



Transforming Writing Instruction: The Bridge Writing Workshop at the Brockton Adult Learning Center

April 12 & 28, 2023

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Presenter

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Objectives

Participants of this workshop will be able to:

- Identify existing knowledge gaps in the content area of writing
- Know how to assess their institution's current ability to address writing for ABE and ESOL learners
- Know how to design and implement a writer's workshop to bridge the knowledge gap for a subset of learners



Welcome! Starting Off Positive...

- ▶ Take a few minutes to think and write about something you feel successful about in your class or at your educational institution.
 - ▶ This could be any number of things:
 - ▶ A specific lesson that you feel works well
 - ▶ A strategy that is implemented successfully
 - ▶ A program that maintains high performance
 - ▶ A subject that you feel extra confident teaching
 - ▶ A resource that you have discovered and use

What is the Response?

- ▶ We are all very skilled in a variety of areas!
- ▶ Let's focus on writing.

Questions to Consider

- ▶ How often do we explicitly teach the writing process?
- ▶ How confident do instructors feel when teaching writing?
- ▶ How much time do instructors use to explicitly teach writing?

Identifying the Need

Who identified the need and how?

- The director of the Adult Learning Center, Dr. Mostafa Mouhieeddine
- Instructors of the HSE courses



What We Noticed



Viewing original student work from the application process



Speaking with instructors



Speaking with students



Looking at test scores

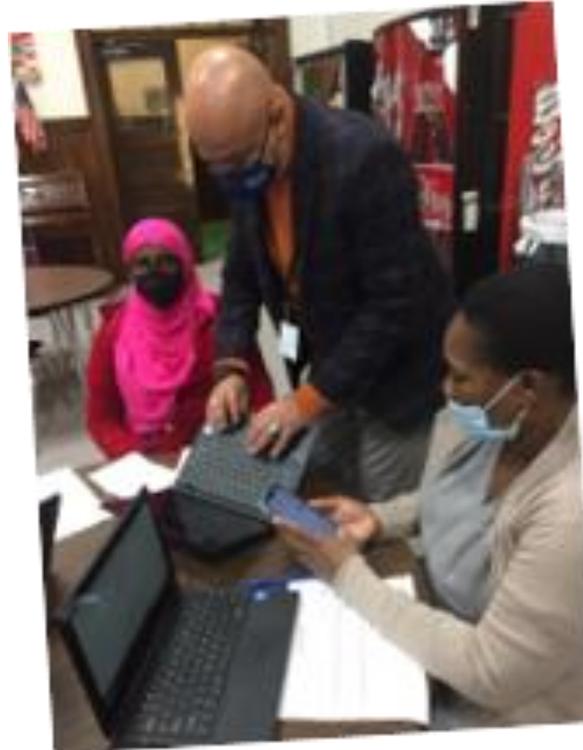


Analyzing student transitions to higher education

Connecting The Dots

- ▶ Reaching out to communicate with the local community college
- ▶ Identifying the existing challenges
- ▶ Communicating with staff to identify individuals with a passion for writing and a desire to fill the knowledge gap
- ▶ Begin brainstorming and the planning process





The Brockton Adult Learning Center Curriculum and the Bridge Writing Workshop

First Literacy Professional Development Workshop

Writing Instruction at the BALC

Before the CCRS and ELPS:

- Not enough attention paid to our students as writers.
- Often taught as an aside, or as writing for practical purposes: forms, applications, letters/emails to children's schools, etc.

CCRS and ELPS Change Expectations:

- Emphasize Academic Writing
- Bring attention to instruction for that emphasis.
- Focus on supports for instructors to teach writing.

Curriculum Development at the BALC



- ▶ “Buy in” to Backwards Design Theory of Curriculum development
- ▶ Identification of prioritized standards in writing by working backwards to develop strong writing skills appropriate for entrance to college.
- ▶ Creation of formative assessments/writing products that show proficiency in identified prioritized standards.
- ▶ Emphasis on writing across the curriculum (ABE and ESOL): Writing Across the Curriculum

What does backwards design in writing look like in the BALC curriculum?

