

Here are my top ten types of writing:

1. Classroom notes from projector or discussions
2. Daily Warm-up activities
3. Worksheets, study guides and labs: fill in the blank, matching, multiple choice, short answer
4. Answers from questions in book
5. Collaborative and individual work copied onto a 2x2 sheet of whiteboard
6. PowerPoint and word documents – unit topics
7. Test corrections
8. Essays and short answers on tests/quizzes
9. Math problems
10. Concept maps and diagrams

This is one topic that I have always planned to improve in my classroom. I am fairly lenient on the criteria of my student writing. As long as I can read and understand what they are trying to talk about, I have been OK with that. Most often heard question? “Do we have to use complete sentences?” To which I respond, “Yes, please.” Due to the fact that I am a relatively new *science* teacher, teaching new *science* classes (for me), I am more focused on *science* than writing quality and procedures. This will change in time, once I am more comfortable with my environment. I will say that correcting assignments is much easier and quicker when the writing quality of the students is of higher quality. I will pull those students aside that have really poor skills and work with them on improving their quality. However, this is sometimes more for my benefit than theirs due to poor and unintelligible writing.

I do start out every class with examples of the types of writing that I expect from my students. We go over student examples on the projector, and I quiz the students on what is wrong. This works for the most part. I have such a wide range of student ability that it would be better to selectively address problems with individual students than with the whole class.

I would like to initiate steps to improve the writing in my own classroom eventually. The writing examples work very well in the beginning of classes. I need to stay on top of the students throughout the entire semester to make the practice work. Peer review is an excellent strategy for improving writing quality. This does give rise to ego and embarrassment problems, however.

According to the guidelines in our reading (Troia and Graham, 2003) these are some of the things that I could introduce to help with writing skills in my science classroom.

- I do display student work in my class, but it is usually drawings and diagrams, not writing. This would be an excellent place to start literacy training as well.
- Predictable writing routine such as Think, Reflect and Revise
- Instill an overall can-do, positive attitude throughout the class (mine as well)
- Increased conferences with myself and peers to hone skills, gauge progress, and build confidence
- Be consistent in my expectations throughout the semester

There are many things that I could do to foster proper writing techniques in my class. It would take some effort, but once the time was put into the task, I believe it would make my own teaching experience more enjoyable.