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Crafting words and voice: A way to develop writing within in-service and pre-service teachers and their students

The growing demands on teachers to increase the level of performance of students on standardized tests forces them to reduce their level of teaching, and primarily teach for the purpose of the test. As a result, the attention of writing as a craft is jeopardized and the exploration and joy of writing is substituted by a set of generic templates of what an essay should resemble. This presentation will focus on the experiences of a literacy educator working with a group of in-service and pre-service teachers who are taking an elective writing course at CUNY-Lehman College. Through free-writing, peer editing, the usage of music and the process of multiple drafts the students were able to experiment with different styles of writing which ultimately promoted their writing skills. The focus of the course was on the writing processes, allowing students to become aware of their own writing strengths and challenges and in the process develop awareness to improve the writing of their students. The premises of the course centered on the free- 'writing-to-learn' approach where it was centered on the learning process of the students, thus it created an almost "teacherless" classroom whereby the students take the ownership of their own writing craft and their constant growth is stemming from their colleagues' editorial suggestions. The creation of safe environment in the classroom and the increase of their involvement in the writing process created a growth in their own writing and a meaningful connection between their own writing development and their students'