

## Useful Strategies for Teaching With Writing

- *Assignment Design & Sequencing*
- *Responding Effectively to Student Writing*

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January 2008

## Assignment Design & Sequencing

### Assignment Design & Sequencing

Your turn . . .

What writing assignments do you typically  
give?

Why?

What problems did students have?

## Assignment Design & Sequencing

- Assignment design influences students'
  - thinking
  - writing process
  - skill development
  - content learning

## Types of Assignments

1. “Support” writing (write-to-learn)
  - freewriting, email, journal, pro/con grid, minute paper, data-provided microtheme
2. Conventional academic writing (learn-to-write)
  - analysis, case study, essay, report, memo
3. Non-conventional academic writing
  - dialogue, role-play, concept map+write-up

## Choosing an Assignment

### **Ask: What is your goal(s)?**

#### Examples:

- Learn to write in a particular format or genre
- Explore an issue or phenomenon
- Gain deep content knowledge
- Develop a way of thinking (e.g., inference, comparison, multiple perspectives)

## Create an Assignment Sequence

- Break assignment into steps
- Use checkpoints for complex assignments
- Describe an appropriate sequence/process on the assignment sheet
- Use “support” assignments as building blocks

## Create an Assignment Sequence

*continued*

- Identify areas where students need support
- Use an activity and/or writing to provide that support

Examples

- **Data analysis** -- Data-provided microtheme
- **Comprehensive understanding** -- Role-playing; pro/con grid; what-if scenarios
- **Genre knowledge** -- Annotate a sample/model
- **Critical reading** -- Quick questions

## Example: Research Paper Sequence

### Research Paper

1. **In-class idea-generation session (peer discussion groups)**
2. **Focused freewrite on best idea**
3. **½-1 page prospectus (teacher feedback)**
4. Draft paper (peer feedback)
5. Revise draft
6. Teacher-student conference
7. Proofread & edit
8. Submit final version

## Example: Position Paper Sequence

### Position Paper

1. Pro-con grid (peer discussion groups)
2. Two sentences: question and thesis (teacher feedback)
3. Draft paper (peer feedback)
4. Revise (teacher feedback)
5. Proofread & edit
6. Submit final version

## Assignment Guidelines

- Always give students written guidelines
- Elements to include
  - Task
  - Form/genre
  - Role & audience
  - Format
  - Sequence (with due dates and checkpoints)
  - Grading criteria

## Assignment Design & Sequencing

Your turn . . .

In one sentence, summarize the information presented so far.

In another sentence, state what you might use in the future.

## Responding to Student Writing

### Responding to “Support” Assignments

- Count towards the course grade
  - 10-15% of course grade is common
  - Ungraded, but required to pass (incomplete=C or lower course grade)
- Use minus/check/plus “grading” system
- Rotate which students get comments
- Give “model” comments to the class (not individuals)
- Don't collect everything that students write

### Responding to Complex Assignments

- Establish checkpoints: students submit materials during the sequence and receive guidance
- Use peer discussion groups and peer feedback
- Write comments on drafts only
  - Comment on final versions only if aimed at next assignment OR if re-writes are allowed
- Hold one-on-one or group conferences

## Writing Comments

- Coach—don't justify, don't correct
  - Suggest what to do next
  - Be specific
  - Explain why
- Avoid over-commenting
  - Comment on 2-3 main concerns
  - Don't write comments as you read
- Make positive comments

## Writing Comments

*continued*

- Don't correct grammar and mechanics (or edit only one paragraph)
  - Teach proofreading & editing strategies
  - Require that students proofread & edit
- Have a plan: address higher-order concerns before lower-order concerns

## Writing Comments

### Higher-order Concerns

1. Does the draft follow the assignment?
2. Does the draft address an appropriate problem or question?
3. What is the quality of the argument?  
(May include appropriateness of evidence)
4. Is there an effective overall organization?
5. Is there effective organization at the paragraph level?

(John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, p. 243-250)

## Writing Comments

### Lower-order Concerns

1. Are there stylistic problems that bother you?
2. Is the draft free of errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling?
3. Does the writer follow the style guide rules for citations?

(John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, p. 243-250)

## Responding

Your turn . . .

What will be the easiest for you to put into practice?

What will be the most difficult?

What will you try?

### **Resources (available at Hamilton Library and Mānoa Writing Program)**

John C. Bean's *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom* (2001, Jossey-Bass)

Thomas A. Angelo & K. Patricia Cross's *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers* (2nd ed., 1993, Jossey-Bass)

Mānoa Writing Program's *Teacher Resources* at [www.mwp.hawaii.edu](http://www.mwp.hawaii.edu)

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*Thank you!*