

Study Guide for
The Resourceful Writing Teacher: A Handbook of Essential Skills and Strategies
by Jenny Bender

The purpose of this study guide is to deepen your understanding of the content of the book and to enhance the effectiveness of your teaching. Some of the following are questions for you to consider on your own or with colleagues in order to reflect on your teaching practices and hopefully uncover valuable new ways to support your students' learning. Others are activities that aim to directly assist with the assessment and teaching of the writers in your classroom.

How do your own teaching practices compare with or differ from the ones described in section 1?

Consider the teacher pacing and student stamina described in section 1; for example, consider the length of a minilesson and a conference as well as the length of students' independent work time. How does this compare to the pacing and stamina in your own classroom? Are there things you would like to change? How could you begin to make these changes?

What is something you want to teach your class this week in writing? Use section 1 to help you plan teaching that follows the structure of a minilesson.

What is something you want to teach to a small group of students this week in writing? Use section 1 to help you plan teaching that follows the structure of a strategy lesson. How does the structure of this strategy lesson compare and differ from the structure of your whole class teaching?

Think about what you have taught this week in writing. With what are your students struggling? Use the table of contents to find additional skills and/or strategies you might teach your students to address their need(s).

How are you assessing your students' needs and keeping track of your teaching? What does accountability look like in your classroom? How does this differ or compare to what is described in section 1?

Photocopy a piece of student writing from your classroom or from one of your colleague's classrooms and use the skills from section 2, 3 or 4 as a guide for assessment: What is the writer doing well? Name specific strategies she uses to accomplish these goals. What might the writer do better? Name specific strategies you might teach to help her internalize these skills. Discuss possible individualized learning goals based on your assessment. Role play a conference with the student making sure to compliment and teach a skill and a strategy that address the learning goal.

Using the list of skills from section 2, 3 or 4, look across writers' notebooks from a single classroom and discuss what the majority of writers need to learn to do better. When and how might you do minilessons to address these needs?

Using the strategy lesson chart from section 1 and the list of skills from section 2, 3 or 4, look across several notebooks from a single class and group students based on need: Which writers need support with a given skill? For those writers who need support with multiple skills, how might you prioritize your teaching?

What are some of the goals you have for your own students; what are some of the skills you want them to internalize as writers? How do these skills compare with or differ from the ones in sections 2-4?

Choose any sample teaching and active engagement in sections 2-4. What are other ways you might teach the strategy? What are other ways you might have students try the strategy?

What texts might you use to teach the strategies in this book? Consider student writing and your own writing as well as published pieces. Once you've gathered texts, discuss how the teaching might go.

Pick a strategy you'd like to teach your students and compose your own piece of writing that you could use to exemplify the strategy.

Choose a student writing sample from any of the chapters in sections 2-4 and briefly discuss the level of writing: How does it compare to the writing your own students are doing? How does it compare to the writing you see in the grades above and below your own? Now find or create another example of the same strategy which you could use when teaching more or less sophisticated writers.

If you can, gather with colleagues in the grades above and/or below your own. Using the table of contents, talk about whether certain skills feel more appropriate for certain grades. Then choose some of the skills you all teach regardless of grade level and study the strategies for acquiring a given skill. Are there strategies that feel like benchmarks for certain grades? How might you level the strategies for a given skill in terms in difficulty?

Try teaching a strategy in sections 2-4. What went well? What was difficult? What might you do differently next time?

Consider a unit of study you want to do with your class. Use the table of contents to choose the skills you will teach in this unit. Considering the needs and strengths of your students, choose the strategies you will teach in minilessons to help students acquire these skills.