

Planning and Designing Professional Learning

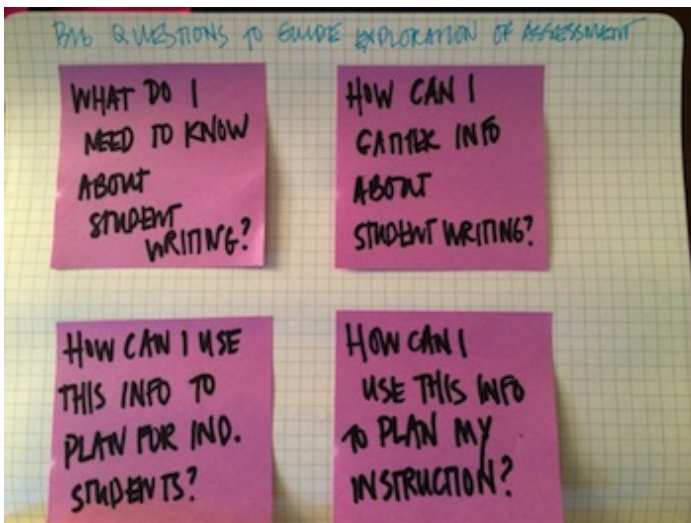
Categories: Professional Learning, Writing

Calling all instructional coaches! Indulge me for just a few minutes to think about how you organize your professional learning sessions with teachers.

Lately, *writing assessment* has been on my mind—schools have asked me for support around writing assessment (webinars, after-school sessions, you name it). It was time to organize my thinking in order to support others in their own learning around writing assessment—that's always the tricky part, right? Organizing and giving structure to our thinking on a topic can be challenging!

Where to start? I began by using my notebook, brightly colored Post-it notes, and a black magic marker to determine some of the big important questions about writing assessment. Here are the ones I came up with (of course, there are probably other questions also):

- What do I need to know about student writing?
- How can I gather information about student writing?
- How can I use this information to plan for individual students?
- How can I use this information to plan my instruction?



Then, I began exploring some of the first question: what do teachers need to know about student writing in order to guide their instruction? This, of course, led to more questions (and I am sure you can think of more as well):

- Do my students have age-appropriate knowledge of skills and conventions?
- Are they able to use "voice" when they write?
- How do they get ideas for writing?
- What motivates them to write?
- Can they organize their thinking?

This was a good place to start. Then, I organized these questions into two categories: questions that can be answered by reading students' writing and questions that require conversations with students to find out more.

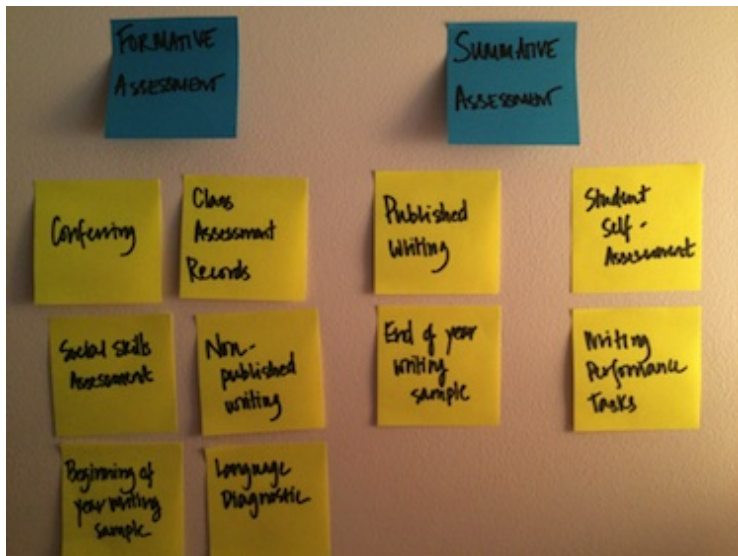
Student writing can tell us-

- Do my students have age-appropriate knowledge of skills and conventions?
- Are they able to use "voice" when they write?
- Can they organize their thinking?

Conversations with students can tell us-

- How do they get ideas for writing?
- What motivates them to write?
- Can they organize their thinking?

Finally, I began thinking about the suite of writing assessments we use in *Being a Writer*. And to help me better understand these assessments and how they support instruction, I took my Post-its to my wall (for more space!) to categorize the assessments based on their formative or summative nature.



As I was sorting and thinking about our assessments, I really wanted to talk and collaborate with others. I thought that several of the assessments could fit into both categories (summative and formative) and I wanted to talk with other educators to get their thoughts.

After going through this process of asking questions and categorizing information, I now have several different ideas and activities for my professional development sessions with teachers:

- I can start our time together with the questions on the pink Post-it notes above and let the teachers engage in the same thinking I just went through. Clearly there are some productive places for teachers to work together and have conversations about their thinking!
- I can provide an opportunity to analyze student work obtained from some of the assessments above.
- And, finally, we can discuss instructional implications and designing a lesson based on some of our conclusions after reviewing the assessments.

I am curious: What are some strategies you use when you are planning for professional learning experiences? What other ideas for

professional learning do you have for me?