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Chapter One

Program Overview

Teaching students to write has always been one of the greatest challenges facing English and language arts teachers. Here's a scenario you may be all too familiar with:

You've marked the same errors on your students' papers all year long, and you've seen no improvement. Even when you make students correct and resubmit their papers, the same errors show up again the next time!

Or, maybe this scenario describes your situation better:

You would really like to teach style, but you can't possibly worry about issues like voice and cadence when your students still aren't using complete sentences.

Or, perhaps you're fortunate enough to have this problem:

Some of your students are already excellent writers, and they make good grades with minimal effort. It's hard to help these students improve when they're already so advanced. Besides that, you have weaker writers who need remediation, so you don't have time to push the better writers ahead.

If you've experienced any of these frustrations, you're not alone! When I started teaching, I thought that "teaching writing" meant assigning essays, grading the essays—by marking all of the errors and possibly pointing out a few strengths—and returning the papers. I really felt that I was making progress when I required my students to rewrite their essays. Still, the good writers remained static while the poor writers experienced frustration. Over the years, I've tried everything from peer editing to portfolios, but no single approach has been appropriate for all of my students (and manageable for me). I've also read nearly every text available on the teaching of writing, most of which are full of excellent theories but offer no realistic solutions to the problems we face in our classrooms. Everyone wants to tell us *what* we should do, but I wanted to know *how* to do it!

Still searching for the "perfect" way to teach writing, I researched, experimented, talked with students (a step we leave out all too often), and completely changed the way I thought about writing instruction. The final result of these efforts is the Burnette Writing Process, a systematic, user-friendly program that removes the ceilings for the top students and removes the barriers for the lower ones thanks to two key components: focus and reflection.

The Burnette Writing Process is based on research and supported by student achievement. It is designed for use in grades six through twelve, but some students can begin working with the more basic skills at a younger age. The program has two primary objectives: to improve writing (good for students) and to facilitate assessment (good for teachers). Traditional writing assignments are overwhelming. Students work for hours to perfect their essays. They may manage to do ten things correctly, but they fail anyway because they did twenty things wrong! In many cases, teachers are faced with class loads of more than 100 students per day, making essay grading a daunting task. The more students you teach, the more time it takes to grade essays; therefore, the fewer essays you're likely to assign, and the less meaningful your feedback is likely to be. However, the Burnette Writing Process will significantly decrease the amount of time it takes you to grade each essay so that your students can write more. In addition, your

students will benefit more from each assignment they write because they'll receive more meaningful feedback, and they'll receive it before they've forgotten what they wrote about.

I recommend that your students write at least one essay every two weeks with rough drafts due on the weeks in between. If you try to push them through the process more quickly, they won't have enough time to focus on each skill. My students end up submitting seven original writing assignments per semester with a masterpiece—or rewrite of one of the seven—as their eighth submission. (Note, however, that they write for many other purposes throughout the year as well: journaling, think-writing, summarizing, paraphrasing, answering essay test questions, etc.; but not all pieces go through the entire process and become assessed final drafts.)

The Burnette Writing Process requires students to think differently, which can be uncomfortable for students at first. Once students learn to see writing as a learning process rather than as a final product, however, they start moving out of their safety zones and get more serious about their writing. The two key components of the approach are focus and reflection. For each writing assignment, students work on a few specific skills so that they have the opportunity to focus on and master these skills before moving on to more advanced ones. (See Chapter Three.) In addition, students annotate, self-assess, and reflect on each final draft to demonstrate their understanding of (as well as occasionally their confusion about) each specific skill. (See Chapter Six.) The process can be as individualized as necessary, and student data can be carried over from one year to the next for seamless teaching and learning.

While the Burnette Writing Process requires a change in thinking for students, it requires even more of one for teachers. The approach is “different”—from the way you design writing assignments to the way you assign writing grades. It's not like any method you've taught or been taught, but it's good for students. One of my colleagues once described the “perfect” writing program as one that is effective for students and convenient for teachers. She also added that it should grade papers for her. Although the Burnette Writing Process doesn't grade papers, it does fulfill the other two criteria!

I have outlined below the basic steps involved in the Burnette Writing Process and will explain the steps in the following chapters.

1. Teacher creates a meaningful writing assignment using the format described in Chapter Two.
2. Teacher (with or without help of students) selects appropriate focus skills and creates a rubric.
3. Teacher presents assignment and writing lesson.
4. Students pre-write and generate rough drafts.
5. Students revise and edit to address focus skills.
6. Students annotate their final drafts and self-assess and reflect on their rubrics.
7. Teacher uses rubrics and student feedback to grade the final drafts.
8. Teacher or students update student Focus Skills Progress Charts.
9. Teacher uses Focus Skills Progress Chart to show parents the progress students are making.
10. Teacher uses information about student progress to create new assignment.

