

ECI 620: Special Topic – Writing Process (Independent Study)

Course Instructor

Dr. Alan Reiman, Associate Professor
Curriculum & Instruction
North Carolina State University

Course Description

I completed this “special topics” course as an independent study under the supervision of Dr. Reiman. In keeping with my specialization area, Literacy, the course focused on the teaching and application of the writing process. The culminating assignment for the course was a formal review of manuscripts (i.e. literature review) encompassing 10+ scholarly works.

Course Activities

To meet Dr. Reiman's expectations, I completed the following tasks:

- Accessed the university library and identified appropriate databases;
- Used search terms (e.g., writing process, strategy instruction) to locate relevant works;
- Skimmed more than 20 works to learn about existing scholarship on the writing process;
- Identified research trends, including the use of process writing by students with disabilities;
- Reread select articles to learn how the writing process was taught in English classes, applied to formal writing tasks, and found to impact students' writing;
- Used the writing process to plan, draft, revise, and edit the paper; and
- Submitted the final paper which consisted of 21 pages (5,160 words).

Excerpts from the Paper

Abstract. This review of studies examined instructional factors leading to improvement in the writing ability of students with learning disabilities. The report begins with a discussion of the process writing approach, which includes steps (planning, organization, writing, editing, and revising) that can be used to guide students’ writing of expository compositions. Some of the benefits of direct instruction in the process approach are discussed. These include larger word count, better organization, and improved overall quality of writing. The report also indicates that the process writing approach may not be sufficient in teaching students the specific writing skills and strategies on which successful writers rely. The review indicates that combining instruction in the process approach with specific strategy instruction may lead to enhanced outcomes.

Background Excerpt. The process approach provides a framework that can be used to guide students’ writing from the planning stages through publication of the final piece. Goldstein and Carr (1996) define process writing as “a broad range of strategies that include pre-writing activities, such as defining the audience, using a variety of resources, planning the writing, as well as drafting and revising.” The process writing approach is generally broken into five steps, which include planning, organizing, writing, editing, and revising. Students gather and organize their



ideas in the pre-writing stage. The writing stage involves the creation of the first draft, which requires students to form sentences and paragraphs from ideas generated in the previous phase. After the first draft is in place, students can then assess their “strengths and weaknesses on what was written” (Wojasinski & Smith, 2002) and make changes before publishing the final piece.

Literature Review Excerpt. Over the course of one semester, teachers in three different classrooms conducted writers’ workshops four to five days a week for 45-60 minutes. In these workshops, they modeled the writing process at least once a week. They did so by projecting their own writing onto screens while sharing their thoughts about the process. Kowalewski et al (2002) point out that “this technique allowed students to see the development of a writing piece and how it could be transformed when edited and revised.” During that semester, students were given the opportunity to write for a variety of audiences, including classmates, teachers, parents, and other people in the community, and to share their work with their peers. Students were also introduced to the idea of self-assessment. Using rubrics, they were able to evaluate their work on the basis of...criteria such as organization and idea development [and they] had many occasions to engage in written reflection about their strengths and weaknesses. Students collected their final written products along with a corresponding written reflection about each piece.

Select Works Cited

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- Hallenbeck, M. J. (2002). Taking charge: Adolescents with learning disabilities assume responsibility for their own writing. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 25(4), 227-246.
- Harris, K. R., Graham, S., Mason, L. H. & Saddler, B. (2002). Developing self-regulated writers. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(2). 110-115.
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- National Commission on Writing for America’s Families, Schools, and Colleges (2005). *Writing: a powerful message from state government*. Retrieved from <http://www.writingcommission.org>.
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