	<u>Prioritized CCRS</u>	<u>Formative Assessment</u>	<u>Evaluation Tools</u>
The Civil Rights Movement (Interdisciplinary Social Studies & Writing)	W/WHST.9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selections, organization and analysis of content (Persuasive Essay). (Application: a-f.) NOTE: Implied: students know, understand, and can apply Writing Process and Essay Structure.	Students will show their learning by writing a research persuasive essay on a topic of their choosing from the unit, analyzing and interpreting the impact of the topic on the Movement and by extension to contemporary American society. Students will prepare a short presentation to the class based upon their research to deepen the class's understanding of a variety of events related to the topic.	The essay and presentation will be evaluated based upon the GED and oral presentation rubrics.

**High School Equivalency
Unit 5
The Civil Rights Movement**

**Reconstruction
(Social Studies
with reading and
writing)**

Prioritized CCRS

W/WHST.6-8.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assessing the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quoting or paraphrasing the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

Formative Assessments

Students will show their learning by writing persuasive essays, addressing one of the key topics of learning and discussion from the unit. They will compare texts for similar and dissimilar information and themes connected to their theses.

Students will then prepare an oral presentation to share their research and conclusions.

Evaluation Tools

BPS writing rubric, grades 6-8.

Also, an oral presentation rubric generated by students and teacher to assess part 2 of the assignment.

**AE 3
Unit 5
Reconstruction**

Slavery and The Civil War

Prioritized CCRS

W.4.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization and analysis of content:

- a. Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.
- B. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, and details.
- c. Use linking words and phrases
- d. Provide a concluding statement or section. (W.3.2)

W.5.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

Formative Assessments

Create a PowerPoint presentation on describing and demonstrating the impact of 2-3 Abolitionists on the demise of slavery.

Write an opinion of at least two paragraphs determining the impact of an Abolitionist from the PowerPoint on the end of slavery.

Evaluation Tools

BPS writing rubric for grade 4 will be used for the opinion writing.

AE 2 Unit 5 Slavery and The Civil War

Why the Bridge Writing Workshop?



College Writing

Students often have difficulty testing into College Composition I after taking the Accuplacer.



Writing at the ALC

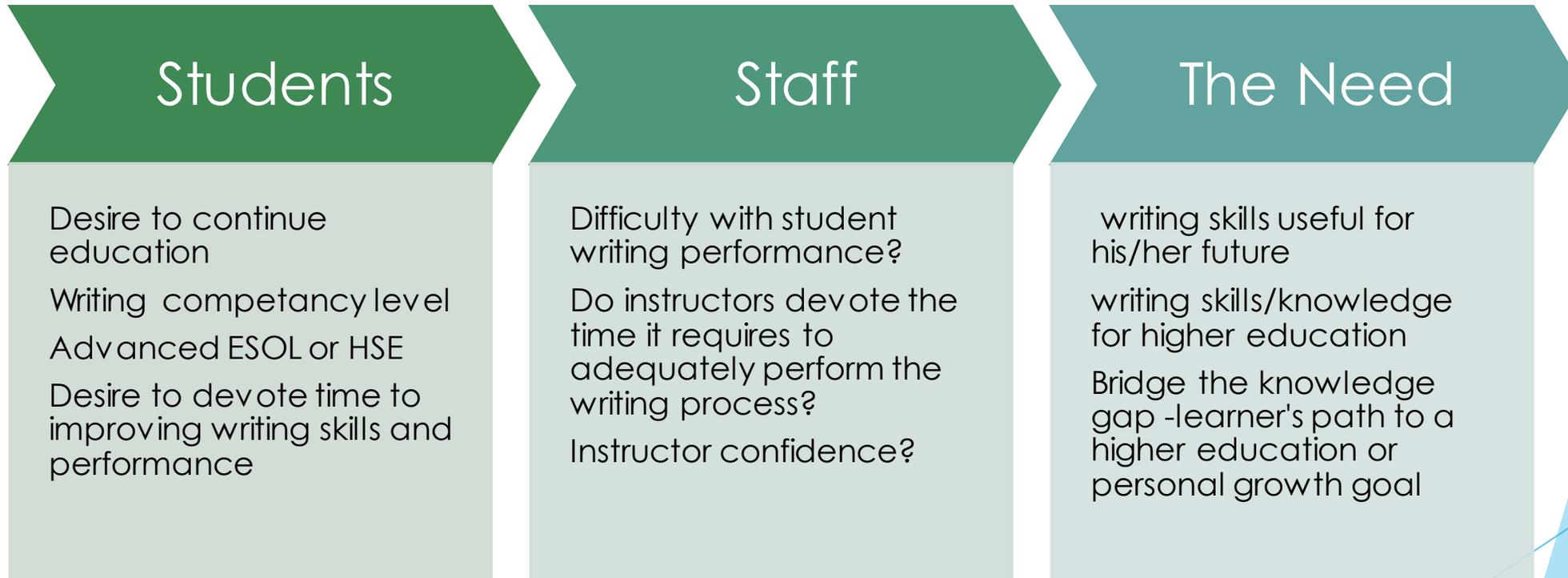
Teachers have difficulty finding enough time to teach writing at the depth needed for students to test into college-level composition classes.



