Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

Describing Student Work:
A Slice of Writing

Developed in the field by educators.

The Writing Slice

- The same writing prompt across a grade span, a grade level, or the curriculum.
- The writing conditions do not have to be standardized, but could be, depending on focus question and purpose. (e.g.: a focus ? such as "What Are the Characteristics of Proficient Writing" might not demand a timed sample.)
- Samples should be scored by students' individual teachers before examination.
- 1 High, 1 Medium, 1 Low Sample from each teacher:
  — One of those samples has to be from an ELL student.
  — If there are too many samples, eliminate the "Medium" sample, still keeping the MLL sample.
- Names and scores are covered or removed.

The Descriptive Review Set-up

- Everyone gets the same *paginated* packet of student work.
- Everyone speaks each round. Rounds can go clockwise, or counter-clockwise.
- Everyone speaks in turn and describes ONE thing, and only ONE thing.
- Facilitation is "intrusive," keeping each round of descriptions at a particular level, while keeping things moving quickly. There is no discussion at this time.
- Facilitation includes a short recap of one or more rounds, if appropriate.
- Facilitator may ask participants to pause and reflect between some rounds (e.g.: a quick write).

The Descriptive Review Process: *Times are adjustable depending on time available.*

1. The process is explained and the Framing Question is introduced and briefly discussed, e.g.: What are the Characteristics of Proficient Writing? (5 minutes)

2. Participants examine the samples, looking for evidence. They make notes and list the page number and example for reference during the discussion. (15+ minutes)

3. The Rounds: Facilitator takes close notes of participant responses. (30+ minutes)
   a. General Impressions
   b. Literal — physical
   c. Literal — physical
   d. Literal — physical
   e. Elements — style
   f. Elements — tone, audience, etc.
   g. Common Values (What positive evidence is showing up again and again?)
   h. What's Missing?

4. So What, Now What: (15+ minutes)
   Do several more rounds reviewing the content and possible next steps *and* Debrief the quality and value of the Protocol for "next time."

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