

Inside Writing Communities, Grades 3-5

Workshop 9 Conversations With Student Writers

**Narration written by
Mary Duncan, Ph.D.**

FINAL DRAFT

RUNDOWN SHEET

Program Duration:

	MASTER IN	DURATION
ANNENBERG MEDIA LOGO	01:00:00	00:15
KET LOGO	01:00:15	00:08
SERIES OPEN/TITLE #9	01:00:23	00:28
INTERVIEW Jack Wilde	01:00:51	01:14
NARRATION #1	01:02:05	01:26
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NARRATION #2	01:04:31	00:45
INTERVIEW Mark Hardy	01:05:16	00:24
CLASSROOM FOOTAGE Mark Hardy	01:05:40	03:04
INTERVIEW Mark Hardy	01:08:44	01:36
NARRATION #3	01:10:20	00:46
CLASSROOM FOOTAGE Sheryl Block	01:11:06	03:28
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INTERVIEW Sheryl Block	01:14:49	00:34
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INTERVIEW Lindsay Dibert	01:21:38	00:47
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Final Draft

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Lindsay Dibert	01:25:10	00:36
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Series Open/ Title 9	Inside Writing Communities, Grades 3-5 Theme	00:28	00:51
Jack Wilde	<p>JACK: I think there are several reasons for doing teacher conferences. The first—and, as far as I’m concerned, in many respects, the most important reason is so the student feels that his words or her words are heard. To me, that’s what matters to all of us.</p> <p>You can have a teacher-student conference at any point in the process. So there are times when I have conferences about choosing a topic, where nothing is really down on paper, or the only thing down on paper is a list, but the child is stymied at that moment about, well, which one to choose, or are any of these any good, or being able to extend their thinking for these any good, or being able to extend their thinking for themselves to make that choice. So I think it can start before anything is on paper and go all the way to having a conference That’s really a reflection. The piece is done, and then you can have a conference about, “Well, what do you think you did well? What—now, looking back on that piece, what do you think worked? What are ways in which, if you were to work on it some more, you’d improve it? What are skills that you feel that you used in the piece that you might want to hold onto as you write your next piece?” So, absolutely, it can happen at any point in the process.</p>	01:14	02:05
B-Roll	<p>NARRATOR: Student-teacher conferences play an essential role in successful writing workshops. When teachers approach their students’ work with respect and kindness, they’re modeling appropriate ways to talk about writing. They’re also serving as sympathetic and discerning sounding boards. These one-on-one conversations help young writers clarify their thinking and give them a</p>		

	<p>chance to ask questions about writing craft. And they help teachers shape instruction to meet students' individual and collective needs.</p> <p>It's easy to see the advantages of conferring with students about writing. But fitting conferences into instruction can be tricky. How can teachers find the time to meet with all their students? Do conferences need to be planned in advance? What strategies and structures make conferences more effective? And how can teachers keep track of what they observe?</p> <p>To explore these questions, we'll travel to four classrooms—a third-grade, a fourth-grade, and two fifth-grades. As we sit in on authentic conversations with student writers and listen to the teachers reflect on their practice, one thing becomes apparent. When it comes to conferring, there are no simple, one-size-fits-all answers. The teaching that occurs during conferences is subtle and nuanced; it needs to match both the situation and the student.</p>	01:26	03:31
Jack Wilde	<p>JACK: The distinction between a formal conference has mostly—my classroom has mostly to do with just the structure. So there are times when I'm moving around the room and I'm just stopping by everybody's desk and saying, "How's it going," or I'm reading over their shoulder a little bit to see whether they have any questions or concerns. To my mind, that's an informal conference.</p> <p>A formal conference is where I've got a sign-up sheet, or I've got just a place on my—on the blackboard for them to sign up because they want a conference. So they've initiated it, and, in some instances, they've had to do something to get ready for that conference. So they've had to make some revisions; they have had to have done some work and come to me with an agenda. I may change that agenda, or we may negotiate the agenda, but</p>		