The Burnette Writing Process: Student Comments

“I now think more about what I am writing, so I understand it more.”

“I can now go into a writing assignment and know what I need to do and know that I can do it.”

“Writing is still not my favorite thing to do because I know I need to work at it, but my attitude has gotten better because I know that there are things that I have become better at.”

“I don’t dislike writing as much now that I understand it.”

“Writing has become a lot easier than it was before. I don’t dread it as much as I used to.”

“I don’t hate writing as much as I used to!”

“I’m just a much wiser writer.”

“Writing has always come easy to me. Before I used this approach, I would simply sit down, whip something up, and turn it in. This process has made me analyze, criticize, and think of my writing in a new way.”

“Previously, I had teachers that assigned writing assignments just to assign them rather than taking the time and effort to use writing as a teaching tool.”

“I never used to try on essays because I could always get a decent enough grade by just throwing something together at the last minute. But now I’m challenged to the point where I have to actually work on my essays and think about how I am writing.”

“I’ve learned the fundamentals of writing, and now I can apply them to every class. My history teacher thinks my essays are good now, too.”

“This year I have finally learned how to WRITE instead of just emoting onto paper. It’s been a big change.”

“Before, I didn’t even understand what writing was. I thought you just put words on paper, but there’s style and content and all of those things that you have to incorporate to really make a great paper. It’s like an art.”

Chapter Two

The Writing Assignments

Student #1: What homework do you have tonight?

Student #2: I'm supposed to write an essay on Huck Finn.

Student #1: What kind of essay?

Student #2: I don't know.

Student #1: Well then how are you supposed to write it?

Student #2: I'll probably just get one from the Internet.

Good writing instruction begins with good writing assignments. Many school systems and teachers are wasting a great deal of time and money trying to catch plagiarizers. However, the more specific your assignment is, the less likely a student is to find a useable essay online. In addition, students cannot properly annotate work that is not their own. (See Chapter Six.) You will find that, by using the Burnette Writing Process assignment format, you will virtually eliminate plagiarism. In addition, students will understand clearly what you expect from each assignment.

It is important to provide your students with a wide range of writing opportunities. They need to write often; they need to write for a variety of audiences and purposes; and they need to write different types of pieces. The Burnette Writing Process makes creating an appropriate assignment easy. You can design the assignments yourself, or you can allow students to participate in the process.

Each assignment consists of nine components:

- **Assignment Number:** Just number your assignments in order beginning with 1. There's nothing tricky here unless you want to get fancy and number them according to grade level and number (i.e. 10.1, 10.2, etc.).
- **Assignment Name:** Choose a name for the assignment such as "*Romeo and Juliet* Analysis," "Original Short Story," "Persuasive Business Letter," or "Personal Narrative." As my example, I will be using an assignment called "Allusion Essay."
- **Assignment Overview:** Type up a basic explanation of the assignment and its purpose. (Example: For this assignment, you will write a documented, researched, expository essay explaining how the use of literary allusions in a movie or novel of your choice enriches the viewer's or reader's understanding of and/or appreciation of the work. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your understanding of allusions and their effects and to demonstrate your ability to research a topic and to incorporate multiple sources.)
- **Author and Audience:** Tell students what role they are to take as authors and who their audience will be. (Example: You are an expert on your movie/novel. Members of the movie/novel's official fan club have invited you to speak at their national convention. You will write the script for your lecture. Your tone should be informative but comfortable. You may use first and second person pronouns where appropriate, and you should use present tense verbs. You may safely assume that your audience is quite

Writing Assignments: Student Comments

“I really liked the masterpiece essays—and not just because they were helpful to my grade. They also helped me see how to improve my writing and showed me what I could do better.”

“The variety of assignments has helped me to understand how the different types and styles of writing compare to each other. Writing for different purposes is easier for me now.”

“I learned new ways to write different things—depending on the audience.”

“I can now go into a writing assignment and know what I need to do and know that I can do it!”

“This is the first time I’ve been allowed to have a voice in my writing.”

“I feel like I don’t write just to get a grade but that what I have to say might actually matter to someone.”

Chapter Three

The Focus Skills

Teacher #1: Well, it happened again. We started working on research papers today, and my students acted like they had never heard of parenthetical documentation. Didn't these kids write research papers last year?

Teacher #2: Yeah, and the year before and the year before.

Teacher #1: What's happening? Why aren't they remembering how to do it?

Teacher #2: I think they just don't care. Maybe we need to take off more points. That will get their attention.

We've all faced the same frustration at some point: No matter how many times we've explained how to do a skill (such as parenthetical documentation), students don't seem to remember it. Are they lazy? Do they not care? Neither one. The problem is that we don't ask students to focus on and master any specific skills within the writing process. Instead, we expect them to deal with every possible skill in every possible assignment. Research shows that "the approach that produces the best learning is focused practice. . . . The teacher structures writing tasks to emphasize specific aspects of writing" (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock 142). That's not to say that students should work on individual skills in isolation, though. As Robert Marzano, Debra Pickering, and Jane Pollock explain, in focused practice "the learner still engages in the overall skill or process, but targets one particular aspect to attend to" (70).

