evaluating themselves, John A. Ross, Carol Rolheiser, and Anne Hogaboam-Gray’s study “Effects of Self-Evaluation Training on Narrative Writing” interestingly concludes that teaching students self-

evaluation techniques can improve their assessment skills while not necessarily improving their writing itself. Although such a finding sounds discouraging, the researchers admit that their study has limitations due to its short-term duration of just a few weeks. Weaker writers did improve during this period, while stronger writers remained at the same level, even though they could more accurately assess their work. The researchers write that “teaching self-evaluation skills increased the accuracy of student self-appraisals” (123) and suggest that further research could help determine how to help stronger writers improve.

In “Analyzing the Benefits of Revision Memos during the Writing and Revision Process,” Bryan Anthony Bardine and Anthony Fulton discuss how they require their students to write revision memos, letters describing their revision process. Revision memos typically run one or two pages long, and Bardine and Fulton teach their students to incorporate details and be specific when describing their revisions and revision process. Students attach these memos when they submit revised drafts of their work. The teachers never grade these memos, using them instead to better respond to students about their personal writing processes. The authors stress that, although they teach college students, all students could benefit from this approach, noting that “the earlier student writers begin reflecting on their writing, the easier it will be for them to view their papers objectively and revise more effectively” (153).

Heidi Andrade’s article “Self-Assessment through Rubrics” discusses how student self-assessment works best when not initially connected to grades. Andrade

discusses how rubrics designed by students and teachers cooperatively can help students improve their writing by teaching them what makes for strong writing. Among other strengths of this article, Andrade details how self-assessment is not always an easy sell: “Although my students have told me that they thought the self-assessment I required was a ‘big pain’ at first, their attitudes have usually become positive after they try it” (63). Her final conclusion is a mantra for the importance of teaching students how to become self-reflective revisers: “If students produce it, they can assess it; and if they can assess it, they can improve it” (63).

Looking at how students can provide feedback for each other, Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff provide much good advice in their description of effective writing workshops, Being a Writer: A Community of Writers Revisited. Their book describes three levels of revision: first, reseeing or rethinking, changing the writing’s “bones”, or a “process of writing and rereading [that] changes you”; second, reworking or reshaping, changing the writing’s “muscles,” or how a piece gets across its meaning; and third, copyediting or proofreading, or changing the writing’s “skin” (124-125). Although a writer can benefit from feedback at the first level, it is at the second level where feedback often becomes most crucial.

For this second level process of reworking, Elbow and Belanoff recommend that students work in writing groups, distributing their work to each member of the group, using copies with large margins. The readers take notes in these margins as the writer reads the piece aloud. They note their emotional reactions, such as if they were “curious, bored, annoyed, offended, excited, informed, hostile, or something

else” along with “the words or phrases that cause their reactions” (134). Receiving this feedback can help a student writer to see what parts of a piece are working effectively and what parts need more clarity. As Elbow and Belanoff assert, “form and content are inextricably linked: Changing *how* something is said almost always affects *what* is said” (135, italics theirs). Writers often need the feedback of an audience of readers to realize if they need to rework their form in order to convey their content effectively.

Elbow and Belanoff note that the third level of copyediting can work well with writers pairing together to mark up each other’s papers (137). However, the audience approach is most effective for the second level, the reworking type of revision, because “revision requires becoming consciously aware of your own purposes... [and] also aware of the effects your language is having on others” (143). When students write without a real audience, it is hard for them to know how effectively they are conveying what they really want to say.

In Clearing the Way: Working with Teenage Writers, Tom Romano discusses how he sets up peer review groups in his classroom. He notes that such groups can bring about some teacher anxiety: Will students provide helpful feedback for their peers? Romano explains how he has learned to set these doubts aside, realizing that “some of the groups are working better than others, but all the groups are working better than I think. They accomplish things that would be difficult to measure with a standardized test” (69).

Romano considers the peer group process to be a critical one for developing writing. He sees the process as inherently beneficial: “by its very nature, conversation requires students to focus and clarify their thinking” (70). Student writing does not work best when operating in a vacuum.

In summary, writing evaluation and feedback is a complex process which teachers need to understand more thoroughly in order to help students become strong revisers of their own work. Whether learning how to give good feedback themselves, or teaching students how to evaluate their own work or the work of peers, teachers can learn from existing research how to be effective and how to empower their students to be strong editors as well as writers.

Revision in the twenty-first century classroom: Working with technology

Back in 1964, Marshall McLuhan wrote:

The electronic environment creates an information level outside the classroom that is far higher than the information level inside the schoolroom. In the nineteenth century, the knowledge inside the classroom was higher than the knowledge outside the classroom.

Today it is reversed. The child knows that in going to school he is, in a sense, interrupting his education. (18)

Certainly what appeared true to McLuhan in 1964 is even more the case in the twenty-first century. Finding ways to incorporate technology into teaching revision accomplishes two goals. First, technology helps to engage students, who are used to technology in their daily lives, in a process which otherwise can appear dry and

forbidding. Second, technology can provide ways to make the revision process easier as well as more enjoyable.

Thomas E. Krucli's article "Making Assessment Matter: Using the Computer to Create Interactive Feedback" describes his switch from paper-based to electronic-based feedback for his students. Krucli uses such tools as the Microsoft Word AutoText function to streamline comments on common errors, hypertext links to websites to instruct students on how to fix such errors, and voice recordings of his summary comments and grades. According to Krucli, students respond enthusiastically to these innovations, paying significantly more attention to the computer feedback than they had to his written comments. Krucli also found that their writing significantly improved, with his computer-feedback students scoring approximately 10% higher than a control class (51). Krucli concludes that:

The interactive process helps students formulate clearer ideas as to what they do well and what they need to improve as they write their essays; as this strategy is developed, it can become a powerful tool that will improve the effectiveness of writing assessment in the classroom and provide superior returns on the time invested in grading. (52)

Not only does his new approach appeal to his students, but it can also appeal to teachers who will be glad to see their feedback given more attention.

Debbie Perry and Mike Smithmier's article "Peer Editing with Technology: Using the Computer to Create Interactive Feedback" directly respond to Krucli's article. They outline their approach to teaching students how to give peer reviews via

word processor. The teachers provide specific, detailed lessons to instruct students on how to edit each other's work effectively and then to respond to these edits. Their article also discusses ways for teachers to evaluate progress between drafts by analyzing revisions by having students highlight their specific changes. This article, although brief, provides good nuts-and-bolts info on how to implement technology in the revision process, with particularly helpful information on the importance of clear teacher modeling to insure that student editing and response skills develop. The authors conclude that their approach helps students both as writers and as reviewers: "Ideally, by tracking their comments through a series of revisions, students will be able to identify personal strengths and weaknesses not only in writing but also in their peer editing" (24).

