Curriculum Design

9th Grade Writing

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Statement of Purpose

Learning to communicate effectively is the most important skill a child can develop in public education. Many districts recognize this skill and have implemented a “writing across the curriculum” mandate as a way to better engage student’s abilities. As the technological society advances, students are faced with new challenges in learning to communicate and socialize appropriately. It is important that educators break down the communication process and focus on teaching students to communicate effectively through the written word.

Success in academics, and the world outside of academia, not only depends on one’s cognitive ability to understand a concept, but rather one’s ability to explain their understanding effectively. Hence, learning to write in a coherent and structured manner is an important skill to attain. The ACT has studied the “readiness” of high school seniors who attend a college or university. They discovered some grim facts; “Only 1 in 4 ACT-tested 2007 high school graduates are prepared for entry-level college courses in English composition, algebra, social science, and biology. One in 4 ACT-tested 2007 high school graduates are not prepared for college coursework in any of the four subject areas” (ACT 2009).

An interesting facet of standardized testing and writing to consider is that currently, on the Ohio Graduation test, students are required to write detailed responses for every section of the test. Students must not only write essays, but they must also explain their math answers as well. Writing permeates through every structure in education and therefore, structured writing needs to be taught to high school students.

The problem in teaching structured writing, however, is challenging students to engage in writing as a thought process, or a means to express oneself, rather than a regurgitation of facts. Rick VanDeWeghe in his article “Scary Stories and Paradigm Shifts: Preparing High School Writers for College Writing” in the National Council of Teachers of English Journal, states “if we wish to promote writing as thinking, we can talk about writing as discourse tied to personal thought- learning how to appropriate others’ ideas to one’s purpose as a writer rather than merely regurgitate them and leave it at that” (2006).

Furthermore “students report that when they do not see a purpose for writing beyond completing the assignment and turning it is, the conditions for learning or thinking do not exist” (VanDeWeghe 2006). This curriculum is unique because it strives to work in conjunction with other core subject areas as a means to engage students’ writing abilities in a meaningful way. Students are not only taught how to write in the confines of the English classroom, but they are taught to apply those standards to other subject matter as well.

ACT, . (2009). *A first look at the common core and college and career readiness*. Retrieved from http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/FirstLook.pdf

VanDeWeghe, Rick. (2006). Scary stories and paradigm shifts: preparing high school writers for college writing. *National Council of Teachers of English*, *96*(2), 62-66.