To illustrate this point, allow me to compare learning to write to learning to play golf. (We could argue all day about which one is more difficult!) **Insufficient preparation:** If an instructor just explains all the rules and tells you how to drive, chip, and putt and then sends you out to play, you'll give up after four holes. Likewise, some students are insufficiently prepared for writing and experience such frustration that they want to wrap their pens around a tree. **Practice without focus:** If you go out there and play 18 holes every day without the right kind of guidance, you'll continue to make the same mistakes over and over. Likewise, some students write often but don't really know what they're doing or how to improve, so they never make much progress. **Skills in isolation:** You may be able to hit your driver perfectly every time on the driving range, but inevitably you shank it when you're on the course. Likewise, some teachers incorrectly assume that a student who can complete a worksheet on commas can automatically use commas correctly in an essay. **Focused practice:** If you really focus on chipping during every round, and you don't worry about the other aspects of your game, you'll eventually master the art of chipping *during actual play*. Over time, you'll also master the other aspects of your game and ultimately master the game of golf (well, theoretically). Likewise, students who focus on a few skills at a time will ultimately master the art of writing.

Focus skills are one of the most important components of the Burnette Writing Process. By focusing on certain skills in each assignment, students improve their writing one component at a time instead of being overwhelmed by the process. Without focus skills, students will look over their papers once or twice, run spell-check, or have a friend proofread for them; but they'll never improve in any specific area. You will discover that once a student has mastered a skill, however, he will naturally continue to use it correctly even when it is no longer a focus skill *because he understands it*.

A question I hear from many teachers is “What if my students master only a few skills this entire year?” If your sixth graders master only three skills in each category, so be it. You should be preparing sixth graders for seventh grade after all, not for college. At least when you send the sixth graders to seventh grade, they’ll be masters of a few skills. Traditionally, they move from one grade to the next having been exposed to many skills but having mastered none. If they master just a few each year, they’ll come out way ahead by the time they leave high school!

Starting on Page 17, you will see a Focus Skills Progress Chart listing over 100 different skills in the following categories: content, organization, style, conventions, format, and challenge. You will want to keep a copy of this chart for each student. (See Chapter Eight.) Later in this chapter, you will find descriptors and real student samples for each of the skills. You can add skills and descriptors for each category based on the needs of your students. You can also change the samples to include your own students’ work or add information about specific problems your students are experiencing with individual skills. Use the descriptors as they are, or make them your own!

Although the skills on the chart are listed in increasing order of difficulty, it is not necessary to tackle them in any particular order. However, you may want to decide as a department which skills to focus on at each grade level. Although it doesn’t hurt a student to repeat a skill, designating certain skills for certain grade levels will ensure that no student misses out on any particular skill. If a student is ready to move on, however, you should certainly allow him to do so. The focus skills allow you to individualize writing instruction so that you provide remediation for your weaker writers and a challenge for your advanced writers. Although for the first few assignments you will probably want all students working on the same skills, you can eventually individualize the focus skills so that each student is working on what he or she needs. Individualization is easy with a personalized rubric for each student. However, I recommend that you always have at least one skill in common for each student to make writing lessons more meaningful for everyone. (See Chapter Five.)

So, how do you go about selecting focus skills? With your assignment in mind, look over the list of focus skills on the Focus Skills Progress Chart in this chapter and determine which ones would be most appropriate for this particular assignment. For example, it would not be prudent to focus on using effective topic sentences in an original short story; a better choice would be using inventive figures of speech. Again, because students should “be allowed to exercise some authority over their material” (Yancey 202), they can help with this process. Once you select your focus skills, add them to your assignment sheet.

Although the standard assignment is set up with six focus skills (one in each category: content, organization, style, conventions, format, and challenge), you can choose to focus on fewer than six skills in a particular assignment, or you can choose to focus on six different skills from one category instead of one skill from each category. For example, in one essay you might want students to focus on only content and organization; hence, all of your focus skills will be from the content and organization categories. Or, you might want them to focus on two different conventions skills but no style skills. Or, your students may not be ready for any of the challenge skills until later in the year. The assignments are fully adaptable to your students’ needs. In fact, you may decide to include only three or four focus skills altogether instead of six. That’s fine. Don’t be tempted, however, to focus on skills in only one category (such as conventions) for the

Focus Skills: Student Comments

“I really liked the times when we got to go back and choose a skill that we hadn’t done so well on and try to improve that skill. That really helped me.”

“Focusing on specific skills helps those skills to stay with me, and I remember them better from spending a lot of time working on them.”

