

Writing Instruction: A Vehicle for Post-High School Success

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Although school districts deem writing instruction as an integral part of the English and Language Arts curriculum, it is undeniable that the success rate in writing is not at par with students' reading achievement. Many students in today's schools do not meet the grade-level demands in writing. This is unfortunate because the ability to write cohesively is a skill that is valued in the workforce—the path our students will take after they leave the confines of our schools.

The 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that only 33% of eight-graders and 24% of twelfth-graders performed at or above “proficient” level in writing. This is quite alarming given the fact that these numbers reflect the need for intervention for the majority of adolescents who are below the proficient level to help them transition and meet the writing demands for college and later on, for employment.

- 70% of students in grades 4-12 are low-achieving writers
- Nearly one third of high school graduates are not ready for college-level English composition courses
- U.S. graduate's literacy skills are lower than those of graduates in most industrialized nations
- Thirty-five percent of high school graduates in college, and 38% of high school graduates in the workforce feel their writing does not meet expectations for quality
- About half of private employers and more than 60% of state government employers say writing skills impact promotion decision

The implications of a successful writing program in schools are far-reaching. The ability of schools to provide effective writing instructions and interventions for students is one of the biggest challenges educators face in this day and age. Schools and teachers who fail to provide instruction that helps students improve their writing ability is passing on youngster who will have to suffer the consequences of poor writing remediation. Most importantly, these students' self-efficacy as writers are diminished and their motivation compromised which could have adverse effects in their ability to reach their potentials.

Despite the number of books published to guide teachers in their instructional practices, the diversity in each classroom presents problems in choosing the best approach to use. The teaching of writing has evolved overtime—from viewing it as a product-centered endeavor to a process base activity requiring inquiry strategies to develop content of the written work. These changes call for a paradigm shift in how educators and administrators view their writing program. The different researches made formed the basis to what is now considered effective strategies to improve writing outlining 11 key recommendations which teachers should included in their teaching practice.

Creating an effective writing instruction should be one of the top priorities of schools alongside reading instruction. The writing instruction should develop the students' understanding of the writing process, provide a lot of opportunity for practice, and scaffolds the development of writers from K-12th grade. A school environment that fosters authentic and meaningful writing experiences is paving the way for academic and post-high school success. Having high expectations for good writing early on and scaffolding instruction to meet those expectations should be embodied in a school's writing instruction. Students who have mastered

diverse writing strategies and have developed competence as a writer are more likely to succeed post high school because they are better equipped to meet the demands of higher level writing.

In the heart of writing instruction is the role of teachers and their ability to motivate students to write. Teaching writing necessitates educators to be well informed of research-based, best practices that will promote the writing development of their students. To this end, schools need to take a proactive stance in offering ongoing professional development that supports the teachers' quest to achieve the writing goals. Keeping in mind that writing is inherent across the curriculum and can support learning in all disciplines, it is only fair to expect all teachers to have some form of formal instruction or training in teaching writing.

Students' post-high school success, whether in college or in the workplace, can be influenced by the quality of writing instruction they received from K-12th grade. The writing instruction we provide students could be their ticket to success. Effective writing instruction must be one of the pillars of the school's philosophy. With this in mind, ongoing professional development that ensures teachers' use of research-based strategies and best-practices should be a focus of any school administration to guarantee its students successful transition beyond high school.