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Eng 509

30 Apr. 2004

**Writing for Specific Audiences and Specific Purposes:
A Unit Exploration of the Forms of Writing**

Context

Prior to this second unit to be taught during the school year, students will have been exposed to a two-week unit examining various student-generated models of personal writings, literary writings, and transactive writings, and, according to McNabb's Curriculum Alignment Document, have had practice writing both expository and narrative texts in the sixth grade. This unit invites student exploration and practice with the various forms of writing required in seventh grade portfolios as well as utilization and understanding of Kentucky's Holistic Scoring Guide. Students will be expected to use the scoring guide to analyze and score personally generated text, as well as the text of peers. Following this two-week unit, students will begin generating portfolio-appropriate personal writings in response to various writing prompts, picture books, memory box items, etc.

Immediate Objectives

Culmination of this exploratory unit will result in each student's production of a draft in three of the four required genres of seventh grade portfolios: personal writing, literary writing, and transactive writing. While this unit is designed to result in a draft of each of the previously mentioned genres, these drafts will not be generated in hopes of producing a portfolio-appropriate piece, rather the unit's aims are to impart an

understanding of the different modes of writing students will be required to complete during the school year. It is hoped that through discussion, examination, practice, and analysis both of the criteria of Kentucky's Holistic Scoring Guide, and also practice in writing prescribed forms, students will be afforded insight into the importance of generating drafts while mindful of purpose/audience, organization, and idea/development and support. With discussion and practice of not only the various forms, but also in utilization of the scoring guide, students will be better prepared to compose portfolio-appropriate drafts during the school year.

Long Term Expectations

Because this unit occurs during the third week of the school year, students are just beginning to get a glimpse of the extent of writing required by Kentucky's Core Content for seventh grade. While a brief discussion of the class syllabus, reading list, and portfolio requirements has taken place during the first week of school, students generally have poorly-conceived conceptions of what development of a particular piece requires, and usually possess minimal to no understanding of Kentucky's Holistic Scoring Guide. In addition, students do not have solid comprehension/understanding of what "good" writing consists of, and are mostly incapable of tactful, responsive peer conferencing. This unit gives them an overview of the forms of writing, develops an understanding of peer conferencing by utilization of specific criteria rather than meaningless responses, and requires them to examine the Holistic Scoring Guide using their own and other's drafts.

Connection to Course Goals

Per class syllabus and Kentucky Core Content:

Academic Expectations:

1.4 Students make sense of the various messages to which they listen

1.11 Students write using appropriate forms, conventions, and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes.

Procedure

The following table provides a daily timeline of classroom activities, student responsibilities, materials needed, assessment used, and teacher roles during the unit. During the two-week unit, student roles will change, assessment focus will shift from anecdotal(formative) to scoring guide(summative) assessment, and cooperative learning (including peer conferencing) will occur multiple times to foster the classroom’s initial community of writers. Teacher role throughout the unit is both instructive and facilitative. It should be noted that language arts and literature classes are blocked, thus each day represents an approximate one hundred and five minute time span. Please note: as this unit has been “field-tested” all times allotted for specific activities are accurate.

Day	Activity
One	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As students enter the room, place a yellow, blue, or red sticky dot on back of hand. This will determine initial group assignment. 2. Provide students with unit overview and discuss goals/objectives. 3. Inform students that the color of dot they received represents the group in which they will be members for the next three days. Students with blue dots are in the personal writing group, students with red dots are members of the short story group, and students with yellow dots are in the transactive writing group. 4. Tell students they will be watching segments of various video excerpts and expected to compose drafts based on events of those videos. Students will be expected to adhere to the form of writing to which they are assigned, and, after three days, video segments, as well as group assignment will change. 5. Distribute packet containing various copies students will need for the ten-day unit. Handouts in packet include: plot structure handout and feature article format handout (both are generic forms, so I did not provide in this lesson plan) and copy of Kentucky Holistic Scoring Guide as well as Characteristics of Feature Articles,