Vivian Jewell takes a different approach to technology in "Continuing the Classroom Community: Suggestions for Using Online Discussion Boards." Jewell describes how to use online discussion boards outside of the classroom, with students posting comments from home as a way to continue class discussion of assigned texts. The author describes many benefits: more students participate than they do in class, because shyer students are willing to speak up more online; students craft lengthier and more sophisticated responses, creating long chains of responses; and the feeling of class community grows despite the fact that much discussion occurs outside the classroom and in a virtual format. In general, Jewell's students take to online discussions eagerly since it builds on their interest in online messaging with friends. Jewell also finds that using class time for the untraditional activity of silent reading

and then holding more discussions online helps students to stay current with reading assignments.

Although this article is not specifically about writing and revision, Jewell's approach could be implemented with writing assignments, having students draft in class and then review and comment on each other's work from home. Jewell writes that "with discussion boards, students can explore issues, craft hypotheses, and ask questions in a community of learners that extends beyond the bricks-and-mortar classroom" (87). Similarly, giving students class time for writing could help more reluctant writers to write more. Peer feedback could then continue from home. Of course, this approach relies on students having access to computers after school, which could be an issue for students from lower-income families. Nevertheless, the untraditional approach this article takes is inspiring and worth exploring in the pursuit of teaching revision skills.

Kathleen Blake Yancey's article, "Using Multiple Technologies to Teach Writing," describes several good ways to use technology to help with the writing process in general. Most relevant to revision, Yancey describes having students create PowerPoint slide presentations while beginning research assignments and before starting to draft their papers. Students show their presentations in class and ask for feedback, helping them to plan their paper. This approach ties into the idea that revision can begin even before a first written draft. The author believes that "from a technological perspective, it was probably easier to teach writing 100 years ago—and it was certainly cheaper" (40). Nevertheless, she insists that we need to

prepare students to become writers in the twenty-first century, making use of current technologies.

Mary B. Nicolini's article "Making Thinking Visible: Writing in the Center" presents an overview of how one school's writing center facilitated a variety of student assignments across the curriculum. Among other technologies, the center provides the Daedalus Integrated Writing Environment (DIWE), a program to help students generate responses via a series of teacher-determined prompts to nudge their thinking. For example, a teacher can prepare a series of prompts asking a student to explore different aspects of a novel or class unit theme. The students also can pick and choose prompts depending on their particular interests. Although this article does not discuss revision *per se*, such a prompt-based approach could also help students to expand, develop, and otherwise revise pieces of writing. Students could also be involved in writing prompts for each other, giving them more investment in the process of helping their peers to develop their essays.

Nicolini's article addresses the importance of how a school can show commitment to a technology-assisted writing program: both financially, through designated funding and staffing, and philosophically, through supporting the center across the curriculum. Nicolini writes that: "...technology does not teach writing. In fact, teachers do not teach writing. Students learn to write by writing. Using technology in a writing-process classroom allows teachers to get out of the way and let students compose" (67). Nicolini's language is strong: Certainly one can make the argument that teachers *do* at least assist with students learning how to write.

Nevertheless, Nicolini's point about students learning by writing is sound. Students need encouragement to write and then to rewrite, and if technology can encourage more writing, all the better.

Finally, Jeffrey L. High, Jennifer M. Hoyer, and Ray Wakefield write in "Teaching 'Process Editing' Skills with Computers: From Theory to Practice on a Larger Scale" about English-speaking students learning how to write short essays in German. Although the students are learning to write in a foreign language in this setting, the general approach that the authors describe would work well in an ELA classroom.

The three teachers implement a peer review system with an emphasis on peer identification of mistakes via word-processed comments on student papers. The authors find that students improve significantly more with this technological approach than they do without it. This article provides extensive and helpful details for how to structure this type of peer review program, including reproduction of assignments, checklists, and student feedback. It also documents how students appear more enthusiastic about editing and revision when engaging in these tasks on word processors rather than on paper.

Overall, this article offers detailed documentation of a technology-based approach to peer editing which results in significant development of students both as writers and editors. The authors write that "student writing and students' diagnosis of which errors they were commonly making and in what context they occur has also improved in impromptu writing tasks, evidently because students had internalized the

editing skills they had practiced on the work of their classmates” (160). Such a finding demonstrates that students’ evaluation of others’ writings and their own writing development are not separate skills, and that appropriate use of technology can improve both areas.

Final thoughts

A good attitude, a toolbox of techniques, evaluation and feedback skills, and technology can combine to create a strong classroom for revision instruction. Steve Graham and Dolores Perin’s article “What We Know, What We Still Need to Know: Teaching Adolescents to Write” surveys a number of studies on what helps fourth-through twelfth-graders write. Not surprisingly, Graham and Perin’s primary conclusion is that this area needs much more research, echoing the thoughts of many of the authors discussed above.

Acknowledging the need for more investigation, their strongest findings include the importance of teachers explicitly modeling the steps of writing. Teachers also must provide a supportive, scaffolded environment for developing writers. By providing such support, teachers can help students excel at revision. Graham and Perin conclude that “writing intervention research needs to be innovative, testing new treatments and hypotheses. This includes going beyond the classroom to study writing outside of school, including how new technologies such as e-mail, text messaging, and innovations not yet realized impact writing development” (330). In the ongoing Information Age, revision needs to consider nontraditional communication avenues as well as the traditional ones.

The teaching and study of revision remains an exciting field both because of the benefits provided by past research and the opportunities still ahead for future investigations. Given such possibilities, Chapter 3 outlines a curriculum which incorporates revision research into an eleventh-grade ELA classroom.

Chapter 3

Application: A Research-Based Revision Curriculum

Ten principles for effective teaching of revision

This chapter outlines the most fundamental principles for effective teaching of revision and then describes a sample curriculum based on these ten ideas. These ideas stem from the research discussed in Chapter 2, and they will be discussed in more detail in the curriculum and lesson plans below.

The ten principles are:

1. Students need to learn a positive attitude toward revision.
2. Students need to learn that they are real writers.
3. Students benefit from a playful approach to revision.
4. Students benefit from approaches that appeal to multiple intelligences.
5. Students need to learn how to evaluate their work.
6. Students need to learn how to give feedback on each other's work.
7. Students need clear, focused, and supportive feedback from their teachers.
8. Students benefit from working with literature in connection to revision.
9. Students benefit from working with technology in connection to revision.
10. Students need to learn how to think metacognitively about their own writing processes.

