

WCW Conversation-Writing Assessment Protocol - DRAFT

Format

This assessment activity emphasizes students doing a pre-assessment, then conversing with another student, then doing a post-assessment. The format is flexible, although if we do any comparison with other teachers, over time, or with similar students, action research, PLC work, inquiry, etc., we try to keep it consistent. The foundational format is WCW:

- Write (W) (the pre-assessment)
- Conversation in pairs (C)
- Write (W) (the post-assessment).

A key feature is isolating what students do between the pre- and post-assessment. In this case the isolated activity is conversation. We will look at how the conversation connects to the writing.

Other Formats

In some cases, we might want to add activities before the pre-assessment to make the process more instructional. One could, for example, have two pair-shares (S), as in a Stronger-Clearer activity, before the pre-writing, which would be SSWCW. Others could include Reading an article first, which would be RWCW. You could even have the conversation be the pre-post, with writing in between, as in CWC. Others could be CRC, CSC, CV(video)C, or even CTC, in which case the middle “thing” would be Teaching (modeling, practice, scaffolding) of a conversation skill or content. For now, we will focus on the WCW.

Rationale

The reason for the pre- and post-assessment “sandwich” is to isolate and analyze the influence of whatever is in between. If, for example, you do too many different things in between the pre- and post-assessment (e.g., reading, oral language, video, pair-share, etc.) then you don’t know what influenced the differences in the pre- and post-assessment. Of particular interest is the connection between conversation and writing, as in the WCW format. In this format, you

- a) Assess the conversation
- b) Assess pre and post-write samples and at the difference between them
- c) Analyze how the conversation likely influenced the differences between the pre- and post-assessments, along with any other noticings from comparing the two.

In this format we are able to see how the conversation influenced the difference between the pre- and post-assessment. If we gather conversation data over time, we can also record the improvement of conversations for one or more students. We can analyze the post-writing content learning and language development. And it is easier to collect and analyze writing than it is to record all student conversations and listen to them all. Finally, any of the formats can serve as teaching activities—it is not just another time-wasting assessment.

Procedure

1. Generate a prompt. We recommend an argument-based prompt to promote longer and deeper conversations, but it's not necessary. Remind them to build up one or more ideas by clarifying and supporting with evidence, examples, and/or reasoning. If it's an argument-based conversation, remind them to build up both ideas as much as possible, and then decide which idea is stronger.
2. Have students respond in writing to the prompt, letting them know that they will converse about their initial idea(s) with another student before writing about it again.
3. (W) Gather their pre-writes with their names on them.
4. (C) Pair them up and ask them to have a conversation with the third partner, using the prompt. Remind them to build up one or more ideas by clarifying and supporting with evidence, examples, and/or reasoning. If it's an argument-based conversation, remind them to build up both ideas as much as possible, and then decide which idea is stronger. Audio or video record this conversation.
5. (W) Have students answer the prompt again in writing (the post-assessment). Remind them to build up one or more ideas by clarifying and supporting with evidence, examples, and/or reasoning. If it's an argument-based conversation, remind them to build up both ideas as much as possible, and then decide which idea is stronger. Try to give them roughly the same amount of time as they had for the pre-write. Gather these post-writes with names on them and match them to their pre-writes.
6. Use the tool below to analyze the differences between the pre- and post-writes (you could also start by analyzing the conversation). Watch or listen to the conversation using the middle column. Look for areas changed (or not) in the writing that are evident in the conversation. Look for any interesting patterns or trends across students.