Professional Development

We continue to have a need for teachers to increase their abilities to teach writing and to see themselves as writers.

What Was Considered Before Designing a Writing Program?





Steps To Designing Intentional Writing Instruction

- ▶ Previously established: the "problem"
- ▶ Confirm the group of learners that require this additional writing instruction:
 - ▶ Looking to continue his/her education
 - ▶ Writing proficiency is good/above average
 - ▶ Yet, does not meet the qualifications to achieve entry into a credited English Comp course at the college level.
- ▶ Identify the gap in knowledge
 - ▶ Expectations/qualifications required
 - ▶ Learners' prior/existing knowledge

Speaking to Our Process

- ▶ Designing a full year curriculum
 - ▶ Align curriculum with the Prioritized Standards for ABE and ESOL3
 - ▶ Allow for modification as needed: adding "pillar" standards
 - ▶ Consider:
 - ▶ requirements for English Comp I
 - ▶ specific writing skills useful for real life
 - ▶ the knowledge gap previously identified
- ▶ Determine the amount of time to devote to specific skills, knowledge, and instruction

Tips While Designing a Program

- ▶ **Communicate** with other instructors at your institution
- ▶ **Communicate** with students
- ▶ **Communicate** with local schools and initiate an exchange of information



What is Different About This Writing Course?

- ▶ The strategy for development was instruction based on the "writing workshop" style lesson plan
 - ▶ Student centered instruction
 - ▶ Purposefully limited student capacity
 - ▶ Primary focus: the writing process
 - ▶ sharing work with peers
 - ▶ Intentionally limit grammar instruction to mini-lessons:
 - ▶ reduce anxiety about criticism, promote continued writing
 - ▶ Specific objective for grammar practice, self-editing
 - ▶ Tailor grammar instruction to students when required (limited class size makes this possible)

Where Are We Now in the Process?

Step	Topic	Description	Status
Step 1	Problem	Identify the problem	Completed
Step 2	Need	Identify the knowledge gap	Completed
Step 3	Design	Fill the knowledge gap: design full year curriculum	Completed
Step 4	Design/ Implement	Create proof of concept 16 week writing workshop; implement and retain results	Completed
Step 5	Goal	Installation of a yearlong writing program to service a recognized need among our students	Current phase

Going From 36 Weeks to 16 Weeks:

Designing a pilot program for proof of concept with the goal of permanently implementing a writing program at our learning facility



Identify what is the most critical

Exposing learners to the different writing styles



Identify what is possible within this time constraint

Six units over sixteen weeks:

- Descriptive Writing- 2 lessons
- Narrative writing- 2 lessons
- Process writing- 2 lessons
- Compare/Contrast writing- 3 lessons (begin research skills)
- Persuasive writing- 3 lessons
- Research writing- 4 lessons