A curricular outline incorporating the ten principles

Although revision can, and should be, taught at all grade levels and taught across the curriculum, this project focuses on ways to incorporate revision into an

eleventh-grade ELA classroom. Revision activities in this class begin early in the year and continue through both semesters. Revision activities accompany all major writing assignments as well as many smaller ones.

Because describing the full curriculum for a high school year would become very lengthy, this chapter discusses the general approach to teaching revision and then provides a series of seven sample lesson plans which incorporate the ten principles for effective teaching of revision. These lessons would all take place fairly early in the year, most during the first month of school. The lessons set a foundation for evaluation, peer feedback, and revision activities that then continue throughout the year. Especially for students who have not had much previous experience with revision, these lessons make the point that revision is intrinsic to the writing process and to the majority of writing for this course.

The lesson plans describe revision activities based on personal essay topics. Working with personal essays is a good starting place for revision activities because students tend to be more invested in writing these types of assignments and therefore want to pursue their ideas further.

After introducing revision approaches with this type of assignment, the activities can then extend to other and potentially longer writing projects, such as persuasive essays, creative writing, or research papers. They can also apply to non-traditional projects, such as developing a graphic novel, a PowerPoint presentation, or a short film. Chapter 4 discusses extensions of this curriculum in more detail.

The remainder of this curricular outline addresses the ten principles.

Principle 1: Students need to learn a positive attitude toward revision.

The curriculum lays down a foundation from the start that revision is a good and necessary aspect of writing. Lesson 1 discusses revision directly and then gives an exercise for transforming a piece of writing. By the time students reach Lesson 7 (approximately a month later), they will have taken on a variety of revision challenges.

Students will be encouraged to talk about their writing and revision processes, and of course not all students will love revision, or like writing in general. However, the focus of the curriculum is to show that revision does not have to involve punishment—the teacher will not grade any assignments that are still undergoing revisions, although the teacher will provide oral and written feedback to help guide students.

Principle 2: Students need to learn that they are real writers.

Part of why teaching revision is so important is that it is a critical part of any published writer’s process. High school students need to learn that they are real, legitimate writers, not just drones cranking out papers for an English teacher. Writing is a real skill, not busywork, and students need to know that it is a legitimate, real-world activity.

Lesson 1 begins to send this message by talking about the importance of revision. Students could also be exposed to quotes by writers about their revision process, or look at sample drafts written by famous writers.

By the time students reach Lesson 7, they have a lot to think about. They have written multiple pieces (approximately four) with various types of self-evaluation and peer and teacher feedback guiding their revisions. They now are ready to take on a real-writer step of analyzing their own writing process.

Principle 3: Students benefit from a playful approach to revision.

Tied in with Principle 1, students need to learn that they can play with words, sentences, and entire compositions. Writing is not set in stone and should not feel overly precious once put on paper. Students also need to know that it is good to take risks when writing, and that they will not be penalized for taking chances and stretching their wings.

Lesson 2 provides one type of game for transforming sentences. Other lessons could provide other types of games, such as cutting and pasting essays and mixing them up with the essays of other students.

Lesson 3 provides a game on a larger scale, transforming written pieces into drawings and then into songs. Continuing this approach, Lesson 5 is an example of connecting revision to literature, where students change the genre of Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart."

Principle 4: Students benefit from approaches that appeal to multiple intelligences.

One way to overcome resistance to writing is by changing the assignment format to something more visual or auditory, broadening its appeal to students with different learning styles. Lesson 3 allows students to experiment with drawings and

songs as well as with prose pieces. Lesson 5 offers alternatives such as creating board games, comic books, or rap songs.

Since revision as a process works with all types of activities, and since the greater goal of revision is to deepen student thinking whatever the medium, the curriculum would include opportunities for working with multiple intelligences throughout the school year.

Principle 5: Students need to learn how to evaluate their work.

Students sometimes feel like they have a hard time knowing how to evaluate their own writing. Lesson 4 introduces one exercise, the reverse outline, to help them think about how each sentence of an essay functions. Questions then prompt them to consider alternate constructions for a revised essay.

Student self-evaluation continues online with Lesson 6, which carries group work and student responses onto an online discussion forum.

Principle 6: Students need to learn how to give feedback on each other's work.

Feedback can be a tricky thing to give and to receive, but it does not have to be. Lesson 4 provides some ground rules for respectful ways to offer and to take feedback, stressing that the writer is the ultimate decision-maker when it comes to his or her piece. Lesson 4 also focuses on broader responses: not correcting a misplaced punctuation mark, but commenting on how effectively the writing is working.

Similarly, Lesson 6 continues the feedback process through an online discussion forum. Most lessons within this curriculum include some groupwork component to strengthen the sense of classroom community and interactive learning.

Principle 7: Students need clear, focused, and supportive feedback from their teachers.

Most of the lessons ultimately include teacher feedback, either informally during classwork or more formally on submitted papers. The teacher does not assign grades until students have had at least one opportunity to revise their work. In fact, as the year went on, the teacher would encourage students to give their own evaluations of their work. Although grading is a necessary evil for the sake of report cards and transcripts, the teacher can find ways to emphasize non-grade feedback.

Georgia Heard notes that “one of my goals in a conference is to validate or acknowledge what a writer has written—to be a mirror for the student so she can begin to really see her writing. I try to avoid making any judgments or giving advice in my initial words to the writer” (83). Teachers need to start by having conversations with students about their writing that are not about corrections. Too many high school students have come to hate writing assignments because they feel it is just another place where they will get criticized.

By incorporating student self-evaluation and peer feedback, the teacher also emphasizes that the classroom is a community of learners. The teacher is not the only source of evaluation or knowledge.

Principle 8: Students benefit from working with literature in connection to revision.

Lesson 5 is just one of many ways to connect literature to revision. Here students rewrite an Edgar Allan Poe story. They also could consider different versions of the same story (book and film) or different takes on the same story (a fairy tale and modern reworking). The possibilities are endless and can tie in to whatever literature is part of the standard curriculum.

Principle 9: Students benefit from working with technology in connection to revision.

Lesson 6 describes how to use online discussion forums for peer feedback. Based on the research, students love having the opportunity to communicate online. This approach also frees up class time to focus on writing, motivating students to write more than they might if they were trying to rush through their nightly homework tasks.

