

Indicator: 2. Teachers plan instruction in order to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning and to promote their curiosity about the world at large by: *Developing and organizing coherent and relevant units, lessons and learning tasks that build on students' prior knowledge, skills and interests and engage students in the work of the discipline.*

Goal:

I will learn 2-3 writing strategies that will help students make stronger interdisciplinary connections with the English/Language Arts Department in our technical high school. As a result, students will improve their writing skills and benefit their academic and employment careers i.e. creating a resume/business plan, enhancing vocabulary, interviewing, developing confidence when communicating with employers, customers or public speaking, increasing creative thinking, etc.

Initial Summary:

I work hard to develop and organize lesson plans that reflect the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching indicators. I incorporate multiple strategies in my lesson planning to present content in a differentiated manner, challenge students appropriately, engage students to think and problem solve creatively and make real world/career/interdisciplinary connections. One area I would like to enhance is making stronger interdisciplinary connections to the English/Language Arts Department. Currently, I do not plan any formal writing assignments and therefore, my students have few experiences in my classes for relevant written communication. The lessons I plan focus on the instruction of relevant trade skills that prepare students for future employment in a people-oriented industry. Although I purposefully implement recommended school-wide note-taking strategies (Two- Column Notes and a modified version of SQ3R, Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) regularly in my lesson plans, I do not incorporate any other formal writing activities. I feel strongly that solid writing skills are essential for students as they continue in their academic and professional careers.

Reflection Paper:

When I decided to focus on the Planning for Active Learning module, I was immediately drawn to Indicator 2, which emphasizes the importance of integrating learning activities that make real-world, career or global connections, and promote interdisciplinary connections whenever possible. As a trade instructor, I find that the content of our curriculum naturally lends itself to making frequent real world and career connections. I am reminded of a meeting with my colleagues last year at which a Language Arts Department member spoke to the trade instructors about the importance of supplementing our lessons with writing activities. I fully appreciated the message she was conveying; writing is a skill that enhances all education. I felt inspired to comply, but as a first-year trade instructor, I was unsure of how to effectively do so. As I shared this story with my

mentor, I felt truly motivated to learn how. I want to be able to develop effective writing assignments relative to our trade, and incorporate them into my lesson planning. By doing so, I will be promoting interdisciplinary connections while fostering the students' exploration of our industry.

I decided to begin my quest for information about writing strategies by reaching out to two colleagues in the English/Language Arts Department. At our meetings, I presented my goal of adding more writing strategies to my lesson plans and shared my apprehension. What is an appropriate writing assignment for a trade instructor to implement? I am not an English instructor; do I have the skills to facilitate such strategies? How do I grade the assignments? Both teachers were quick to calm my fears. From them, I learned that writing strategies do not need to be complicated or daunting and can be kept simple. They assured me that I should not feel the need to "reinvent the wheel"; it will only overwhelm and frustrate me. The important thing is to get the students to write their thoughts on paper. When students express themselves through writing, they are asked to reflect on several things: what they think about a topic, what they know about a topic and/or what they have learned about a topic. Both teachers also pointed out the advantage of being a trade instructor, as students are more likely to respond positively when they have a personal interest in the subject matter on which they are writing. I shared with them some writing strategy ideas I had been considering, in particular, the interview strategy or possibly the product review strategy, as they could be tailored to complement our trade curriculum. My colleagues both agreed that an interview assignment was a solid place to start, and shared with me some foundational advice. I learned that good writing assignments start with a clear goal, one that identifies what it is you want students to learn and be able to demonstrate. Like all successfully planned lessons, I would first need to decide what I want the critical outcome to be. One way to do this is to "think backwards." By establishing and planning a vision for the end product, you can provide students with a clear goal to target. I also learned that the scoring guides or rubrics for such assignments can focus on the objectives of the interview itself that I have determined to be critical. I was encouraged when I heard this, for I had feared grading a composition would certainly be more complicated for me. Learning that writing assignments and their scoring rubrics do not have to be formal and extensive to be effective was most assuring.

