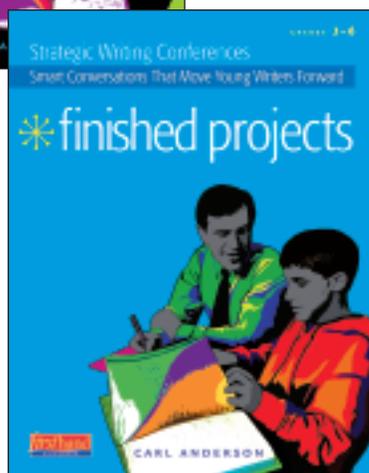
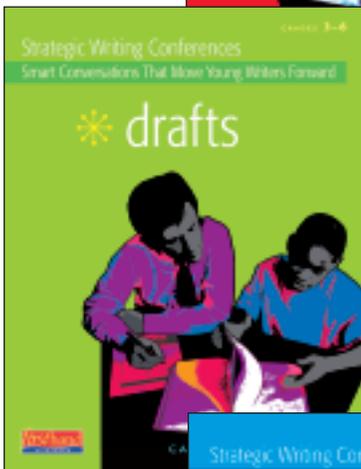
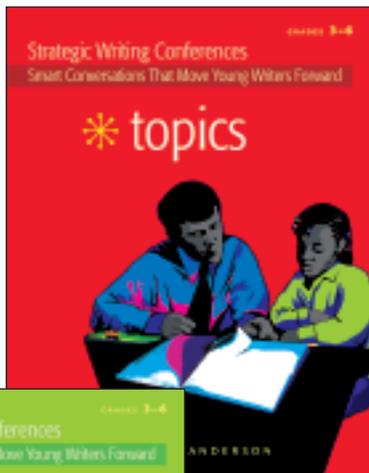


# Strategic Writing Conferences

## Smart Conversations That Move Young Writers Forward



Although conferences appear to be informal conversations, they are in fact highly principled teaching interactions designed to move writers along learning pathways. Used strategically, conferences can be powerful interventions that address individual writing needs. Carl Anderson's *Strategic Writing Conferences* is a diagnostic guide for writing teachers looking to use conferences to move young writers another step forward. These conferences will enhance your current writing curriculum and help you confer with greater purpose and clarity.

### \* components

- **3 Guides to Confering** present 100 conferences organized around three stages of writing—identifying topics, crafting drafts, and polishing finished projects.
  - 1 The conferences in *Topics* teach students to identify and explore topics and develop seed ideas.
  - 2 The conferences in *Drafts* help students consider their audience, practice strategies for getting started, and craft leads, scenes, and endings.
  - 3 The conferences in *Finished Projects* support students in revising their writing, editing for effect, and editing for clarity.
- The **Teacher's Guide** outlines the principles and practical insights that shape Carl's approach to conferring and provides tools for diagnosing common writing problems and identifying the best conferences for moving students forward.
- **2 DVDs** provide video-based professional development support.
  - 1 On the first DVD, Carl explains the elements of an effective conference, conferring concepts, and ways to assess young writers.
  - 2 On the second DVD, 11 full-length conferences allow you to eavesdrop on Carl as he confers with students at various stages of the writing process.

### \* ordering information

**STRATEGIC WRITING CONFERENCES** / 978-0-325-01201-8 / **\$82.00**

CALL: **800-225-5800** INTERNET: **HEINEMANN.COM**



### WHAT YOU FIND

The student who could be helped by this conference has trouble generating ideas for notebook entries or for pieces. He may complain, "I have nothing to write about!" The writing in his notebook may:

- resemble diary entries, recording day-to-day events.
- appear randomly generated, without purpose, pattern, or depth.
- be sparse or virtually nonexistent.

## Finding a Topic by Making a List

### CONFERENCE PURPOSE

*Teach the student to generate a topic list that he can refer to whenever he is unsure what to write about.*

I learned this strategy from Randy Bomer, who discusses giving kids a list of topic categories to write about in *Time for Meaning* (1995).

### MODEL TEXTS

Carl's list of topics, or another writer's list

I NOTICE THAT YOU ARE NOT SURE what to write about today. This is something every writer goes through at different times in his writing life. One strategy writers use to help them find a topic to write about is to brainstorm a list of possible topics, usually on a page in their writer's notebook. Making a topic list helps us figure out what to write about—not only on the day we make the list, but also weeks and months later, or whenever we can't come up with a topic to write about.

### Explain a Strategy

How do writers make a list of possible topics, especially when we are having trouble coming up with even *one* topic? We make a list by first thinking of *categories* of topics to write about. These categories may include "special people," like family and friends; "memories" (or events that they will never forget); "places" (that they have visited or that mean a lot to them); "activities" (that they enjoy); and "issues" (that they feel are important). As we think about each category, we ask ourselves, "Do I have something to write about in *this* category?"

When we think about a topic category, sometimes we come up with a specific, ready to go topic, such as, "The time my dad took me on the roller coaster at Coney Island." Other times we come up with a big topic, such as, "my mom," that can give us lots of ideas for writing.

Each conference book opens with a **Diagnostic Guide** that links conferences to specific writing needs.

## \* conference features

- 1 What You Find** helps you quickly identify a typical writing dilemma and describes how this conference will address it.
- 2** Each conference opens with **Carl's teaching language** as he sets the stage for teaching a concept.
- 3 Share Your Writing** models for students how more experienced writers apply the strategy. Exemplar notebook entries and drafts are provided in a reproducible format.

**4 Coach the Student** provides a concise framework of questions that help the student apply their new learning to their current work.

**5 Side column notes** provide additional teaching tips and recommendations. Each note offers timely and relevant counsel at point of use.

**6 Link to the Student's Writing** offers strategies to reinforce and extend the conference and suggests ways to share this new learning with the class.

### Topics I Can Write About

- the time dad showed me the newborn baby rabbits
- riding the waves at Robert Moses State Park with my sisters
- the time we went clamming in Cape Cod
- launching model rockets at Tobay Beach
- winning my first sailboat race
- when Adrian bullied me after my class beat his in a spelling bee

### Share Your Writing

I want to show you my own list of topics that I brainstormed in my writer's notebook based on categories [Figure 1-1, Reproducible 1-1].

I started to write this list by thinking of the topic category "family." As I thought about this category, I came up with a few important experiences that I shared with my family, such as, "the time my dad showed me the newborn baby rabbits" and "riding the waves at Robert Moses State Park with my sisters."

Then I thought of the topic category "places." As I thought about places that mean a lot to me, or did when I was a kid, I came up with the idea, "the time we went clamming in Cape Cod." Then

I continued to think of different topic categories, and brainstormed even more ideas for writing.

### Coach the Student

I'd like to help you use categories to brainstorm a list of possible topics you could write about.

Is there a category you would like to think about first? What can you write about in this category?

What about the topic category "family"? Are there special people in your family that you would like to write about? What experiences or special moments with your family come to mind that you might write about?

What about other topic categories—"friends," "places," "issues"?

### Link to the Student's Writing

I'd like you to make a list of topics right now in your writer's notebook that you will draw ideas from to write about. To help you do this, I'm going to give you a list of topic categories that you can look at as you make the list.

Remember that whenever you're stuck for a topic to write about, you can make a list of possible topics by thinking about categories. The list you make can help you find a topic to write about now and also give you topics to write about in the future.

You might suggest a category to the student, based on what you know about him. For example, if you know a student went fishing with her brother recently, you might say, "I'm sure you've got some good ideas in the category 'family.' What about when you went fishing with your brother this past weekend?"