Forms of Assessment That Reflect the Writing Workshop Design of Instruction

- ▶ Writing
 - ▶ Journal prompts
 - ▶ Warm-ups
 - ▶ Extended writing assignments
 - ▶ Pre and post assessment for each unit
- ▶ Grammar: formative assessments
 - ▶ Workbook
 - ▶ Self-editing for single objectives
- Peer review & the writing process
 - Read aloud
 - Think.Pair. Share.
 - Turn & Talk
 - Peer editing
 - Group/Instructor feedback
 - Pre-writing & Organizing
 - Drafting
 - Revising/editing
 - Polishing

What We Have Noticed

The Writing Workshop Environment

Community

Vulnerability

Possibility

Students

Engagement

Development

Writer

Instructor

Participant

Model and Release

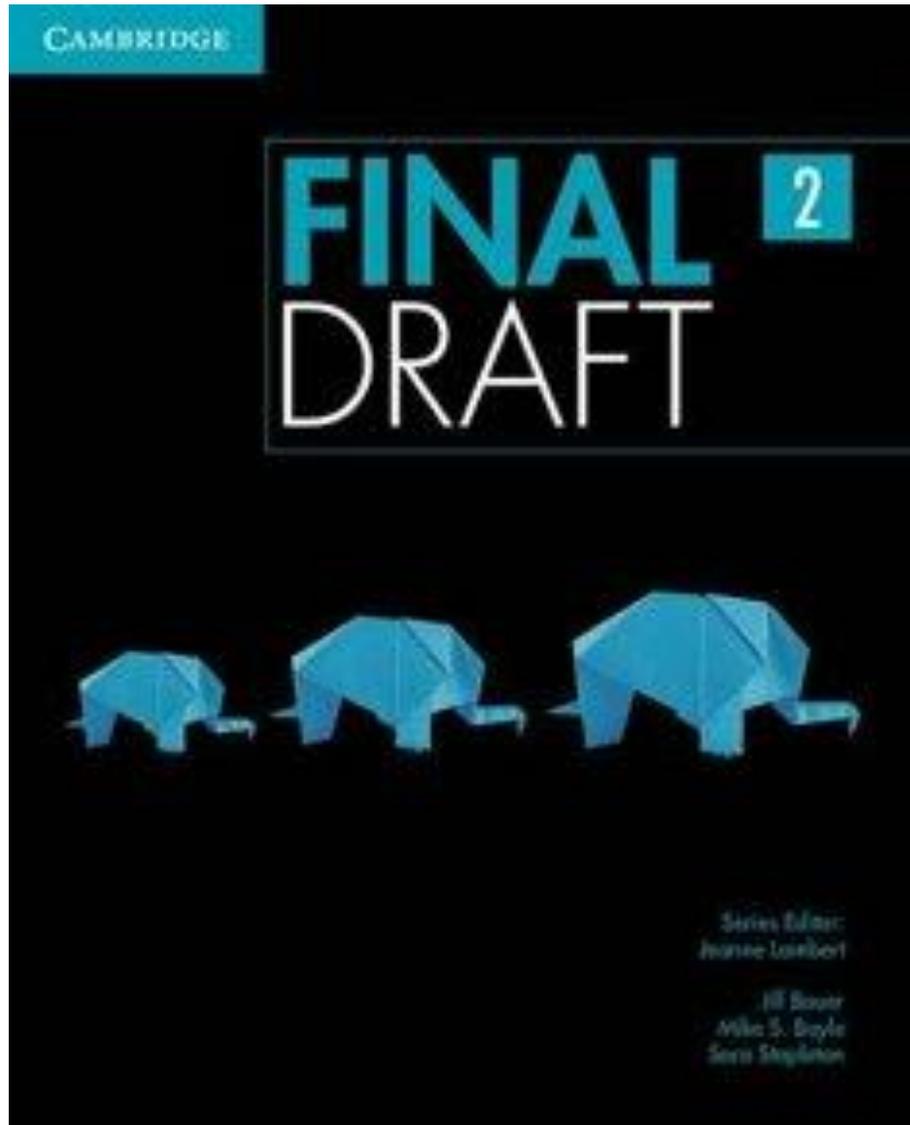
Student Writing Samples

Before instruction on descriptive writing:

- "[...] Mom made Cucu and flying fish my favorite dish and had a Barbados channel on T.V. playing music. It could not have been a better setting. The dinner was wonderful."

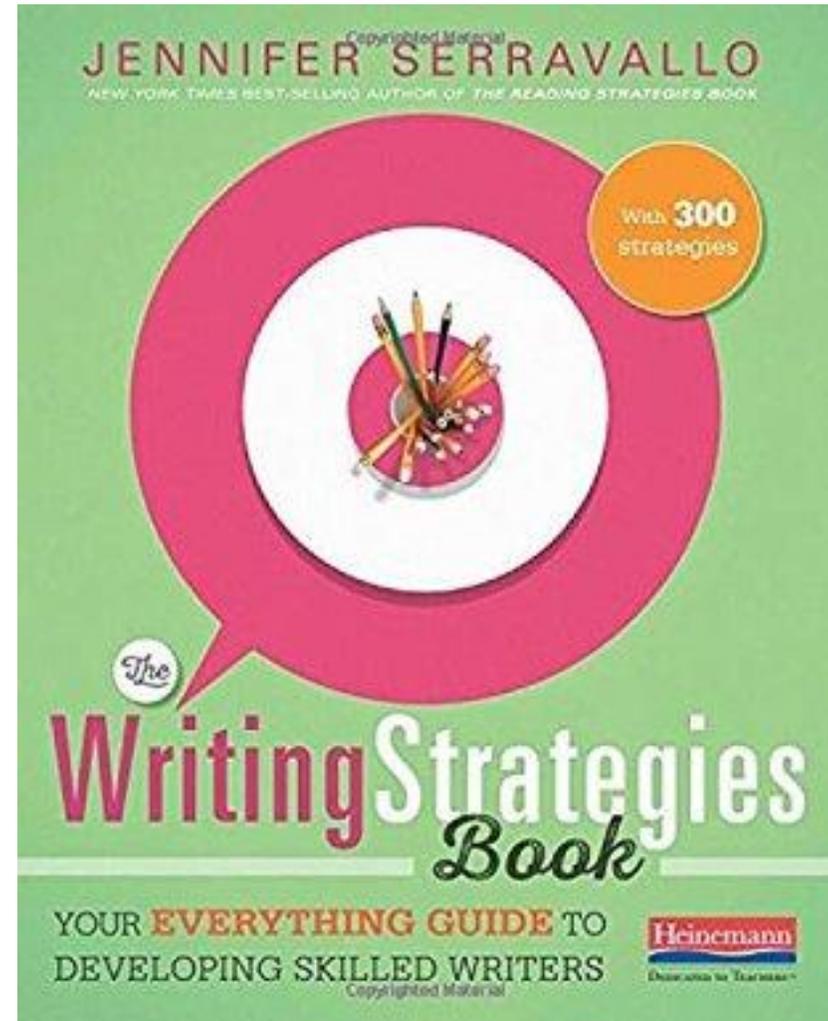
After instruction on descriptive writing:

- "You can hear Rudy's shoes scuff against the gravel making a heavy crunch then scattering noise with every step. He would hum happy hums while delivering the mail and a few kind words to the neighbors and I "Hello How Are You?" [...] Short and stumpy, robust he is with broad shoulders [...] As I reached for my mail I could smell the scent of his woody cologne."



A Text We Are Using in the Course

Additional Resource Option



Program Progress & Next Steps

- ▶ We are currently running two full year writing workshops
- ▶ Instructors will benefit from taking notes during the year
- ▶ Instructors will collaborate at the culmination of the program
 - ▶ What resources did you use?
 - ▶ What worked and what didn't?
 - ▶ What were the time requirements for various styles of writing?
 - ▶ Student feedback, progress, and challenges
 - ▶ Additional needs or requirements

Consider the information and adapt the curriculum for the following year!



"Brief But Spectacular" Taste of the Writing Workshop

Write a short descriptive writing in the full group following a prompt

Separate into Breakout Rooms with a facilitator to share writing following a simple protocol

Return to large group to discuss, briefly, the process and thoughts on implementation in your programs.

