

Bird Talk

A Classroom Critique



Birds

Submitted By:

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Overview

Students will learn to give and use effective feedback for learning and transformation by creating a drawing of a bird, joining a critique group and giving and receiving from each other feedback. They will revise their drawings up to four times, as decided by the critique group before determining it is finished.

Grade Levels

4th

Curriculum Correlation

Classroom culture

NCCCS for ELA Speaking & Listening 4.1 , NCCCS for ELA S&L 4.1D, NCCCS for Literacy/Writing 4.7

Duration

Four to five class periods of no less than 30 minutes each

Location

Indoors (post bird identification experiences)

Materials

- Video: Austin's Butterfly: Building Excellence in Student Work - <https://vimeo.com/38247060>
- Equipment for video viewing
- chart paper and markers
- Bird Identification books, photos, etc. for each student to use - online using 1:1 devices also works as well
- Paper and pencil per student
- Colored pencils and/or crayons

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Educators Information

Austin's Butterfly is a great video made for teachers but well worth sharing with students.

It helps kids see how to give specific, helpful feedback with the eyes of a scientist. Essentially it's about the design process, with help from a critique group. Students create drafts of work. Specific feedback leads to specific changes. The feedback is based in kids of advice that allow one to get better at each stage. Building this specific kind of culture in the classroom allows kids to accept new suggestions.

Sketching or drawing gives kids a chance to observe, read and talk about "text" in a richer way. Over time, the discourse around drawings transfers to other types of text. Learning to respond to the critique group gets kids past the "I can't draw" stage and helps them become more open to failure, a much needed skill in science and life.

Some of the positive attributes of effective feedback include: being kind, being specific, being a respectful listener, seeing sequential changes/improvements, etc. This sort of feedback teaches kids to respond rather than react, to build effective dialogue, especially when explicitly teaching domain specific vocabulary, teaches kid to be observant, and over time, transfers to reading.

Procedure

1. Discuss the word critique with whole class.
2. Watch the video, Austin's Butterfly together and talk about what they noticed, what they wondered and how they feel about it. (Pull out accurate observation, seeing like a scientist, etc.)
3. GENERATE a chart of positive stems, ways and words used to critique together.

Examples: That's a good start. Ok, I'll try. That draft really is better. What do you notice about the drawing? It needs a little bit more of --, listening, etc.

4. Keep one small group of 6-8 students for first critique group. Have them decide on a bird

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they want to learn more about. It is best to not have repeats of birds within a critique group.

5. Each student folds a standard sheet of copy paper in half along the 11 ½” side. This is less daunting than a full sheet. If this is the first effort of anything like this, go ahead and fold it to fourths - much less daunting.

6. Talk a little about what it means to make a close observation. Use the video as a reference for them.

7. Send them away to work on their accurate, scientific drawing based on close observation for 10-15 minutes while you meet with each of the other groups.

8. Repeat steps 3-5 until you have met with each group to get them started. Three critique groups works well for 22 kids. It is good to have more brainpower than a small group of 3-4 kids.

9. After the 1st group has had time to draw for 10-15 minutes, have them meet again to begin the first critique circle. It matters not whether they have ‘finished’ their first drawing.

10. As the non-member of the critique group, sit back and let them give feedback based on the video and chart. Be there to support them with finding where to start. In the video, Austin’s critique group chose 2 areas to observe - shape. This is always a fine place to start.

11. Give them time for the feedback discussion. Listen in. Complement kindly put feedback and well received feedback.

These steps don’t have to happen on one day. The first time I did this, I did one critique group a day, while the rest of the class was working on other tasks.

12. After everyone has given and received some criticism, set them free to continue on their second draft, paying attention to specific suggestions and making the changes to the best of their accurate-scientist observations-abilities.

Repeat this with each group. At this point, kids will say they really need to meet with their group to discuss pattern. Do this.

13. After the critique groups have met several times, suggest that it may be time to add color. The groups will determine this for its members. I always suggest using colored pencil for a more controlled “real” version of color.

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14. While students are waiting on members of their critique group, have them do a little “blurb” research about their bird. They can type up the blurb to put with their completed drawing.

15. Support the good criticism, the artwork, the use of the scientist's eye and the warm and happy feeling they all have.

It is amazing how the “I can’t draw-itis” goes a little further away each time.



Resources

- Video: Austin’s Butterfly: Building Excellence in Student Work - <https://vimeo.com/38247060>
- Online bird guide: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search/>
- bird guides such as Paterson’s, Sibley’s, Audubon, etc.



Photos

