

(2) Process Writing

Process writing views both the product and the process of writing as equally important. Students follow the procedures of prewriting (planning), drafting, revising, editing, and publishing their writing.

Prewriting: Exploring the Topic

Prewriting helps the writer to determine what to write about. Some of the most common prewriting activities are: making lists, conducting research, formal or informal reading, interviews, brainstorming, outlining, discussing, free writing, journal writing, etc. The purpose of this stage is to allow the writer to explore the topic thoroughly, in an unstructured and non-threatening way, before entering into formal composition. Prewriting is a prerequisite for good writing.

Drafting: Putting it Down on Paper

Drafting is the stage where formal writing begins. Using prewriting materials as inspiration, the writer writes, without too much concern for mechanics, style, or organization other than getting everything down on paper as quickly and as easily as possible. Drafting is over when: 1) sketches and notes and lists and ideas have been turned into sentences and paragraphs; 2) there is at least a recognizable beginning, middle and ending; and 3) the writer has gone as far as the writer can go without getting some feedback. The result often resembles the traditional first draft, but need not be complete from beginning to end. In this stage writers should be given time and encouragement to engage in risk-free exploration of their subject matter.

Revising: Taking Another Look; Getting Some Advice

“Revising” means “seeing again” and also includes getting reader response, which can come from teacher/peer conferences, small group/full class share sessions, and discussions with friends, teachers, etc. At this point, the writer is looking for reactions and suggestions, while comments regarding conventions should be kept to a minimum. Concerns about conventions will be addressed during editing. Writers typically go through three distinct stages of revision: adding on, moving around, and cutting out. The writer may move back and forth many times between revision and response (and even prewriting and drafting, if necessary) until the paper has reached a satisfactory stage.

Editing: Making Corrections

At this point, the writer will focus formally on mechanical correctness, such as grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling and minor text changes. Editing can come from many different sources such as the writer, a peer editor, or the teacher. It is at this stage that direct instruction in conventions is most appropriate. As much research has shown, instruction in grammar and other conventions is only effective in the context of real student writing. The ideal result of the editing stage should be a conventionally correct and completely finished piece of writing that requires only recopying or typing and formatting.

Publishing: Polishing for Presentation; Reflecting on the Work

Publication can take many forms, such as posting in class or the school, submitting for formal publication to a newspaper or magazine, reading out loud, and performing. Ideally no changes of any kind occur at this point except those that affect presentation. Reflection or a final assessment can take a variety of forms, such as small group/full class share session (informal verbal response), student written reflection, and peer review (formal written response). Assessment is often the most valuable stage in the process. There is potential for learning when writers revisit their finished work with a constructive self-critical eye.

Reference

McQuinn, C. & Roach, M. (2002). *The Writing Process: Web Tutorial*. [on-line]. Retrieved December 12, 2002. URL: http://www.psesd.wednet.edu/write_process/Write_PC/writepr.htm