Module 4 Reading, Writing, and Response Assignment: Synthesis of Journal Articles

The reading and writing assignments will be integrated for this module. Instead of a separate writing assignment, your Original Thread for the Reading Response will double as your writing assignment; thus, it will be posted on the Reading Response Discussion Board instead of on your Writing Response Group Discussion for response. (You also will not create screencasts or post writing responses for this module.)

How do you know it works?

If you've been teaching for a few years, you've probably experienced a shift in curriculum or teaching practice that came from above--a principal, curriculum director, superintendent or state department of education. Many times, little rationale is given for the change; someone decided, and you were bound to comply. Does anyone know how well it works and why, for which students, in which grade levels? Certainly, many forces come together to produce these shifts, but the confusion that frequently follows disrupts ongoing practices and can be destructive in many ways. Few classroom teachers have time to investigate the effectiveness of the new practice before implementing their new plans, but they plow forward, anyway. With obscure purpose and goals that are more about improving test scores than developing writers, whatever effectiveness the practice might achieve may be reduced, and the development of students’ writing abilities haphazardly taught.

The purpose of this assignment is for you to practice the process of investigating, for yourself, a recommended change in practice. You now understand some aspects of how workshop instruction responds to student writers’ current needs, and you must consider how to plan for those needs. As you’ve done in this class, so far, you need to constantly refer to professional books about teaching writing to find help. And, while Pinterest presents great ideas, great ideas aren’t well-planned lessons. Great ideas don’t take into account how some practices work with your students and other practices don’t.

Why is reading scholarly articles important?

You must develop the sense of when to turn to resources that go beyond the great idea to explain the why, when, how and who. The texts you’ve read for this class are comprehensive, explaining writing workshop practices, but hundreds of professional books deal with specific aspects of workshop and writing techniques. You need to become better acquainted with professional texts that focus on the complexities of specific practices. For that, I recommend that you become familiar with two companies that publishing extensively about teaching writing, Heinemann and Stenhouse. However, this course has passed its halfway point, and our time—much like your time when you’re teaching, won’t allow you to find and read a new book for every lesson you want to plan. That's what professional journals are for.
You now should return to what you’ve read, thought and learned from Ray’s or Kittle’s recommendations related to the practice you tried out in your Teaching Action, or a practice that you want to implement in response to the needs you found in your Student Work Analysis. Then, search the recommended scholarly sources for evidence that convincingly supports or refutes what our text authors have said. Then report to the class what you find. Without a doubt, the ability to back up what you recommend with evidence is the key to effecting changes in practice—your own and that of others. The ability to synthesize information from several sources and present it to an audience who might have power over your teaching decisions is of value!

Use the library link for this course to locate recommended professional journals that you can search for at least two articles that address the content of the “next-step” lesson you identified in your student work samples or that is related to the practice you implemented in your Teaching Action. The articles you select will be your reading assignment for this week. Feel free to contact me to consult about options, if necessary. Also, library assistance is always available at http://library.eku.edu/ask-us. Attached are the assignment and an explanation of a suggested strategy for composing your synthesis. The strategy covers how to read the sources—two articles which should be considered in the context of what you’ve read from Ray or Kittle—and how to integrate them into a coherent explanation that your readers will learn from. Read through it to see if it might help you work through the process efficiently. In addition, a short synthesis of research article example, Bryan Goodwin’s “Teach Critical Thinking to Teach Writing,” is also attached for you to use as a mentor.

Assignment: Synthesis of Journal Articles (and Original Thread)

How do you know that Ray and Kittle are recommending teaching practices that are effective? Should you take them at their word? Have you seen well-respected, effective teachers using them? Other experts recommending them? Research supporting them?

The synthesis differs from what you’ve done for your previous Original Threads in that you will compose to fuse a broader scope of reading so that you can inform the class about the practice you’ve explored. Your synthesis will include much more than the few essential ideas that the Original Thread required. As before, however, read with consideration of the practicality and applicability of the instructional practice and rationales described in each article. Consider, as well, how well the author makes his or her case for the practices. Create your Synthesis of Journal Articles for Module 4’s Reading Response Discussion Board by briefly summarizing the central ideas presented in your articles and analyzing the central ideas recommended to evaluate them in comparison or contrast to writing instruction that you have experienced as a writer or planned/taught as a teacher as well as in comparison to recommendations from Ray or Kittle. After your summary of the articles, select the most important issues resulting from your analyses and explain why they are significant and how these issues will affect your planning and implementation of the practice for the next-step lesson. Use thorough and relevant evidence to support your comparison or contrast. Carefully cite sources and provide a link or attach the article so that other students can access the
Focus Elements

- Focus your search to determine the practice’s effectiveness [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7]
  - synthesize evidence
  - read 2 authoritative sources to synthesize with previous readings
- Gather relevant information from print and digital sources, [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8]
  - assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of your assignment and purpose
  - integrate source information into your synthesis selectively to maintain an integration of ideas
  - avoid plagiarism and overreliance on any one source
  - follow MLA or APA format for citation.
- Produce clear and coherent writing [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4]
  - Develop your synthesis objectively
  - Organize information to integrate information from sources based on the most important issues
  - Use a professional, objective style

Study the Reading Response rubric for specific Common Core State Standards (CCSS) required in your post.