A Writer’s Post

Have you ever experienced frustration while writing? The answer is yes, everyone has and will at some point throughout their writing career. This frustration stems from a variety of things which may include, but are not limited to, low confidence in one’s own ability to write and not knowing what to write about. If we, as educators, can work together to improve student confidence regarding writing, we may be able to eliminate some of this frustration. The more frustration a student experiences when writing, the more likely they will develop negative feelings towards writing and therefore, lose all motivation to write. So how can we improve student confidence regarding writing?

To improve student confidence regarding writing, we need to be able to put ourselves into the students’ shoes. We need to understand the normality of what they are going through and how to respond to them. Before responding to them, we need to remember the feelings we experienced as a student going through this. We also need to remember how we would have wanted the teacher to assist us. If we consider these factors when assisting our students, our students may feel more comfortable receiving help from us and therefore, may be open to any suggestions from us.

Not only is it important for us to put ourselves into the students’ shoes, but it is also important for us to conduct research on how we can improve student confidence regarding writing. While conducting research, we need to consider what has worked and what has not worked within the classroom. Because we are aware that certain things have worked, we may decide to either keep them the way that they are or manipulate them to fit the needs of our students. Research suggests several changes to be made within the classroom to improve student confidence regarding writing. These changes suggest teachers “assign low-stakes writing assignments, capitalize on informal writing assignments, create “scaffolded” writing assignments, use “minimal” grading, and give “global” as opposed to “local” feedback. (University)

If we “assign low-stakes writing assignments,” we are giving “students the opportunity to practice writing skills without the stress of high-stakes assignments.” (University) These low-stakes writing assignments will assist students when preparing for high-stakes writing assignments. Because high-stakes writing assignments will most likely be grade heavily, it is important for us to provide endless writing opportunities for students before completion of these assignments.

Assigning informal writing assignments “can reduce the tension students associate with writing, help them get their ideas down on paper clearly, increase their confidence, and eventually pave the way for more formal writing assignments.” (University) Student confidence may increase solely by practicing, which is why it is extremely important for us to provide these endless practice opportunities for students. While students are practicing, it is our job to give feedback. If we are not giving any feedback to the students regarding their writing, they may never know if their writing is improving or if how they are writing is correct. Because of this, students will remain unsure and therefore, their confidence level will never improve. As previous students, try and remember teachers you had. Did you have teachers who gave endless amounts of feedback, little amounts of feedback, or no feedback? How did this affect your level of confidence as a writer? Did it affect the way you view writing today? It is important for us to consider these three things when teaching our students. Most likely, all students will appreciate a teacher who gives endless amounts of feedback. In saying this, all teachers should consider this when teaching and use feedback as a learning guide for students.

If we “create “scaffolded” writing assignments,” students will be given “a clearer point of entry for beginning the assignment and thus will help them overcome anxiety and writer’s block.” (University) Anxiety and writer’s block are two factors that contribute to a student’s low confidence regarding writing. It is our job, as educators, to eliminate these factors and therefore, boost student confidence regarding writing. If students do not have the confidence to write and are not given any resources to help boost their confidence, their confidence will remain at the same level. This is what we want to eliminate, as educators, because we want to see continuous improvement in our students. Student improvement and confidence go hand in hand: once a student notices improvement in their writing, their confidence level regarding writing will increase.

While we know and understand the importance of giving feedback to our students, we also need to know and understand the levels of giving feedback. For instance, there is such thing as giving too much feedback. Think back when you were a student. Were you ever given an assignment back with a large amount of feedback on it? Was this feedback positive or negative? If the feedback was all negative, did this affect your confidence regarding writing? If we consider our past experiences with feedback and how that has shaped our confidence regarding writing today, we can use these past experiences when working with our students. It is our job as teachers to provide students with the feedback necessary for them to succeed. As educators, we need to know and understand the importance of honest feedback. Yes, positive feedback may help improve student confidence regarding writing, but we also need to understand the importance of giving negative feedback. Instead of calling it negative feedback, we can call it “constructive criticism.” Although this type of feedback is important, it is also important to understand the levels at which we need to give this type of feedback. We may decide to incorporate equal levels of positive feedback and constructive criticism for the student.

In giving feedback, it is important for us to understand how to “give “global” as opposed to “local” feedback.” (University) As stated above, a poor strategy for giving feedback is giving too much feedback. Think back on your schooling years. Were you ever given an assignment back that had comments written all over it? If so, how did this make you feel? For most of us, we may have become overwhelmed. As we understand the normality of this feeling, we need to eliminate any factors leading up to this. By organizing the feedback given to students, we can focus on one aspect of writing at a time. In doing this, students can work to improve this aspect of writing before moving on to the next aspect.

I hope this information has been helpful for you all and feel free to add any information you find beneficial!

Call to action: Subscribe to this blog post if you are an educator and want to see an overall improvement in student confidence regarding writing.