The Writings on the Wall

Statistics don’t lie! Across the nation, as well as in Hawaii Public Schools, there is an enormous need to improve the writing abilities of all learners, in particular those at the high school level.

Castle High Gets On Board

The University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, College of Education - Center on Disability Studies was awarded a federal grant to develop and implement a tiered approach to improve the writing performance of all incoming freshman. The goal of the project is to increase the writing achievement of these 9th graders by transforming the way in which writing is taught. Castle High is the first, of two schools, selected to be a part of this multi-year writing project.

What’s in it for 9th graders

Starting in fall 2010, 9th grade Language Arts teachers and other content-area teachers, will be “equipped” with the newest and most powerful teaching strategies that have proven to increase the writing skills of adolescent learners. These teachers will attend a special summer training on how to implement the new strategies. Project staff will be working closely with teachers, for the next three years, to make certain that the strategies are implemented as directed.

How technology will enhance learning

Technology will play a major role in this project. For instance, students will have daily access to laptop computers, purchased through grant funds. They will write and submit their pieces for electronic scoring, which will give them both immediate and targeted feedback on every writing assignment submitted. In addition, students will keep track of their progress and be given explicit information related to several ways in which to continually improve their writing.

Writing well is not just an option for young people—it is a necessity.
—Writing Next (A Report to Carnegie Corp. of America)
Students who encounter difficulties, along the way, will be given additional small group and/or individual support to resolve their writing difficulties immediately (see graphic).

Monthly updates, on how your child’s writing skills are improving will be made available to you. In addition, project staff will distribute quarterly updates about the writing project in general.

What We’ll Need From You

Because we will be observing and possibly interviewing you and/or your child about this writing project, we will need signed consent forms, from both you and your child, for involvement in the project. The consent forms will be made available when your child receives the Language Arts class syllabus.

Regardless of whether your child participates in this project or not, his/her teacher will be implementing several new writing strategies. Your child’s participation is voluntary and his/her grades and status in school will not be affected in any way.

For More Information

If you have questions and/or comments, contact:
Dr. Jeanne Bauwens, Project Coordinator
358-1157 (cell) or 956-3164 (UH Office)

If students are to make knowledge their own, they must struggle with the details, wrestle with the facts, and rework raw information and dimly understood concepts into language they can communicate to someone else. In short, if student are to learn, they must write.

—National Commission on Writing