Prompt

▶ Briefly describe a favorite place. What do you see when you think of this spot? Use all available senses to imagine the details that remain with you. Be prepared to share your descriptions. You have 15 minutes to write. Don't worry about writing mechanics at this stage. Simply write with confidence and memory.

▶ Protocol:

▶ Volunteers to share

▶ Questions: What do you like about the piece?

▶ What do you want to know more about?



The Learner's Experience

- ▶ Thoughtfully designed curriculum reinforces skills during the year
- ▶ Narrative writing as the initial writing style
- ▶ The previous demonstration represents a beginning of the year writing task
 - ▶ Focuses on the student and the student's story
 - ▶ Learn the elements of narrative writing, including descriptive writing
 - ▶ Course progresses through different styles of writing
 - ▶ Course culminates with literary analysis and writing about literature
 - ▶ Final topic connects skills gained at the start of the year

Example of End of the Year Writing Prompt

- ▶ How does the author's use of imagery in the text, "from Stelmark: A Family Recollection," develop the theme of the short story?
- ▶ An excerpt from the short story written by Harry Mark Petrakis:
 - ▶ "I ate the figs late that night. I forgot about them until I was in bed, and then I rose and took the package from my jacket. I nibbled at one, then ate them all. They broke apart between my teeth with a tangy nectar, a thick sweetness running like honey across my tongue and into the pockets of my cheeks. In the morning when I woke, I could still taste and inhale their fragrance."

By the end of the writing workshop, learners will be able to explain in writing how the use of descriptive writing works to create imagery and how the use of imagery can be used to develop a theme within a story.

To-Do Before Part II of the Workshop

- ▶ Select from any of the following tasks to complete before our next meeting via Zoom on April 28th at 1:00 P.M.
 - ▶ Communicate with co-workers to see if there is a need for more intentional writing instruction at your facility
 - ▶ Communicate with local higher education institutions to gauge learner's success, or notable challenges, regarding writing
 - ▶ Communicate with learners and ask questions about writing
 - ▶ Implement a writing workshop session in your classroom and record student feedback

Part II of the Bridge Writing Workshop

- ▶ Let the conversation begin!
 - ▶ What task or tasks did you choose to complete over the past couple of weeks?
 - ▶ What were the results?
 - ▶ How do you foresee writing instruction at your facility in the future?

What Was Learned After One Year of Implementing the Workshop:

- ▶ Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill directly linked to one's writing abilities; therefore, reading comprehension should be incorporated throughout the course
- ▶ When teaching narrative writing at the start of the workshop, focus on comprehension skills as well: main idea & theme
 - ▶ This will better prepare the learners for literary analysis at the end of the year: focus on literary devices & figurative language
- ▶ Pre-writing & planning should be consistently reinforced throughout the year
- ▶ Writing is a vast topic and requires a well-planned curriculum
 - ▶ Allow for schedule adjustments for writing styles that will require more time

Why the Writing Workshop Works

- ▶ This style of classroom setting can lower the learner's affective filter
- ▶ Learners are writing with intention and with ample time
- ▶ Learners are writing for an audience that participate in the process
- ▶ Empowers learners when writing across the curriculum
- ▶ Repeated exposure to grammar and mechanics
- ▶ Learners engage in the whole writing process
- ▶ Learners accept themselves as writers
- ▶ Learners gain a sense of accomplishment through the development of their own writing portfolio of finished works

Current Status & Student Feedback



We are at the end of the first full year of implementing the Bridge Writing Workshop

- Finalizing student portfolios
- Analyzing formative and summative assessments
- Assessing notes from the year
- Fine tuning the curriculum for next year



Students who attended the full year of the writing workshop acknowledge and recognize their growth and development in writing.



Students expressed appreciation for the class and the elements that make it unique: small group, ample writing time, the writing process, constant feedback



A Parting Quote

"If writing must be a precise form of communication, it should be treated like a precision instrument. It should be sharpened, and it should not be used carelessly."

-Theodore M. Bernstein



Thank you!

We want your feedback.
Insert evaluation link

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