HOW TO CREATE AUTHENTIC WRITING IN THE CLASSROOM:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AMERICAN AND SWEDISH PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

The basis of my query into authentic writing stems from my personal experiences as a writer; however, my findings focus on my personal experiences as a teacher of writing. I have been fortunate enough in my undergraduate pre-service teaching, to experience American classroom culture as well as the environment in Swedish classrooms. This good fortune has led me to record and compile my experiences as a teacher of writing in both countries to consider cultural differences and also to discover universal commonalities in the classroom. My aim is to uncover teaching strategies that will improve student writing in every sense: the desire to write, the enjoyment of writing, the act of revision, and the final product. Using the theories of authors Penny Kittle and Jim Burke, I encourage individual expression, freedom of structure and exercise care and attention towards my students in order to achieve success in each of these four categories in my classrooms in America and Sweden.
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The Complexities of Writing in the Classroom: An Overview

As a future educator, specifically of English, I have become aware of the immense demands placed on English teachers in America. Unlike other subjects, English teachers are responsible for far more than just understanding and remembering the material. We have to teach our subject matter (literature) as well as communication skills (speaking and writing). We are responsible for making sure that students learn these skills well in the classroom and then are capable of applying them in various situations. It seems that much of the pressure of student success or failure in the real world is placed on the English teacher’s shoulders. As a result of this, I feel that it is important for upcoming English teachers to rise to the challenge. We need to impress upon students that English class is not about just being able to read a book (or the ability to read spark notes). We need to show the students how to apply skills learned in the classroom to real life situations. What we should do is easy to identify – how to accomplish a task of this magnitude is much more complex.

While I value all aspects of communication and recognize the need to teach this, I have chosen to focus on writing as a means of communication. I feel that this is the skill in which students are the least prepared and yet is one of the most important skills to succeed in life. As Jim Burke states in his text The English Teacher’s Companion, “You can’t write and not think. There are no cliff notes for writing” (Burke, 152). I have found so much truth in that short statement. There is no short cut to writing well – no secret formula. The five-paragraph essay is a poor substitute for this “secret formula” students seem to think exists. When I was a high school student myself, I was confident that I could write anything well if I could fit it into a solid five paragraph essay. Clearly I was dead wrong. My first semester in college illuminated that for me very quickly. I received the first C of my life. Why? Because my writing was boring and
formulaic, just a recitation of facts squeezed into five paragraphs. No analysis, no novel ideas, just a list of facts properly cited in MLA format.

So why was I convinced that the five paragraph essay was my ticket to graduating magna cum laude? Because there is an absurd amount of pressure on teachers in this country to test students quickly and efficiently. Although No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was implemented with good intentions, the repercussions for teachers have been disastrous. NCLB promotes testing to ensure that all students are receiving an adequate education. Sadly, “the tests are created in such a way as to be cheap and easy to administer” (Wilhelm, 15). Jeffrey Wilhelm further states that “they mostly test information; they don’t test deep understanding, they don’t test procedures- in other words they don’t correspond to what writers know and do. If you get a dumbed down test, you’ll get a dumbed down curriculum, and kids are not going to learn what real people do” (Wilhelm, 15). Gretchen Bernabei expands on this by commenting that, “School essays are boring to write and boring to read. Essays in the real world are completely different” (Bernabei, 73).

I think it is important to grasp what Penny Kittle states in her book _Write Beside Them_, “Teachers make the difference, not tests. What power – what opportunity – lies in our hands. Because I know this, standardized tests will not rule my world” (Kittle, 3). Reading this brought about a fantastic revelation for me. Standardized tests do not have to rule my classroom. Yes, they will be a part of it as long as students are required to take these tests and pass them but they do not have to rule my teaching. I can teach students how to write an effective five-paragraph essay but I refuse to teach only this. What good does a five-paragraph essay do for anyone in the workplace anyway?
To be fair, this formulaic essay was implemented with good intentions. According to Carl Nagin and the National Writing Project in *Because Writing Matters*, it dates back to a 1975 *Newsweek* article entitled “Why Johnny Can’t Write”. Nagin states that, “this article proclaimed that America had a writing crisis, only this time the onus was placed on public schools for neglecting ‘the basics’” (Nagin, 1-2). He goes on to explain that this was not a new concept for American schools but that “educators and policymakers were defining our literacy needs, which in turn changed expectations for writing curricula in terms of their scope and context” (Nagin, 2). As a result, it is understandable that there would be a demand for assessment to ensure students were learning to write. The problem is that writing, “is one of our primary means of reflection on what we think and what we know… we use it to assess and explore” among other things (Burke, 152). I interpret this to mean that writing is fluid not concrete. Writing cannot be plugged into an equation to be solved and graded for accuracy; “single test assessment cannot show the range of a student’s work or his or her development as a writer” (Nagin, 15). In fact these assessments can undercut good writing by placing too much focus on organization and mechanics without pausing to consider if the writing is powerful, memorable, provocative, or moving (Nagin, 15).

