

Writing Matters



Publishing Student Writing

With all the options that are available for publishing student writing (to be explored in the next article), the question may arise, “Why would I want/need to publish my students’ writing?” Simply put, students write better and put more effort into their writing if they know there is the possibility of an “outside audience” reading their work. For those of you who took piano lessons as children, you know the difference between practicing for your weekly lesson and practicing for the upcoming recital. For the recital, knowing you had a larger audience than simply your teacher, you put more effort into your practice, slowing down to master the strange scales, stretching your fingers to reach for the large chords. You wanted your music to be easy for the audience to listen to. Student writers do the same for published writing. They are more likely to revise and edit their work, and they appreciate instructor feedback and peer review as part of the process of making their writing “easy” for readers to read. With online and traditional methods available, publishing student work can be an easy and fun option for you and your classes.

Options for Publishing Your Students’ Writing

When students know they are writing to be published, their writing improves. They are more likely to follow more closely a writing process that involves revision and close attention to detail in their editing. Therefore, a valuable instruction tool is to publish student writing. There are many ways to do this that require a small amount of effort on your part, and very little time.

Traditional, hard-copy publishing is quick and easy for the instructor. Student essays can be photocopied together, back-to-back to create a packet. It only takes a moment to punch holes and bind these packets with plastic spines. Students

can help design a table of contents page, an introductory letter, and a cover page. Print your cover page in color on card stock paper, and you automatically dress up your class’s publication.

This traditional method can be useful for various purposes. A copy of the best work from each student can be bound and placed in the library on the reserve shelves as future reference. Or, over the course of the semester, students can produce writing and summaries that, once bound together, create a study guide for the final exam. An additional benefit is that you will have models of student work to share with future

classes.

With the advent of Web 2.0 technologies, publishing student writing doesn’t have to be confined to hard copies. One option in the cyber-world of publishing is to create a class blog. This free (and simple) service can bring into the classroom a type of writing and publishing that students are very used to seeing and doing outside of class. You can require students to submit weekly entries on various subjects covered during lecture. A bonus to blogs is that there is space for commenting on each entry, thus creating a type of “online discussion.” Be sure to set

parameters for what kind of writing is acceptable (academic, formal English), then enjoy watching your students flourish!

Finally, it is a great idea to have your students assist you in determining what means of publishing you want to use. Some students feel very comfortable in an online environment, while others may prefer their work to be published in a hard-copy that can be taken home.

Whatever you choose, you are likely to see improvement in the final product your students are able to create. Students will be more engaged, and their learning will be deeper and more critical.

I think I did pretty well, considering I started out with nothing but a bunch of blank paper.

Steve Martin

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WAC Fall Faculty Workshop/Training

Do you want your students to think more deeply about the content you are teaching? Ever wondered how to get students engaged with the material in a real, substantial way? Do you want to help your students improve and maintain their writing skills? If you answered yes to any of those questions, consider this your invitation to discuss these ideas, explore ways to support student writing, and discover methods that encourage thinking and writing but take little time on your part!

This fall, prior to the start of classes, the WAC program will be holding its annual workshop/training day. During this time, we will explore ways of integrating writing into any class; creating writing assignments that encourage critical thinking about your discipline; developing methods of using writing that take little of your already-packed time. Writing is a powerful tool and a needed skill in today's job market. This training day can help you develop writing in your courses in a way that encourages students to develop their skills and deepen their education.

WAC Workshop/Training Day

❖ **Monday, August 9, 2010** ❖

9 AM - 3 PM

If you are interested in participating in this one-day training session, please contact Jennifer Hippensteel before May 14. jb_hippensteel@southwesterncc.edu, or ext. 264

Why proofreading
is important



What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure. - Samuel Johnson