“Focusing on one skill has helped me to learn that specific skill and not just ignore it or avoid using it as I did before this year.”

“Without focus skills, there are so many things to think about that it is hard to develop specific writing skills. Focus skills help me to develop and perfect just a few things at a time.”

“Focus skills make me spend more time fixing things in my papers, and as a result, I unconsciously look for those mistakes now.”

“At first the focus skills were very hard for me, but now I feel like a pro at some of the tougher ones.”

“I love having new skills to try every week so that I improve as a writer. I like to be challenged.”

“This is a great approach for me because—although my writing will need to be perfect when I graduate—for now I can just work on improving one skill at a time.”

“Focus skills make writing a paper much less stressful for me. Then, once I’ve mastered a skill, I naturally tend to do that skill correctly in the rest of my papers.”

“Instead of worrying about everything, focus skills give me a chance to really improve in those specific areas instead of glazing over them in a full-out editing frenzy.”

“When writing papers without specific skills to focus on, my writing didn’t improve. Focus skills really help me to develop specific aspects of my writing to the point that they stick in my head. With so many things to think about on a ‘regular’ paper, you don’t really learn anything—it’s mostly just trying to fix common errors rather than improving style or content.”

“I like that I can focus on skills that I personally have problems with. Now many of the things that I’ve focused on have become automatic.”

“I know that I only have to work on certain skills, so I don’t just give up and think my papers are horrible.”

“It is easier to spend more time and effort on my papers because I know the specific items to focus on, whereas in the past I did only a semi-okay job on my papers as a whole.”

“This approach has helped me improve my writing but has not overwhelmed me. These few skills each essay allow me to work on those things, master them, and then move on to more—all in my time, which makes me a better writer.”

Chapter Four

The Rubric

Mom: Did you get your English essay back today?

Son: Yes.

Mom: So, how did you do?

Son: Okay, I guess.

Mom: Well, what did you get?

Son: A B-minus.

Mom: What did you do wrong?

Son: I don't know. She made some red marks on my paper, but I don't really know what any of them mean.

The rubric is an important component of any writing assignment because it provides students with expectations and feedback. Plenty of educational research has supported the use of rubrics in the classroom, and many teachers are indeed using rubrics. Some teachers, however, use rubrics only at the end of the grading process. A rubric should not be a secret. Your students should have a copy of the rubric up front to use as guidance throughout the process. Ann Davies argues that “[w]hen students begin with the end in mind, the learning destination is clear, and they are better able to make decisions that support their learning” (1).

Kay Burke reminds us that “[r]ubrics that state expectations and criteria for success provide students of all abilities clear guidelines for meeting goals. All students may not reach the standard, but they know where they are and what they still need to do” (19). The Burnette Writing Process rubric outlines criteria clearly and follows a consistent format every time—only the focus skills change. This rubric is probably different from others you have seen before because it includes space for student self-assessment and reflection as well as for teacher assessment. (See Chapters Six and Seven.) On the rubric, students can earn between zero and five points for each focus skill based on the following criteria:

- 0 = provides no evidence of skill
- 1 = demonstrates minimal understanding of skill
- 2 = uses skill correctly to some extent
- 3 = correctly, competently achieves skill
- 4 = uses skill consistently and can manipulate skill for rhetorical effect
- 5 = meets level four criteria and is able to justify and explain rhetorical choices

A rubric with six focus skills will be worth a total of 35 points (five for each skill and another five for Item A: meeting the assignment criteria). If you focus on only five skills, the rubric will be worth 30 points. If you don't grade on a point system, you may choose to generate a percentage grade instead.

Note that the Burnette Writing Process is not based on assessment by deduction. When we grade by deduction, students make minimal progress because we merely deduct points for errors, reducing writing to what Robert Probst calls “a pointless exercise in error-avoidance, or in guessing the expectations of the teacher” (75). In assessment by deduction, a student can do almost everything right but still fail because of a few things he did wrong. In a joint statement, the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English

Rubrics: Student Comments

“The rubrics are very helpful because if one area is low, I can go back and try to fix the problem before turning in the paper and perhaps earn a higher grade.”

“The rubrics help me because they make me not only write a paper but analyze, critique, rewrite, critique some more, and rewrite again! Sometimes it is hard to look at your own work as a critic and not just admiringly.”

“I love having a rubric. It allows me to know how I will be graded.”

“The rubric and the annotating helped me more than any other aspect because I could see what I was doing wrong and why and how I could fix it.”

“The rubric made me think and reflect on my writing to get a decent grade.”

“At first I thought the rubric would make it easier to get a good grade. It should be easy to do well on only six skills. Wrong! It’s actually harder because you have to prove yourself, but I have learned a lot.”

“Doing the self-assessment on the rubric really helps me to know when I’ve written a good paper and when I haven’t.”