Thomas Newkirk believes this is due to the pervasive “image of ‘normal schooling’ that is implanted in the minds of administrators, parents and the general public” (Newkirk, 4). Essentially, these people expect their children to be taught in the same manner that they were – rote memorization, repetition, and the occasional ruler slap. They find it unnerving when they see their children *enjoying* a lesson or showing innovation or creativity in their schoolwork.

Certainly, “these deeply conservative trends in public schooling can work against thoughtful writing instruction” (Newkirk, 5) because children are being encouraged to write with the same constraints of the 18th century without educators taking into account that we are now in the 21st
century. Newkirk even goes so far as to say that “if a physician from 1900 visited a modern-day hospital, he would be stunned by the changes; but if an English teacher from 1900 visited a school today, he or she would feel strangely at home. The very nature of modernization in our country demands that we change the way we teach but strangely, it is this same society that insists we stay the same” (Newkirk, 7).
Effective Writing in the Classroom: Tips and Tricks

Partially as a response to NCLB, “within the last ten years we have seen a push toward uniformity and product-centered standards” (Kittle, 3) and it is only now that teachers are beginning to push back. Emphasis on product is beginning to take a backseat to an emphasis on process; as Nagin puts it, “Teaching writing well involves multiple teaching strategies that address both process and product, form and content” (Nagin 16). Unfortunately teachers like the authors cited here who support this line of thinking are battling against a deep-rooted “nineteenth century model of language development [in which] emphasis on mechanical errors overshadowed the deep rhetorical, social, and cognitive possibilities of writing for communication and critical thinking” (Nagin, 20).

Writing as a Process

Kathleen Graves explains in Teachers as Course Developers what she means by writing process, “meaning and content are of primary importance for the writer. In a process approach, the process is not linear at all; it is cyclical, and the writers move back and forth on a continuum, discovering, analyzing and synthesizing ideas” (Graves, 125). Writing as a process strikes fear in the hearts of many teachers because of the nature of the act. The writing process is all about uncertainty and discovery; the exact opposite of a “typical” classroom where teachers are meant to have all the answers. Nagin states, “Many professional writers acknowledge that writing is never mastered once and for all; it is a lifelong, communicative mode of learning whose craft and process must be adapted for distinct purposes and contexts”. As teachers, we need to pass this belief on to our students instead of imparting the idea that writing is one and done and there is a “correct” formula.
Research conducted by Donald Graves in the 1970’s supported this belief. Subsequent research found that writing can actually “develop higher order thinking. The very difficulty of writing is its virtue: it requires that students move beyond rote learning and simply reproducing information, facts, dates and formulae” (Nagin, 22). Sadly, Graves’ research was forced into the rigidly scheduled school day and educators were prompted “to fashion rigidly sequenced writing process curricula: a day of free-writing, another class on drafting, followed by a workshop on editing and so on-followed by a final draft” (Nagin, 36). In order for the process of writing to be successful, students must take ownership of their own individual processes. This means that all students will need to engage in some form of free writing, drafting, and editing but not shoved into a 45-minute class period when they are forced to think about it systematically.

Penny Kittle and Jim Burke agree that the most important component of writing in the classroom is just that, writing. They both advocate that writing should take place in the classroom constantly and in a variety of forms. In Kittle’s classroom, this means that students spend at least 10 to 15 minutes every single day, writing. They might be free writing, responding to a prompt, or reflecting on another piece of writing but they are always writing. Donald Graves supports this practice, “If kids don’t write more than three days a week, they’re dead… If you provide frequent occasions for writing, then the students start to think about writing when they’re not doing it” (Nagin, 22). Jim Burke also provides frequent opportunities for students to write in his classroom and advocates that all teachers additionally provide the “time necessary to work through the process of thinking and, ultimately, writing” (Burke, 153).