	<p>they've got an agenda, whereas, the informal conference, I'm just dropping by. "How's it going? Any questions you've got?" I may have a question because they're—they seem to be stuck on something.</p>	01:00	04:31
B-Roll	<p>NARRATOR: It's the first day of school for Mark Hardy's third-graders in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Mark is already setting up his writing workshop. To encourage his students to put words on paper, he's given them an open-ended writing task. They can write in any genre, on any subject—their only guides are their own preferences and interests.</p> <p>Allowing children so much freedom is empowering, particularly early in the year. But for some beginning writers, it also can be paralyzing. What if they can't think of something to write about?</p> <p>While the students are working individually, Mark observes what they're doing and initiates informal conferences with students who need help finding ideas for their writing.</p>	00:45	05:16
Mark Hardy, Partnership Elementary, Raleigh, North Carolina	<p>MARK: Today, largely, what I'm doing is having conferences as I notice the need for them—and sometimes as children appealed for help.</p> <p>I knew that there would need to be a lot of individualized kind of shoring kids up and giving them the support that they needed so they could, you know, work successfully and feel successfully.</p>	00:24	05:40
Mark Hardy, Partnership Elementary, Raleigh, North Carolina	<p>MARK: Now Andrew, let's you and me talk different because, look, you said, picture book about my life. I know you're only what, nine, eight, twenty-eight, how old are you?</p> <p>ANDREW: Twenty-eight.</p> <p>MARK: You're twenty-eight. I know you're</p>		

twenty-eight. You've lived a lot of stories, so we need to pick one. So, let's start and make a little list. And I'll write the list, all right? Can you think of some different stories, from your life? Name one.

ANDREW: Um, one is going to be my reading life.

MARK: One is going to be your reading life. Do you think people would be really interested in reading a book about your reading life? Okay, excellent. What's another, another interesting story that might capture readers?

ANDREW: Uh, my writing life.

MARK: Oh, your writing life, okay. What about an interesting story that happened outside of school? Can you think of something interesting that's happened outside of school?

ANDREW: My friend, he has a dog. It was a girl. Me and my brother was scared of it and I went close to it and it was actually nice.

MARK: Oh my gosh, so you were surprised. You thought it was mean but when you got closer and closer it got nice? What was it licking you and jumping up on you? Or did it quit barking?

ANDREW: It sniffed me.

MARK: It sniffed you and you knew it was nice? That was a friend's dog?

ANDREW: My friend.

MARK: Your friend's dog, okay. Well, you want to try and think of one more from your life outside of school? That one's very interesting. When you started talking about that story and being scared and then being surprised that the dog was really nice, my

	<p>ears got really, really interested and my mind got really interested. Do you want to think of another story from your life?</p> <p>ANDREW: In the forest.</p> <p>MARK: In the forest. What happened in the forest? (<i>Student interrupts</i>) Try and unstick yourself. Okay?</p> <p>ANDREW: Me and my friends went in the woods, went in the forest. We have some woods by our yard. We saw deer. We saw six of them. And we saw a rabbit.</p> <p>MARK: Wow! Wow! That's another very interesting story. When I helped you make your list, these two about reading life and writing life, in all honesty, I kind of went, uh. But this one about your friend's dog and being scared and then realizing it was nice, very exciting and interesting. And this one about being in the forest, very, very interesting. As a person who's going to read your story, I'm interested in both. You want to choose one to start today? This one? Excellent.</p>	03:04	08:44
<p>Mark Hardy, Partnership Elementary, Raleigh, North Carolina</p>	<p>MARK: What I was trying to do, in that conference, was help him find a topic that was appealing and captivating for an outside reader. He wasn't quite ready for me to help him do too much work on developing those topics, so the fact that he was giving me powerful details and giving me images in his talking was a real bonus. It he hadn't been saying—giving me so much language like that I may have waited to bring that into our conversation.</p> <p>My main goal was to help him learn that, when I'm thinking about a topic, I want to choose a topic that other readers are going to be captivated by. So I tried to play the role of a genuine reader of what he was going to write and react, you know, like I would react to his list of topics and help him know that I'm</p>		