Other ways the curriculum could include technology would be by having students develop storyboards for a film, revising them until they had a final version, and then shooting the film. Students could also develop PowerPoint presentations to help them plan larger writing projects, such as research papers. (See Kathleen Blake Yancey's article, "Using Multiple Technologies to Teach Writing," discussed in Chapter 2.)

10. Students need to learn how to think metacognitively about their own writing process.

Finally, Lesson 7 provides a questionnaire to help students think about their developing writing and revision skills. The largest goal of teaching students revision is to help them deepen their thinking; with this in mind, students need to reflect on how their writing is going. As Janet Angelillo states, “We must help students understand that their writing belongs to them and that it reflects their thinking and mirrors what they want to say” (23).

The remainder of this chapter includes the seven sample lesson plans.

REVISION CURRICULUM LESSON #1: What is revision and how does it work?

Principles of Revision Addressed in This Lesson:

1. Students need to learn a positive attitude toward revision.
2. Students need to learn that they are real writers.
7. Students need clear, focused, and supportive feedback from their teachers.

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Provide definitions for the concept of revision.
- Examine why revision can be powerful.
- Discuss how much writers revise their work.
- Revise a previously written personal essay from an opposite point of view.

NYS Standards Addressed:

Writing Standard 2: Students will write for literary response and expression.

Writing Standard 3: Students will write for critical analysis and evaluation.

Listening Standard 1: Students will listen for information and understanding.

Listening Standard 4: Students will listen for social interaction.

Speaking Standard 1: Students will speak for information and understanding.

Speaking Standard 3: Students will speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

Speaking Standard 4: Students will speak for social interaction.

Anticipatory Set:

Teacher: I want us to brainstorm as much as we can about a word. I am going to write a word on the board. Once I write it, you will have three minutes to write as much as you can about the word. Are you ready? Here's the word!

(teacher writes REVISION on the board)

After three minutes, teacher has students share responses. They compile a list of qualities that define revision. Some students may see it more as editing and final polishing – teacher makes sure to point out, if students do not, that there are many levels of revision, that revision literally means a “re-seeing” of a piece of writing. The teacher also discusses other places students might revise, both in and out of school, soliciting ideas: redecorating your room, or changing your outfit, or trying to like a new style of music.

The point here is to start students thinking about revision and its possibilities, how revision is a vital and engaging process for thinking and writing more deeply.

Teacher Input and Student Output:

Students have previously written a short (1-2 page) piece about a particular thing that drives them crazy. This topic is great for revision because there is some passion to it and they will be into exploring it. As Kelly Gallagher puts it, “students love to write about things that annoy them” (103).

Teacher discusses how writers often play with what they write, how they try on all different kinds of points of view, how they have fun with a piece, and how they spend a lot of time rewriting before publishing their work. A major aspect of this lesson is that revising can be enjoyable and that it is central to thinking more deeply about any subject.

Teacher: We are going to transform our writing in a few ways. First, I want to write a piece about someone who LOVES just that thing that you can’t stand. For example, I wrote about how it drives me crazy when people leaving their shopping carts in the middle of a parking lot. The shopping carts get in the way and make it hard to park, and how hard is it really to return a shopping cart?

Now I have to talk about someone who ENJOYS this crazy situation. What are some things I could come up with?

(teacher solicits ideas: it’s too much work to return the carts, they provide fun obstacles for the cars, the person is evil and wants to screw up traffic, the person used to work for the supermarket and got fired, etc.)

Teacher: Great. Now I want you to spend the rest of class working on this side of the story: the person who loves the thing you can’t stand. You can put it in first-person, their viewpoint, or third-person, from an outside perspective.

Guided Practice:

Teacher circles classroom to conference with students as they write. Teacher holds mini-conferences to evaluate how students are doing at taking another point of view and turning a piece of writing in a new direction.

This assignment would take up most if not all of the period, so discussion about the assignment would carry over to a second day, where students could share their work in groups and comment on what worked well in the new pieces, and how the two

pieces compared. This conversation among students would provide an informal start for writing workshops in the upcoming weeks.

Assessment:

Informal: Checking in with students while they write and at end of class.

Formal: Students would have opportunities to develop these pieces further in groups, but at a later point they would turn in a revised draft for review.

Closure:

Teacher: How did this revision work for you? What were some fun aspects? What were some harder aspects?

(students would give feedback – some might have a hard time taking the opposite point of view, others might really enjoy playing the other side)

REVISION CURRICULUM LESSON #2: **Playing with sentences**

Principles of Revision Addressed in This Lesson:

3. Students benefit from a playful approach to revision.

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Learn sentence types, providing examples for each type.
- Revise a previously written paragraph, restructuring sentences according to a list of sentence types.
- Provide feedback on how this exercise worked for them.

NYS Standards Addressed:

Reading Standard 1: Students will read for information and understanding.

Writing Standard 1: Students will write for information and understanding.

Writing Standard 2: Students will write for literary response and expression.

Listening Standard 1: Students will listen for information and understanding.

Listening Standard 2: Students will listen for literary response and expression.

Speaking Standard 1: Students will speak for information and understanding.

Anticipatory Set:

Teacher: Sometimes when we are revising a piece, we see right away things we want to do. Other times we may not be so sure. Today we are going to try out a game where we work with different sentence types. But the best part is that it's a game—we are playing with our words and sentences, and we don't have to write a perfect paragraph, just one that fits the rules.

In our everyday lives, we speak and write differently in different conversations. For example, what are some differences between how you might text a friend versus how you might talk to your parents? What are some other interactions you have where your language might take on a different form or tone?

(students give various responses—texting is casual and uses slang and lots of abbreviations, they are more formal with their parents but can still be casual, they are most formal if they are interviewing with an adult for a part-time job, etc.)

You all have a good sense of how we use language differently based on the context of our situation. Today we are going to look at different types of sentences. Some have different structures, and some have different purposes. We use the different types for different situations and to generate different effects on our readers. Changing just one sentence can majorly affect how a paragraph works. And changing many sentences can completely transform it.

Teacher Input and Student Output:

This lesson is modified from Tom C. Hunley's sentence variety exercise article.

Teacher presents examples of the following types of sentences on overhead:

Simple: We are playing a game today.

Complex: We are playing a game today because we are learning how to rework sentences.

Compound: We are playing a game today, and we are learning how to rework sentences.

Imperative: Come join us!

Exclamatory: You will love this game!

Interrogative: Why are we playing a game?

Declarative: Our game will last until the end of the period.

Teacher explains how each type of sentence works and solicits multiple examples from students for each type.