I visited numerous web sites that are dedicated to writing instruction, including www.educationworld.com and www.rayser.ca. I also read two writing strategy books recommended to me by a reading specialist, *Razzle Dazzle Writing*, by Melissa Forney and *Writing Whizardry*, by Maity Schreengost. I learned that writing is generally divided into four categories, and that elements of each category can also be used in a single composition:

- 1) Narrative- Writing to tell a story or part of a story to a reader. Examples include short stories, biographies, autobiographies, historical accounts or essays.
- 2) Informational Writing- Writing to explain, instruct, define or inform the reader of something. Examples include instructions, guide/text books, manuals and newspaper articles.
- 3) Persuasive- Writing to convince the reader of an opinion or belief. Examples include speeches, advertisements, pamphlets, opinion pieces and editorials.

4) Descriptive- Writing to vividly describe a person, place or thing to the reader so that they can visualize it. Examples can be found within many written pieces including poems, essays, stories and reports.

I immediately recognized opportunities to incorporate writing strategies reflecting each of these areas into my lesson planning. Once I recognized this connection, the possible strategies I could use to link my trade lessons to academics seemed boundless. From my research, I learned that narrative writing strategies could include a biography; students could write about a significant past or present leader or trendsetter in the beauty industry. Having students explain a specific cosmetic procedure, like a facial, or list the steps or instructions of a procedure, like a permanent wave would demonstrate informational writing. The newspaper article strategy, also informational writing, could be implemented by instructing students to write an article describing to or telling the reader about an event in our department, or new seasonal beauty or fashion trends. Students could compose and create their own manual on how to do a particular up-do or other hair creation they have done successfully for peers to reference. Another method to exhibit informational writing would be a compare/contrast strategy. Students would select a topic of interest, for example, thermal waving techniques, and compare/contrast various aspects of the different applications in a report or chart. A product review could be another potential option using the same strategy. Students could personally compare/contrast various products related to the unit of study or work in interest groups to collectively develop opinions about a product, and summarize the conclusions in writing. A follow up assignment to the product review could be writing a product advertisement. Students could use data collected from their review to write a persuasive advertisement for the product to prove their point of view. Many of my students express an interest in becoming business owners one day. Instructing them to write a convincing advertisement or brochure for their future company would illustrate persuasive writing. I often utilize a visualization strategy to help students create a mental picture of a concept I am trying to convey. This exercise could segue into a descriptive writing piece about hair color or texture. The strategies I have mentioned above are merely a small sampling of potential assignments I came to realize could be implemented into my lesson planning to enrich interdisciplinary connections.

From my reading and research, I also learned about the numerous benefits of including writing strategies in a lesson plan, including:

1) Implementing writing strategies encourages students to become active learners. Such assignments help students personally involve themselves in the ideas presented in class and the subject matter of the lesson by asking for reflection in their own words, therefore actively processing that information.



2) Writing helps students find their own "language" for the subject matter of the lesson; their own analogies and metaphors for the ideas presented. When students can write and speak about what they've learned in their own words, they have internalized the information and personalized it.

3) Writing can also help teachers find out what concepts, skills and objectives the individual student understands, as well as identify what may need further attention. The personal interpretation can also give teachers a better sense of how the student connects the concepts and ideas learned in class to other areas of their life; a glimpse of them as people.

As a freshman Hairdressing, Barbering and Cosmetology instructor, a vital part of our ninth grade curriculum is orienting the new students to the numerous career opportunities available within the industry. It is a message I like to reiterate often throughout the year. This is an ideal unit to implement the new leaning I have garnered about writing strategies into my lesson planning.

I discussed with my mentor the Industry Interview strategy that I would like to plan in conjunction with this unit, and what I wanted the students to learn. After reviewing the ninth grade curriculum goals with the interview strategy in mind, I asked myself *"What do I want my students to know and be able to do at the end of this assignment?"* I developed the following student learning goals:

- 1) Students will be able to describe and explain a specific career opportunity within the beauty industry.
- 2) Students will be able to describe, in writing, characteristics of a successful person in the beauty industry.
- 3) Students will be able to generate three additional questions to ask the professional being interviewed.
- 4) Students will be able to summarize their interview findings in a three paragraph essay with an introduction, body and conclusion.

These goals reflect the curriculum guidelines, as well as my personal aspirations for the students. The next step was to develop the assignment details. I began by creating a list of seven questions I want the students to ask the professional including, *"How did you get started in this career?" "What qualities does your employer look for in an employee?" "What are the challenges of your job?"* and *"What is your daily schedule like?"* My plan included opportunities for students to develop and include additional questions as part of the interview. Using these questions as a guide, I developed specific goals for the written three paragraph essay.

