

Academic Writing across the Content Areas

Anita Archer - Back to the Basics, Sentence Frames, and Writing Frames

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Kelly Gallagher - Short Bursts of Writing and Commandments of Building Successful Young Writers

Back to the Basics - Anita Archer

Reinforce and model sentence structure (capitalization, punctuation, rewording question into response)

Frontload Ideas and Vocabulary → Brainstorm ideas, read related materials, relate to topics that have previously been taught, provide a list or bank of academic (tier II or III) vocabulary, provide a list of transition words or phrases

Provide Explicit Instruction → I do it → We do it (again, again, again...) → You do it

(Model) → (Gradual release) → (Unguided practice)

*Anita Archer notes taken from the 2015 RtInnovations in Equity Conference in Milwaukee

Provide Sentence Starters

- I noticed...
- I wonder...
- An example of _____ is...
- The central issue is...
- One consequence of _____ could be...
- If _____, then _____...
- I'm surprised that...
- One idea is...
- The evidence shows...
- The text states...
- One important fact in the article is...
- I agree with...

Model academic language

Place anchor charts on the walls to promote academic language use in conversations and in writing

Provide Writing Frames

Summary - Informational Text

In this section of the chapter, a number of critical points were made about...

First, the authors pointed out that...

This was important because...

Next, the authors mentioned that...

Furthermore, they indicated...

This was critical because...

Finally, the authors suggested that...

Short Bursts of Writing

Students don't need to write long responses, but should be writing often.

Ways to incorporate short bursts of writing into your classroom:

- Free Response: Write what you're thinking
- One minute write, two minute write (slowly build up writing stamina)
- SDQR Charts: What it Says, What it Doesn't Say, Questions, Reflection (in response to a lesson, reading passage, pictures, etc.)
- One sentence summaries (post-its, white boards)
- Guided note-taking, graphic organizers
- Short answer writing
- Exit slips: With 5 minutes left of class, have students explain in writing what they learned today.

A lot of our students are “chilling” in the zone of minimal effort. 80% of the time our students need to be speaking, writing, or doing.

It's okay to start them out with “dumb” writing opportunities to get them going. Make it fun before you make it hard.

Providing Feedback

Feedback can be general and directed to the entire group:

- “I’ve noticed that we’re struggling to...”
- “A lot of you are misspelling the word...”

Consider having students:

- Take 1-2 minutes to reread their response and check for grammar and sentence issues before they turn it in.
- Exchange response with a partner to provide feedback before turning it in. (Don’t pair low with low or high with low, but instead try high with middle and middle with low).

Commandments of Building Successful Young

Writers

Remember that all writers are fragile. They break easily. Don't pound them by pouncing on every error. Nurture them by keeping the focus narrow and attainable.

2. Start with the overarching goal that every student in class will improve. Focus less on grading and more on improvement. **Expect more from everyone.**
3. Don't focus solely on editing issues; help students develop their craft as well. The best writer in your class is you. **Model how you write by writing in front of them.** Show students effective writing models. You can't do this enough.
4. **Don't wait until they are done to give feedback.** Assessment in the middle gives them an opportunity to revise. Coach them as they are working instead.
5. **Conference, conference, conference.** You can achieve more in a two-minute conference than you can in 5-7 minutes of writing comments on a paper.
6. What you test is what you get (WYTIWYG)
7. **Do your best, and don't worry.** Rome was not built in a day. When the task of teaching writing seems insurmountable, take a deep breath and do something for you.

-Kelly Gallagher

*Models - Your writing and the writing of published authors

"Before you write one poem, you have to read at least 100." - Ted Kosier

Resource

Kelly Gallagher: *Teaching Adolescent Writers*

