

Writing Workshop

In a writing workshop class session, you give the students a significant amount of classroom time to work on a writing project. Working for a sustained period of time—30 to 60 minutes—enables the students to become truly immersed in their work. In addition, while they are busily writing, you have the opportunity to engage in one-on-one conferences with students.

These conferences are a valuable assessment tool. In a brief (1- to 3-minute) conference with a student, you can determine the extent to which he or she is on track and making progress and what kind of guidance or support would be most helpful. In these student-centered conversations, your role is to be a sounding board, collaborator, facilitator, and coach. Guide the conference with simple, open-ended questions that invite student reflection and self-assessment, such as these:

- What are you working on?
- How is your work going?
- What questions or concerns do you have as you move forward?

Here is a sample schedule for a writing workshop, based on a 45- to 50-minute class period:

- 10 minutes: Mini-lesson introducing the focus of today's workshop; for example, writing a homily
- 30 minutes: Individual student work time and one-on-one teacher-student conferences
- 5–10 minutes: Students reconvene in the large group and check in with their classmates regarding the progress of their work. Students may benefit from one another's wisdom as they share helpful insights and strategies. For example: "When I read the Scripture passage really slowly, I noticed details that I had missed before" or "Reading my homily quietly out loud helped me to streamline the flow of my ideas."

Adapted from S. H. Zemelman and A. Hyde, *Best Practice: Today's Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*, 3rd ed. (Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 2005), 243–247.