I determined the introduction should include the date and place of the interview, full name of the company and person interviewed, and the position of the person interviewed. The body of the essay should include how the person got started in this career, qualities of a successful person in this career, pros and cons of the job, facts/details to support and quotes taken from the interview. Finally, the conclusion should reflect the students' overall reaction to what they learned from the interview, including what they learned about the specific job, and why or why not it is a job they would consider pursuing. I compiled all the "Industry Interview" expectations and goals into a clearly outlined assignment sheet for the students' reference. The next step was to develop a scoring guide for the assignment, as learned from my colleagues, to determine if the student reached the established goals. I broke down my expectations into four categories with a 1-4 point value range: 1 = Weak 2 = Developing 3 = Moderately Strong 4 = Strong

1. Preparation- The student has prepared and asked relevant questions that extend the student's understanding about the specific beauty profession.
2. Writing-
 - a. The introduction describes the interview including the date and time of the interview, where the interview took place and the person interviewed and their position.
 - b. The body of the essay summarizes the interview and includes-
 - clear description of a specific career opportunity in the beauty industry, relevant details about how the person got started in this career, qualities of a successful person in this career, pros and cons of the job and facts/details and quotes taken from the interview provide support.
 - c. The conclusion reflects the student's overall reaction to the interview, including what they learned about the specific job, and why or why not it is a job they would consider pursuing.
 - d. The spelling, punctuation, and grammar on the writing assignment are accurate.
3. Organization- The writing assignment is organized and neatly typed or handwritten.
4. Presentation- The student stands up straight, looks relaxed and confident and establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.

I will begin the unit with a brainstorming session about careers in the beauty industry. Students will have 3 minutes to make as many associations as they can and list them. I will ask students to share their lists with a partner and then report out one idea. I will create a list of careers on the whiteboard. The resulting conversations about different beauty careers will help students begin to make connections to the unit and the writing assignment goals, and "set the table" for further investigation into the subject.

The detailed "Industry Interview" assignment sheet and a copy of the scoring guide will be distributed to each student. I will clearly explain the goals and expectations, and solicit questions. A timeline will be outlined on the whiteboard indicating due dates for providing the name of the professional they have chosen to interview, three additional questions to ask the person, the essay and the oral presentation. I will model a successful oral interview and have students conduct mock interviews in pairs, to provide scaffolding and support.

I anticipate many positive outcomes for students as a result of incorporating this writing assignment into my lesson. Conducting an interview with a professional in the industry will help the student see the relevance of classroom learning and the real world challenges and rewards of the beauty business. It will also give students the opportunity to interact with industry professionals, and possibly establish useful contacts or even future employment. By writing about their experience, students will be thinking critically and creatively, actively involving themselves in the lesson, and reflecting on what they think about, know, and have learned. Instruction will be differentiated by giving the students choices about who they interview, flexibility to work at their own pace and level within a given timeframe, while engaging in subject matter that is of personal interest. When students present their findings orally, they will be sharpening critical public speaking skills and interacting with an audience of their peers. I would like to encourage each student to invite an academic teacher to their presentation to further develop the relationship between academic and trade teaching and learning. The ability to discuss the ideas, concepts and information in their own terms will indicate that the student has made the learning personal. Ultimately, my goal of promoting stronger interdisciplinary connections by employing writing strategies from my own new learning into my lesson plans will be accomplished.

As I reflect on my exploration of writing strategies to enhance my lesson planning, I realize how much stronger the curriculum link can be when academic and trade instructors collaborate to create lessons that complement one another. I have also come to further appreciate the importance of ongoing professional development for the teacher. Through discussions with my mentor, colleagues and many readings, I learned that there are numerous opportunities to augment my lesson planning with writing assignments, and that their implementation does not need to be an overwhelming task. I have also learned about the many student learning benefits that the inclusion of writing offers, and realize the potential this has to improve and enhance my lesson planning. I look forward to putting my learning to work, and have set a goal for myself to incorporate a writing strategy in each new lesson I plan. I know my lesson plans will only continue to evolve as I utilize my new knowledge.