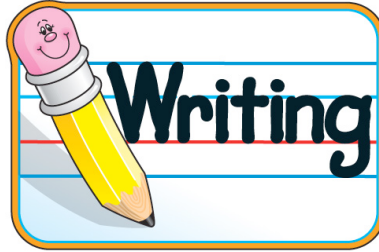


Sound Bites for Better Teaching
People who write want to be read
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Asking the students to write about their summer vacation is a popular and often groan-producing writing activity each September. The teacher who is usually the only person to read them then takes those compositions home and spends countless hours in meticulously correcting all the grammatical errors. The result of all those red marks on the paper tells the student that s/he is hopelessly unable to write with any degree of competence and leads to a dislike in writing. Writing becomes the ultimate test of the student's grasp of spelling and grammatical accuracy (which are achievement-based) rather than a springboard of communication between a writer and a reader (which are proficiency-based). Generally speaking, because people write to be read by others, it's a good idea to let the students read one another's papers by publishing some of the writings in the form of a handout or brochure.

Self Evaluation (no right or wrong answers)

How knowledgeable are you of the four stages of the writing process?

Before giving a writing assignment, do you engage the students in pre-writing activities as a way to generate or to organize ideas?

Do you consider what the students hand in to you as a rough draft or as the final product?

Do you ask the students to edit one another's papers as part of the revision stage?

Do you correct the assignment yourself or do you indicate where the errors are and expect the students to self-correct?

Do you ask for rewrites of the document? If so, how many times do you ask them to rewrite?

Are the students taught to proofread their documents before handing them in to you?

Do you encourage quality rather than quantity by setting limits to the length of the assignment, i.e., 2 paragraphs, 2 double-spaced typed pages, etc.?

Do you let the students read one another's final papers as a way to initiate conversation?

Do your students have e-partners to correspond with in other schools' foreign language departments or in target countries?

TIP

Engage your students in the following cooperative group writing assignment: 1) in groups of four or five, each student writes one sentence on a sheet of paper; 2) each student passes his/her sheet of paper to the student on the right who then writes a second sentence which logically follows the first sentence; 3) the process is repeated until each student gets his/her paper back; 4) the group chooses which paper to read aloud to the class. The results are often quite impressive and/or funny.