Guided Practice:

Teacher then has students choose one paragraph from their writing pieces about something they can't stand and a person who actually might like that thing. The exercise is to rewrite that paragraph including at least one of each type of sentence. Students are free to add or remove content, but the final paragraph must include at least one example of each of the seven types of sentence.

Teacher points out that some sentence types may work better than others and urges students to remember that this exercise is a game—they are trying to rework sentences in different styles and the paragraph doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to show a lot of variety. Students are also free to split their original paragraph into several paragraphs if they like.

Teacher circulates throughout room checking in with students to see how they are doing. Particular goals for checking in include assessing if the students are enjoying the game, making sure that they are trying out different types of sentences and enjoying the variety and not overly worrying about the final format of their

paragraphs. The point of this exercise is to loosen up student writing, to create a playful atmosphere which students can carry over into future revision work.

Assessment:

Informal: Reviewing work with students as they write; feedback from students on their ticket out (see below). No formal assessment for now, we want to keep this lesson playful and low-stakes.

Closure (ticket out strategy):

Teacher: Before you leave today, I want you to write me a quick note as your ticket out. I want to know what you thought of this game. What did you like? What didn't you like? How did it make you think about revision?

Thanks for playing the sentence variety game! We will be playing with more of these types of games as we continue exploring revision.

REVISION CURRICULUM LESSON #3:

Creating a sense of place with words, pictures, songs

Principles of Revision Addressed in This Lesson:

3. Students benefit from a playful approach to revision.
4. Students benefit from approaches that appeal to multiple intelligences.
7. Students need clear, focused, and supportive feedback from their teachers.

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Discuss how stories and descriptions change in different formats.
- Write a brief description.
- Transform it into a drawing.
- Transform it into a song.
- Share their work and discuss the exercise with partners.

NYS Standards Addressed:

Writing Standard 1: Students will write for information and understanding.

Writing Standard 2: Students will write for literary response and expression.

Writing Standard 4: Students will write for social interaction.

Listening Standard 1: Students will listen for information and understanding.

Listening Standard 2: Students will listen for literary response and expression.

Listening Standard 4: Students will listen for social interaction.

Speaking Standard 1: Students will speak for information and understanding.

Speaking Standard 2: Students will speak for literary response and expression.

Speaking Standard 4: Students will speak for social interaction.

Anticipatory Set:

Teacher: Today we're going to talk about how revision can involve transformations. For example, how many of you have seen the latest Batman movie?

(students practically jump up and down with excitement)

Teacher: I really liked it, too. Now, how many of you have seen some of the older movies, like the one with Jack Nicholson as The Joker? Or has anyone seen the TV show? Or read the comic books? What are some differences between the new movie and these other versions?

(students give responses – the new version is more serious, the TV show was sillier, the comic book is creepier, etc.)

Teacher: Today we are going to look at different versions of how to picture a scene. We are going to work with words and we are going to work with other mediums as well.

Teacher Input and Student Output:

Teacher: Everyone close your eyes. I want you to think of a house or some other place you remember from when you were a little kid. It can be your house or another place in your neighborhood. I want you to picture it as vividly as you can....
(teacher leads students through a visualization – what do they see? What do they smell? What do they hear?)

Now I want you to write for 10 minutes about that place and all the memories you have connected with that place. Why is that place special? Just what is it like?

(students write)

Now set aside your piece of writing. We're going to try something different. Close your eyes and go back to this place. Picture it again, the smells, the sounds, the colors, the objects, any people who might be there. Now, when you are ready, open your eyes and draw a picture of that place. I have crayons and markers here if you want them.

(students draw)

When you've finished with your drawings, I want you to ask yourself these questions:

- How is my drawing similar to what I wrote?
- How is it different?
- Are there details in one that aren't in the other?
- What new things am I thinking of which I didn't remember before?

Now I want you to think of the place one more time. Close your eyes and think of all the details that are flooding back to you. Is it hot? Is it cold? Is it bright, dark? What kind of music does this place make you think of? Does it remind you of any songs you have heard? When you are ready, open your eyes and write a song or poem about this place.

Now pair up and share what you've created. Did things change from version to version? Did things stay the same? Which was your favorite version? What do you notice about your partner's transformations? What details stand out for you?

Assessment:

Informal: Watching students work and seeing what kinds of details they include.

Formal: Homework assignment is to write one or two paragraphs explaining which version student enjoyed creating the most and why. Students turn in this reflection attached to all three versions they crafted in class.

Closure (sharing from pairs):

Teacher: Are there any pairs who would like to share what they learned from looking at each other's transformations?

(students give responses: the drawing made me think more about what the place looked like, the song made think more about my emotions, I liked writing but not drawing, I liked drawing but not writing, etc.)

Teacher: Thanks for those great comments. I think you see how different formats can give us different perspectives on a topic, just like how the different versions of the Batman story show us different details about Batman and the other characters. We're going to keep this idea of transformation in mind as we continue to revise our work throughout the year.

REVISION CURRICULUM Lesson #4: Introduction to writing workshops

Principles of Revision Addressed in This Lesson:

5. Students need to learn how to evaluate their work.
6. Students need to learn how to give feedback on each other's work.
7. Students need clear, focused, and supportive feedback from their teachers.

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Use the reverse outline process to examine a piece of their writing.
- Work in groups to evaluate each other's work based on a question list.
- Provide feedback for each other based on these questions.
- Rewrite their pieces based on their own analysis and feedback from group, knowing that their decisions are up to them.

NYS Standards Addressed:

Reading Standard 1: Students will read for information and understanding.

Reading Standard 2: Students will read for literary response and expression.

Reading Standard 3: Students will read for critical analysis and evaluation.

Writing Standard 1: Students will write for information and understanding.

Writing Standard 3: Students will write for critical analysis and evaluation.

Writing Standard 4: Students will write for social interaction.

Listening Standard 1: Students will listen for information and understanding.

Listening Standard 2: Students will listen for literary response and expression.

Listening Standard 3: Students will listen for critical analysis and evaluation.

Listening Standard 4: Students will listen for social interaction.

Speaking Standard 1: Students will speak for information and understanding.

Speaking Standard 2: Students will speak for literary response and expression.

Speaking Standard 3: Students will speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

Speaking Standard 4: Students will speak for social interaction.

Anticipatory Set:

Teacher: Have you ever been in a situation where you couldn't figure out what to wear? Say you are going to a party and you want to look sharp. You're trying on lots of clothes, you're thinking about lots of options. But you really aren't sure what to wear. What do you do?

(students give responses: ask a friend what they think, talk to brother/sister, etc.)

