

**Response to Intervention (RtI)  
Resource Team**

***Focus of the Month***

***Curiosity – based learning***

Based on the philosophy of John Dewey that curiosity sparks true education, this classroom approach encourages students to be self-directed, an essential skill for success of a 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. Classroom practices based on natural curiosity of a student can aid in academic and social-emotional interventions. Classroom strategies that encourage student curiosity promote the following outcomes:

Student voice and choice  
Student responsibility  
Interaction and talk  
Student as knowledge creator  
Teacher as model and coach  
Self-assessment  
Reflection on data collected by student

Harvey, S. & Daniels, H. (2009). *Comprehension and Collaboration: Inquiry circles in action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

**Research-based Strategy of the Month:**

**Encouraging Student Curiosity: Written Conversations/Write-Around**

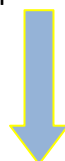
Even all the technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot stop many students from “passing notes” in the hallways. Why not allow them to do this with class content reactions? The following strategy, from Harvey Daniels and Nancy Steineke (2011), encourages student expression and curiosity by asking them to write to each other about a reading, picture, quote, theory, data investigation or other class content. This strategy is useful after students have had an anchored learning or investigation experience with the chosen resource. Students who have a difficult time getting started in a small-group discussion will find that they have more of a starting point after using the Written Conversations/Write-Around strategy. All students will benefit from seeing how the written conversation that they started ended up sparking new inquiries and connections from classmates to the class content. **Directions for this strategy are on the next pages of this newsletter.**

***Turn this strategy into an intervention:***

Use this strategy as an intervention ***when you notice deficiencies for certain students*** in reaching learning outcomes because of difficulty with the following behaviors:

- Participation in small-group discussions
- Showing initiative in small-group discussions
- Volunteering to speak in front of the class
- Reflecting upon the decision-making process of collecting data for a project

Print out the script to the strategy below!



## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR A WRITE-AROUND**

Shared directly by and revised in November 2012 by author and researcher Harvey Daniels, adapted from *Texts and Lessons for Content Area Reading*. (Heinemann 2011)

► Form a group of three or four, pull your seats together and introduce yourselves (or discuss the assigned warm-up question.) *Do not allow twos or fives; push for as many groups of four as you can get.*

► Each person please get a large blank piece of paper ready to use. Put your first name in the upper left-hand margin.

► As we work, please follow these guidelines:

1. Use your best handwriting so friends can read your note.
2. Use all the time I give you for writing. Keep that pen moving until I tell you to exchange papers.
3. This is a silent writing activity.

► Ready? OK. We are going to write for just a minute or two. Write your thoughts, reactions, questions, or feelings about our topic. You can address your note to the classmates in your group ("Dear classmates"/friends/etc). *The topic can be any common experience: a story, poem, nonfiction article, lab experiment, textbook selection. If you want to be sure that all kids can get started writing promptly, you may decide to project 4-5 possible "safety net" starter stems (e.g., One thing I am wondering is...), but remove these after the first note-passing. Keep time not by exact minutes and seconds, but by walking and watching kids write. When most students have filled 1/4 of a page, it is time to pass).*

\*I didn't understand \_\_\_\_\_ before but now I can make a connection to it.  
\*I was surprised that...  
\*I think it's interesting that...  
\*One thing I am wondering is...  
\*Questions  
\*A connection I can make to this content is \_\_\_\_\_.  
\*"Reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_"  
\*What I'm seeing  
\*Important parts  
\*What it all means

► Pass your papers to the left. *Here the teacher reiterates instructions by saying:* Now read the note from your buddy, and just beneath it, write them back for one minute. You can tell your reaction, make a comment, ask questions, share a connection you've made, agree or disagree, or raise a whole new idea. Just keep the conversation going!

*Walk the room, looking over shoulders to get the timing right.*

► Pass again, please. *Reiterate the instructions if needed, especially about using all the time for writing and working silently, for now.*

*Repeat and continue. Trade three times, total. If there are mixed group sizes, no problem, the threes and the fours will still do three trades. Important: You need to allow a little more time with each entry because kids will have more to read with each successive exchange. Again, don't time this activity by actual minutes, but by watching how kids are coming and calling "Pass" only when most people have written at least a few lines.*

► Now pass one last time so that everyone gets back the letter you began with, with your comments at the top. Now read the whole page over and enjoy the conversation that **you** started. You won't write an answer this time.

STUDENT EXAMPLES:

Can be used to differentiate students by readiness

KD I think its kind of confusing how the overjustification effect works. The children who were given a reward for drawing actually ended up being less motivated to draw in the future and those with no reward were more motivated. How does that make sense? Shouldn't they be more motivated b/c they cognitively think they will be receiving a reward for drawing?

GJ I agree. I feel like at first they would be motivated to do even better, but after that initial time they would need the same reinforcement in order to continue the same progress. However I do believe that a reward for something you loved would ruin it because if you were doing it before for free you would want the continuous reward.

EW This is definitely true. George, I think that once rewarded for an enjoyable activity, not only will it ruin the joy, but I think that, in expecting a reward, you may actually begin to desire a higher and higher reward because once you realize that the activity is worth paying for, you may begin to overestimate its actual worth. This is the reason many artists refuse to sell their art.

Can be used as a formative assessment to expose holes in understanding to guide your instruction for the next day

Students can agree and disagree with each other

Students can offer clarification for each other with examples that may not have come up in verbal discussion

Z Skinner's belief that we do not have free will is quite debatable. It poses a lot of questions. Are we products of our environment? Can we not control our thoughts & actions? Is it just everything around us that makes us who we are & makes us do what we do? I think that you can argue this both ways. But I believe in his belief more than the idea of us having our own free will, the ~~are~~ humans just go with it. What do you think?

The final person can go through and underline an insightful comment from each group member to share with class (encourages pride)

*As soon as kids are done reading and start talking – and they will – say:*

► O.K. We are going to switch to out-loud talk in just a minute. But to be sure we will have plenty to discuss, I want you to do one more thing. Look through the page you are holding and underline the one most interesting sentence that anyone wrote. Look for something that would be really interesting to discuss further in the group. Ready? OK, the person with the coolest shoes (earliest birthday, etc) starts it off by reading their chosen sentence. Now continue the conversation out loud for a few minutes, using those sentences to support the conversation if you need them.

*Option: At this point, you could also announce a more focused prompt (“Do you think that blacklisting could ever happen again in America? Why or why not?”) and send kids back into their now warmed-up groups to discuss it.*

► Let’s gather as a whole class and see where this write around took us. Will each group please share one highlight, one thread of their discussion? Something you spent time on, something that sparked lively discussion, maybe something you argued about or laughed about. Who’d like to share? *And here’s the beauty part, there will be plenty of volunteers*

*Don’t forget that you now have two things to discuss - the topic you’ve just dug into and the process the kids have just used. It is important to reflect upon the activity itself, because you want this write-around tool to enter your kids’ repertoires for repeated use.*

► Let’s discuss this process. What worked for you? How could we make it even better next time? Jot down those ideas and save them for the next write-around.

***“Don’t tell me you believe ‘all students can learn.’ Tell me what you’re doing about the kids who aren’t learning.”***  
*-Richard DuFour, author of Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don’t Learn*