

in that it contains no opportunities for students to do any rewriting-despite the insistence of teacher members of the committee that rewriting was a critical phase in the writing process. Again, officials of the Minnesota State Department of Education vetoed the request of the teachers. There was no intention to sabotage the effort, just a lack of appreciation for the special features of writing assessment as distinct from assessment in reading, math, social studies, etc.

In short, the Minnesota Writing Assessment is significantly less than a perfect process. Any interpretations made of the sampling results must, therefore, be qualified by allowance for a least two major limitations: the absence of a comparable adult writing sample, and the absence of rewrite opportunities for student writers.

At present, the Minnesota Writing Assessment Project seems to be a worthwhile enterprise, but it is hoped that if the writing assessment program continues in Minnesota, there will be an opportunity for the aforementioned imperfections to be eliminated - along with the others which would most assuredly crop up.

REFERENCES

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TIRED TEACHERS: SOME SUGGESTIONS

Lorraine Perkins
Saint Cloud State University
Saint Cloud, Minnesota

Because a tired teacher is often a dull teacher, I believe it is worthwhile for us to lighten our load deliberately when we can do so without impeding our students' progress.

That we have a time problem is undeniable; even those in other disciplines offer sympathy. If, as Conant says, the average English load is 120 students, and if each student writes one two-page paper a week for a twelve-week semester, then one teacher reads 1440 papers. If each paper takes ten minutes to grade, then 240 hours of work--20 hours per week--are added to a schedule already filled with five classes and a study hall. Did someone mention preparation? Or conferences?

But students need to write to learn to write. No denying that. Filling in blanks or underlining the right word won't do it. How can we reduce the paper load to a manageable size? Not light, just manageable?

By listening to teachers and by reading, I've discovered six ways to save time, and I'll begin with the most radical suggestion, one I first read in Don Murray's book A Writer Teaches Writing: we can give only a mid-term and final grade in composition classes. In that way we can save the time and energy we use in frequent debates between, for example, a C- and a D+.

But suppose we must, for some reason, grade more than twice a period. Then we can try a second approach: grading only some of the papers. We can select at random the ones to be graded, or we can announce that we will correct and grade every second or third paper, or we can let students choose from among groups of their papers the ones they want graded. Responding to journal writing adds to our time dilemma but, here again, selectivity can

help. We can have the student put a paper clip on the "page of the week," the one he or she most wants us to see.

A third time-saving suggestion is this: during workshops when students are writing at their desks while we are at ours, we can have individual students bring us their short papers--a paragraph or two--and skim through the writing quickly as they watch. We can explain immediately what we see as strengths and weaknesses. Occasionally, the workshops may become read-aloud days for short papers, with perhaps four students responding to selected readers each day.

A fourth attack on the time problem is to ensure as far as possible well-written papers that are fun to read and easy to grade. To this end, we can have students correct one another's papers. Not the final copies--no, then it is too late to help the writers. It's the rough draft that should be exchanged. For this method to succeed, we must give careful directions. One teacher I know has each paper critiqued by two classmates, not always the same ones. She has the writer include two blank pages for his or her commentators, and she gives examples of the kind of comments that are useful, such as "You need a plural pronoun in sentence 3," or "The metaphor in paragraph 2 is vivid." In a similar way, small groups can also correct their members' papers.

A fifth time-saving method is not over-correcting papers. The early papers might have only commentary concerning the ideas; gradually we can wrestle with the errors in usage and editing, focusing on the most serious or frequent ones first. In noting these errors we can save time by not doing our students' corrections for them.

Finally, in spite of advice from writers such as John Ciardi and Janet Emig, I believe that having students make informal scratch outlines for their expository work is a useful practice that saves time for both teacher and student. After students have worked through the pre-writing phase of composition, some sort of order must be imposed on their material, and making a sketch outline

to show relationships serves most students well. By checking for errors in the logic of the outline, I save the students some time; I save mine because the final paper is then more unified and coherent.

Let's try at least some of these approaches with our students, for reducing our paper load may well help us to become better teachers.

CALL FOR PAPERS

In an attempt to solicit timely and thematically appropriate manuscripts, the editor announces the following themes for the 1980-81 Journal and issues a call for manuscripts.

Fall 1980--Interdisciplinary Concerns and English--
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Please include with your manuscript a SASE. Efforts will be made to acknowledge your manuscript upon receipt and to evaluate it promptly.

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Minnesota English Journal
English Department
University of Minnesota, Duluth
Duluth, Minnesota 55812