

[Recording starts 0:00:00]

Today's show is sponsored by Power School Learning

<https://www.powerschool.com/products/lms/>. At the end of the show I'll give you some resources about Power School Learning, my favorite learning management system. Stayed tuned.

JENNIFER SERRAVALLO

"For stories, these work well too, they could put five sticky notes on their desk in a plot mountain."

VICKI DAVIS

The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every week day you'll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.

VICKI: Happy Five Idea Friday. Today we have Jennifer Serravallo <http://www.twitter.com/jserravallo> from the Writing Strategies <http://amzn.to/2kyaRCJ> book. It comes out February the 16th and we'll be telling you at the end of the episode how to enter to, perhaps, win a copy of her book. Now, today, we have Five Idea Friday. Jennifer, what is your first idea for how we can improve writing in our classroom?

JENNIFER: My first idea is, it's really helpful to focus. **Focus on one goal**, one thing that you want to help students get better at. I felt like sometimes when I was teaching writing I would respond to whatever jumped off the page to me each time I'd sit down with a student, and what ends up happening is that you teach these little things across time and a lot of it sometimes adds up to not much. So what I started to do is to shift to focusing on just one goal and sticking to that goal over time and then offering the student strategies for that one goal in the series of several different small groups or several different conferences. Let me give you an example; one of the goals that I might have for students is to work on their elaboration, adding details. Another goal might be to help them with their structure. Another might be to help them focus on just one topic or one argument or one story idea that's focused in one small amount of time. Another might be to help them with their word choice or maybe their conventions.

[00:02:00]

And instead of going over to a student and trying to give them feedback on all of those things and end up with them just looking confused often or not knowing what to do first. Saying, you know, I want to work with you on a goal of trying to add more details to your writings that you can really stretch out what you're trying to say so your reader can really picture it. And then in that first small group or in that first meeting with the student, just offer one way to do that, so if you're writing a story it might be one way to add detail to describe the setting for your

reader by using all of your senses and putting those details down on the page. And then maybe the next time you come back it's not setting anymore, now it's adding on to character dialog, it's another way. But it's all under this umbrella of elaboration.

VICKI: I love that because you're focusing and you're not overwhelming your students. So, what's next Jennifer?

JENNIFER: My second big idea is to try to set up opportunities for kids to collaborate and don't save these till just editing, have them work with partners all across the writing process. There's lots of ways that kids can benefit collaborative groups, early on during the writing process when they're just trying to clarify their thinking and decide what they want to say, they could work with partners to story-tell if they're working on stories or to teach their partners if they're writing an informational text, to really get out what they want to say before they go and write it down on the page.

And then as they're working on their draft they could be with their partner to help them re-read what they have so far and how their partner can help them to get unstuck. There could be suggestions for clarifying parts that seem fuzzy or for adding in detail in places that need more description. And then of course editing helps too but I think a lot of people tend to use partnerships just at the end of the process when really they are great ways to help kids across the entire process.

VICKI: So much in brainstorming and prewriting or such great places to include partners. And even the focus that you mentioned are number one. Okay, what's our third?

[00:04:00]

JENNIFER: The third tip is to try, if you can, to **save instruction around conventions, so spelling, grammar, punctuation, until kids, at least, have their ideas down.** I think that the conventions and errors around conventions are one of the first things to leap off the page. Teachers want to go in and tell them where to put the capital letters and remind them to put the period at the end of their sentences. But sometimes if there's too much up front instruction around conventions, the kids get so bogged down and all their cognitive energy is going towards, "Capitalize the right word. Is the period in the right spot?" If they're not yet automatic with these different skills that they lose track of what they're trying to say and you end up with much poor-quality writing overall because the ideas aren't there.

So, I teach kids to really try to think through what they want to say, to plan what they want to say, to get it down, and through editing, to go back and try to improve their conventions. And then maybe, the thing that they edited for on that piece could be something that they're trying to work toward on the next piece while they're drafting, it becomes more automatic. But first, it's often best to save that once the ideas are already on the page.

VICKI: That's fantastic, what's our fourth?

JENNIFER: The fourth one is, maybe sometimes, instead of planning – we all know the importance of planning before we write and I'm someone who really benefits a lot from planning and having my organization and structure clear before I start. But I want to, sometimes, not plan on an external graphic organizer which I think is really common. Instead, I like to plan right on the paper. So, let me give an example, let's say I'm going to teach my kids how to write an informational piece and they're going to be writing all about a topic. So, all about, let's say, an animal that they've researched. Instead of writing an outline on a separate piece of paper and then trying to follow the outline as they apply to a draft paper, they could do a quick sketch on a sticky note and stick that poster on the corner of each page of the writing and then use it as a reference point. So essentially, they're outlining on sticky notes and sketches on the page.

[00:06:00]

Then those sticky notes can be removed and they've used it as their way to plan. For stories, this works well too. They could put five sticky notes on their desk in a plot mountain going up to the right, out of climax, and then going down on the right-hand side and sketch how the problem starts, how the problem gets worse, how the problem get solved. Peel the sticky notes off, put them right on the paper across the several pages that they're going to be drafting on, and then use that little sketch or the keyword that they wrote on that sticky note as a reminder of what they plan to do on that page. I find that there's less using of different materials, it helps kids to focus and it helps them to really stick to the structure that they plan.

VICKI: I love that. And it gets them from imagination to the words. Okay, what's our fifth idea?

VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER

JENNIFER: **The fifth idea is to make sure to plan to celebrate.** Kids work really hard on their writing pieces and any writer will tell you that it really is nice that you have something to look forward to that your published piece is out in the world and that there's celebrations happening around it. So, I try to make public to kids, early on in writing process, what the plans are for celebration, when the celebration is going to happen, how we're going to celebrate, who's going to come to our celebration or if it's just going to be within our own class. And making that really public and helping kids feel excited about it is a great way to motivate kids throughout the process.

VICKI: I love that. Teachers, have you planned how you're going to celebrate your writing and are you publishing for an audience? We know that blogging can help us to do that. So, the name of the book is The Writing Strategies Book by Jennifer Serravallo and the way that you're to enter is to go iTunes, leave a review (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/10-5-ideas-for-improving-student/id1201263130?i=1000381044644&mt=2>) , leave your Twitter handle or

Instagram handle or any handle that you want to leave so we know how to get up with you and we'll put them all in, we'll draw out one lucky winner and get up with you. But this book is just now coming out so get out there, take these five ideas and make writing better now. And have a remarkable day.

[00:08:00]

Today's show is sponsored by Power School Learning. Power School Learning is my learning management system. And I have all of my videos and assignments and everything in there. Now, the thing I love is when I grade in Power School Learning, it goes straight across to the Power School Student Information System for all of my grades. So I have, what they call, a unified classroom, everything is one place, I don't have to log in here or log in there, it's all in one place which makes my life so much easier. Now, if you want to know my secrets for blending my classroom effectively; how I screencast, how I setup the standard layout of the pages and how I do everything, I've shared this in a blog post at coolcatteacher.com/effective-blended-learning. Now, you can go to the show notes to follow the link. Now, go out there and be remarkable today.

Thank you for listening to the Ten-minute Teacher Podcast. You can download the show notes and see the archive at coolcatteacher.com/podcast. Never stop learning.

[End of Audio 0:09:09]

[Transcription created by tranzify.com. Some additional editing has been done to add grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors. Every attempt has been made to correct spelling. For permissions, please email lisa@coolcatteacher.com]

VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER