

Building Students' Evaluative And Productive Expertise in the Writing Classroom

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If students are to move from being recipients of feedback to intelligent self-monitoring, they need to take responsibility for their learning. Instructional programmes should provide students with authentic opportunities to monitor and improve the quality of work during production. Three elementary teachers were observed during the teaching of a genre based writing unit. Observation revealed qualitative differences in the opportunities created for students to gain understanding of expectations, engage in evaluative and productive activities, and make decisions about their writing. These three cases show that developing students' evaluative knowledge and productive skills in writing involves adoption of Assessment for Learning (AfL) as a unitary notion and a radical transformation of the traditional taken-for-granted roles and responsibilities of teachers and students.

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- AFL is part of everyday practice by teachers, students

and peers that seeks, interprets and responds to information from dialogue, demonstration and observation in ways that enhance learning. The aim is for students to become autonomous, self-regulating learners.

- It is no longer sufficient or fitting for teachers to be the primary or sole source of feedback. This runs the danger of developing and maintaining dependence on others for information about progress and achievement. Instead, teachers and students should collaborate to construct achievement and effect improvement.
- Development of students' evaluative and productive expertise is contingent on three conditions: students need to understand the goals of learning and what constitutes quality work, compare current performance to what is expected, and have a repertoire of strategies to modify performance as necessary.

Developing students' evaluative and productive expertise in writing

- The most effective way for learners to grasp the nature of a complex activity such as writing is through direct experience creating, evaluating, and revising work.
- Students are deliberately inducted into the art of making substantive and comprehensive appraisals of their own and peers' work during production to make improvements and promote further learning.
- Central is the development of shared understandings between teachers and students and among students about the goals of writing and what constitutes quality when writing a particular kind of text.
- Teachers are encouraged to share or create learning goals with students in the form of learning intentions and use success criteria, rubrics, models or exemplars to communicate what counts as achieving these goals.
- Quality in writing is reflected in and determined through all-things-considered holistic judgements where

the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

- Constructing text requires the writer to revisit and revise at a whole-text level and address the more mechanical aspects of their work.
- The first process involves scoping the work to get a feel for its overall quality; the second pays attention to particular attributes or properties of the work.
- As they engage in evaluative activities, students learn to make holistic, multi-criterion judgements, justifying these concerning salient properties that may (or may not) be included in the manifest criteria.
- Quality feedback provides information about progress and learning in relation to goals and expectations; encourages dialogue between the teacher and student and between students about the substantive aspects of learning; helps students develop a repertoire of alternative moves or strategies; promotes positive motivational beliefs; and enhances self-esteem.
- Teachers must establish an environment where students can freely exchange views about texts and mutually construct meaning thoughtfully and reflectively.
- Common types of writing lessons such as conferences and writing circles allow student-writers to interact with and craft meaning for readers and receive audience feedback.
- Peer feedback is a socially situated dialogic process where students work together, in pairs or small groups, to construct achievement and encourage improvement.
- Engaging in peer feedback can lead to and is the precursor of “intelligent self-monitoring,” a state whereby students generate information, during learning, about the quality of their performance.



The study

This meta-analysis draws on but dramatically extends the two previous meta-analyses of single-subject strategy instruction research in writing. The primary research question of this research was conducted in two sequential phases, with participants in phase two selected purposively from all who participated in phase one. The aim of phase one was to investigate teachers' beliefs and knowledge about feedback and to investigate their perceptions of practice. Phase two focused on the roles of the teacher and learners in the feedback process and the nature of opportunities provided for students to develop evaluative and productive knowledge and expertise.

Method

Studies were included if they involved grades 1–12 students and provided data to calculate the effect size. Overall, 119 documents were found, from which 88 were suitable. Studies were cIn phase one, 20 teachers participated in a semi-structured interview which tapped into teachers' conceptions about the nature and role of feedback in the enhancement of learning; beliefs about their role and that of learners in the feedback process; and the strategies and practices teachers utilised and ascribed importance to within the feedback process. In phase two, the case studied was teachers' use of feedback during writing, bounded in time and space. The three teachers who participated in the second phase were Kate, Marama and Audrey (pseudonyms).

The case of Audrey

- Audrey teaches the fifth grade.

- She used three types of productive activity – planning for writing, developing a plan into a first draft and producing a “finished” version ready for public viewing.
- She hoped students would develop understanding and skill in the structure and organisation of ideas and spend significant time refining and re-crafting their writing.
- Her focus was on a single, product-oriented goal, “I am learning to write a narrative for a young child.”
- The learning intention and success criteria had the potential to restrict opportunities for students to develop the required evaluative knowledge and expertise necessary to make judgements about their productive attempts.
- However, despite the required elements in the narrative, Audrey invariably judged students’ work as needing further attention to reach the required standard, which only she knew.
- Failure to share these tacitly held expectations with students resulted in misalignment between the evaluative judgements made by students and those made by Audrey.
- Feedback was often framed as a directive to be carried out.
- There was little evidence of student voice or dialogue between Audrey and individual students.

