

Research Summary

Necessary Components for Effective Writing Instruction

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Research Summary – Necessary Components for Effective Writing Instruction

Overview

A considerable challenge faced by educators today is ensuring that every student is able to write effectively and proficiently for a variety of audiences. In order to accomplish this difficult task, schools have implemented various instructional techniques. Research exists that documents a multitude of strategies, but there is often disagreement on which strategies are most effective.

Two strategies that researchers agree will improve writing ability are:

- 1) increasing the amount of writing that students do, and
- 2) receiving timely and appropriate feedback on this writing.

MY Access!®, a web-based instructional writing tool developed by Vantage Learning, is grounded in the research regarding necessary components of an effective writing instructional program. MY Access! provides every student with the opportunity to write to a wide range of audiences and receive immediate feedback to improve the quality of their writing.

Practice, Practice, Practice

Students learn to write by writing. Studies have shown that the amount of writing that students do is positively related to writing ability (Chircop 2005; Coe et al. 1999; Boersma, Dye, Hartmann, Herbert, Walsh 1997; Cotton 1988). Writing-intensive programs that require multiple drafts and a high volume of written work, such as those using writing portfolios or software to leverage success in writing, have been particularly effective in increasing writing aptitude across a wide range of students of varying abilities (Chircop 2005; Boersma et al. 1997). Writing effectively in a variety of modes is a skill that every student must possess. However, in many schools, the amount of writing instruction provided to students is lacking. According to an NAEP report, many students are spending a negligible amount of time completing writing assignments. The National Commission on Writing advocates doubling the amount of time students spend writing, with writing skills being taught at all grade levels and across all subject areas (2003). Researchers agree that students must be given daily opportunities to write in order to become proficient writers (Boersma et al. 1997).

Effective and Timely Feedback

Timely feedback received in response to student writing is also essential in increasing writing ability. Studies have indicated that when feedback is received often, and in the early stages of writing, it is more likely to be judged by the student as valuable. This feedback then has a positive effect on the quality of the writing (Cowie 1995). Feedback that is given later in the writing process, or after the final draft has been submitted, is often not followed in future drafts and writings (Cowie 1995). The use of peer editing and evaluation in providing immediate feedback has also been shown to be beneficial in creating high quality writing. When such procedures are used, students receive punctual,

clear feedback, helping them correct errors (Cotton 1988). Timely and appropriate feedback is vital in increasing student writing ability.

Summary

Studies have shown that the more a student writes, the more proficient the student will become in writing. This writing must be paired with effective and timely feedback to maximize the writing potential of every student. MY Access! provides students with the opportunity to write to a variety of prompts, submit multiple revised drafts, and receive instant feedback regarding methods to improve their writing. The availability of hundreds of unique prompts allows the user to practice writing across genres to various audiences.

“The research is crystal clear: schools that do well insist that their students write every day and [are] provided regular and timely feedback” (National Commission on Writing 2003).

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