	<p>choosing a topic that other people are going to be interested in reading—and that other people are going to have an intellectual and an emotional reaction to.</p> <p>So when he gave me the story ideas that were genuinely interesting, I did heighten my emotional reaction a little bit, you know, for him. I don't think I would have put any energy or attention right then, other than letting him tell me a little bit of the story to make sure he had some language to go on the page. I wouldn't have put much time into helping him develop it very thoroughly. I just wanted him to get an idea that other people would find interesting; get it down on the page so that he could practice that again. Get another idea and get it down on the page.</p>	01:36	10:20
B-Roll	<p>NARRATOR: Writing specialist Sheryl Block has been working with a fourth-grade class in Simpsonville, Kentucky. In health class, Sheryl's students are studying nutrition. Now, in writing workshop, they're preparing to draft content pieces based on what they've learned.</p> <p>All the pieces will deal with some aspect of nutrition. But the fourth-graders have several choices within this broad subject. Not only do they choose their subtopic—in Sheryl's parlance, their slice of the pie—they also determine their focus, purpose, audience, and form.</p> <p>The students work in pairs to bounce ideas off on one another. Before they start drafting, Sheryl checks in with the students to make sure that everyone has a workable plan.</p>	00:46	11:06
Sheryl Block, Simpsonville Elementary, Simpsonville, Kentucky	<p>SHERYL: Right now whom are you thinking that you'll be writing to?</p> <p>MACY: Uh, I wasn't sure about that.</p> <p>SHERYL: Well, you know before you</p>		

determine your form you probably need to think about your audience. Who would like to learn from this information?

MACY: Maybe I could give it to Ms. Stratton or

SHERYL: Okay

MACY: Or the pediatrician's office.

SHERYL: Okay. So if, if you want to deliver it to Ms Stratton or the pediatrician's office which form would be most appropriate?

MACY: A brochure.

SHERYL: You see, I think, brochures, I kind of wonder, yeah. See how all this fits together? It kind of leads you to the form doesn't it? Definitely brochures. Brochures, all the time, are just left on tables for people to read, right?

MACY: Yeah.

SHERYL: That would be pretty cool. You know there are all sorts of computer graphics that you can use too. There are programs that I can show you that automatically create brochures and all you have to do is insert your text, insert your picture? You interested in doing that? Cool. You'll get a draft going and then either I can show you that technology or our computer lab, you can do it in there. Okay? You're off to a great start. This is wonderful.

Sting and dissolve

SHERYL: Now you're going to focus in on a nutritious snack, what did you come up with for your focus?

MATTHEW: Like my focus is

SHERYL: Remember that's what I'll tell about a healthy snack.

MATTHEW: Yeah, how to eat a healthy, like eat, make healthy snacks out of the five food groups.

SHERYL: Great! So Matthew I hear what you're saying is that you're going to be talking about informing people about healthy snacks. Cool. Caleb what slice of the pie do you have?

CALEB: Telling about, like my characters are George and

SHERYL: Okay, right now you're talking into the form. I want you to put that on hold for just a minute. Let's talk about what big idea you're first interested in exploring.

CALEB: Like to eat healthy snacks.

SHERYL: To eat healthy snacks. You guys are kind of similar in that, right? But then look at how the focus is going to change. Well the focus may be close; the forms will be different. What are you going to tell, the big idea, to your audience?

CALEB: Change your body around.

SHERYL: What do you mean by change your body around?

CALEB: Stop eating junk food and change to grapes and healthy stuff

SHERYL: All right.

