GUIDE TO REVISION

Educator Tool

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WHY REVISION?

At 826, we believe that the art of writing is found in the revision stage. Once a student reaches this step, they have emptied their minds and hearts onto the page, and now they can begin to sift through their work and decide what is most important to them. It can seem like a daunting task, which is why we recommend taking this step slowly.

Encourage students to step away from their piece when they feel stuck. If they feel frustrated during this process, remind them that we tell stories because our words are valuable; we revise our stories because we care about them and want them to be the best they can be.

> "Writing this was hard. We had to open ourselves up and be vulnerable.
>
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STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING REVISION

- **Model revision.** Modeling the revision process might make it less intimidating for students. Quickly write up a paragraph or two of your own, using a very simple topic–or even the same prompt as your students followed. Project it on the board and then revise your work live, while you narrate your thinking. After you model revision, you could show students another one of your unrevised paragraphs and ask them for suggestions of what to change or add.

- **Consider the audience.** Ask students who they intend to read the piece they are revising. What does this audience already know, and where are their gaps in knowledge? The focus of their revision can be filling in those gaps or providing additional details to the information the audience already knows. Identifying their audience will also help to nail down their tone and word choices.

- **Change the perspective.** "Perspective" refers to how the narrator in a piece of writing processes and perceives what's happening in the story. Changing the perspective allows for new parts of the narrative to shine through. "Perspectives with Daniel Ehrenhaft" is a Spark on 826 Digital that provides students with a variety of prompts that will help them see their existing drafts in completely different ways.

TIP FROM ARACELIS GIRMAY

Return to something that has inspired you. Much of our own inspiration comes from the things that inspired us the most. If students get stuck, recommend that they turn to their favorite book, poem, or other piece of art. What about that favorite thing stuck out to them in the first place?

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RETHINKING THE ARMS STRATEGY

The ARMS strategy is a common tool used during the revision process. It is an acronym that stands for Add, Remove, Move, and Substitute. Below are concrete activities to help you facilitate these steps in a meaningful way:

ADD DETAILS

Adding details to writing helps readers picture the story as they read it. Details, such as sensory words or dialogue, can help bring a piece of writing to life.

- **Re-see your writing.** Students will practice seeing their writing in a new light by using Hoa Nguyen's poem, "Blackberries." Students will read the simplified version of Nguyen's poem, with most of the details redacted, to see how adding more information to a piece can change its meaning. Note: This resource is from Session 6 of the Lesson, Lunch Poems.
- **Name what's unique.** Find a collection of like things; apples, for example. Every apple should have at least 1 unique characteristic about it. Break students into small groups and give each group an apple. They will work together, closly examining the object's appearance and create a list of adjectives that describe their apple. Ask each group to present their list to the class. Then, have students reread their drafts and mark 2-3 places where more detail would be helpful
- **Add dialogue.** Ask students to recall a conversation they had recently. Ask them to re-write the conversation as closely as they can remember it. Then, ask them to examine it. If a stranger read this conversation, what would they learn about these two characters from the words they used? Then, have students mark 1-2 places in their draft where lines of dialogue could go, and either type or write it in.

TIP FROM AMANDA GORMAN

Get as specific as possible with language. Finite details will make writing all the more vivid. Students can ask themselves some questions of detail, starting each question with one of the 5 W's or I H. Blending specific sensory details with personal reflections will add a new dimension to their next draft.

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RETHINKING THE ARMS STRATEGY

REMOVE UNNECESSARY WORDS

Words that don't support the meaning a paragraph is trying to convey can get in the way of impact and clarity, but can take some practice identifying!

- **What's the main idea?** Write a short paragraph that clearly features extra words and sentences in it. This extra content can be filler words, or completely off-topic information. Project your paragraph on the board and then read it out loud. Ask students what they noticed about your paragraph: Was it easy to understand? If not what was making it difficult to understand, and how would they fix it? After you model this technique, ask students to mark 1-2 places in their draft that could be removed to improve clarity.
- **Blackout poetry.** Blackout poetry is a classic writing activity that can help students learn this strategy. Each student needs a block of text, like a page from a novel or a whole newspaper article. Students will skim through the text and underline words that catch their eye. After they have underlined these words, they will go back and decide which words create meaning together - these words will be their poem. Last, students will use a black marker to blackout all of the text that is not their poem. This activity can be translated to revision by asking students to reread their draft with new eyes, keeping the meaning they'd like to convey in the forefront. Anything that doesn't support the main idea of their piece can be reviewed, and then removed if necessary.

TIP FROM AMANDA GORMAN

Students should save their first draft somewhere first, but once it is safe they can take risks! Try out another version that takes out a few unnecessary words, eliminates cliches, vague words that have already been said, unclear sentences, etc. This will help them get to the point faster and keep their reader engaged.

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RETHINKING THE ARMS STRATEGY

MOVE

Often, students have already written an excellent paragraph or sentence, but it's simply placed in the wrong part of their drafts.

- **Cut it out.** One way to make rearranging writing easier for students is to have them literally cut up their writing. Make copies of students' original drafts and have them cut out the paragraphs or individual sentences to reorganize until they find a structure that suits the piece. Once they find an order they like, tape the sections back together and then either re-write or re-type this new draft.

