



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

February 7, 2005
Volume 2 Number 22

Additional Teaching Strategies for Editing and Revising

Strategy One: Use revision goals. The following are potential revision goals for lessons:

- elaborating on ideas – ask pointed questions about details in the writing that need more information;
- substituting more precise vocabulary – highlight adjectives and verbs that lack specificity and ask the student to offer alternatives;
- deleting unnecessary words;
- adding supporting evidence to an argument – ask the student to highlight sentences that support his or her opinion;

Strategy Two: Model the process of revision, following a process similar to this one:

- Use a first draft that is lacking in a specific feature and another draft that successfully exhibits that feature.
- Provide each student with copies of both drafts (or use the overhead projector or a computer network).
- As a group, read the successful draft and have the students analyze and discover why they enjoyed listening to it.
- As a group, read the draft lacking the feature (while admiring its other strengths) and model the revising process by adding details, using editing marks.
- Have the students identify the specific characteristics that were revised (added details, more specific word choices, etc.);
- Have the students read over their own drafts and ask themselves if they can apply the same strategy to improve their own papers.
- Provide revising time, walking among the students in order to provide encouragement that they are on the right track.

Strategy Three: Once the writer is comfortable with the ideas and content of the paper, it is time to reconsider the language usage, organization and mechanics which will contribute to the fluency of the writing. (There always will be individual students whose styles are such that they will feel the need to deal with editing problems early in the drafting process.) The teacher or the class may decide to concentrate on only a few characteristics of conventions and track these over several papers. By focusing on a few elements and providing time to reflect on progress, teachers help students feel that improvement is manageable and that they can monitor and improve their own work. The teacher chooses to teach any of the skills listed below in the context of student writing rather than as an isolated exercise.

- sequencing the content;
- paragraphing;
- sentence restructuring, including:
 - run-ons,
 - fragments,
 - too many short sentences (sentence combining),
 - sentences with similar beginnings,
 - sentences with similar structures,
 - sentences that are too lengthy or involved.

Modeling the process of writing and revision is critical to helping students become clear, more fluent writers. Without guidance, students are often stymied about how to begin, what to do once they get going, how to include details from the text, how to select an appropriate word to avoid repetition of key words and phrases, and how to end a piece. Using examples of student work to show them how to write an essay will pay handsome dividends.