Allowing Students a Choice

In addition to all that Kittle and Burke believe, I also think that it is important for students to write about areas of interest to them. Kittle says that a major reason why students are reluctant
to participate fully in assignments is simple, “we aren’t tapping into their passions” (Kittle, 3). Sarah Hudelson, a professor of curriculum and instruction at Arizona State University agrees. She says that “students are likely to achieve the greatest growth as writers when students use language ‘to share what they know, to work through what they’re learning; to ask questions about what they want to know; and to seek answers to their questions’” (Nagin, 41). Essentially, students are not going to engage with material simply because we tell them it’s important and relevant – students will excel only when they are allowed to engage with material that they feel is important or relevant.

I feel it is the duty of teachers to encourage engagement by providing students with choices; a duty that is frequently under-practiced. This is not the case with Penny Kittle. She tries to provide as many choices to her students as possible. Kittle’s ultimate goal is “that students will understand enough about form and the possibilities of products to imagine shaping any idea into a product that will best express their thinking” (Kittle, 16). What Kittle is really getting at, is to provide her students with as much information and practice as possible so that they can make competent decisions for themselves. In my opinion, this is the best way to run a classroom because this is what all teachers should aim to do for their students. As English teachers we are charged with the responsibility to provide students with as much ammunition in their literary arsenal as possible so that we can set them up for success in their lives after school.

Ironically, the current educational system directly undermines student choice. Thomas Newkirk points to the college examination system as a symptom of the formulaic writing that is so prevalent in America. He states, “many of the examination prompts – as well as traditional writing topics – frequently required young writers to comment on moral issues, leading to a ‘falseness of tone’ as they attempted to philosophize on these issues” (Newkirk, 3). Similarly,
students are now forced to write for the SAT’s and state standardized assessments in response to prompts. It is simply unreasonable to expect students to be able to write anything of true value in response to a generic prompt within the constraint of 25-35 minutes; yet, despite all evidence to the contrary, we continue to remove student choice and require this type of writing as the ultimate measure of student achievement.

**Knowing Your Students**

An important antecedent of expecting students to write about topics of personal interest or share information from their personal lives, is to know students personally. By this, I mean that teachers must see their students as individuals and engage with them on an individual level. The entire idea of the standard five paragraph essay defeats this idea since it forces students to perform at the same level when in reality each student is a unique individual with varying strengths and weaknesses. Gretchen Bernabei illustrates this point wonderfully, “When it comes to essays, we just don’t ask for much. Even when students’ essays have sparkling introductions, include zippy, memorable language and make profound points – even when they are A+ papers – 150 of them sound remarkably similar” (Bernabei, 74). I feel that we need to ask more.

In order to treat each student as an individual, we must realize that students are much more than grades in a grade book. They are human beings with stories to tell and we are there to guide and support them in their telling. As Kittle puts it, “Nurturing a creative spirit and unleashing a vibrant mind is every teacher’s dream; we just get constrained by government mandates and decisions we can’t control. … but for all of those experts, I’m still the one who knows my students best”.

Who is the Real Expert?

By providing students with autonomy and choice in writing, we are choosing to treat our students as experts. This is not to say that they know every grammatical convention in the English language, but rather that they are the experts of their own stories. This seems to be a novel idea but one that I feel is essential to being an effective teacher of writing. If we expect students to write anything of value, we cannot then turn around and tell them they are “right” or “wrong”. By presenting writing as a process, students have opportunities to shape their ideas, receive feedback from multiple sources, and make informed decisions on revision. These are the true skills of a writer; not knowledge of MLA formatting or having a strong grasp on when to use the semi-colon as opposed to the hyphen.

I feel that there is a lot of truth and honesty in the way that Kittle and Burke teach which can be difficult to provide in a classroom setting. However, treating students with respect and honesty leads to trust and this is the essential component missing in so many English classrooms. How can we expect students to write deeply personal pieces if they do not trust us to respect their stories? How can we expect students to think critically about our revisions, if they don’t trust us as educators? Trust is absolutely essential in the classroom and I firmly believe this is a trait taken for granted by most teachers. We expect students to respect and trust us, but these are qualities to be earned, not expected. They are reciprocal in nature; therefore, we must respect and trust our students and their work before we can expect the same from them.

