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## Minimize Lecture, Maximize Learning: The Workshop Model

Education World is committed to bringing educators the practical tools they need to make good decisions, engage in effective leadership and implement strategies that work. The following excerpt from *So What Do They Really Know? Assessment That Informs Teaching and Learning* describes the workshop model that the author relies on to foster a cycle of student work, timely feedback, and assessment. When students can show what they understand, you can adjust your teaching to what they need the most.

Just like the athletes on the field who do the majority of the work during practice, students in my classroom do the majority of the work by reading, writing, and thinking during class. By organizing my time using the workshop model every day, all year long, I can ensure that their reading, writing, and thinking are getting better.

In its simplest form, the workshop model has four basic parts: opening, mini-lesson, work time, and debriefing.

The opening is an opportunity to share the day's learning targets and set the stage for the day.

During the mini-lesson the teacher provides direct instruction for the whole class.

During the work time, students get to dig in and practice the learning. This is the most important part of the workshop and therefore must be the longest part of the period. I try to give students the bulk of the class to work, practice, or apply what has been taught during the mini-lesson.

As students work, I confer with individuals or small groups. Often my conferences are pretty short—about two to four minutes long. The purpose of conferring is twofold. I want to assess student learning and help them to build stamina. When I confer, I try to figure out what students know and what they need so they can continue doing the work on their own. My goal when conferring isn't to "fix" students but rather to provide support and scaffolding so students can be the ones who engage in the critical thinking. Just like during the mini-lesson, I must be careful not to take time away from students' doing the work. Conferring helps me help students stay on task so they can build stamina, skill, and endurance.

Catch-and-release occurs during the work time and can be either a planned or an unplanned part of the workshop. When I use the catch-and-release technique, it is because I have noticed a pattern of confusion in several students. Instead of repeating the teaching to each individual student, I temporarily halt the work time to quickly share a strategy or a piece of content that will benefit the class's learning process. Other times when I use catch-and-release, I've anticipated places where students might

struggle. In these cases, I model a way to negotiate the difficulty and then I release the kids so they have time to practice what I showed them. In either case, the catches are short, usually lasting only a few minutes.

The debriefing occurs at the end of the workshop and gives students an opportunity to be metacognitive as they synthesize, reflect on, and name what they have learned for the day.

Whether learners are struggling, gifted, or in between, they all deserve a year's worth of growth. When they get two-thirds of each class period to work, the minutes of practice time add up. When there is intentional planning with student work minutes in mind, combined with a teacher by their side conferring and giving targeted feedback, students can't help but expand their knowledge and increase their skills. This means they can tackle any kind of text with confidence and have the wherewithal to know what they need to do to construct meaning. If we do our jobs well, by listening to teach instead of talking to teach, students should be just as exhausted as teachers at the end of the day—and just as brilliant.

Be sure to read two other excerpts from this book: **Grading That Reflects Your Values and Annotating as an Assessment Tool.**