

MILLS TEACHER SCHOLARS

Understand Learning, Improve Teaching

Transcript of a learning conversation

Aija, Annie, Alex

Aija: So what I'm interested in is my own use of language in the classroom. And what I've come in thinking about it is my use of language during Writer's Workshop mini lessons. Because what I've noticed my students are doing in writing conferences is they were not talking about the writing, they talked about what was in the writing as if it was a real experience. So if a student was-- and it was a real experience-- but they tended to focus on the happenings as opposed to the writing. So if a student wrote about a trip to Great America, the whole conference would be about Great America. "What did you do? Who was there?" And those are good questions, but the author couldn't figure out what to do with the writing. So what I'm wondering is how my use of academic language in the mini lesson can sort of lead them to talking about each other's writing as a piece of writing, as opposed to just discussing an activity.

Alex: What do you mean by academic language?

Aija: There's the question. That's where I'm at right now. What is it I'm really talking about? Am I talking about language structure? Am I talking about words? That's what I'm trying to figure out. So what I've been doing is modeling terms writers use, for example, we talked about metaphors, or similes, hyperbole, figurative language, adjectives, description, onomatopoeia. I'm using all these words, but I'm not sure if I want to just think of academic language as concepts and terms, or if it's the structure of the discussion. Is it the pair conference? Is it a sentence frame? I don't know.

Annie: If you said, if I asked you, in this research if you want a goal to be present in your classroom, ideally, at the end of the research, what would the goal be for your students?

Aija: The goal for my students is that they would be able to discuss someone's writing as authors. So that they would be able to have a conversation around a piece of writing that sounds like two writers as opposed to two kids who just went outside to play.

Annie: Are you talking about their own writing?

Aija: Their own writing ...