

DOINGWHATWORKS



SAMPLE MATERIAL

Tips for Using an Author's Chair Activity

Fall Creek Elementary School, North Carolina

Topic: Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers

Practice: Engaged Community

The Author's Chair activity gives students the opportunity to share their writing with their classmates. This activity guide provides tips for using the activity to build an engaged community of writers, explaining its purpose, structure, and strategies to help it run smoothly, and ways to differentiate its use to meet students' needs. Since the activity is designed to build writing motivation and morale, it's important to focus on giving and receiving positive comments.

To learn more about how a teacher at Fall Creek Elementary implements Author's Chair, view the presentation *There Is a Larger Audience*.

Tips for Using an Author's Chair Activity with the Classroom

Focus: Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers

Practice 4: Create an Engaged Community of Writers

Reference: Melinda Walsh, Fall Creek Elementary School, East Bend, NC 27018

- 1 – Authors Chair – Definition: A classroom writing strategy that provides an opportunity for students to actively share their personal writings with their peers as the audience. This special opportunity allows students to feel that their individual writing products are also valued by their peers. With *Author's Chair*, students receive only positive feedback from their peers, which greatly enhance writing motivation and morale. Areas of writing need/weaknesses have already been addressed previously during the revising/editing phase of the writing process, through utilization of student/teacher conferencing as well as peer revisions.
- 2 – Purposes of Author's Chair:
 - To motivate and enhance students desire to write.
 - Students feel their writing is valued and worthy of sharing.
 - Develops active listening skills as students learn to become an effective, listening audience.
 - Students exercise critical thinking skills as they analyze, critique, and reflect on their writing as well as that of their peers writing.
 - Improved student writing as a result of feedback.
 - Develops necessary 21st century skills such as self-evaluation, collaborative learning, analyzing, etc.
 - Enhanced overall writing conventions (punctuation, grammar, spelling, etc.) as students read aloud shared writing products; they learn to self correct any remaining grammatical errors in their writing.
- 3 – Tips:
 - Student faces audience and reads selected writing (all students participate) (recommended Author's Chair for students to sit in while reading their selection).
 - Establish a set of criteria/rules /guidelines to foster a climate of respect and acceptance of the author's writing effort (share/discuss guidelines with the class) (Students can also help establish the class guidelines).
 - Teacher serves as facilitator of Author's Chair – guide the process – call upon students to give positive feedback regarding writing that has been shared.
 - Students must be respectful of their peers as they share their writings.
 - Have a checklist of topics/areas of focus for students to check off as their peers share writing samples.
 - Teachers can focus/direct students' comments upon a particular lesson focus as their classmates' share writings. For example, pre-direct students to listen for elaborate details, figurative language feature, use of vocabulary (strong verbs) etc. and to direct comments regarding those topics as they listen to their peers share writing samples.
- 4 – Ways to Differentiate Author's Chair to Meet Student Needs:
 - Young students, kindergarten level and younger can share drawings and first attempts at writing basic sentences that describe their drawings.
 - Older students could share writings with younger level students, which would encourage those younger students to write as well.
 - Students should share writing samples across all areas of the curriculum. Many students enjoy writing about expository topics of interest to them, especially in the areas of science and social studies.
- 5 – Expected Outcomes from Author's Chair Implementation
 - Students' self-confidence in ability to write is enhanced.
 - Students get to see/hear examples of classmates' writing and will hopefully incorporate good writing practices/methods heard from peers in their own writing samples.
 - As students share their writing aloud within a group setting, they feel their writing is valued by their classmates.
 - Students can correct mistakes/errors in writing as they "hear" them upon sharing samples aloud.
 - As students share writings and hear positive comment from classmates, it "paves the way" to successful peer evaluation opportunities and conferencing.