“Using a rubric totally prepared me for the SAT essay. It was just like writing an essay for English class.”

Chapter Five

Rough Drafts and Writing Lessons

On the day you make a new assignment, go over expectations with your students. Address any questions they have about the assignment. Spend some time prewriting and drafting. Use a mini-lesson from this chapter to teach one of the style or challenge focus skills.

You can devote class time to working on rough drafts, or you can require students to write their rough drafts at home. Either way, encourage students to write a preliminary draft before they begin worrying about focus skills. Students can either write or type their rough drafts, but they should double space to allow space for revisions. I recommend that students and teachers work with hardcopies in order to make the revision, editing, annotation, self-assessment, and reflection steps more tangible.

Once students have put together a first draft, they should begin thinking about the focus skills for that particular assignment. If the class as a whole is focusing on a common skill, you can work on the skill as a group, perhaps sharing descriptors and examples of various skills. Students focusing on the same individualized skills can work together in small revision groups. You will find that most students benefit from discussing their writing process with others.

The writing lessons in this chapter correspond to the style skills and to the challenge skills found on the Focus Skills Progress Chart. Each lesson is divided into two steps. I suggest that you use the first step when you initially make the writing assignment that focuses on the skill in question. Then, use step two on the day that students bring in their rough drafts. Although you can certainly conduct mini-lessons on content, organization, conventions, and format skills as well (perhaps using the skill descriptions and examples in Chapter Three as a starting point), the lessons in this chapter are geared toward style skills and challenge skills because those are the ones for which teachers most often ask for guidance. Regardless of which skill you're teaching, it always helps to use examples of professional writing as models. Look to the literature your students are reading for samples. My favorite source of contemporary, authentic models is the *Best American Essays* series edited by Robert Atwan. Each year, Atwan collects the best essays of the year from sources such as *Harper's*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Atlantic*. By studying these essays, students can see examples of great writing strategies at work.

Any writing lesson is more beneficial when students have a working knowledge of grammar and grammar terminology. Although knowledge of grammar does not automatically make students better writers, it does make them better able to discuss and think about their writing. When you're conducting a lesson on absolute phrases, for example, you need to be able to talk about participles. In order to understand appropriate use of first, second, and third person pronouns, a student must be able to recognize personal pronouns. If your students are not comfortable using grammar vocabulary, I recommend *Daily Grammar Practice* (www.dgppublishing.com). Students work with one sentence for a whole week at a time, analyzing it further each day so that, by the end of the week, they understand how all of the grammar concepts tie together. Each lesson is designed to take two or three minutes at the beginning of class, and students develop a grammar vocabulary that they can use to talk about their writing.

Writing Lessons: Student Comments

“During our Wednesday writing lessons, I learned skills that I will continue to practice in my writing.”

“These lessons are very helpful because they focus on the more challenging skills for each writing assignment.”

“I like that our lessons are like a class discussion and not a boring lecture. I also like the fact that everyone can participate.”

“These lessons have taught me about things I never knew before, and they have TRULY improved my writing.”

“I wish we could have done more writing lessons. I really feel like I made progress because of them.”

Lesson D1

Style: Uses variety of sentence lengths

Step One: Give each student a piece of graph paper and a passage—a different one for each student—from a literary work you are studying. Ask each student to count the number of words in each sentence of his assigned passage and plot the results on a graph. Have students post their graphs and comment on what types of patterns they observe. They should notice that the sentences vary in length, creating peaks and valleys rather than flat lines on their graphs. Once students have made this observation, talk about how the variety of sentence lengths impacts the passage. Next, ask students to pull an old assignment out of their writing folders and graph one of their own paragraphs. Some students will have relatively flat lines while other will have some peaks and valleys. Challenge all students to rewrite their paragraphs in order to add more variety in their sentence lengths. Invite a few students to share their before-and-after paragraphs.

Step Two: Have students look at their rough drafts of the current writing assignment. Ask them to graph each paragraph to examine the sentence lengths. Then, tell them to rewrite sections that appear flat on their graphs.

Lesson D2

Style: Uses purposeful and varied sentence beginnings

Step One: Give each student a highlighter. Provide each student with a copy of a paragraph demonstrating limited variety in sentence beginnings or have students use old essays from their writing folders. Have students highlight the first word of each sentence in their papers. Challenge

Chapter Six

The Final Draft: Annotating, Self-Assessing, and Reflecting

Student: You want me to write on my final draft?

Teacher: That's right.

Student: But it's a final draft!

Teacher: And what am I going to do when I read it?

Student: Write on it?

Teacher: Okay, so shouldn't you be the first to deface it?

Student: Oh, yeah, I guess that makes sense.