	<p>Characteristics of Personal Narratives, and Characteristics of Short Stories (Also, I did not provide copy of these documents for this lesson plan as these copies are widely available in the Portfolio Handbook provided to Kentucky teachers.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Watch fifteen minute video excerpt from “Impact: Stories of Survival” or “Storm Stories.” During this time, students are expected to complete brief notes about video content. 7. Discuss purpose/audience, organization, idea development/support and utilize dry erase board to compile student-generated ideas about how each criterion would differ depending on genre one is writing. 8. Inform students that when they get in groups, they should collectively brainstorm plot diagram or feature article format for 7-10 minutes, then pre-write/draft individually for the remainder of class (approximately thirty minutes). Students should know that thirty to forty-five minutes will be afforded the next day to finish rough draft. Assemble groups and permit group discussion and individual drafting. <i>*Note: students in transactive group will be provided with relevant, cited research from which to develop draft; for example, if segment of video watched is about an airline crash, students will be provided with extra information about airline safety or travel tips to provide them with needed information to develop a feature article.</i>
Two	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review previous day’s activities and unit objectives. 2. Provide students with 30-45 minutes to finish rough draft of piece. Encourage students to review Holistic Scoring Guide and appropriate “Characteristics” handout from packet. Instruct students that any revision taken should focus on the top three bullets of the scoring guide. 3. Explain to students that the next half of class for the day will put them with a peer partner to read each other’s drafts and provide each other with detailed feedback for possible revisions. It should be noted that students have previously been exposed to appropriate/inappropriate responses during peer conferencing during a whole class fishbowl technique used in previous unit taught. 4. Divide students into pairs within the larger group. Each student is to complete a “T” chart (glow and grow) about his/her partner’s draft. On one side of the chart students should list things the writer does well, on the other side, the reviewer lists questions or possible areas for improvement. At this point in the year, while writers are still getting acclimated to writing as a “community” activity, I require students to list equal numbers of responses in each column of the chart and responses must be limited to the first three bullets of the scoring guide criteria. 5. Explain to students that homework assignment is to revise rough draft.
Three	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review previous day’s activities and unit objectives. 2. Place students in groups with previous peer partner. Student dyads should examine revisions made to rough drafts and discuss further questions/issues with partner. 3. Instruct students to circulate drafts among the larger same-color group as desired for the next half hour. If students (as audience) still have questions about something in draft they have read, he/she should place a sticky note with the question on/near the appropriate area of the draft. 4. Provide time for discussion in large color groups about difficulties each writer encountered during drafting or revision, and how he/she solved those problems. 5. Revision efforts during remaining class time or as homework should focus on top three bullets of scoring guide. Students should not re-write entire draft, just write

	in margins or staple snippets of revised text near area to be inserted.
Four	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As students enter the room, place a different color sticky dot from the color he/she was given during day one of unit. 2. Follow steps #2-#8 of day one of unit. Note: video excerpt will differ to provide variety for students.
Five	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review previous day's activities and preview goals/objectives for the day. 2. Follow steps #2-#5 from day two of unit.
Six	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow steps #1-#5 from day three of unit.
Seven	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As students enter the room, place a different color sticky dot from the color he/she was given on days one and four of unit. This will comprise full rotation with each student having been a member of all three writing groups. 2. Follow steps #2-#8 of day one of unit. Note: video excerpt will differ to provide variety for students.
Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow steps #1-#5 from day two of unit.
Nine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow steps #1-#5 from day three of unit.
Ten	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain to students that today will conclude unit. 2. Student should examine his/her three drafts generated during previous days of unit. On back of each draft, student should list problems he/she encountered during drafting each piece, how he/she solved those problems, and (for student's information only) what he/she thinks each piece scored per the scoring guide. 3. Teacher will draw a large table on board. Titles for columns will be three types of writing students have explored. Titles for three rows will be "Easy To...", "Difficulties," and "What Helped." 4. Student discussion will provide teacher with items to list in appropriate areas of table. It is important during this discussion to use terminology of scoring guide. 5. Wrap-up discussion for this unit and collect all drafts; introduce next unit.

Assessment

Student assessment for the unit is both summative and formative. Formative assessment will consist of anecdotal notes taken throughout cooperative learning assignments. Basically, I am most interested in identifying and possibly circumventing writing difficulties, cooperative learning problems, and peer conferencing issues that might hinder student and writing community progress during the initial three to four weeks of school. Summative assessment will consist of completion of three drafts that adhere to specific, prescribed format. At this point in the semester, I am more interested in acquiring a baseline of students writing abilities, deficits, and attitudes toward writing than I am in providing students with an intense scoring guide that could actually breed

failure/apathy in students unused to their writing being graded for more than surface errors. If student demonstrates applied effort and completes three drafts in prescribed format, he/she will receive a “pass” grade for the assignment; however, student writing will be evaluated by the instructor utilizing Kentucky Holistic Scoring Guide criteria, and students will be given specific feedback (similar to Marker Paper design) by which to evaluate his/her work. Later assignments in the semester are also evaluated using Kentucky’s Holistic Scoring Guide, but various weights are assigned depending on ability of student and recognizable effort exerted during drafting. Specific grades are then attributed per student, per writing assignment, mini-lesson assignment, or revision assignment.