Kittle and Burke are ideal examples of writing teachers. They are able to offer students the opportunity to express themselves and their points of view coherently – a skill that is invaluable for success in life. Even more importantly, they provide students with the knowledge that their thoughts and feelings are important and valid. Each of these students has a unique story
and set of talents to share with the world and by supporting writing in all its forms as a major focus in the English classroom, teachers like Kittle and Burke allow these stories to be told. As Kittle says on the last page of her book, “We teach life writing” (Kittle, 236). This is what I hope to teach – writing skills that will influence and stay with my students long after they have left my classroom. It may not be everything that these students will need to succeed but it will be a step in the right direction.
Interested Students Produce Interesting Work

My first teaching placement was at Bald Eagle Area High School (BEAHS) in Wingate, Pennsylvania. The environment at BEAHS is drastically different than high school I had attended. There is one building for grades 7-12 and roughly 100 students per grade. This is a rural school where the students have literally all grown up together and everyone is a friend, neighbor, or acquaintance. My only frame of reference for high school consisted of a building for grades 10-12 with 500-600 students per grade in the suburban area of Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

At BEAHS I was placed in an English classroom with twelfth grade students who had failed to pass the Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment (PSSA). The first lesson I was to teach, dealt with William Shakespeare’s play Macbeth. I knew that I was at a disadvantage on many levels; the students knew and trusted my mentor teacher while I was a stranger and my subject matter was unfamiliar to the majority of the class (“stupid” and “useless” were the words used by students). As an avid student of Shakespeare, I know that the difficulty for many readers lies in the outdated language of the text. In order to attack that problem, I devised an assignment to make the language more accessible to the class. This assignment required students to practice reading techniques we had previously learned and practiced in class and put these techniques to use when writing.

While reading Macbeth, I frequently stopped to define unknown words and phrases, focusing heavily on the footnotes. I modeled the behavior of “substitution”. I use this term to describe the technique that I use myself when reading Shakespeare. It involves inserting a synonym or definition in place of any unknown word or phrase and then re-reading the sentence with the substituted term. This can be incredibly beneficial but also incredibly tedious if every
sentence requires a substitution. I chose to focus the classes’ attention on sentences that included a word or phrase that was particularly difficult to understand contextually. This technique helped the students understand that Shakespeare can be challenging but not impossibly so. I modeled the substitution during the beginning of reading but the students seemed to be capable of employing the technique themselves by the end of the play.

I wanted these students to understand Shakespeare’s impressive grasp of the human condition and realistic portrayal of human interaction. In order to do this, Macbeth needed to be adapted to terms familiar to the students. Therefore, the students were assigned to “translate” at least 15 lines of Shakespearean dialogue from Macbeth into modern day language. This assignment would require the students to use the reading technique rehearsed in class, and apply it to create a completely new product. Not being so far removed from the generation myself; I know that the major method of communication today takes place via technology. Therefore I included text message (SMS) language in my definition of modern language (See Appendix A and B).

The majority of students seemed to enjoy this activity. One particular comment that was repeated by many students was the question, “Can we choose any 15 lines we want?” The answer was yes, provided those 15 lines included at least two characters speaking and the translation continues to the end of a line (does not stop in the middle of a sentence). The students seemed surprised that they were allowed the autonomy to choose their own “topic”. Many students who had been identified as “at risk” (a phrase meaning in danger of failing or dropping out of school) actively participated, repeatedly asking for my help using the substitution technique.
I was particularly impressed by the cartoon component of the assignment. Most students used the ToonDoo website to create images they had clearly imagined during reading: depictions of castles, knights, and ladies in waiting. However, some students chose to “translate” the context of the scene along with the language, which demonstrated a deeper understanding of the work. Many students had also clearly put effort into the modernization of language by changing outdated metaphors to phrases that are more common today. For example, changing the phrase “Whiles I see lives, the gashes/ Do better upon them” (Macbeth, V.viii) to “As long as the people I don’t like are still kicking, I would rather hurt them then myself” (See Appendix C). By using the phrase “still kicking”, this student demonstrated that they could not only replace unknown words or phrases with provided synonyms or definitions, but that they could synthesize Shakespeare’s work into their own words.

