

I assigned a research paper about social outcasts to my juniors. We had just finished reading *The Scarlet Letter*. We spent about a week on each step of the process. I gave them notes and talked through each step, and then we went to the library and worked. Each paper was full of mistakes; spelling, sentences, paragraphs, MLA, citation, plagiarism, you name it. They were incredibly hard to read and difficult to grade. I had no idea what the students were talking about. Some were fine—let's not get crazy; but so many were not. No matter what kind of writing we did, short essays, journals, or short answers there were many issues with a number of students' writing.

The characteristics of poor writers, taken from the class PowerPoint, reads like the list I made from the writing assignments. 1. Poor writing mechanics are difficult and tend to interfere with the execution of higher-order composing process, 2. shorter compositions with less elaborative detail reflect memory, incomplete knowledge of the topic, less understanding of text structure, 3. inclusion of irrelevant material, 4. less revision (focus on superficial), 5. rarely plan, 6. little motivation, 7. little awareness of what is good writing. Where do you start?

I feel fairly certain that I have not done enough to help my students. I have broken each assignment in to separate due dates, I have had peer editing days, but I have not broken each assignment down into small digestible pieces. I have not given much in class time for writing and I have not allowed them much room to choose their own topic. All of this must change.

I am taking three classes this summer this one, TE 847 Advanced Methods of teaching Language Arts, and CEP 841 Classroom Management in the Inclusive classroom. Between the three classes I have learn a host of things I can use to help my students be successful. The first thing I need to do is stop assuming that in English 11 they already know how to do spelling, sentences, paragraphs, etc... I have to pretest students to see where we are in spelling, writing, reading, and vocabulary. From there I can start to make plans.

Next I need to start breaking down the assignments into smaller learning goals, as well as teaching the objective of each step. Students need to be able to see the relevance of a task. The more steps there are the better chances of success, "self-efficacy is best facilitated by providing opportunities for students to succeed on tasks within their range of competence and through these experiences actually develop new capabilities and skills" (Linnenbrink 2002).

I need to work on making a connection with motivation, "not only are students motivated in multiple ways, but their motivation can vary depending on the situation or context in the classroom or school" (Linnenbrink 2002).

I can also find multiple ways for student evaluation, "by having a variety of tasks in the classroom and multiple forms of assessments such as portfolios, essays, and project-based assessments, classroom teachers may be able to provide all students with opportunities to be successful" (Linnenbrink 2002).

I have set high goals for myself and my students but I am hoping for a dramatic change in my behavior that will facilitate a better working environment.