

Analyzing Writing Evidence: Keeping the Focus on Learning Goals and Success Criteria

In this example, (adapted from Clarke, 2005) the teacher analyzes students' story drafts and provides feedback, which the students use the following day. The example shows how the teacher analyzes evidence related to the Goal and Success Criteria and then crafts her feedback in response to those only. While student work and teacher feedback is in written form in this example, the same activity could be done orally, with students reciting their stories in draft form and getting verbal feedback from teachers.

Learning Goal

Develop an opening to a story that introduces a problem and uses contrasting imagery and/or actions to create an engaging scenario.

Success Criteria

I can set up the problem in the story opening

I can include contrasting imagery and action to create an engaging scenario

I can use vivid vocabulary to make the contrasts powerful

Here is an example of student writing. The teacher has used a technique that Shirley Clarke refers to as comment markers – she has underlined the parts of the paragraph that relate to Success Criteria – and has analyzed or evaluated their effectiveness. Pause the video a moment to read the student's work.

It was a freezing night in First Falls...The old, grey walls glistened in the moon light. There was a blanket of frost covering the whole parking lot. it was as if the whole place was a crystal. Max and Jenny had escaped from there beds to catch the culprit – Mr. Pedding. Abruptly, a blood curdling screech invaded the still quietnes. Max spun around to see a huge bird, bigger than an eagle, bigger even than a full grown human being. Its dark shadowy figure came lumbring towards them, getting closer and closer. Before they knew it, the creature had snatched Jenny and sped off with her, while Max watched in horrer, speechless and motionless.

Then she provides *a written comment to this student about her analysis. This demonstrates the teacher's analysis of evidence and is also a form of taking pedagogical action which we will cover in more detail in the next module. The teacher writes:

Samantha, the contrast of the blood-curdling screech vs. the still quietness of the night is powerful and engaging. How can you highlight the contrast between the bird and the children?

Notice that the teacher has noted and provided feedback about contrasts that were successful and then asks the student to consider how she can highlight an additional contrast. Crucially, the teacher does not analyze nor provide feedback about other aspects of language use, as they are not the focus of the Learning Goal. For example, she does not provide feedback on any errors in the writing or spelling because they are not the focus of the analysis on this occasion (although the teacher may have noticed these errors and banked them for a future lesson). In an oral language lesson, a parallel may be that the teacher notices the student making errors with tense and agreement, but chooses to address those issues in another lesson.

The student responds to the teacher feedback by expanding the sentence that contrasts the bird and the children. Her new sentence is: *Max spun around to see a huge bird, bigger than an eagle, larger than an adult human being, dwarfing the delicate children, making them seem inadequate.* As you can see, she has used the feedback to improve her work. She has met the Success Criteria of including contrasting imagery and action in her story opening to create an engaging scenario, and using vivid vocabulary to make the contrasts powerful. The use of the feedback has provided the student with another learning opportunity.

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