

Workshop 7

Learning To Revise

Video 13: Learning To Revise

Video 14: Modeling Revision

How can you help your students understand the value of revision and use what they know to improve their own writing? In this workshop, you will discover why students in the middle grades can be reluctant to revise, help them better understand the purpose of revision, and teach revision strategies they can use.

“A lot of times it’s hard to know what to do during revision because you don’t have a vision to start with.”
—Katie Wood Ray, consultant and author or co-author of five books on teaching writing, including *The Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts (And They’re All Hard Parts)*

Learning Goals

In this workshop, you will explore how to:

- show your students the value of revising writing pieces
- help your students become reflective about their writing pieces
- help your students acquire a repertoire of revision strategies they can use to achieve specific goals
- encourage your students to develop their own approach to revising

Materials Needed

- Examine the Literature Response Chart (included at the end of this chapter and available as a PDF on the *Inside Writing Communities* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting)
- Lesson descriptions and classroom handouts listed in Teachers and Lessons Featured in Workshop 7 (included in the Appendix and available as PDFs on the Web site)
- “Interior Design: Revision as Focus” and “The Writer’s Toolbox: Five Tools for Active Revision Instruction,” articles available as PDFs on the Web site
- Key Practices To Observe (included in the section Analyze the Videos and available as a PDF on the Web site)
- Journal or notebook

Facilitators: You may want to have several copies of the two articles available for participants without Internet access, as well as copies of Key Practices To Observe, Examine the Literature Response Chart, and the lesson descriptions and classroom handouts.

Prepare for the Workshop

To prepare for this workshop, you will examine the strategies you already use and read two articles about revision.

Facilitators: Have participants complete these activities before arriving for the workshop.

What Do You Do?

In *How Writers Work*, Ralph Fletcher writes, “I think of revision as ‘story surgery,’ a time when I roll up my sleeves and make the dramatic changes necessary to make my words sing to the tune I want.” Even the most experienced writers revise their work and initiate the changes they want to make. For student writers, however, this self-direction may not come naturally. Instead, they make writing choices based on what they think the teacher wants.

Think of a recent writing assignment and your students’ attitudes toward revision. Then answer the following questions in your notebook:

- Think of one or more students in your class who don’t seem to have ownership of the pieces they write. What factors might account for their feelings?
- As teachers, we often think students dislike revision because they simply don’t want to make changes. How can a lack of ownership translate into distaste for revision?
- What are some ways you might help your students discover their own intentions with their writing?

Examine the Literature

To complete this activity, use the Examine the Literature Response Chart found at the end of this chapter.

Read each article listed below, recording your ideas on the chart during and after reading. When you have finished, save your chart to submit as an assignment.

You can download PDFs of these articles on the *Inside Writing Communities, Grades 3–5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting.

Interior Design: Revision as Focus

This article examines how one teacher provides time, directions, and structure to help her students develop effective revision habits.

Smede, Shelly D. “Interior Design: Revision as Focus.” *English Journal* (National Council of Teachers of English), 90, no. 1 (September 2000): 117–121.

The Writer’s Toolbox: Five Tools for Active Revision Instruction

Barry Lane’s book *After THE END: Teaching and Learning Creative Revision* gives teachers classroom ready examples and lessons to teach revision concepts. In this article, a teacher shares a “writer’s toolbox” she developed based on the five revision “tools” discussed in Lane’s book: Questions, Snapshots, Thoughtshots, Exploding a Moment, and Making a Scene.

Harper, Laura. “The Writer’s Toolbox: Five Tools for Active Revision Instruction.” *Language Arts* (National Council of Teachers of English) 17 (March 1997): 193–200.

Analyze the Videos

Facilitators: When the workshop begins, you may want to spend a few minutes discussing the group's responses to What Do You Do? and the readings. You also may want to direct the participants' attention to the Key Practices listed below.

Key Practices To Observe

"Learning To Revise" and "Modeling Revision" explore common issues in teaching revision to upper elementary students and specific strategies to help students revise their writing. They feature commentary from experts on teaching writing at the elementary level as well as classroom illustrations highlighting the practices of several teachers.

As you watch, look for the following key practices:

- Teachers define revision broadly and model strategies for "re-seeing" ideas and writing throughout the composing process, not just at the end.
- Students choose from this repertoire of revision strategies and learn when to use specific strategies for specific purposes and effects.
- Teachers model a reflective approach to revision through mini-lessons and conferences and by questioning their own writing.
- Students practice using reflection and questioning to help them revise.
- By internalizing the reflective stance modeled in the classroom, students learn to revise based on the point of view of their potential audience.
- Teachers help students take risks with their revision choices by nurturing a playful sensibility about writing.
- Students are able to revise without feeling the anxiety of achieving correctness.
- Students talk about and reflect on their use of revision strategies and have regular opportunities to share their revisions with peers.
- Students realize that revision is often experimental and that writers are not bound to the changes they make.

Teachers and Lessons Featured in Workshop 7

Descriptions of the featured lessons, along with related handouts, are included in the Appendix.

