Revise Your Personal Narrative for Voice

1. Focus

Explain Revising for Voice

Say: Sometimes when we complete our drafts, we assume we’re done, but we’re not. One of the most important parts of writing is revising the text—or making changes to it—to make it stronger. In fact, professional writers often do several revisions to a work before they publish it. In a personal narrative, one thing you will really want to focus on as you revise is your narrative voice. If the voice is strong, your readers will be able to connect with you, the writer. Today I’m going to show you how to revise a personal narrative to make the voice stronger.

Model Revising for Voice

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen as you read the passage aloud and to listen for the author’s voice in the writing.

Despite the cool weather, both teams came out swinging. By the sixth inning the score was 13–12. We were on top! Now it was the Mountain Cats’ turn last licks. We took the field determined not to let the other team scare us or shake our spirit. We got one out, then another. Then the Cats loaded the bases and! What’s worse, their best fiercest hitter, Jack, was up. He walked onto the field swinging his bat. The crowd cheered him on as he walked toward the plate. We were really nervous Our stony determination began to show some cracks.

Modeling Text

Say: I think I can make the voice stronger throughout this paragraph. I really want readers to hear me talking to them.

Reread sentences 1 and 2. Say: I don’t hear my own voice at all in these sentences. I’m just telling my readers what happened. Maybe I could add a sentence that would talk directly to the readers and share my feelings about the situation. I could write “We were on top!” That would show my excitement and make me part of the action. Insert this sentence into the text. (revised to include side comment)

Reread sentences 3 and 4. Say: “Now it was the Mountain Cats’ turn” is okay, but I could use an expression that shows more of my personality. I could write “Now it was the Mountain Cats’ last licks.” I like that better. (revised to reflect the writer’s personal voice)

Reread sentences 5 and 6. Say: Again, I don’t really hear my voice coming through. Instead of writing “Then the Cats loaded the bases, and their best...
hitter, Jack, was up,” I’m going to write “Then the Cats loaded the bases. What’s worse, their fiercest hitter, Jack, was up.” That’s what I would say, and this tells my readers how nervous I am about Jack being the up to bat. (revised to reflect the writer’s personal voice)

Reread sentences 7 and 8. Say: “We were really nervous,” tells readers how I feel, but I could do better than that. I could write “Our stony determination began to show some cracks.” Readers will be able to visualize that better. They’ll understand how my team is feeling. (revised to include the writer’s emotions)

2. Rehearse

Practice Revising for Voice

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

I caught the ball and Jack was out. We won the game.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to revise the sentences for voice. Each team should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how they strengthened the narrator’s voice. Say: Remember, you can make a connection with your readers in many ways. You can write things the way you would say them; you can put your feelings into pictures for the reader; you can speak directly to the reader.

Share Practice Revisions

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their revised sentences and explain what approach they took to strengthening the voice. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they revise their own personal narratives.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Support students’ use of the first person voice by inviting them to use the first person as they tell you about pictures they have drawn. Encourage them to think about who they drew the pictures for and what they would want to say to their audience.

Intermediate and Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Remind students to make the sentences sound the way they might say them.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned how to revise our personal narratives to make the voice stronger. Remember, a good personal narrative has a strong voice that readers can connect to. As you revise your personal narrative, remember to let your voice come through. You can do this by talking to the reader, writing in a way that sounds like you speaking, or describing your emotions visually for readers.

Encourage students to focus on voice when they revise during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section of their narrative that they revised for voice effectively.