



# Profile Approach to Writing

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### Content

- writing evaluation
- traits of quality writing
- responding to student writing
- use of the Composition Profile

The Profile Approach to Writing program (PAW) provides a system for accurately assessing student writing and for giving meaningful feedback. The goals are: to increase objectivity and reliability of readers/evaluators of student writing; to reduce grading/evaluation time; to promote growth in writing through the identification of writing strengths and weaknesses, using positive, constructive teacher feedback, peer evaluation, and student self-monitoring; and to measure student writing performance. The National Diffusion Network recognized PAW from 1986-1995 for inclusion in *Educational Programs That Work*.

Profile Approach to Writing was developed from 1976-86 by four university composition instructors. It treats evaluation of writing as an integral part of the writing process and acknowledges that, when students have more opportunities to write and receive meaningful, systematic feedback, their writing performance improves. The core element of the program is the Composition Profile, a holistic/analytic evaluation instrument that contains five components of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The Profile can be used by teachers in all disciplines and allows schools to have consistent standards to assess student writing performance.

## PROGRAM CONTEXT

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- diverse student populations including large populations of minority and low-income students
- diverse school settings including rural, urban, and suburban schools

The PAW program has been widely implemented. Participating schools include seven districts in Texas; three districts in Oklahoma; one district in Missouri; and St. Joseph's Indian School in South Dakota. Other participants are schools in California, Louisiana, Kentucky, Wyoming, Arkansas, and Connecticut. Demographics in each district vary extensively in terms of minority populations, socio-economic levels of students, and college attendance levels. Regional areas also differ. The exception is that St. Joseph's Indian School has a student population that is 100 percent Native American who all receive free- or reduced-lunches.



## STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Staff development includes training, modeling, and ongoing support. Emphasis is placed on assessing student writing accurately and reliably and on providing meaningful feedback to students. Training and follow-up support are provided by the program developers or certified trainers. The training is supplemented with curriculum materials and a training manual for teachers.

Training is offered in units varying from 6-30 hours. Workshops are tailored to meet the specific needs of the audience, and are aligned with the objectives of the site and teachers' prior knowledge about writing evaluation. The scope of the training ranges from raising teachers' awareness of the writing process to learning how effective feedback and evaluation assist in writing development to create successful, independent writers.

Topics of the staff development include: (1) audience/purpose and developing and organizing content; (2) effective feedback, grading, testing and diagnosis; (3) growth effects from positive feedback; (4) in-depth revision techniques and activities that correlate with teacher feedback; (5) methods that encourage students to analyze and strengthen their own writing; (6) topic development through analysis of writing techniques; and (7) ways to use large and small groups and individualized conferencing in the classroom.

Each training is approximately 15 percent theory and 85 percent hands-on activities. Teachers develop materials and activities that can be incorporated into their existing curriculum. All PAW trainers are certified and have undergone extensive training and use of the PAW materials in their own classrooms.

### *Process*

- training
- modeling
- hands-on practice
- developing instructional materials

### *Intended Audience*

- entire school
- entire department or team
- individual volunteer teachers

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Profile Approach to Writing has improved student writing performance on a number of measures of writing. PAW assists both students and teachers in learning to develop their own writing skills. In addition to improving their writing performance, PAW has positively influenced students' attitudes about writing and their creative thinking.



## EVIDENCE OF INCREASED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



### *Success Indicators*

- writing samples
- the Profile Approach to Writing
- state writing assessments
- Torrance Test of Creativity
- Daly-Miller Apprehension Test



Researchers used a number of assessments and a quasi-experimental research design to compare students' writing performance before and after PAW intervention and to compare PAW students' improvement with the performance of other students on statewide measures. Statewide assessments of writing included the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) (4 point scoring rubric), the Oklahoma Stanford Writing Test (12 point scoring rubric), and The Profile Approach to Writing (100 point scoring rubric) to assess student-writing performance in multiple states, districts, and schools. Each student writing sample was read by a minimum of two readers, and scoring discrepancies were resolved by a third reader. Inter-rater reliability for all assessments exceeded .85.

Statistical analysis included ANOVA and paired and independent t-tests. Students participating in the PAW program had statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ) gains in the short term after one year and in the long term. Effect sizes for various middle school populations ranged from 1.15 (large effect size) to 2.34 (large effect size).

Additional assessments indicate improvement in students' verbal creativity (Torrance Test of Verbal Creativity) as well as in writing performance and maintenance of a positive attitude about writing (Daly-Miller Apprehension Test and Student Questionnaire). In schools using the Profile Approach to Writing, student performance in writing and attitude about writing increased significantly ( $p < .01$ ) over diverse populations and school and district settings when compared to performance of similar student groups. The results were consistent from grades 3-11 and sustained over a three-year period.

### THE BOTTOM LINE



The Profile Approach to Writing provides teachers with the tools and skills to respond constructively to student writing and to reduce the time spent grading student writing. At the same time it increases students' opportunities to write and their performance in writing.

## SAMPLE SITES



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## DOCUMENTATION

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