Video 13: Learning To Revise

- Sheryl Block, Fourth Grade: "Revising Writing To Show Action"
- Silvia Edgerton, Fifth Grade: "Teaching a Revision Strategy: Zooming In"
(Handouts: Excerpts Used To Illustrate Zooming In; *Charlotte's Web* graphic organizer)

Video 14: Modeling Revision

- Nicole Outsen, Fifth Grade: "Writing Newspaper Articles From Research Notes"
(Handouts: Multigenre Research Project Requirements, Possible Pieces for a Multigenre Project, Elements of a Newspaper Article, Lewis and Clark Notes, Lewis and Clark Source Guide)

Analyze the Videos, cont'd.

Guide to Video 13: Learning To Revise

Use this chart to help identify the pause points in Video 13. Zero your counter at the Annenberg logo at the very beginning of the tape. The entry points below are approximate.

Segment 1 (0:00-17:49)	Interview (beginning at 00:49) Revising throughout writing	Jack Wilde, Isoke Nia
	Interview (beginning at 02:20) Describing a personal revision process	Student
	Introduction (beginning at 02:57)	
	In the Classroom (beginning at 03:43) Experimenting with revision	Sheryl Block
Segment 2 (17:49-21:04)	In the Classroom (beginning at 17:49) Learning a new revision strategy	Silvia Edgerton
Segment 3 (21:04-end)	In the Classroom (beginning at 21:04) Rehearsing a revision strategy	Silvia Edgerton

Analyze the Videos, cont'd.

Video 13: Learning to Revise

Watch the 30-minute video “Learning To Revise.” If you prefer to watch the video in segments, you can stop it at the times suggested below or use the detailed Video Guide outline on the previous page to help you determine other places to stop for discussion. The Video Guide is also available as a PDF at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting.

Answer the questions that accompany each segment below, jotting down your responses in a notebook or using them as discussion starters.



Experimenting With Revision (approximate times: 00:50-17:50)

In the first segment, Jack Wilde discusses the role of revision in the elementary classroom, and Sheryl Block teaches her fourth graders how to add more action to their personal narratives. (Stop after Sheryl's student shares his revised lead with the class.)

- In what ways do Sheryl's students exhibit a sense of experimentation with revision work? What evidence do you see that they might be willing to take risks?
- How does Sheryl's teaching encourage experimentation with revision? Specifically, what do you observe in her lesson, instructions to students, classroom arrangement, conferences, etc. that supports experimentation?
- What are some of the overall benefits of teaching revision techniques to young writers, apart from the immediate goal of improving a specific piece of writing?
- Based on what you saw in this video segment, what are some ways you might encourage more risk taking and experimentation with revision in your classroom?

Modeling a Revision Strategy (approximate times: 17:50-21:00)

In the second segment, Silvia Edgerton uses passages from *Charlotte's Web* to help her fifth graders learn how to use the technique of zooming in to revise their writing. (Stop after Silvia asks the students to sketch the scene from *Charlotte's Web*.)

- How does sketching the scene from *Charlotte's Web* help Silvia's students understand the writing strategy E. B. White uses? What do her students learn by looking at and discussing other students' sketches?
- What is the connection between Silvia's sketching strategy and the students' independent revision work? How could the students use drawings based on their own drafts to help them revise? How would you help students make this transition?
- Think of one or more other specific writing strategies that could be taught at least partially through sketching. In your experience, what are the advantages of connecting writing and visual art in the elementary classroom?

Analyze the Videos, cont'd.

Rehearsing a Revision Strategy (approximate times: 21:00-end of video)

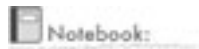
In the final segment, Silvia reads a personal narrative by a former student and has the class analyze this writer's choices. Then she asks her students to find an entry in their writer's notebooks where they can try the "zoom in" technique. (Play to the end of the video.)

- Silvia's students discuss how the student writer might have revised her narrative using the "zoom in" strategy. How does rehearsing revision in this way help the students?
- What value do you see in having the students practice the new strategy with a writer's notebook entry rather than with a draft?
- Based on what you saw in the video, what strategies could you adopt in your teaching?

Video 14: Modeling Revision

Watch the 30-minute video "Modeling Revision." Apply what you learned in "Learning To Revise" as you observe the extended classroom example.

Answer the questions below, jotting down your answers in your notebook or using them as discussion starters.



Nicole Outsen's Class (entire 30-minute video)

Nicole Outsen and her fifth-grade students are writing newspaper articles as part of a multigenre project on the Lewis and Clark expedition. After sharing an introduction to an article she's writing and getting feedback from the students, Nicole revises the introduction in front of the class.

- Nicole purposely has written an introduction that needs lots of revision. How would the lesson be different if she had used an introduction that was authentic rather than one written with the lesson in mind?
- How does this activity help build trust in Nicole's classroom? What specific evidence do you see that her students feel safe?
- What do the students learn by listening to Nicole talk about her revision as she writes? What do they learn about newspaper articles from this exercise? About writing from research notes?
- How could you offer opportunities for your students to see you revise as you write?

