

# Writing Matters



## A Safe Place to Practice

Often sparsely decorated, with only a piano and perhaps a mirror or two for the vocalists, music practice rooms on college campuses often witness the process of stumbling and halting sounds becoming beautiful music. It is in the practice room that pianists play endless scales; vocalists push their voices past what they believed they could do; instrumentalists wheeze and honk their ways through their sheet music. It is in the practice room that these musicians make mistakes, many times hitting more bad notes than good. However, because of the effort, because of the grind of practice, their skills blossom into a talent—and eventually into an art. The safety of the practice room creates the confidence of the stage. Only when given a chance to practice, to fumble around, to start and re-start can these music students truly learn their music. This is true of writers, too. If given the opportunity to practice, to wrestle with the skill that is writing, our students can move through the awkward halting and stumbling and arrive at a place of mastery and even art.

## The Classroom as Practice Room

Much like a musician's skill with music, our students' skills with writing will improve if we guide them in the way they practice.

### Practice often

Imagine a child learning to talk. It would be unthinkable to have the child to remain silent for weeks on end only to ask him to speak for tests or exams. The child wouldn't have a chance at success. We learn skills like talking through nearly constant practice. Likewise, our students should be practicing often those writing skills they will need in their lives after SCC—

whether it is at another school or in the workforce.

### Varied practice

Skill in writing cannot grow to its fullest potential if our students simply perform the same tasks over and over. In order to foster good writing, we should look for ways to vary the assignments we ask our students to do. Essays, reflection papers, journals, letters, memos—the possibilities are numerous within each class. One helpful exercise is to have students respond to an issue or a problem by writing letters to one another and then responding with another letter. Give

guidelines for format and length, and then you can grade for understanding, content and analysis of the issue at hand.

### Practice means making mistakes

Even though we aren't preparing all of our students for the stage, we are still sending them out into a world where their performance matters. It is imperative, then, that our students have a chance to practice the skills that are crucial once they leave us. We shouldn't be surprised when our students make mistakes. They are, after all, practicing. We can guide them, giving

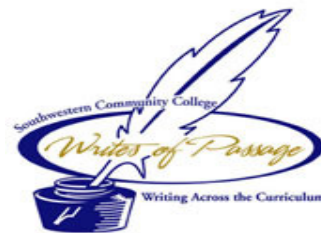
feedback along the way, pushing them towards being "performance ready." In addition, they should never be worried about making mistakes. The practice room is where mistakes are made, learned from, and erased. Without that "safety net" of practice, the mistakes would persist. We should consider our classrooms the practice rooms for student writing—and for student mistakes.

### Incorporating reflection

Finally, successful practice involves at least a bit of reflection. Identifying problem areas, proposing solutions, searching out mistakes—these tactics help to create meaning out of practice.

**Don't fear making a mistake; fear failing to learn and move forward.**  
—Philip Humbert

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## MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENT! FOURTH ANNUAL WAC ESSAY AWARDS

Your students could win cash for the essays they  
write for your classes!

Any essay written by an SCC student in an SCC class (Summer 2011-Spring 2012) is eligible! Research and non-research categories are offered.

**CASH PRIZES in each category! 1st = \$200, 2nd = \$100, 3rd = \$50**

See the WAC website for entry forms and complete rules: [www.southwesterncc.edu/wac](http://www.southwesterncc.edu/wac)

## Do your students need extra support for their writing assignments? WAC Workshops are available for your classes!



Simply contact the WAC Coordinator, Jenn Hippensteel ([jb\\_hippensteel@southwesterncc.edu](mailto:jb_hippensteel@southwesterncc.edu)) to schedule an in-class workshop for your students!

**There are a variety of workshops available:**

- Performing academic research
- Using APA, MLA or Chicago Style
- Evaluating resources
- Avoiding plagiarism
- Revising, editing, and proofreading your writing
- Or tailor a workshop to meet your needs!

**A writer doesn't solve problems; he allows them to emerge.**

**—Friedrich Durrenmatt**