

Method repeated with penguins

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Although students did need some prompts to make their feedback specific, the experience was ultimately an empowering one, she added. They felt like they had “good ideas and their opinions mattered.”

After that, Vandervinne sent her students “back to the drawing board,” so to speak, and told them try drawing a second penguin, keeping the suggestions they received in mind.

The next day, half of the class took part in another critique session with the aim of making their third and final penguin illustrations look even more realistic.

Throughout the process, Vander-

vinne liked watching what she describes as “helpful and honest feedback” carry over from the carpet to the tables where students were working. Advice between classmates flowed freely and naturally—she heard things like “remember the shape looks like this” and “you should add this ...”

When students were finally able to display all three penguin illustrations to their reading buddies Vandervinne said she was “blown away at the improvements between the drafts.”

Pictures of the student work tell the same story. Daniel’s first penguin is a small, barely there oval drawn in crayon. In his second draft, the lines are a little more confident and we know that

he’s on his way to something better. By his third draft, Daniel’s penguin is outlined in thick black marker—its clearly defined wings have been filled in and its webbed feet are a vibrant shade of orange!

This was the first time that Vandervinne has tried out an activity like this, and views the lesson design as her own “Austin’s Butterfly” moment.

“When colleagues were giving me feedback—suggestions for how to do it differently, or what else to do with the project, at first I got defensive,” she admitted. But, Vandervinne was soon “reminded to step back and take their advice as helpful things to make the lesson better.”



DANIEL'S THREE VERSIONS OF HIS PENGUIN

“I get to do lots of planning with the other SK teachers at the school. It’s good to hear a new perspective and different suggestions for lessons.”

Vandervinne’s take on an “Austin’s Butterfly” lesson is a beautiful example of what can happen when teachers embrace critique and invite their students to do the same. By making room for children to take part in critical cycles of

feedback, Vandervinne is also creating a culture of perseverance and encouragement at HHCS. Through that journey, she’s seen her students grow, and watched them create some truly excellent work.

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