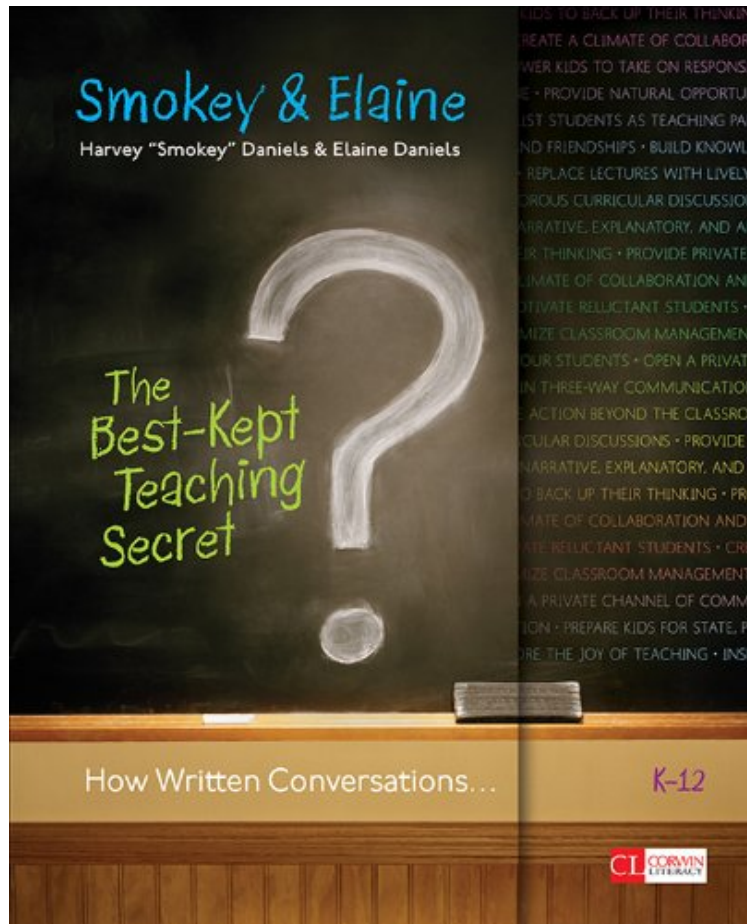


[Ebook pdf] The Best-Kept Teaching Secret: How Written Conversations Engage Kids, Activate Learning, Grow Fluent Writers . . . K-12 (Corwin Literacy)

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Harvey "Smokey" A. Daniels, Elaine Daniels
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Harvey "Smokey" A. Daniels, Elaine Daniels : The Best-Kept Teaching Secret: How Written Conversations Engage Kids, Activate Learning, Grow Fluent Writers . . . K-12 (Corwin Literacy) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Best-Kept Teaching Secret: How Written Conversations Engage Kids, Activate Learning, Grow Fluent Writers . . . K-12 (Corwin Literacy):

21 of 21 people found the following review helpful. Simple Ideas with Big ImpactBy Cult of PedagogyPicture this: You just showed students a thought-provoking video clip that illustrates something in your content area.Now, instead of asking the whole class what they thought about it, or handing out a review worksheet, you put students in small groups. Every student has a blank sheet of paper. When you say "Go," each student responds, in writing, to this question: What did you learn from this video that surprised you? After a few minutes, you tell students to pass this

paper to the student on their right. Each student writes a response to the paper they have just received. A few minutes later, they pass their papers again and respond to the first two comments. Once this third rotation is done, you tell students they may begin discussing their ideas out loud. Which they do. With way more energy and enthusiasm than they would have if you'd simply stopped the video and said, So what do you think? This technique, called a write-around, is one of many described in this book. The book's premise is simple: If we have our students write informally more often, in every content area, we will dramatically improve learning, behavior, engagement, test scores, even our own job satisfaction. Using specific, easy-to-follow instructions and lots of examples, the authors show us exactly how to do this. When I started reading this book, I was skeptical. The table of contents listed topics I was already familiar with: exit slips, online message boards...was this book just repackaging strategies that have been around for decades? That argument could definitely be made. But I would argue that in this case, the "repackaging" has value. It gathers up techniques that have been used loosely, on their own, and lines them all up as components of a larger body. In the same way that cooperative learning is a blanket term for a variety of collaborative strategies, the informal writing tools described in this book have now been given their own collective term: written conversations. As we continue to study and practice what works in education, it's challenging to keep up with every little technique; stopping periodically to group them helps us build a common language and stay organized as a profession. But that's just the beginning. This book goes well beyond a simple listing of strategies. Here are some of its best features:

- * Application in all content areas and age groups: The authors show how to use the strategies in a variety of content areas and with all age groups, even those in K-1 who will not all be able to write. In the examples of written conversations in math, science, social studies, and foreign language, we see that these tools are not just add-ons, but a way to get students thinking deeply about content. If you've been struggling to meet the Common Core standards for content-area literacy, this book is a gold mine.
- * Model lessons: For each strategy, the authors walk the reader through a lesson that puts it in context, showing what happens before, during, and after the use of the strategy. In these walk-throughs, we hear exactly what the teacher would say to introduce students to the activity and how they respond to students in the process. This was what really made the book valuable to me, because reading a description of a strategy only gets you so far; until you "see" it in action, you run a much greater risk of doing it wrong and discarding it as useless.
- * Student samples: The book is loaded with samples of real written conversations between students and teachers. At times I felt there was a little overkill in this area, but I would rather there be too many examples than not enough. The samples give the reader a clearer picture of what's possible in written conversations: Students arguing about content with supporting evidence. Students paraphrasing one another's contributions. Students defending their ideas with logic and reasoning, developing and expanding on these ideas with examples and details. All the things we want them to do in their more formal writing. There's serious academic work going on in many of these interactions; the samples are the proof.
- * Practical advice: Some readers may see written conversations as impractical or hard to manage, and the authors try to anticipate and address many potential reader questions. When I read about dialogue journals, my first thought was how I could possibly manage them with a typical middle-school roster of 100+ students. This concern was addressed within a few pages. The authors suggest ways to respond to larger numbers of students (without adding extra work to our load) and advise us to have students spend the bulk of their time writing to each other. Plenty of other questions are answered as well, such as how to grade these written conversations and what to do with students who don't take them seriously.

