

Finding 1: The conferencing protocol provides three main supports.

■Provides writing techniques that can be used to generate revision ideas

During a class discussion, my students and I, worked together to come up with a list of features that could help make each piece of writing strong. For example students may say things like: an interesting opening, figurative language, dialogue, etc. Having this list at the top of each conferencing sheets helps the students to choose which techniques they can incorporate into their writing piece during the revising process. It also strengthens the use of academic language and reinforces the meanings and uses of each of these terms.

■Author's partner suggests a possible revision

After listening to students using the protocol, it was clear that in some cases the writer really benefited from the suggested revisions of a classmates. It was also clear that the discussions helped the writer clarify their ideas. As they read text aloud with a partner looking on they were able to negotiate what areas of the writing they needed to change. In many cases a strong partner would make really good suggestions to a partner that may be struggling with the writing. In cases where the partner listening was the weaker partner, the strong one in the group could really use the protocol to push their partner to give them a possible revision idea.

■Author realizes a needed revision

I also noticed a definite trend that writers were coming up with their own ideas for revising their papers by discussing them with partners. After reading their paper to their partner and going through the protocol, writers could find areas where their paper may be lacking. In some cases the writer only used the revisions they chose and did not take the suggestions of their conferencing partner. I found this to be quite profound because in many cases where the teacher suggests a revision idea students don't questions it. They just incorporate it as the teacher suggested without giving it much more thought. Having the discussion with a peer really helped students to feel more in control of the direction of the revisions.