

TEACHING

CONVENTIONS

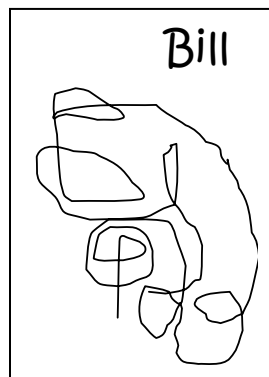
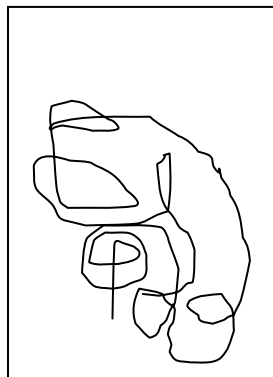
WHAT YOU'RE GOING FOR

- * Awareness of writing conventions
- * Willingness to experiment
- * Patience to take a second look

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. BEGIN SIMPLY

Assign editing tasks that are appropriate for age and ability. A good first editing activity is to check for your name on your paper. Is it there? Be sure you refer to this as editing, and reward students for having the patience to go back and check for this detail. Gradually, add other simple things as appropriate: e.g., a title on the paper or picture, a date on the piece. Eventually, beginning writers can also add such things as space between words, vertical space between lines, left-to-right orientation on the page, etc.



2. ENCOURAGE YOUNG WRITERS TO THINK LIKE EDITORS

As students begin to generate their own conventional text: (multiple words, beginning sentences, punctuated phrases and sentences), routinely and frequently ask **WHY**: Why did you put a period here? Why did you put a capital letter here? This helps reinforce the thinking behind the conventions.

3. CELEBRATE DISCOVERIES

without worrying overmuch about correctness: e.g., “Robert—I see you’ve discovered periods! You have lots of them in your writing now.”

4. ENCOURAGE EXPERIMENTATION

Reward students for trying something new. For noticing. For attempting to copy. For asking questions. Exploration is an end in itself; when it stops, learning stops with it. We do **NOT** need to assess everything, nor is it useful to do so while students are in their exploring/experimenting phase. If we expect and look for correct text all the time, we’ll get precious little of it.

5. SEE WHAT IS THERE

not what is missing. Make sure students also know what they are doing well. Left-right orientation? Spaces between words? Using letters to indicate sounds? Readable spelling, or pretty close? Applaud little victories. Point them out to students and **DO NOT WORRY YET ABOUT “ERRORS,”** which are only the young writers’ imagination at work.

6. TEACH COPY EDITOR’S MARKS

just as soon as your young editors are ready. This usually means as soon as they begin to write in sentences or near-sentences. A list of symbols appropriate for and useful to primary writers appears in the section on “Beginning Editing,” immediately following this section.