Teacher: It sounds like you are all agreeing that it can be important for us to ask for feedback. What does someone else think? The same thing is true for writing—when we are revising, it can really help to get feedback from other people. Now keep in mind, what if your sister or brother has no taste? What if you don't like what they have to say?

(students say, "Ignore them! Do what we want!" and so on)

Teacher: Yes! The great thing about feedback is that it's up to us how we want to use it. We can take it or leave it, work with some of it in whatever way we think works best, or try it and then decide later whether we like the changes. Feedback can be very helpful, but it's up to us how we choose to use it.

Today we are going to do two things: learn a way to assess our own writing and then learn how to give and receive feedback about it from other students.

Teacher Input and Student Output (reverse outline):

This lesson is really two small lessons in one. It probably would take two regular periods or one block period to conduct.

The first exercise is based on Barry Gilmore's reverse outlining exercise (18). The teacher explains how in this exercise, students take a piece of writing (in this case we would work with our "something that bugs me" essay or another personal essay of about 1-2 pages) and on a second piece of paper write a numbered list, one number for each sentence in their piece.

They then go through their piece sentence by sentence asking what each sentence does to help their piece and taking notes on their reverse outline. Teacher demonstrates this approach with a piece of his writing, just a long paragraph for the sake of time, taking notes on overhead to show what each sentence does. For example, one sentence might introduce the topic of what bugs the writer, one sentence provides visual details, one sentence provides auditory details, and so on.

After completing the reverse outline, the students ask themselves:

- How could I rearrange the sentences?
- How could I expand on my examples or descriptions?
- Do I like how the piece starts? What are some other ways it could start?
- Do I like how the piece ends? What are some other ways it could end?

Teacher would walk the students through these questions on overhead as well.

Guided Practice (reverse outline):

Students would have time to create a reverse outline based on their own essays. Teacher circulates to check in with students and also would have students volunteer to talk about how the exercise went at the end.

Teacher Input and Student Output (peer responses):

Teacher has students work in groups of approximately four. Teacher discusses how each student will read his or her piece aloud to the group. The group will listen to the piece once through. Then the reader will read it a second time, and this time the group members will jot down notes to the following questions (adapted from Elbow & Belanoff, 119-120):

1. What kinds of emotions do you feel during this piece? Where do they occur? What triggers them?
2. Where does the writing really become interesting? Why? What makes it interesting?
3. Where does the writing go flat? Why does that happen?
4. Which areas of this essay make you want more details or discussion?
5. What other reactions do you have when you hear this piece.

Teacher also lays down some ground rules—we are all writers in this room, and we all deserve respect. We can be honest with each other, but we need to look for things we like as well as things we think the writer could change. We are here to help each other. Again, feedback can be very helpful, but ultimately each writer can decide how he or she wishes to work with this feedback.

A final crucial point to stress is that the writer also can ask questions to better understand the feedback they are hearing.

Guided Practice (peer responses):

Groups work through their writing pieces. Teacher checks in with groups to see how the process is going and to take any questions.

Assessment:

Informal: Teacher checks in with students as they work on both reverse outlining and peer response groups.

Formal: For homework, the students will revise their essay based on their own thoughts from the reverse outline exercise and from peer feedback. Students will turn in both the first draft and the revised version.

Closure (around the room):

Teacher: I'd like you to each take a minute and write down one or two things you liked or didn't like about these exercises. What was helpful? What wasn't helpful? What did you think of these activities? Then I'm going to ask each of you to tell us one thought you had.

(students each share one idea)

Teacher summarizes comments. Hopefully the exercises have gone well and the students are fairly positive! But teacher also addresses any concerns about giving or receiving feedback, making decisions about how to use feedback, and so on.

Teacher concludes by giving homework assignment: a revision of the writing piece as the author sees fit, to turn in attached to the first draft.

REVISION CURRICULUM Lesson #5:
Rewriting Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” in different genres

Principles of Revision Addressed in This Lesson:

3. Students benefit from a playful approach to revision.
4. Students benefit from approaches that appeal to multiple intelligences.
7. Students need clear, focused, and supportive feedback from their teachers.
8. Students benefit from working with literature in connection to revision.

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Read aloud “The Tell-Tale Heart.”
- Discuss what aspects of the story make it part of the horror genre.
- Work as a class to discuss ways to transform the story into a comedy and ways in which that genre is different.
- Work in groups to brainstorm another type of transformation of the story based on personal preferences for genre type.
- Write new versions of the story at home based on brainstorming from groups.

NYS Standards Addressed:

Reading Standard 1: Students will read for information and understanding.

Reading Standard 2: Students will read for literary response and expression.

Reading Standard 3: Students will read for critical analysis and evaluation.

Reading Standard 4: Students will read for social interaction.

Writing Standard 1: Students will write for information and understanding.

Writing Standard 2: Students will write for literary response and expression.

Writing Standard 3: Students will write for critical analysis and evaluation.

Writing Standard 4: Students will write for social interaction.

Listening Standard 1: Students will listen for information and understanding.

Listening Standard 2: Students will listen for literary response and expression.

Listening Standard 3: Students will listen for critical analysis and evaluation.

Listening Standard 4: Students will listen for social interaction.

Speaking Standard 1: Students will speak for information and understanding.

Speaking Standard 2: Students will speak for literary response and expression.

Speaking Standard 3: Students will speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

Speaking Standard 4: Students will speak for social interaction.

Anticipatory Set:

Teacher: How many people here like scary stories or scary movies? Which stories or movies do you like?

(students raise hands and name favorites)

Teacher: Today we are going to start by looking at a classic horror story and then we are going to have some fun playing with it, re-seeing it in different forms.

Teacher Input and Student Output:

Because these lessons are designed with an eleventh-grade NYS ELA class in mind, whose curriculum focuses on American literature, the “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe is an appropriate choice. In addition, this lesson would probably fall in early October, perfect time for a little scary reading. If students had read “The Tell-Tale Heart” in previous years, another Poe story, such as “A Descent into the Maelstrom” or “The Fall of the House of Usher” could work.

“The Tell-Tale Heart” does have the advantage of being a story which is familiar in popular culture (à la the Simpsons—and that TV episode could be shown after students completed this lesson), and it is also short and manageable to read quickly aloud in class. However, any other piece of genre fiction could work well here. The primary point is to take a piece of literature in a very specific genre and then transform it into other genres. Not only is this a lesson in revision, it is also a stealth lesson in genre conventions.