(Sting and dissolve)

SHERYL: Miranda tell us about your

MIRANDA: I want to write about the servings—of how many servings you need a

	<p>day of each food group.</p> <p>SHERYL: Are you going to select the 0-4-2-3-2-6?</p> <p>MIRANDA: Yeah.</p> <p>SHERYL: All right.</p> <p>MIRANDA: That's what I pretty much want to do.</p> <p>SHERYL: Jasmine, we'll be with you in just a minute. Please take a seat. All right, so what's the big idea that you will be addressing there?</p> <p>MIRANDA: That, um, how it's important to have just a certain amount of, well, how you're supposed to have a certain amount of servings each day.</p> <p>SHERYL: Good job using the how. Now have you all asked questions of each other?</p> <p>MIRANDA: Yeah, we've gone through the whole packet</p> <p>SHERYL: Oh cool, what were, well I think we're about ready to break here and get you all to record, What were some of the questions you asked each other?</p> <p>STUDENT: She asked me how, how I could convince the kids to eat healthy food.</p> <p>SHERYL: Cool!</p>	03:28	14:34
B-Roll	<p>NARRATOR: Sheryl's quick check-ins as the students plan their pieces are just one way she confers with them. At other points of each child's writing process, she'll be available to listen, ask questions, and offer individual support.</p>	00:15	14:49
Sheryl Block, Simpsonville	<p>SHERYL: Other times, when the kids are writing, individually, it's a conference where I</p>		

<p>Elementary, Simpsonville, Kentucky</p>	<p>come up and I, very generally, just start, “Hey, what are you working on right now?” or “How’s it going?” And they begin to discuss this piece. They begin to share with me—and I always go back with a conversation of the focus purpose. I want to hear from the author while they’re drafting. “What are you writing, and why are you writing this?” Then I begin to talk with each individual student. Based on their needs.</p>	<p>00:34</p>	<p>15:23</p>
<p>B-Roll</p>	<p>NARRATOR: For Nicole Outsen’s fifth-grade class in North Hampton, New Hampshire, the school year is almost over. The students are in the midst of a culminating unit: a multigenre project on the Lewis and Clark expedition.</p> <p>At the moment, the students are working on one part of this project: a newspaper article based on their own research. Although Nicole has specified the genre and the overarching subject for these pieces, she’s left it up to her students to find a specific topic that interests them.</p> <p>Up to this point, Nicole’s fifth-graders have been studying how to organize research notes. Today, during individual writing time, the students are using what they’ve learned to sort information and decide on how to shape their notes into an article. And Nicole has a clear conferencing structure in place to help them with this task.</p>	<p>00:54</p>	<p>16:17</p>
<p>Nicole Outsen, North Hampton Elementary, North Hampton, New Hampshire</p>	<p>NICOLE: The establishment of the routine of our literacy workshop was something that was really important to me at the beginning of the year. So I established that—excuse me—when we’re doing a mini-lesson, we’re going to come to the rug. They’re going to be focused on what we’re doing. When they work independently, I expect them to be quiet. There’s a time for them to work together. There’s a time for them to work independently. And we set those structures in</p>		

	<p>place.</p> <p>One of the most important things, for me, is to establish that, when I'm conferencing with a kid, that's really sacred time, and it's not to be disturbed, under any circumstances. And the kids, you know, we go through a whole list of—like, it you're bleeding, okay, you can interrupt me. But, for the most part, you know, there's a way for them to go to the bathroom without asking permission. They just use a clothespin and sort of say where they're going. So those kinds of routines are established early on in the year.</p>	00:55	17:12
<p>Nicole Outsen, North Hampton Elementary, North Hampton, New Hampshire</p>	<p>NICOLE: Show me here because you have all this stuff all spread out right here.</p> <p>STUDENT: Yes, I do.</p> <p>NICOLE: So where are those notes?</p> <p>STUDENT: They're kind of scattered around.</p> <p>NICOLE: Oh, so you're still reading through. So as you cut apart your notes you realized that you had so many different interests that you wanted to really maybe investigate a couple of different characters.</p> <p>STUDENT: Yes.</p> <p>NICOLE: Involved in the expedition. Okay. So what's the next step? What are you going to do right now?</p> <p>STUDENT: I'm going to make an envelope for each character.</p> <p>NICOLE: Okay.</p> <p>STUDENT: And I'm doing Sacagawea.</p> <p>NICOLE: Once you get those notes about Sacagawea, what's your plan?</p>		

STUDENT: I'm going to do the other notes and then start doing a rough draft of the article on Sacagawea.