Theoretical Rationale

So much of the success of writers depends on self-prescribed attitudes toward writing. With this knowledge in hand, I make every effort possible to foster welcoming, non-threatening atmosphere/community, and provide students with specific writing tasks and revision suggestions. An additional factor besides attitude and atmosphere is how the teacher develops an invitation to begin writing. Students are understandably frustrated with poorly-conceived assignments, and it is of utmost importance that one chooses writing prompts and invitations to write with individual and community needs fully considered. At this early stage of the year, I am consumed with creating a strong writer’s workshop because I believe autonomous writers/revisionists are only created through shared power with my students. Students need to become aware of and comfortable with their own creativity through exploration and trial and error. One of the most concise, yet fully-developed articles I have read on building a writer’s workshop was written for the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. In this article, Darla Shaw posits “Seven C’s”

that are necessary for well-built writer's workshops: climate, choice of literature, communication, coaching, connection, collaboration, and chemistry. Shaw feels that within those "Seven C's" a writing workshop should have positive energy, provide challenging work, promote student communication through peer /teacher/class conferencing, and foster specific collaboration using criteria/traits. In particular, within this article Shaw cites earlier research of Elbow and Playoff when she concludes that teacher role within writer workshop is a delicate one between supportive coach and judge of student work(322-324). An earlier book written by one of the acknowledged founders of writing workshop, Donald Graves, also supports allowing student autonomy within writer's workshops. The first four words of Graves's (1983) book assert: "Children want to write"(p.3). In addition, Graves develops a paradigm for conferencing that also points to building a strong writer's workshop through established routines and expectations, rather than harsh control and punitive grading. Graves feels that students should be able to predict what happens during conferencing...students should be free to initiate questions and comments, in efforts to find their own solutions...Both teacher and child need to possess common language to discuss the process and content...There ought to be a combination of experimentation, discovery, and humor (pp.271-272). Other researchers also note the importance of discovery within writing workshop. *In Teaching Children to Write: Theory into Practice*, authors Jane Hughey and Charlotte Slack posit that in writing workshop writers are free to explore thoughts, experiences, and imaginations, and in collaborative groups, writers brainstorm ideas, share feedback on progress, and learn through response to their own and other's work through the writing process (p.5).

As our definitions of writing communities and the writing process evolve, so also does our use of text, both as a springboard to prompt writing, and also a means of

communication. Today's youth are bombarded with a plethora of media from television to computer-based technologies, to anime, to comic books, to fantasies, to video games, to graphic novels. It only makes sense to bring the graphic world into our writing communities to foster student interest. Yes, students do still need an understanding and appreciation of classical literature; students can be and still are inspired by these masterpieces that usually contain so much more depth than a comic book and/or graphic novel. Students need to feel welcomed into realm of writing and text, and this often only occurs if teachers are flexible with reading materials and springboards to writing. This is why I often use intriguing pictures, picture books, and clips of video to inspire student writing. This practice is experiencing recognition, albeit slowly, as accepted practice by some noted teachers/researchers of writing. According to T. Hipple in the ALAN Review, the use of various available media to foster literacy can "appeal to minds as yet unchallenged" (p. 43). Further evidence from others in the field also attests to the efficacy of alternative text, especially with promoting literacy in males. Authors Michael Smith and Jeffery Wilhelm assert that using drama as a means of promoting literacy and creativity cannot be underestimated. Further, in a 1997 study, Wilhelm states that drama was the single instructional technique that was mentioned positively by all members of the boys comprising his case study (p. 130-131).

The values of cooperative learning have long been established within both the educational realm and the world of writing. Authors Dan Kirby and Tom Liner feel that cooperative learning is invaluable to fledgling writers. Within a writing community/workshop, "the growing writer becomes fluent (by making substantial, meaning-based contact) with others, (and) begins to control his writing automatically."(15) In addition, these authors offer a few other benefits to peer

conferencing/cooperative writing communities. “Careful reading of (other) student papers sensitizes them to problems in their own papers...students use peer papers as creative sources for borrowing ideas and vocabulary.” The authors also assert that students who know their papers will be read by an immediate audience of their peers find more of a purpose for writing (230). Further, these authors establish that during writing workshop, the teacher is afforded time to “look for places where I (teacher) can intervene to help them (19).

Author Marjorie Frank creates a vision for assessment of writing that deserves a thorough examination. Frank states that, “Assessment is not the private property of teachers. They must take part in this, ...it is central to the growth of writing....they need to know the criteria by which their own writing will be judged.” (p. 175). Author Vicki Spandel’s views coincide, “What you can assess, you can revise.” (p. 142). Further, Spandel asserts that trait based writing should be supplemental to the writing process, not supplant it (p. 2).

Predictions

Through exploration of writing workshop and the genres of writing they will be expected to experience during portfolio development, students will not only form an understanding of course requirements, but also develop a deeper understanding of what comprises quality writing in specific formats. In addition, students will develop applied comprehension of the top three bullets of Kentucky’s Holistic Scoring Guide; essential tools/skills by which quality writing can be composed, revised, and assessed.

Follow-up

Throughout the year, the experiences of these two weeks will be referenced. Not only will students become efficient peer reviewers, they will also be afforded a glimpse

into formats they will fully develop in weeks to come. Time and again students will be expected to rate theirs and others work through analysis and trait understanding. This will aid them throughout future writing endeavors, both in seventh grade and in future.

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