- **In the middle of things.** This writing activity actually utilizes a technique called in medias res, which means "in the middle." Have students re-read their drafts and underline a powerful, suspenseful, or interesting sentence from anywhere in their piece. They will write this sentence on a fresh sheet of paper, and then begin a completely new story with that sentence as their jumping off point. They will write for 5-10 minutes, continuing this new story. They can jump back and forth in time, add new dialogue, or refresh the setting. After their 5-10 minutes of writing, ask students to compare their two drafts and see if there's anything they can incorporate from their in medias res activity into their original drafts. Last, discuss what was challenging and helpful about this activity, as a class.

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RETHINKING THE ARMS STRATEGY

SUBSTITUTE

The revision phase is when students can look for any words that they've overused, or places where synonyms of existing words would be helpful.

- **Mad Libs.** Mad Libs is a fun and simple word game, but it can also be a helpful revision lesson! Before you start this lesson, you'll want to complete a Mad Lib yourself, following the normal rules of the game—the sillier this Mad Lib is, the better. (Blank Mad Libs can be found online). Project your completed Mad Lib on the board and ask students to read and summarize the story as they understand it. Write their summary ideas on the board. Next, go back to the beginning and look at each sentence individually, covering up everything that you aren't working on at that moment. Read each sentence out loud, asking students if the original word in the Mad Lib fits with the story summary they identified. If that word doesn't fit, what is a word that would fit into that sentence better? You can use the parts-of-speech prompts found in the template. Once the entire Mad Lib has been revised, read it again and check with students to see if their version tells the story better. Then, have students mark 1-2 places in their draft where they could substitute different words.

- **A List of Golden Details.** In this activity, students will collectively create a running list of golden details - details and descriptions that are singular, completely original, and make their subject unforgettable. Students can then find 1 or 2 details from their draft and make a similar list, which will help them insert additional descriptions into their writing.

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BUILDING STUDENT AUTONOMY

Making space for student voice and choice is critical during revision because, as the author, students should have autonomy to make choices about how they want to approach revision. Building student autonomy will also help increase student engagement in revising, and investment in their work.

Revision can often be the most challenging part of the writing process. Remind students that their words matter, and that as the author, they have the authority to make final decisions about their writing. The resources below allow students to choose how they want to approach revision

- **Revision Bingo for Narratives.** Your students can use this resource to self-select three strategies for revising a narrative piece of writing. In the handout there is an explanation for each strategy allowing students to work independently or collaborate with peers who are using the same strategy.
- **Polishing a Poem.** Former poet laureate Rita Dove said, "I love to revise. Lots of younger poets don't enjoy this, but in the process of revision I discover things." In this lesson, students will engage in an authentic revision practice to discover the possibilities of words and the spaces between them. They will begin with mentor texts to hone their revision skills before turning to their own poetry drafts, which they will revise using the handout, Revision Bingo for Poetry. Students can self-select three strategies for revision and using the explanations provided work independently or collaborate with peers who are using the same strategy.
- **The Art of Revision with Shavon Doyle-Holton.** Students can watch the video with Shavon Doyle-Holton, a Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy Lead, to learn how she uses writing and revision in her role. Students will then practice a revision strategy that strengthens their focus, organization, and details in a current piece of writing.

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BUILDING STUDENT AUTONOMY

PEER REVIEW

Peer review gives students the chance to give and receive feedback and learn from their peers, reinforcing the collaborative community. It also gives the writer an opportunity for their writing to be heard by an audience. During Peer Review, students can request general feedback or more focused thoughts on specific sections.

- **Read Out Loud.** Reading out loud helps writers hear the rhythm and flow of their words, sentences, and ideas. Students could pair up and read out loud to a partner, or record themselves reading their own piece and play it back. After students listen to their writing out loud, they can reflect on their own writing and receive peer feedback taking into consideration:
  - What do they notice about how ideas and sentences flowed (or not)?
  - What can they add, remove, or change to improve the reading?

- **Musical Chairs Reading Circle.** If space allows, this activity works best when students can gather in a big circle, either on the floor or with their desks arranged. Students need 3 materials to start: their writing, a pencil, and 4-5 sticky notes. Tell students that they will read 4-5 pieces of writing and leave praise for their fellow writers. You will start by playing music. Students will leave their writing at their seat, then with their sticky notes, walk around the circle (or dance, hop, tip toe, etc!) until the music stops. When it does, they will stop and read the piece that is in front of them—like musical chairs, except every piece of writing stays in the circle for every round of this game. Students can respond to the writing using the following sentence starters
  - "I connect with this because…"
  - "I love your choice of…"
  - "I like how you tried…"

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BUILDING STUDENT AUTONOMY

PEER REVIEW

- **Mirror, Mirror.** In pairs, students will read their writing out loud to each other (alternatively, teachers could work with a group of students and read each piece aloud). Students who are listening will be a "mirror" for the writer by reflecting on the piece using the following sentence starters. The writer will use their partner's reflections to gauge whether their piece is achieving their desired effect.
  - "I heard…"
  - "I pictured…"
  - "I felt…"
  - "I wondered…"

- **Revision Guide.** Provide your students with this Revision Guide, originally from Session 5 of the Lesson, Who Ya Gonna Call: Writing Spooky Stories, to help focus the feedback they are receiving during a peer review. The writer will have the final word on what feedback is included in the revision process and this will help ensure the reader is focused on the areas the writer has identified may need fine tuning.

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