



TEACHING WRITING SKILLS TO FOUNDATION STUDENTS

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra9663>
DOI No: 10.36713/epra9663

ABSTRACT

There are many reasons for getting students to write, both in and outside class. Firstly, writing gives them more 'thinking time' than they get when they attempt spontaneous conversation. This allows them more opportunity for language processing that is thinking about the language whether they are involved in study or activation. When thinking about writing it is helpful to make a distinction between 'writing for learning' and 'writing for writing'. In the case of the former, writing is used as an aide memoire or practice tool to help students practice and work with language they have been studying. You might, for example, ask a class to write five sentences using a given structure, or using five of the new words or phrases they have been learning. Writing activities like this are designed to give reinforcement to students. This is particularly useful for those who need a mix of visual and kinaesthetic activity. Another kind of writing for learning occurs when you have students write sentences in preparation for some other activity. Here, writing is an enabling activity.

KEYWORDS: *Teaching Writing, Writing Effectively, and Paragraph Writing to Foundation Students*

INTRODUCTION

Writing for writing, on the other hand, is directed at developing the students' skills as writer. In other words, the main purpose for activities of this is that students' should become better at writing, whatever kind of writing that might be. There are good 'real life' reasons for getting students to write such as things as emails, letters and reports. Whereas, in writing for learning activities it is usually the language itself that is the main focus attention, in writing for writing you look at the whole text. This will include not just appropriate language use, but also text construction, layout, style and effectiveness. It is clear that the way you organize your students' writing and the way you offer advice and correction will be different on what kind of writing they are involved in.

THE WRITING PROCESS

When a students are writing for writing you will want to involved them in the process of writing. In the real world this typically involved planning what you are going to write, drafting it, reviewing and editing what you have written and then producing a final version. Many people have thought that this is linear process, but a closer examination of how writers of all different kinds are involved in the writing process suggests that you do all of these things again and again, sometime in a chaotic

order. Thus, you may plan, draft, re-plan, draft, edit, re-edit, etc before you produce the final version. You will need to encourage students to plan, draft and edit in this way, even though this may be time-consuming and may meet with some resistance on their part. By doing so, you will help them students to enhance their skills.

BUILDING THE WRITING HABIT

Many students either think or say that they cannot, or do not want to write. This may be because they lack confidence, think it is boring or believe they have nothing to say. You need to engage them, from early levels with activities not only become a normal part of classroom life but also present opportunities for students to achieve almost instant success. It is when students have acquired this writing habit that they are able to look at written genres and involved themselves in the writing process with enthusiasm.

WRITING TECHNIQUES

1. Instant Writing Technique

One way of building the writing habit of the student is to use instant writing activities as often as possible with the students who are reluctant writers. Instant writing activities are those where student are asked to write immediately in response to a



teacher request. You can, for example, dictate half sentences for students to complete. You can give them three words and tell to put them into a sentence as quickly as possible. Instant writing is designed to make students comfortable when writing, and also to give them time before they say the sentences they have written aloud.

2. Using music and pictures Technique

Music and pictures are excellent stimuli for both writing and speaking. For example, you can play a piece of music and the students have to imagine and then write out the film scene they think it could accompany. You can dictate the first sentence of a story and then have the students complete the story, based on the music you play them. You can then dictate the first sentence again and have them write a different story. They can then read out one of their stories and the class has to guess which music excerpt inspired it.

Pictures offer a wealth of possibilities. You can ask students to write descriptions of one of a group of pictures, their classmates then have to guess which one it is. They can write postcards based on pictures you give them. You can get them to look at portraits and write the inner thoughts of the characters or their diaries or an article about them. All these activities are designed to get students writing freely in an engaging way.

3. Newspapers and Magazines Technique

The different kinds of text found in newspapers and magazines offer a range of possibilities for genre analysis, followed by writing within that genre. For example, you can get students to look at a range of different articles and ask them to analyze how headlines are constructed and how articles are normally arranged. They then write an article about a real or imaginary news story that interests them. You can do the same of genre analysis in newspaper and magazine advertisements. Students can learn a lot from analyzing the genre and being able to imitate it. In the same vein, agony column letters offer engaging writing practice. Finally, you can show students a story and have them respond to it in a variety of different genres and for different audiences. For examples, the report of a long traffic delay can prompt letters to the newspaper, emails, text messages, letters of apology etc.

4. Writers are the Best Writing Teachers

To teach effective writing, you must be effective writers yourselves. You can not teach what you do not know and when it comes to writing, it is important to continue honing your craft. If you have not engaged in much formal writing since college, you will remain a less effective writing teacher. No matter what subject you teach, try starting a blog, writing articles, or developing short stories all terrific ways to engage the mind and keep your skills sharp.

Reading is important, but reading alone is not enough to strengthen your writing skills, or to make you a credible authority on the subject. The author is not proposing that every teacher write online every day (though if you do, that is excellent). But

even if just once or twice a month, in some way, shape, or form, teachers should produce writing to be read by others. It is at least that important to practice what you preach.

5. The Value of Sharing

No matter what you teach, share your written work. The author always share with his students and ask for their feedback even their criticism. In that respect, it is essential for students to recognize not only your skill, but also your interest and engagement in constantly refining a crucial life skill. For one lesson, the author even share with students some of high school, college, and graduate school essays, and they analyze what need to improved upon over time. It was excited about sharing the author's work and that in turn helps to get students excited about doing the same.

6. Write for Your Students

No matter what you teach, write in front of students. When you are teaching about formal introductory paragraphs, for instance, history students think of a worthy historical question for me to tackle. With the projector on then write out the paragraph, sharing thought process along the way. Students observe how to work and rework my prose, and how to place a premium on concision. They also critique work, which in turn helps them not repeat similar mistakes. Admitting the weaknesses helps the students become less defensive about their own work, and in turn more open to criticism.

7. The Writing Workshop

Create workshop environments, with multiple stations focusing on different aspects of writing. In the classroom, appoint a student who is great at transitions to staff the "transitions" booth, and a student great at topic sentences to staff the "topic sentence" booth. Of their own volition, or at any suggestion, students visit whatever booth fits their needs. As far as instruction goes, this maximizes utility while freeing me to meet one-to-one with the neediest students.

8. Seeking Feedback

Urge students to share their work with each other and online. Few writers have ever improved by keeping their work to themselves. As the teacher, know that opinions carry significant weight. But the same is true of what others think, especially one's peers. In an increasingly flat world and a digital age, students must feel comfortable and confident about sharing their work for the whole world to see. To that end, teachers should help students produce appropriate, high-quality content.

9. Real-World Writing

Most importantly, teachers must do whatever they can to convey the importance and usefulness of writing more effectively. No matter what craft or profession students wish to pursue, make it clear at every turn that knowing how to write well will play a significant role in their success. From science, math, engineering, law, history, and journalism to anything else one can



think of the ability to express oneself clearly in writing is absolutely essential. Next year, to help get that point across, hope to invite various professionals to speak to the students about the role of writing plays in their lives.

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