(Sting and dissolve)

NICOLE: You're doing some good work here. What are we working on?

STUDENT: Uh, my draft.

NICOLE: Okay, let's back up. What, what sort of notes did you, what categories did you?

STUDENT: Um, I did before, during and after.

NICOLE: Okay, and you're, you're focusing on York, right? Okay. Hold on. Let me get my little note-taking sheet out here. So do you feel after reviewing your notes that you have enough information about York?

STUDENT: Yes.

NICOLE: Okay, great. So you're categorizing them before, during and after? So, how, when is, how are you going to make it sound current? Do you know what I mean? Like how are you going to make it sound like this is news that people of a specific time would want to read about?

STUDENT: Um, I haven't really thought about that but

NICOLE: Okay, but you've started writing so you kind of need to think about when the—so if you did before, during and after, are you going to do it maybe after York's death and you could kind of do a retrospective on his life?

STUDENT: Well I was like talking about basically, um, how York was Clark's lifelong companion and

	<p>NICOLE: Okay</p> <p>STUDENT: And when his, like how his father got York for Clark.</p> <p>NICOLE: Okay</p> <p>STUDENT: The age of</p> <p>NICOLE: So that would be, that would be the before the expedition part, right?</p> <p>STUDENT: And then I'm going to write about how Clark got the letter from Meriwether Lewis and he, then Clark told, um, told York that he was taking him and stuff.</p> <p>NICOLE: Okay. All right. So, um, do you think that these facts that you have, do you see them as being in one paragraph or do you see them as being like a section?</p> <p>STUDENT: Well I was kind of thinking of maybe, kind of three paragraphs. A before paragraph, a during and after.</p> <p>NICOLE: Okay. And you've, and that, that you have the, you think that you have the right amount of facts that</p> <p>STUDENT: Yes.</p> <p>NICOLE: I didn't say that in the right way. So you think that one paragraph per envelope will be enough?</p> <p>STUDENT: Yes</p> <p>NICOLE: Okay. All right.</p> <p>STUDENT: I'll have plenty to write during it because I have quite a few notes</p> <p>NICOLE: So do you think that during the expedition might be more than one paragraph? Can you see that as a possibility?</p>		
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	<p>STUDENT: Or one big paragraph</p> <p>NICOLE: Okay but if it has so many facts you could break it into a couple of paragraphs.</p> <p>STUDENT: Okay.</p> <p>NICOLE: All right so why don't, why don't when you start that part or after you write that part, why don't you check back in with me and we can see to make sure it's organized in a way that makes sense to your reader.</p> <p>STUDENT: Okay.</p> <p>NICOLE: Okay? All right. Good job.</p>	03:16	20:28
Nicole Outsen, North Hampton Elementary, North Hampton, New Hampshire	<p>NICOLE: I try to conference with every student in the class, at least once a week, about reading. I try to conference with every student in the class once about writing. That becomes a little trickier just because it depends on what they're writing, so that's not as easy.</p> <p>But, after each conference, I'll record, on little sticky labels, the conversation that we had or key points. And it's very public, so the kids can see what I'm writing down.</p>	00:28	20:56
B-Roll	<p>NARRATOR: In another New Hampshire classroom—Lindsay Dibert's fifth-grade in the small town of Danville—the students are writing personal narratives. Today, they're drafting multiple leads for their pieces, using opening paragraphs from well-known children's books as models.</p> <p>Lindsay has spent a lot of time scaffolding the lesson—relying on whole class discussion and small group work to help the students understand what the authors are doing in their leads. So her fifth-graders are ready for the next step: applying the lesson to their own writing.</p>		