The combination of student annotation, self-assessment, and reflection is an important component of the Burnette Writing Process. When you look at a student essay, you can ascertain fairly easily what he has done well and what his weaknesses are. However, students need to be able to ascertain these things for themselves because in the real world there will be no English teachers telling them what's good and bad about their memos before they send them out! In addition, if we're going to assess accurately, we must be able to determine what a student has done intentionally and what he has done by accident. As writing teachers, explains Probst, we can see a student text only with our own eyes, but “[w]ith the writer present, authorial intention can become a principal concern” (71). In this respect, annotation, self-assessment, and reflection allow us to become mind readers. Overall, the process allows students to “have first opportunity to show evidence of effort and improvement in areas that [the teacher] may have otherwise missed or taken for granted. Not only does this save teacher time, but students become more accountable for their efforts and their efforts become more self-directed in reaching better ratings” (Mondock 63).

Students can annotate, self-assess, and reflect on their work at home or in class, but I recommend that you guide them through the process the first few times at least. After students complete the process, collect hardcopies of essays with the rubrics stapled to the top. If you prefer conferencing with your students about their essays, the completed annotations, self-assessments, and reflections can “serve as a catalyst for these meetings, providing both teacher and student with ample material to structure the dialogue and give it the sort of direction [it needs]” (Sommers 180). Sommers adds that “something is lost if these kinds of responses are restricted completely to the oral mode. Why not, as much as possible, use writing itself to improve writing?” (180). Brain research supports this idea as well, demonstrating “the power of asking students to carefully explain—preferably in writing—the principles they are working from” (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock 105).

The first step students should complete is the annotation of the final draft—or “marking it up” as my students call it. Essentially, annotating is a way for students to communicate with their teacher on their essays, to explain their rhetorical choices, and to point out their strengths and struggles. For example, if a student is focusing on skill D1 (uses purposeful and varied sentence beginnings), he'll highlight or circle the first word of each sentence in his essay. He'll then use the margin of the paper to point out particularly good beginnings with a note such as “This

Burnette Writing Process Essay Scoring Rubric

Name	Period	Essay #	Writing Type
Kelly [REDACTED]	3	11	Allusion Essay

- Skill Levels:
- 0 = provides no evidence of skill
 - 1 = demonstrates minimal understanding of skill
 - 2 = uses skill correctly to some extent
 - 3 = correctly, competently achieves skill
 - 4 = uses skill consistently and can manipulate skill for rhetorical effect
 - 5 = meets level 4 criteria and is able to justify and explain rhetorical choices

A. Essay meets criteria set forth on assignment sheet:

Self-assessment: 0 1 2 3 4 **5** Teacher's assessment: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Reflection: *This paper definitely took longer to write! I used 3 allusions and outside sources. My title is an allusion.*

B. Content Skill: Uses primary and secondary sources appropriately

Self-assessment: 0 1 2 **3** 4 5 Teacher's assessment: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Reflection: *I think this is right, but I have one question, so could you look at my paper? I could have used more primary quotations.*

C. Organization Skill: Uses introduction to draw reader into text

Self-assessment: 0 1 2 3 **4** 5 Teacher's assessment: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Reflection: *I changed it around a lot and tried to make it sound how a person talks. Not sure if I got it though.*

D. Style Skill: Introduces and integrates quotations smoothly

Self-assessment: 0 1 2 3 4 **5** Teacher's assessment: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Reflection: *I integrated them all this time, and I think they sound like part of the sentence.*

E. Conventions Skill: Uses commas correctly

Self-assessment: 0 1 2 3 **4** 5 Teacher's assessment: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Reflection: *I fixed many comma errors and explained why I used each one.*

F. Format Skill: Sets up works cited page correctly

Self-assessment: 0 1 2 3 4 **5** Teacher's assessment: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Reflection: *works cited centered at top, entries in ABC order, hanging indent, thanks to writingprocess.net!*

G. Format Skill: Uses brackets correctly

Self-assessment: 0 1 2 3 **4** 5 Teacher's assessment: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Reflection: *I'm pretty sure I did this right. I took notes on how you said to do it and followed those.*

Total Score for Self-assessment: 30

Total Score for Teacher's Assessment: _____

Comments:

Kelly

Ms. Hudson

English II

May 9, 2005

Fortune's Fools

I hope you get it. Does it make sense?

conversational

Hello members of the Shakespeare in Love fan club! My name is Kelly, and as an expert on this spectacular movie, I have come to speak with you. As some of you may know, parts of this movie are brought alive by allusions from William Shakespeare's play

rule #1

Romeo and Juliet. Others may ask, what is an allusion? An allusion is a reference to a historical or literary person, place, event, or aspect of culture (Language Network 670).

not sure about this one rhetorical question!

I had another definition but this one made more sense.

is this right? It's the first word of the word cited entry.

These references can make the scenes of the movie seem funnier, more romantic, more dramatic, and overall will enhance your viewing pleasure. So, let's jump in and take a look at a few!