* A return to the "whole child." Our current educational climate focuses so much on measurable data. Although the techniques in this book should ultimately improve test scores, written conversations go well beyond that, helping us connect to and nurture many more aspects of our students' growth. In using these tools, we get to know our students better, we build more trust and compassion within our classrooms, and with our own writing, we model a whole lot of other things for them -- not only mature writing and thinking skills, but attitudes and values that contribute to their overall character and love of learning. Things have gotten awfully complicated and contentious in education lately. This friendly, easy-to-read book offers something we're all looking for these days: simple ideas with big impact.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Love it!
By Susan D Snow We are leading a book study with our teachers with this book! It is an easy read with student samples. Our teachers have been able to immediately implement the activities and are already seeing excitement for writing like never before!
Curriculum and Instruction Coach K-12 Math and Science
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The teachers liked the material and I encouraged them to buy this ...
By Jann Martin I used this book as part of my teaching material at a teachers conference. The teachers liked the material and I encouraged them to buy this book for their classroom.

Your fast-track to student engagement Everywhere Smokey Daniels speaks, there's one teaching strategy that teachers embrace above all others. That single method for transforming students from passive spectators into active learners . . . for evoking curiosity, inspiring critical thinking, and building powerful writers along the way. Now, that best-kept teaching secret is revealed: Written Conversations. Smokey and coauthor Elaine Daniels describe how to leverage these "silent writing-to-learn discussions"; structure by "structure"; Mini-memos Dialogue journals Write-arounds Digital discussions. . . with detailed descriptions, lessons, and annotated student samples—making this the most practical teaching book in recent memory.

"Engaging, enchanting, elegant, and totally practical. This little book is a gift to any teacher or school who wants students to write and think and communicate more--instantly. The tweaks to the written conversation strategies are fresh, stimulating, and easy to implement. Open it and start the conversation."--Jeff Anderson, Author of Ten Things Every Author Needs to Know and Mechanically Inclined

"Smokey and Elaine pave the way to increasingly sophisticated communication and thinking by cracking open their secrets for successful written conversations. This book is loaded with fabulous student writing samples, tips for instructional success, and so many great ideas that you won't be able to resist making written conversations an integral component of every learning day."--Linda Hoyt, Author of Revisit, Reflect, Retell and Coauthor of Nonfiction Writing

"Smokey and Elaine Daniels let the secret out: when students participate in written conversations, they generate new and deeper thinking. The easy-to-implement strategies found in this book place writing where it belongs-- in the forefront of the classroom-- and in doing so ensure your students will be involved in active, engaged learning. Better yet, your students will actually look forward to writing. And reading, too! I recommend this book for all teachers looking for ways to deepen their students' thinking through writing."--Kelly Gallagher, Author of Write Like This and Deeper Reading

"Simple and brilliant! Smokey and Elaine invite us to capitalize on kids' natural urge to write to each other. The tactics they describe in this book are easy to implement and will have a huge impact the minute you deploy them. The book is brimming with examples from preschoolers to college English classes. You will laugh out loud when Marco writes 'Am I a plant?' and covet comments like 'I would be excited if we did more things like this' from a high schooler!"--Ellin Keene, Author of To Understand and Coauthor of Mosaic of Thought

"Written in a light conversational style, The Best-Kept Teaching Secret brims with jottings written by children and with an armful of ways you can use letter writing to revitalize your teaching. Readers who have come to trust Smokey's grounding in classrooms will find that once again, he draws upon a rich repertoire of stories and methods drawn from the hurly burl of classrooms."--Lucy Calkins, Author of Units of Study for Teaching Writing and Coauthor of Pathways to the Common Core

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"Written Conversations stand the test of time, and Smokey and Elaine prove it here. So bring on the new standards and ever-changing technology! The more things change, the more best teaching practices stay the same."--Tanny McGregor, Author of Comprehension Connections and Genre Connections

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The author or coauthor of 18 books for teachers, Harvey Daniels, also known as "Smokey," has been a professor, researcher, consultant, and teacher coach over his 43-year career. These days, he serves as a conference speaker, school district consultant, and demonstration teacher in schools around the U.S. and Canada. In 2012, Smokey was presented with the NCTE Exemplary Leader Award. See Smokey reveal his best-kept secret to Ellin Keene. Elaine Daniels has been a reading and writing teacher and teacher literacy educator throughout her career. A former high school English teacher, she graduated to teaching in college and graduate programs, first at National-Louis University in the Master of Arts in Teaching program, then at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, where she taught literacy education courses. Elaine now teaches in the Developmental Reading and Writing Programs at Santa Fe Community College, where her students teach her new ideas, old ways of being, and places on the map she's never heard of.