Students take turns reading the story aloud. At the end the teacher asks what made the story scary. The setting? The characters? The action? The way the narrator spoke (voice)?

Teacher: Now let’s talk about writing this story in a very different way. What if this story were a comedy? How would that work? What are some things we could do if we were trying to write this story in a new way so that it would be humorous or like a sit-com?

Students would give ideas: it would need a happier ending, the old man would really have normal eyes but would be trying to freak out his lodger, and so on.

Guided Practice:

Students could choose to transform “The Tell-Tale Heart” into:

- A science fiction story
- A chick lit story
- A letter to the editor

- A detective story
- An advice column about how to live with a roommate
- A comic book
- A rap song or other type of song
- A board game

Students would choose one option and then work in groups based on common interests in each option. Each group would collaborate to come up with a new version of the story. However, they would not write the full story in class – each member of the group would take the ideas and then go home to write his or her own unique version.

Assessment:

Informal: Checking in with student groups as they brainstormed.

Formal: Ultimately the teacher would review the homework versions, but students would first have a chance to share them with their groups in the next class.

Closure (group call-out):

Teacher asks each group to briefly discuss their plan for their new version of the story. Teacher makes sure students know to write their own versions for homework based on their group ideas but feeling free to add their own.

Teacher: In some ways, what we are doing today is like the game we played recently changing our sentences. We are looking at ways we can play with language and with plot and other elements to create something new out of a piece of writing that already exists. By practicing these transformations, we are getting used to the idea that language is flexible, it's not set in stone. Have fun writing your new versions of "The Tell-Tale Heart."

REVISION CURRICULUM Lesson #6: **Using discussion forums for peer responses**

Principles of Revision Addressed in This Lesson:

5. Students need to learn how to evaluate their work.
6. Students need to learn how to give feedback on each other's work.
7. Students need clear, focused, and supportive feedback from their teachers.
9. Students benefit from working with technology in connection to revision.

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Write a rough draft of a personal essay.
- Post their drafts on an online discussion forum.
- Provide members of their groups with feedbacks via the forum.
- Discuss feedback online and rework their essays.

NYS Standards Addressed:

Reading Standard 1: Students will read for information and understanding.
Reading Standard 2: Students will read for literary response and expression.
Reading Standard 3: Students will read for critical analysis and evaluation.
Reading Standard 4: Students will read for social interaction.

Writing Standard 1: Students will write for information and understanding.
Writing Standard 2: Students will write for literary response and expression.
Writing Standard 3: Students will write for critical analysis and evaluation.
Writing Standard 4: Students will write for social interaction.

Anticipatory Set:

Teacher: How many of you spend time sending IMs or otherwise talking online? Do you enjoy doing it? Why?

(most students basically love to do this—and if they don't, that's fine too, they can talk about what they like and what they don't like about it)

Teacher: Today we are going to take our peer response groups into a new arena. We are going to be working with an online discussion forum to continue our feedback conversations outside of class. The process will remain the same, but the time and approach will change from during class to outside of class.

Teacher Input and Student Output:

The concept for this lesson is adapted from Barry Gilmore's ideas about using discussion forums (128). It also ties into Vivian Jewell's philosophy about using class time for reading (or in this case, for writing) and time at home for class discussion, reversing the traditional approach to classwork and homework.

The teacher would guide students through using an online discussion forum by demonstrating on a classroom computer. Many free forums exist and are not hard to set up. The teacher would need to ensure that students either had computer access at home or could use a computer lab at school outside of class time.

Guided Practice:

Class time would be spent writing a personal essay. Possible topics would include:

- something I would like to change about our school
- the kind of life I would like to have in ten years
- an issue that I really care about
- something new that is exciting to me
- personal topic of student's choice

The idea would be to freewrite, to just let out thoughts on the page for about twenty minutes. Students would then post their pieces online, with the opportunity to edit them slightly if they wanted to before peer review.

Students would be assigned to groups of four. Each group member would review the other three pieces online from home and give feedback, looking for at least two things that work well and two things that the writer could develop more.

This lesson would continue throughout the week, with the writer asking questions to his group if necessary and revising the piece for further responses. Teacher could check in with students during class to see how process was going, but by and large it would happen outside of class time with class time devoted to other lessons on revision or other topics.

Assessment:

Formal: One nice aspect to this approach is that the teacher can review everything the group does through the discussion forum, including posted drafts and all student conversation. The teacher can also make comments to encourage good group dynamics.

Closure (quick review of feedback approach):

Teacher: Who can describe a type of feedback that might not be so helpful? Or that might even be really unhelpful?

(student responses: feedback that is vague, that is positive but doesn't give me any new ideas, feedback that is too negative, etc.)

Teacher: Now, who can tell me a kind of feedback that is helpful?

(student responses: feedback that gives me a solution to a problem in my essay, feedback that is specific, feedback that has positive elements, etc.)

Teacher: Those are all great points. Keep them in mind as you review each other's essays tonight online.

REVISION CURRICULUM Lesson #7:
Exploring metacognition and the writing process

Principles of Revision Addressed in This Lesson:

1. Students need to learn a positive attitude toward revision.
2. Students need to learn that they are real writers.
7. Students need clear, focused, and supportive feedback from their teachers.
10. Students need to learn how to think metacognitively about their own writing process.

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Discuss the idea of metacognition.
- Write metacognitively about their writing process.
- Share their thoughts in groups.
- Share their thoughts with the full class.

NYS Standards Addressed:

Writing Standard 1: Students will write for information and understanding.

Writing Standard 3: Students will write for critical analysis and evaluation.

Writing Standard 4: Students will write for social interaction.

Listening Standard 1: Students will listen for information and understanding.

Listening Standard 3: Students will listen for critical analysis and evaluation.

Listening Standard 4: Students will listen for social interaction.

Speaking Standard 1: Students will speak for information and understanding.

Speaking Standard 3: Students will speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

Speaking Standard 4: Students will speak for social interaction.

Anticipatory Set:

Teacher: I'm sure many of you have heard about how pro athletes make videotapes of themselves playing. They watch these tapes to see how they are doing. How do you think this approach helps them?

(students respond: they see what they need to work on, they get an outside perspective, etc.)

Teacher: You all have been doing really good work evaluating your writing pieces and giving feedback to each other. You've been writing multiple drafts and

incorporating your thoughts and feedback from others into your work. I've also been meeting with you to discuss how your writing assignments are going. We are now going to take some time to think specifically about our writing process. We've been doing a lot of writing and revising so far this semester, and it's time to think back, to make a movie of ourselves and see how we are doing. This process is called metacognition (write word on board), which is a kind of thinking about our own thinking. We are describing how we think to ourselves and to other people. This can help us to keep making progress as writers and develop our talents and skills. I am proud by all the great work you have done so far.

