

Professional Conversation: Penny Kittle

Teaching the Writer's Craft with Micro Mentor Texts

Thursday, January 8th, 2026 • 5:00-6:30pm CST • Zoom

Before We Meet

Read ONE of these articles and bring your questions:

- [Teaching the Writer's Craft with Micro Mentor Texts \(Edutopia\)](#)
- [Exploring Micro Mentor Texts \(Read by Example\)](#)

As You Read:

- ✓ Highlight at least one part that is affirming, interesting, or disturbing.
- ✓ Come up with a question you'd like to explore with the group
- ✓ Reflect after reading: Why does this matter for my students/teachers?

Our Conversation Norms

- Point to specific moments in the text
- Listen to understand, not just to respond
- Let questions guide us before jumping to answers
- Explore what it means before deciding what to do

Questions for Penny

Below are six questions I asked author Penny Kittle. They came up for me during my initial reading, and I anticipate others might have similar questions.

1. What's your definition of a mentor text? What makes a mentor text "micro"?
2. Your approach with micro mentor texts resembles writers workshops that I have participated in. Is this intentional? What's different, if anything?
3. You seem to prefer to write in front of and with your students vs. showing them what you've already written. What benefits do students derive from your modeling and shared demonstration?
4. Where do you collect and organize your favorite mentor texts? How do you organize them? Is this a process you teach to students?
5. You've been a teacher for over 40 years. How disruptive, for better or for worse, has technology been to literacy in general, and to writing specifically, as of late?
6. You share a powerful visual with readers: a library without books. To combat this, what classroom conditions are essential to help kids write for real and for life?

Facilitated by Matt Renwick

Guided by Shared Inquiry principles from the Great Books Foundation



After the Conversation

Take 5 minutes to write privately. You're welcome to share in the chat:

- *What resonated with you during our conversation?*
- *What do you think now that you didn't before?*
- *How might this show up in your work?*