

STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY, 2017

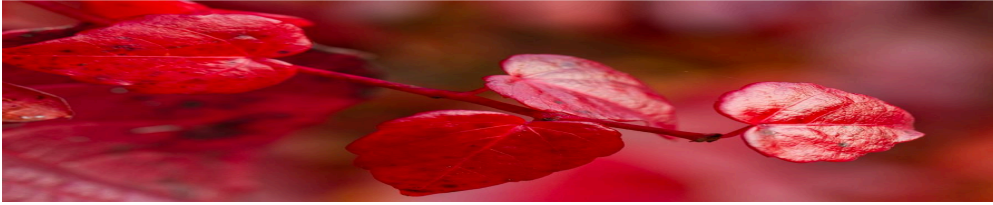


Image from National Geographic

The only thing harder than managing a bunch of students is to do it on a bus. —Todd Whitaker

GIVE ME A REASON TO WRITE

Are we asking students to write enough across all grade levels and content areas? In the world of texting, snap chatting and twitter have we seen kids overall write less? I think about when I was a kid, I spent a lot of time in study hall or at home crafting love letters to girls (which had nothing to do with curriculum), but probably did help me in my writing skills. Kelly Gallagher states, “Writing is not simply a vehicle that allows students to express what they know; writing is a tool that generates new thinking.” In a recent study done by Education Trust (2015) researchers examined middle schools across the United States to find out the following question- Do classroom assignments reflect today’s higher standards? The answer according to the research shows that only 38% of assignments were aligned to grade appropriate standards and about 85% of assignments asked for either recall information or applying basic skills and concepts. This lack of rigor is especially alarming in school’s writing expectations. With the state no longer having a formal writing test it will be important that we continue to have district level writing assessments and students writing across the curriculum.

Gallagher in *The Writing Journey*, describes 5 reasons why writing is so important. Reason 1- When students write, they generate deeper thinking in any content area. Writing does help to generate new thinking and goes beyond just asking student to demonstrate what they already know. When we ask kids to write we can help them reach deeper levels of understanding. Reason 2- Writing helps students become career ready. Writing can be a gatekeeper of the high skill, high wage professions. As our world continues to evolve in the professional world, the ability to write can open the door to many professions. Reason 3- Writing helps students become college ready. Conley states, “If we could institute only one change to make students more college ready, it should be to increase the amount and the quality of writing students are expected to produce.” When you ask students what the biggest challenges in AP Courses are they state, “The amount of reading and writing that is expected of you is the biggest change.” Reason 4- Writing across the curriculum is now assessed on many state tests. This can be seen within our state tests with the new Text Dependent Analysis questions. I personally will miss the state writing tests, but know that the new ELA tests in grades 5-8 will ask students to write. The question will be will this continue to evolve into other subject areas like math and science? Reason 5- We want our students to be lifelong writers. We all want our students to be able to write thoughtful blogs, be productive writers with their careers and be responsible citizens as they communicate through their writing.

This writing journey is not a one-week focus or even a quick fix you can do as a teacher. As a district, we must be committed to the long haul (years) with our writing journey. We can all start with simply thinking about our assignments and how much writing we are asking students to do in all subject areas. Have a great week!

The school district of Seward, in cooperation with parents and community, affirms that all students will have the skills to become productive and contributing members of a global community. The district is committed to the development of each student academically, emotionally, socially and physically.