	<p>During individual work time, Lindsay moves from student to student, asking questions and affirming the writers' choices.</p>	00:42	21:38
<p>Lindsay Dibert, Danville Elementary, Danville, New Hampshire</p>	<p>LINDSAY: The kind of conferences that I was having with the students, today, was with regard to their leads and how they were choosing them and why they were choosing that lead, and just, in general just sidling up to them and, "What are you working on?" And I needed to show those students, in particular, that I saw that I was interested and that I wanted to know what they were working on and why they were making the decisions that they made. I had—got a lot of valuable information from them, just sitting back and letting them do the talking, trying not to ask yes and no questions, but asking them questions that it took more—a little bit more effort to answer, and it was—they provide me with a lot more information that way.</p>	00:47	22:25
<p>Lindsay Dibert, Danville Elementary, Danville, New Hampshire</p>	<p>STUDENT: When I was six, I was afraid of the dark.</p> <p>LINDSAY: I'd say it was a semi-arresting sentence. You now how Betsey Byars starts most of her chapters with an arresting sentence of some sort. I think you're getting to the point. What leads did you like in here?</p> <p>STUDENT: Well, this one.</p> <p>LINDSAY: <u>Chasing Vermeer?</u></p> <p>STUDENT: And <u>Louis the Fish</u> and <u>The Iron Man</u>.</p> <p>LINDSAY: All right.</p> <p>STUDENT: But I can't really think of a question.</p> <p>LINDSAY: Of a question.</p> <p>STUDENT: I thought a different lead could be</p>		

	<p>were you ever afraid of the dark when you were young?</p> <p>LINDSAY: That sounds like a good start. It's similar to what, <u>But I'll Be Back Again</u>, if you are a child; she's speaking to the reader. There's no reason you couldn't try that one and speak to the reader with your question. Would you be willing to give that a shot?</p> <p>STUDENT: Okay.</p> <p>LINDSAY: Okay and maybe that'll lead you to something different. Perhaps something similar to questions about <u>The Iron Man</u>. Okay?</p> <p>STUDENT: So can we go on the computer and change it?</p> <p>LINDSAY: I think you're going to go into your writer's notebook first and write that lead down and then try two more. All right? I'll come back and check in with you. How it's, how are you doing?</p> <p>STUDENT: I'm doing okay I was having trouble and Dale was helping me.</p> <p>LINDSAY: I like that</p> <p>STUDENT: Yeah, because my brother would always hide under my bed and when I went to go he would always grab my ankles.</p> <p>LINDSAY: Oh so is, are you saying this? Oh, see that's, that's clearly another way of starting it is to start with dialogue. So you're saying that to your brother?</p> <p>STUDENT: Yeah</p> <p>LINDSAY: And then what happened afterward?</p> <p>STUDENT: Well he just, he really just</p>		
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	<p>screamed back at me and then he got out.</p> <p>LINDSAY: Well what did he scream at you?</p> <p>STUDENT: He'd scream real loud</p> <p>LINDSAY: And then how would he crawl out from underneath the bed? Would he like really struggle to get out?</p> <p>STUDENT: Yeah. Because it was so small.</p> <p>LINDSAY: The area under the bed? So it was hard for him.</p> <p>STUDENT: Yeah.</p> <p>LINDSAY: So what did he look like when he was crawling out from under the bed? You are laughing. I can see you are picturing it.</p> <p>STUDENT: He looked like a small person. It took him a while to get his head out and then his hands. It was only like a little space like that much.</p> <p>LINDSAY: I think you should probably include that.</p> <p>STUDENT: OK.</p> <p>LINDSAY: It makes you laugh. Imagine what other people are going to think.</p>	02:45	25:10
<p>Lindsay Dibert, Danville Elementary, Danville, New Hampshire</p>	<p>LINDSAY: I think the information that I learned from their conferences about the student themselves—which is wonderful; the more information I have, the better I can tailor my teaching to them—but I think information of where they are with their writing. Are they reading like a writer? Are they writing as if somebody's going to be reading their work, or are they still writing as if this is their work and it's for them only—that kind of information that allows me to see where they are, as a writer.</p>	00:36	25:46

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