The elegant ball that is held for Viola is one of the first of many familiar

allusions. This is the place where Viola meets William Shakespeare, likewise in Romeo and Juliet this is the scene where Juliet meets her Romeo. It is here "[t]he lovers' first

had a comma but changed it

conversation [takes place] . . . in the public bustle of the ball (Kilvert 305). This specific

caps! brackets to make lower case

allusion adds feelings of romance, which are somewhat tainted by the knowledge that the ball is being held on behalf of the engagement of Viola and Lord Wessex, and therefore

changed to make more sense

rule #3

this was a fragment before

adds a sense of drama. The famous balcony scene, our next allusion, is one of the best-

rule #8?

known love scenes in our culture. In Romeo and Juliet "the balcony [is] perhaps the most celebrated expression of romantic love in our literature" (Kilvert 305). In both works,

rule #7

there are expressions of romance, however, the "[r]omance is offset by much witty and

was a comma

I like this integration

bawdy comedy" (Kilvert 305). The fact that the nurse is both Viola's and Juliet's confidant is another allusion that needs to be noted. The nurse is both Viola's caretaker and secret-keeper. In a specific scene, ^{rule #1} the nurse helps Viola hide the fact that she is dressing as a man to work in the play (*Shakespeare in Love*). Likewise, "Romeo's confidant, Mercutio, is matched by Juliet's, her nurse" (Kilvert 306). In contrast to this ^{rule #14} however, ^{rule #8 oh - it's in the quote!} William replaces Mercutio by placing all of his feelings and emotions into the play that he is creating. This allusion will give the audience a good laugh and a sense of irony. ^{rule #7} Torn apart by reality, ^{don't start of this sentence start!} both couples face a frightful downfall. The Queen does eventually make Viola marry her fiancé because that is her reality. Romeo and Juliet's tragedy overall is the hate that the families have for one another, ^{rule #3} and "[they] are gradually destroyed by the world of external reality" (Kilvert 306). Drama, ^{rule #10} tragedy, and sorrow are felt when all of these things take place. But, ask yourself a question: Whose downfall is the most tragic? Romeo and Juliet both must tragically die in the play together, [?] while *Shakespeare in Love* shows both living but in a world without the other, [?] something seeming more terrible than death.

I think this is my best integration

^{rule #14} Well, I hope that the allusions that I identified in *Shakespeare in Love* and *Romeo and Juliet* have been quite fun and easy to understand. I also hope that now whenever you watch the movie, ^{rule #1} you will be able to point out these allusions to have a more enjoyable experience. Thank you all for inviting me. I have enjoyed my time here today very much.

Thanks again, and have a great day!

My conclusions are getting longer!

no heading

Works Cited - sorry - I wrote it in.

3
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page #

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Fiennes. Miramax Films, 2004.

ABC order

SAMPLE

Annotating, Self-Assessing, and Reflecting: Student Comments

“I like being able to show my teacher what I am proud of, and I like asking questions in the margins.”

“Marking up my essays has helped me to find what is good in my writing. I think that when you are able to find the good things yourself, then you probably understand why they’re good.”

“Annotating makes me really think about exactly what I’ve done, and I feel like I understand it better.”

“I find a lot of my errors and realize how I can improve my writing when I’m forced to read my work and mark it up.”

“I love annotating essays because once I start, I can see where I might need to go back and fix something. I make sure I don’t turn in a paper that I am not truly proud of in every way.”

“Annotating my essays helps me because it makes me go back and look at my essays instead of just printing them off and turning them in.”

“When I’m really proud of something I’ve accomplished in a paper, I really like being able to point it out to my teacher. I think it helps me earn better grades, too.”

“I hated writing reflections at first, but now I enjoy using them as a way to justify the scores I give myself. It’s like a conversation I have with my teacher.”

“I’m never surprised when I get back a graded essay. Since I graded it first, I pretty much know what to expect.”

“After I assess my own work, I sometimes say, ‘Hey, that grade’s not good enough.’ Then I’ll go back and rewrite parts of the essay to make them better before I turn it in.”

Chapter Seven

Grading the Writing Assignments

Teacher #1: *So you're telling me that once a student has mastered subject/verb agreement, I'm supposed to stop grading him on it?*

Teacher #2: *That's right.*

Teacher #1: *Then what's to keep him from using poor subject/verb agreement in the rest of his papers?*

Teacher #2: *He understands it. He won't intentionally plant subject/verb agreement errors in his future writings.*

Teacher #1: *I guess not. But I've always counted off five points for each subject/verb agreement error.*

Teacher #2: *Have your students stopped making that error as a result?*

Teacher #1: *Well, no.*

Once you've collected the assignments, it's time to complete the teacher assessment (i.e. grade the essays). Limit your assessment to each student's focus skills to provide more meaningful feedback (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock 99). In other words, resist the temptation to mark errors unrelated to the focus skills, as doing so is counterproductive. If a student is focusing on only one convention skill (avoiding sentence fragments for example), then don't mark and assess his comma usage. However, if you notice that he is having a good deal of trouble with comma usage, make a note at the bottom of his rubric: "Next time, comma usage." Now he knows that comma usage will be his next focus skill—and that he has some comma issues in this assignment—but you have not distracted him from his task at hand: focusing on avoiding sentence fragments. On his rubric, score him (according to the listed criteria) based on how well he has demonstrated his understanding of and ability to avoid sentence fragments.

