

Carey's Collected Tips for Creating Eager Writers

I. ENCOURAGEMENT:

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1. Read everything that students write.
2. Post student writing to corkboard and/or website.
 - Students can do this themselves.
3. Share interesting work during class with LCD or document projector.
 - "Hey, everyone, look at this great sentence by Sascha."
4. Promote content and thought first, grammar sparingly.
 - "Watch for unnecessary commas in your next draft."
 - "I see two incomplete sentences in this paragraph. Can you find and correct them?"

II. MAKE WRITING HABITUAL

1. Have a writing prompt on the board for students who arrive on time, or who finish group work early:
 - "Please summarize an event in the news that had an impact on you, and if you have time, describe why."
 - "Yesterday, we read about and discussed [the Shiavo scandal]. Would you please summarize our discussion [including all points of view]?"
2. Set up writing journals and set an individual word/sentence/paragraph weekly goal for each student, and then check periodically (encouragement).
3. Ask students to write one card/letter per week to a relative/friend/shut-in/pen pal and keep copies of the letters in a binder.
 - "Summarize an event from the news [that had an impact on you] [and explain why]."
 - "Describe at least two things you learned in our last class [and give examples]."
 - "Predict what will happen [in the next election, if a fence is built along the Mexican border] [and give reasons why]."
 - "Write about something that you are optimistic/pessimistic about [and explain why]."
 - "What is the best advice you have ever gotten [and how have you used it]?"
 - What are the qualities of a good parent [student, leader, politician...]?
 - "What would be a good topic for a writing prompt or a journal entry?"
 - "What would you do if you won the Massachusetts state lottery?"
 - "What is one thing you'd really like to change about yourself?"

III. MAKE WRITING ENGAGING

1. Debates, opinions, points of view on controversial or important issues.
2. Write letters to real people and hope for responses.
3. Write/edit letters, essays together as a group using projectors; have two groups write their own versions of a letter or essay and work as a group to integrate best of both.
4. Have students write on the board, or lead a discussion (don't forget note-takers).
5. Develop with students a long-term writing project. E.g., 1. Write a letter inviting a rep to the class; 2. brainstorm questions to ask her; 3. take notes of what she says; 4. collect notes and write summaries of her responses as a group; 5. write an account as a group and send to local paper.

IV. PROVIDE SCAFFOLDING TO INCREASE PRODUCTION

1. Provide prompts and extenders to sentences:
 - "Okay, let's add [therefore/because/but/for example] to the end of this sentence and have you add to it."
 - "This is a good example you provide here. Please provide another one right after it."
 - "You state an opinion here; would you explain why you feel this way in 2-3 sentences right after it?"
2. Provide prompts and extenders to summary paragraphs:
 - "I agree/disagree with the author because..."
 - "This article reminded me of something that happened in my own life."
 - "The problems that the author describes could be solved in these ways. First..."
 - Give a handout to a student with a choice of extenders listed [sample provided]

V. PROVIDE MODELS TO GUIDE WRITING

- Provide graphic organizers of text types. (See attached)
- "In my opinion, this is a good letter. Why do you think I might believe it to be good?"
- "Here's a well-written paragraph, IMO. What's good about it?"
- Use good writing from the students themselves wherever possible.

VI. DEVELOP BUY-IN AND SELF-INTEREST AT EVERY STEP

- Poll students on reading/writing they want to do (don't forget, small groups work too)—ReadyMade source is USA Today: "Today's Debate," "Money", sports editorials
- Have students decide on the writing product—letter, essay, speech/debate, PowerPoint, skit, editorial.
- Have the whole class develop a rubric for assessing quality of the final products. [Sample Provided]

- Have students peer-assess and self-assess, with you as one voice or arbiter.

VII. HAVE A POCKETFUL OF FALL-BACK PROMPTS/PROJECTS

- “If I were the mayor of this city, I would...”
- “If there was one thing I could do over again in my life, it would be...”
- “Describe the [best thing, worst thing] that happened to you this week.”
- “Angela came home at the usual hour, but she sensed something different as soon as she walked in the door” Please continue this story.”

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