A Better Alternative To Grading Student Writing

Description

This is a quick post that just occurred to me while writing about–well, writing about writing.

I was brainstorming ways to use technology to help students improve their writing and realized that over and over again, I was thinking about the *process* of writing and how crucial it is to quality of whatever the writer is left with at the end.

Great writing starts at the beginning, whether with an idea or need or purpose of social context or spark of inspiration. Whatever it is that 'causes' the writing to begin–what's wrought there at the beginning is kind of like a lump of clay. Without that clay, not much could happen and the quality of that clay matters; its texture and purity and consistency and overall makeup has a lot to say about what it's able to produce. In large part, what you're able to create with that clay depends on the quality and quantity of that clay.

The Purpose Of The Writing Process

Put another way, the writing process itself is everything. It doesn't have to be used the same way every time and that's another conversation for another day and I only mention it briefly because the worst thing you can do is read this post and then go shove the 'diligence of the writing process' down the throats of would-be writers/students who only need to believe they can write and then they opportunity to do so with in the company of nurturing.

All this leads me to the title. Instead of grading the end result of that process (the finished process), grade the quality of that student's use of the writing process–ideally based on their specific strengths and weaknesses and the purpose and audience of the writing assignment itself.

Using The Writing Process

Using the writing process takes years of practice because producing great writing takes constant vision and refinement. It requires the writer to understand what they're trying to say and then say it in a way

that produces some effect on the world. Research, idea organization, paragraph structure, sentence instruction, diction, punctuation, rule-breaking, tone, literary devices–using these ideas to communicate complex ideas is hard work.

That's why writing is less of an activity and more of a process not unlike the scientific process. While we might for professionals, it wouldn't make much sense to grade children doing science by the accuracy of their data. Rather, their ability and tendency to use the scientific process to test theories and collect data would be far more important.

For amateurs in many fields, the process is far more important than the product.

If these goals (or those like them) are at least partly true, then a viable alternative to grading student writing is to grade *if* the student writes and *how* the student uses the writing process itself *in a way that makes sense to them*.

And in a way that shows ownership of that writing process that will endure long after they've left your classroom.

Category

1. Business

Tags

1. data science
2. web development

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