Extend Your Learning

Examine Your Practice

Sometimes a simple strategy can help students realize they can change what they've written and be willing to revise a piece they feel is finished. Read the following quotation, consider your own students, and then answer the questions that follow.

“One of the things we have to do is to realize for ourselves that there are ways of revising while the piece is being written; that revision doesn't just have to happen at the end. One of the ways that I get my kids to revise at the beginning is to write two or three different leads, two or three different beginnings. By just having them do that simple step, they begin to acknowledge that text is malleable and they can start to see the results of treating it as malleable, like writing a better beginning.”

—Jack Wilde, retired teacher and author of *A Door Opens: Writing in Fifth Grade*

Guiding Questions Notebook:

- How do you approach revising your own work? Do you make changes as you write or do you wait until you have finished a draft? What kinds of changes do you typically make?
- How do you approach revision in your classroom? What specific strategies do you teach your students? Do you think these strategies encourage them to revise?
- Based on what you've seen in “Learning To Revise” and your experience, what other strategies would you like to try with your students?

Try an Activity

What Do Revision Choices Reveal? Interactive:

Go to the *Inside Writing Communities, Grades 3–5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting.

This activity is designed to help you discover your students' growth as writers by the revisions they make in their writing pieces. You will see two pieces of authentic student writing—a poem and a personal narrative—as they evolved through multiple drafts, and observe how the changes reflect the revision strategies the students learned and applied.

Put It Into Practice

The videos, activities, and readings in this workshop illustrate effective practices for helping students understand the purpose and benefit of revision. Now apply what you have learned to create a reviser's toolbox.

Create a Reviser's Toolbox Assignment:

Create your own reviser's toolbox using some of the ideas you learned in the workshop and in the classroom videos, combined with practices you currently use. List each strategy in your toolbox and describe the following:

- the purpose of each strategy
- how you would teach the strategy to your students
- how the strategy addresses your students' needs
- how the strategy helps students take ownership of their writing
- how the strategy helps build students' independence in their writing
- how the strategy helps students identify the things they want to revise in their writing

Reflect on Your Learning

What Did You Learn? Assignment:

Summarize what you have learned about teaching revision from the experts' statements, classroom examples, and the readings and activities in this workshop. Use the questions below to guide your thinking. When you have finished, save your written summary to submit as an assignment.

- Which classroom practices from the two classroom videos reflect what you currently do?
- Which practices or ideas are new to you?
- What changes do you plan to make?
- What support and/or resources will you need to implement these ideas?

Assignments

If you are taking this workshop for graduate credit, submit the following assignments for Workshop 7: Learning To Revise:

1. Examine the Literature

Read two articles about teaching revision and complete the Examine the Literature Response Chart.

2. Create a Reviser's Toolbox

Create your own reviser's toolbox using ideas from the workshop and videos.

3. What Did You Learn?

Write a summary of the ideas and strategies you explored in this workshop.

Related Resources

Web Resources

The A to Z of Alternative Words

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/A-Z.html>

This site lists hundreds of plain English alternatives to pompous words and phrases that litter writing.

Bartleby.com

<http://www.bartleby.com>

Bartleby.com provides teachers and students access to literature, references, and verse—free of charge.

Buried Under Words?

<http://www.humboldt.edu/~gbn2/wordyhlp.htm>

This site offers advice for eliminating wordiness from writing, including the passive voice, jargon, and tautologies like “advance warning.”

Concise Writing

<http://www.usi.edu/acadskil/OWL/concisbh.htm>

This Web page provides nine quick tips to enliven writing and cut unneeded words.

Plain Language.gov

www.plainlanguage.gov/

This government site includes definitions and examples of plain language, before and after examples, and more. See:

Document Checklist for Plain Language

<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/quickreference/checklist.cfm>

This link is a handy checklist to see if your writing meets plain language standards, i.e., is written for the average reader, is organized to serve the reader’s needs, uses active voice, etc.

Nine Easy Steps to Longer Sentences

<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/examples/humor/9easysteps.cfm>

This Web page is a tongue in cheek lesson on “how to get rid of short, direct, and simple sentences.”

Related Resources, cont'd.

Print Resources

Heard, Georgia. *The Revision Toolbox: Teaching Techniques That Work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002. ISBN: 0325004609

The Revision Toolbox offers practical lessons, strategies, and conferring techniques, using the author's writing and student samples as models.

Lane, Barry. *After THE END: Teaching and Learning Creative Revision*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992. ISBN: 0435087142

This book provides playful and practical suggestions for effective revision.

Lane, Barry. *The Reviser's Toolbox*. Shoreham, VT: Discover Writing Press, 1998. ISBN: 0965657442

This book offers lessons on how to teach revision concepts to students.

Wilde, Jack. *A Door Opens: Writing in the Fifth Grade*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993. ISBN: 0435087614

A Door Opens examines the author's teaching practices, including many examples of student writing in a variety of genres.

Workshop 7: Learning To Revise

Examine the Literature Response Chart

Title	Big Ideas	Notes and Questions
1. Interior Design: Revision as Focus		
2. The Writer's Toolbox: Five Tools for Active Revision Instruction		

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