Teacher Input and Student Output:

This is a fairly quiet lesson at first. Students would write a 1-2 page response to the following questions about their writing process. These questions are adapted from Barry Gilmore (101-102) and Georgia Heard (90):

1. How do you usually come up with ideas in your writing?
Do you ever have trouble thinking of ideas or beginning a piece of writing?
What helps you if you are having trouble?
2. What revision strategies have you used in your writing?
Discuss them by talking about specific examples.
3. What's the hardest part of writing for you?
What's the easiest part?
What do you enjoy the most about writing?
Do you know how you can change what is hardest for you?
4. In reading over your writing, what do you notice?
What are your strengths and what do you need to work on?
5. How has your writing improved so far this semester?
What pieces are you particularly proud of?
6. How would you like your writing to continue to improve?
What other types of writing would you like to explore or try more of?
What are one or two specific goals you have for improving your write over the rest of the year?

Students would then meet in their writing groups and share as they wished about what they had written.

Assessment:

Informal: Teacher circulates throughout room during group time, listening to student groups discuss their thoughts.

Formal: Students turn in their metacognitive reflection. This piece would not get a grade but would get feedback from teacher. The point is to encourage the students to think about how to keep developing.

Closure (group check-in):

Teacher: I would like each group to tell us a few key points that they discussed. Did you have thoughts in common? Advice to give to each other?

(students respond)

Teacher: Thanks for your thoughts. Please turn in your metacognition reflection on the way out so that I can take a look and see how you are all thinking.

Chapter 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

As Kelly Gallagher points out, “writing is sometimes assigned rather than taught” (9). In fact, writing in high school is probably *more often* assigned than taught. Students need explicit instruction on how to write, and they need explicit instruction on how to revise their words.

One way to help students become enthusiastic about revision is to have them work from topics that they care about. Gallagher states that “students must see writing as intrinsically important—not just another school assignment” and also see “how they could be using writing in their lives” (11). By introducing revision work via a series of personal essays, this curriculum helps students develop a positive attitude toward revision by writing about ideas that engage their attention from topics which they want to explore. Later in the semester, the teacher can have students continue to apply these revision techniques to other, less personal assignments: persuasive essays, research papers, literary analyses, and so on. The techniques described here can work for all genres, but it is crucial to invest students with a positive attitude from the start of the year.

Teaching revision also requires a wide variety of approaches and activities, lessons which engage multiple senses and multiple intelligences. Elbow and Belanoff acknowledge that “revision is usually done in the spirit of clenched teeth and duty, but it can be done better in a spirit of play or even fooling around” (130). If high

school students have developed bad feelings about revision, then they need antidotes to help them re-engage. Even for students who enjoy writing, learning how to play with their words can be valuable, showing them that drafts are not final products but part of a greater process of contemplation. Revision is all about going deeper and learning more.

The curriculum outlined by this project offers ten central principles for teaching revision and then provides sample lessons to illustrate these principles. On its own, this curriculum is just the tip of the revision iceberg. Teachers could extend these lessons in numerous directions. For example, to help students realize that they are real writers, teachers could provide publication and performance opportunities, from class bulletin boards to online journals to schoolwide readings.

Teachers can also diversify their approach to revision by making use of other technologies and media. The revision process can come in handy when developing many types of projects, from student films to illustrated novels. Similarly, revision can extend across the curriculum, benefiting students conducting science experiments, historical research, or foreign language projects. Unfortunately, revision is taught rarely enough in ELA courses and even less in other content areas. Despite this lack of attention, revision can provide a bridge component for almost any cross-curricular project. In fact, such projects, typically large in size, could prove ideal for taking the time to focus on effective revision techniques. As just one example, a cross-curricular look at ecological issues, combining student work in science, social studies, math, and ELA, would provide an excellent opportunity for

using the power of revision: rethinking, reinterpreting, and re-seeing the project as it develops.

Recommendations for future research

Research on revision does exist, but data demonstrating exactly which approaches most help students is hard to come by. Typically studies which generate quantifiable data are small in scope and timeframe. The most useful books and articles tend to be written by long-time teachers of writing, practitioners who have developed a range of approaches over decades of work with students. Their personal histories give them the best insights into the revision process and the barriers that students face when they attempt to engage in it.

The ten principles for effective teaching of revision, based on such research, provide a guide for instruction and also outline an approach for future research. Such research must examine everything from how to generate student enthusiasm to how best to teach evaluation, feedback, and metacognition skills. Research also needs to look into the best ways to model and scaffold revision techniques for student writers to maximize instructor effectiveness.

However, no matter how much research occurs, teaching writing is ultimately an individual affair, consisting of unique writers with unique thoughts. The best approach for an ELA teacher to take is to have a large and always growing assortment of techniques to offer to students. Barry Gilmore enthusiastically offers dozens of such techniques; with typical cheer he notes that “there’s something about marking up a whole draft in a rainbow of colors that makes revision more fun” (100). Teachers

need a cornucopia of these ideas in order to offer many possible directions to their students.

Final summation

Tom Romano states:

I keep reinforcing the idea that to help another writer, you don't have to be critical in the way that most teenagers think of the word. You don't have to tear down. You don't have to cast judgment. Fellow writers can help a good deal by just reporting honestly how the words affected them and asking questions that coax the writer to be expansive in her talk. (68)

As Romano suggests, teaching revision involves teaching several types of skills, from evaluative to social. Perhaps most fundamentally, it involves teaching students to approach their work and the work of others with open and flexible minds. Revision thrives in an atmosphere of passion and possibility; it wilts when student writing is put under harsh criticism. Students need to learn how to see such possibilities in their own writing and to encourage them in the work of their peers.

Teaching how to write more deeply is never going to be easy. All students have different needs and strengths, and most of all they have different ideas, individual areas that they want to explore. Teachers need to embrace revision before their students ever will. They need to believe that the often messy process of revision can be taught. They need to know that the principles for teaching revision may take some work to incorporate, but that they can be achieved in their classrooms.

As we enter the twenty-first century, a time when access to information is growing faster than at any other time in history, our students need the skills to think about themselves and their world, and they need the further skills to probe such crucial topics repeatedly and with increasing depth. It is time to revise the idea, currently prevalent in American high schools, that revision is a dirty word. After all, revision is a word like any other, alive with possibility, and it would be a shame to waste all that it has to offer.

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