As you assess, you will also respond to each student's annotations and reflections. Peggy O'Neill tells us it is necessary "to read the self-assessment and respond . . . if we want to develop the students' skill in self-evaluation" (62). She adds that teacher comments should be in direct response to the concerns of the student writer (63). That's not to say that you can't make any other comments; however, the goal of your feedback is to help each student improve on his focus skills, so be selective regarding comments that are not skill-related.

The aspect of the Burnette Writing Process that initially makes teachers the most uncomfortable is the fact that a student can earn a perfect score on an essay that isn't perfect by traditional standards. In other words, if a student is focusing on five different skills in one paper, and he achieves a score of five on each skill (and a score of five on meeting criteria), he earns a perfect score (30/30) regardless of how many errors he may have made in areas not assessed. What we must think about, however, is the purpose for "giving the grade." One reason that we give grades should be to chart progress—"to communicate progress on individual goals and show the working level on a specific content" (Gregory and Chapman 52). If this is true, then grading by deduction (discussed in Chapter Four) is the worst approach we can take. Assessment should measure progress, not ability; it should reflect what students have learned, not what they knew before they arrived in our classrooms. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock tell us that our "[f]eedback should be specific to a criterion. . . . [It] should be criterion-referenced [which means

Chapter Eight

Tracking Student Progress and Planning the Next Assignment

When you're finished assessing the essays, you'll need to update each student's Focus Skills Progress Chart. Suppose a particular student were focusing on B3 (writes a clear and focused paper). In the "start date" column of the chart, record the first date on which the student began working with skill B3. Then, if the student has earned a three for the skill, make a tally mark in the "three" column. The next time the student focuses on skill B3, you will not need to input a start date, but you will again place a tally mark in the appropriate column regarding the level of mastery. Once a student has earned a five in a particular skill two or three times, he should stop working on that skill and move on to more advanced ones.

Though it is time-consuming, you can update each chart yourself. The alternative is to have each student update his own chart (either independently at home or under your supervision in class). Although you may be concerned that students will "cheat" when recording their results, there is really no reason for them to do so. They're not "graded" on their charts. The charts just show their progress; therefore there's nothing to gain by falsifying data. Still, you can decide whether or not you want your students to be able to update their charts themselves.

I suggest keeping copies of your students' charts in the front of their writing folders or notebooks—and keeping these folders in the classroom so they don't get lost. Cumulative writing folders with Focus Skills Progress Charts are great resources to share with parents during conferences. In addition, housing all of their work in writing folders allows students to pull out old essays to use during new writing lessons. And the folders can follow students from one teacher to the next to make it easy to pick up where they left off.

Before you assign the next essay, you'll want to take note of how many students have mastered each focus skill. I use a copy of the Focus Skills Progress Chart to keep up with class-wide progress, highlighting a particular skill once the whole class has mastered it. Use this list to help you decide which skills will be the focus of the next essay. Or, if your students are ready for the responsibility, you can allow them to decide for themselves individually. Student autonomy should be your ultimate goal so that students take more responsibility for their own learning.

You may choose to allow students to rewrite some of their essays later in the year. I assess eight essays per semester (one every other Wednesday with rough drafts due on the Wednesdays in between). The first seven essays demonstrate a variety of audiences, purposes, formats, and skill focuses. The eighth essay, the "masterpiece," is a rewrite of one of the first seven.

Skills Focus Progress: Student Comments

“I’ve focused on my commas and quotations and such this year to the point that they are almost second nature to me.”

“I finally understand how to use hyphens, dashes, ellipses, and brackets.”

“I have learned to keep my writing less wordy and not tell about the plot in literary analysis. I have learned that often the perfect choice of words does far more than lots and lots of words!”

“I had never used any of the style skills before, but now I start to look for places to use them even when I don’t have to.”

“My style has become more adaptable to my type of writing. If I’m writing a research paper, it’s formal; but if it’s a speech, I can make it conversational.”

“I now know what passive voice is and can use it or not when I choose.”

“This year we looked at things I had never thought of before such as passive voice, triplicates, and absolute phrases. What an amazing difference it makes using little devices such as triplicates!”

“My writing has become much more organized. I have actually started planning my papers as opposed to just blabbering.”

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