The case of Kate

- Kate teaches the seventh grade.
- Her students had the task of producing a single frame cartoon followed by a short comic strip.
- The class brainstormed features of cartoons and comics and how authors got their message across to readers.
- Kate recorded the ideas on the class whiteboard, and in addition, she distributed a more formal assessment rubric.
- Through this rubric and the ideas on the whiteboard, the students were exposed to the complexities when making

evaluative judgements and effective decisions about their work.

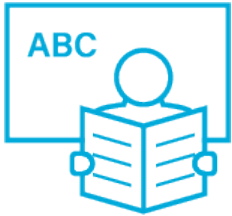
- Constructed using a series of descriptors, the rubric specified achievement at four levels of attainment: skilled, competent, developing strength and having difficulty.
- Kate provided students with both formal and informal opportunities to see and discuss others' work at various stages of production.
- At the end of the unit, students were asked to make multi-criterion judgements about their works and the works of others through the completion of a formal evaluation.
- At the start of the lesson, possible differences between one level of attainment and another were brought to students' attention, as was the need to work holistically.
- The class was brought together to discuss notions of quality contained within the criteria that were easily identifiable, those that were more difficult to ascertain, and those apparent in the cartoons but not overtly captured in the rubric.
- Students were asked in pairs to make a formal appraisal of peers' work and compare these judgements against the self-assessments. Students were observed debating and discussing decisions made about the quality of work produced, providing justifications for their conclusions.

The case of Marama

- Marama teaches the eighth grade.
- She aims to help students negotiate the writing process and improve their writing.
- Throughout teaching the poetic writing unit, she drew attention to the poetic form and processes involved in producing a poem.

- At the start of the unit, the goal was “to effectively prepare for poetry writing,” whereas when a majority of the class had completed drafts of their poems, two new goals were introduced – “to edit and rework” and “to critique my own writing.”
- Students were asked to work in small groups and make judgements about a poem written by a student of similar age from another class, regarding the “use of similes, alliteration; rhyme; repetition; metaphor,” and then they shared their judgements with the class. Following this activity, students similarly critiqued their own work-in-progress, highlighting evidence of the five devices and making annotations about their use.
- Rather than directing students to make changes to their work, Marama posed questions and drew attention to salient features of their work.
- She aimed to build an atmosphere where the kids value what others have to contribute and where constructive criticism and its benefits were brought to students’ attention.
- Students were encouraged to reveal to their peers what they were finding difficult, what sort of trouble they were experiencing with the intent of getting help to overcome the identified difficulties.





Conclusions

- AFL is comprised of a set of inter-dependent strategies that teachers employ during the regular flow of teaching and learning with the dual objectives of supporting and furthering student learning, and developing autonomous, self-regulating learners.
- These strategies entail the promotion of students' understanding about the goal(s) of learning and what constitutes expected performance, generation of feedback by students and their teachers about the relationship between current and desired performance, student engagement in peer feedback and self-monitoring, and the taking of an action by students to effect improvement.
- Students are no longer the objects of their teacher's behaviour; instead, they are animators of their own effective teaching and learning processes.
- Teachers must have the volition and ability to share their tacitly held guild knowledge with students, so they come to embrace a concept of quality generally comparable to the teacher.
- One of the most effective ways for students to become insiders in writing and develop identities as autonomous writers are through involvement in the creation, evaluation and revision of texts during production.
- Critical to developing students' evaluative and productive expertise is an understanding of learning goals and what constitutes quality in a piece of writing. How learning goals/intentions, success criteria, and rubrics are framed influence students' understanding of writing and the writing process and direct their behaviour.

- Teachers need to share their tacit knowledge about quality writing at all stages of the writing process so students can become attuned to the latent-to-manifest translation process. The limitations are using a fixed set of criteria.
- Students develop their evaluative and productive knowledge and expertise as they participate in accurate appraisals of their own work and the work of their peers. Understanding what constitutes quality in texts is acquired through first-hand experience in evaluating such results.
- Both Kate and Marama viewed students as insiders and as autonomous writers. Their students participated in teaching and learning processes and decision-making by adopting pedagogical practices that furthered their learning and that of their peers.
- Students are cast as partners in the learning process instead of passive automatons who respond to their teacher's directives.
- Formal and informal opportunities for peer assessment, peer response and self-monitoring must be deliberately embedded into writing lessons.