Facilitator's Notes
General Tips for Leading Productive Meetings

As mentioned in the Overview of Science-Writing Group Meetings, the facilitator uses more detailed guidelines than the other participants and leads the group through each part of the meeting. The following are some tips for facilitating supportive and productive meetings.

Essential Components of Effective Facilitation

Following Group Norms
- In the first meeting, begin to build a sense of community in your group so everyone feels valued and supported in this learning experience.
- Following group norms can help facilitate the process. Those included in Group Norms for Science-Writing Groups in this section of the website can work well.
- You might agree to change or add to these norms to fit your group's needs.
- Please note that the *norms in numbers five through seven are essential* for these science-writing groups to work effectively.

Using Group-Meeting Guidelines
- Each set of meeting guidelines is designed to guide you and the other participants through the different parts of a meeting.
- As facilitator, you use a set of guidelines that provides additional information to be shared with the group and information about timing and summaries of each section.
- The facilitator's guidelines are designed to help everyone focus on the most meaningful parts of the work, which will ensure the most productive, positive outcomes for the meetings. The guidelines specifically state what is important to discuss.
- The other participants use a set of guidelines that includes only the guiding questions for each part of the meeting that has them, and a place to write notes.

Preparing Handouts for the Meetings
- The website includes downloadable resources for these meetings. The samples of notebook entries and the guidelines and other materials for these meetings are available solely on the website. So you will have to decide whether to print the resources and make copies for the participants, ask them to bring their own copies, or have them download the resources on laptops, or on computers in the meeting room.
- If you are making several different handouts for the participants, copy the main set of participants' guidelines in white, then each additional handout in a different color so participants easily can identify each one.

Common Issues and Possible Support

Managing Time and Topic Discussion

■ Staying true to the facilitator's guidelines maximizes the participants' valuable time and personal investment in this professional development experience.

■ At times, you might need to refocus everyone's attention on the guidelines and the guiding question(s). It is easy for any of us to get caught up in other valuable but unrelated topics during these science-writing meetings.

■ If teachers need to discuss other topics (e.g., their students, school and/or district issues), they perhaps can arrange a time at the end of the meeting to discuss those issues.

Supporting Teachers Who Are Not Yet Comfortable with Teaching Science and/or Science Writing

■ Remind them that research has shown that:

  • *the program does work, and that even very simple strategies (e.g., using* because*), gradually implemented, make dramatic impacts on student learning; and*

  • *it takes about three years for teachers, regardless of their backgrounds, to feel comfortable teaching their science units and science writing in this way.*

■ Focus their discussion on what they *can* do, beginning with small steps.

■ Stay focused on using the Three Key Elements (science content understanding, scientific thinking, and scientific skills) in assessing student work in ways that inform instruction, as described in the guidelines.

Supporting Teachers Who Feel That Scheduling and/or Their Students Make It Difficult to Implement This Approach

■ Share that these are concerns that most teachers have when they first start to learn this approach. Over time, as teachers see that the benefits of student growth are outweighing the time factors, they find ways to integrate the approach in their instructional time.

■ Ask the participants to focus on *one* thing in the discussion that would be possible to accomplish and how to do so in each individual situation.

■ Involve other members of the group by asking some of the following questions:

  • *What ideas do the rest of you have about addressing this issue?*

  • *What have you tried that has worked?*