Some Tips for Developing and Presenting Effective Writing Prompts

➢ Whenever possible, propose prompts based on themes, issues, problems, situations that have been discussed that day.

➢ Writing themes should direct the writers to concrete stories or descriptions.

➢ Examples of good story prompts
  • A time I defended myself (or my family, or community)
  • A turning point in my life
  • When I first came to Chicago
  • Making something out of nothing
  • Biting my tongue
  • What happened when I took a risk
  • Breaking with a tradition
  • Finding a silver lining; or a time when something difficult happened, but there was a positive outcome

➢ Examples of good descriptive prompts that can also lead to a story:
  • A place of refuge
  • A person I admire
  • An object that I treasure
  • A family tradition in my home
  • The biography of my hair (or my handwriting)

➢ Avoid writing themes that lead to abstract writing.
  Examples of abstract prompts:
  • My dreams for the future
  • Respecting our elders
  • The importance of loving our children

➢ Introduce the prompt in ways that encourage concrete writing and lots of detail.
  For example:
  • "As you think about your refuge, think about what it feels like, sounds like, describe it using all your senses...."