

The Role of Post-Writing Exercises and Interventions in Student Writing Outcomes: A Case Study

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Abstract

Teachers of analytical writing in high school classrooms devote considerable time and energy to improving student writing ability. From planning units to delivering classroom instruction to providing feedback on final submissions, the process requires thoughtful attention towards what writing instructors know to be the most important charge of their specific educational role. Yet many educators overlook or undervalue one critical component of the writing cycle. We place significant emphasis on the pre-writing and drafting phases but allow the process to conclude anticlimactically—often through the handing back of marked-up papers whose feedback is largely neglected as students skip immediately to view their scores. In doing so, we forego an opportunity to increase long-term learning and improve future writing outcomes through post-writing exercises such as reflection, conferencing, and feedback consolidation/review.

This paper explores the positive effects of post-writing applications through the case study of an all-boys independent school in the greater Washington, DC, area. It analyzes the writing performances of 115 upperclassmen students who enrolled in the school's Humanities: English course from 2019-2021, primarily focusing on the writing outcomes of students who were subjected to a formalized post-writing process compared to those who were not. It examines data including graded scores of analytical writing submissions as well as follow-up survey results and feedback regarding student experiences. Ultimately, the findings offer new suggestions for strategies to improve student writing outcomes, especially in the face of the learning gap many schools are experiencing as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: analytical writing; conferencing; persuasive essay; reflection; writing process