

MOST EFFECTIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING QUALITY OF STUDENT WRITING

Excerpts from "Synthesis of Research on Teaching Writing," George Hillocks (from readings)

"The available research cannot indicate the optimal curriculum for writing....However, it does indicate **what approaches to teaching writing ought to be stressed...while declarative knowledge is useful, the curriculum needs to stress procedural knowledge.**" That is, "general procedures of the composing process and specific strategies for the production of discourse and transformation of data for use in writing."

Approaches that contribute to procedural knowledge

Inquiry topics Uses "sets of data in a structured fashion to help students learn strategies for using the data in their writing." Presents "students with data, designates a task to be performed using the data and provides guidance in performing that task."

"...three and a half times more effective than free writing, and over two-and-a-half times more effective than the traditional study of model pieces of writing."

**Scales
/Checklists** Present "students with sets of criteria for judging and revising compositions."

"...the teacher leads students in evaluation of compositions until students understand the discrimination illustrated by the scales. "

"...appears to help students develop better control over and understanding of discourse knowledge. "

more effective than the traditional approach of presenting models for study and imitation.

**Sentence
Combining** "...direct instruction in producing more complex syntactic structures results not only in greater syntactic complexity, but in increased quality."

"...provide[s] students with control over an organized repertoire of syntactic structures, control that allows them to pick and choose among a variety of alternative structures at the verbatim level."

Proofreading Systematic approach to incorporating proofreading skills (grammar) into the writing process

Approaches that contribute to declarative knowledge

Models emphasizes "identifying, naming and perhaps evaluating parts or features of models...resulting knowledge is declarative..." (such as using model essays or teaching parts of speech and grammar in the classroom)

does "not teach procedures for producing a piece exhibiting characteristics studied."

Grammar The study of grammar does not contribute to growth in the quality of student writing.