At the end of the short unit on Shakespeare, I asked the students what they honestly thought – Is Shakespeare stupid and useless? The class responded by saying “he isn’t that bad” and they “wouldn’t mind reading Romeo and Juliet”. It was clear to me that by allowing the students autonomy and choice in the classroom, they were able to discover the magnificence of Shakespeare for themselves which is infinitely more influential than listening to someone else explain it. Additionally, students had the opportunity to incorporate images along with the text, which can aid the student by providing a visual interpretation. I found this to be a massive victory, considering that the previous week my students were positive that they would hate Shakespeare and they could not possible relate to his subject matter.
**Teaching Reluctant Learners**

The second unit I had the opportunity to teach in America dealt with cover letters and resumes. Many of the students in my class studied at the vocational school for half of their school day and most planned to apply for jobs in their vocation of choice after graduation. Since the majority of the students did not have much work experience, it was of utmost importance that these students understand how to construct a proper resume and cover. Resumes and cover letters are something that the vocational schools instruct their individual students to complete but unfortunately, the templates leave much to be desired. Additionally, due to the fact that most students had already assembled what their vocational teachers considered to be a solid resume, they did not want to revisit the topic.

One major challenge of this unit was to create an approach appropriate for every student when each student had a different vocational focus and very different set of goals. In effort to generate interest in the topic and create a “standardized” assignment, I developed the “prom cover letter” writing assignment (See Appendix D), which was based on the basic cover letter information presented in class (See Appendix E). With Senior Prom occurring in only a few weeks, I assumed the students would be preoccupied with the topic and distracted from schoolwork. I believed the problem could be addressed by incorporating the students’ distraction into the classroom curriculum.

This was an unfortunate assumption on my part. I had based the solution to my cover letter dilemma on my personal experiences as a high school student (which you may recall were significantly different from my students’). Before prom, I had been distracted in class and would have loved the opportunity to spend actual class time discussing my prom date, dress, and limo. I failed to recognize that the culture of the class and the culture of the school in general were far
different from my alma mater. Perhaps if I had taken more time to learn valuable information about my students’ personal lives, I could have anticipated the rebellion that would ensue in the classroom when the subject of prom was breached.

I believe the reaction was a mixture of true disinterest in the subject of prom and panic over revealing their deepest secrets. I had never considered the possibility that some students may not want to divulge their desire to be the perfect prom date and allow their fellow students to see how deeply they cared about something regarded as trivial by many of their classmates. Had I been familiar with my students’ extra-curricular interests or weekend activities, I would have been far better equipped to design a cover letter activity more beneficial to this particular class.

In retrospect, sitting down to write with the class was the best decision I could have made under the circumstances. It showed the students that I was willing to share personal information if they were and that I did not expect them to do anything I was not willing to myself. Although it was not my intent in the moment (my intention was simple desperation to keep control of the class), it is clear that the reason the protesting students quieted down was an increase in trust. I also encouraged students to turn in what they had written if they wanted to share it with me. In a classic example that trust must be reciprocal, my class showed me that if I was willing to reveal personal information and that I was genuinely interested to learn more about their lives, then they were willing to share their personal stories with me. This was a memorable demonstration for me of just how important it is to know your students beyond their schoolwork.
A Lack of Creativity: An American in a Swedish Classroom

Before arriving in Sweden, I greatly anticipated what my student teaching placement would hold. What I experienced my first day was surprisingly similar to an American high school with a few important differences. High school (gymnasiet) in Sweden is considered optional so there are far less restrictions in place. Students are free to come and go as they please around their scheduled classes. It is quite common to leave the building during a break and buy an afternoon snack from the local ICA (grocery store). This same action in America would result in a rigorous reprimand from the administration.

This autonomy is present in the classroom as well. Swedish students are free to leave the room without need of a hall pass or teacher permission, a serious infraction by American standards. It is of interest to note that despite the lack of excessive rules and regulations, Swedish students are still highly motivated learners. Indeed, I believe it is due to the lack of restrictions that the students manage to stay self-motivated. It is common knowledge in the field of adolescent psychology that when intrinsically motivated students are repeatedly exposed to extrinsically motivating factors, their motivation eventually becomes dependent upon said factors. Thus, a highly restrictive environment can actually decrease intrinsic motivation. Many American students are so reliant upon stringent policies in a school setting that they are rendered unable to self-regulate.

Regardless of whether students are located in America or Sweden, they are still teenagers and share some very basic characteristics. The first common characteristic I observed is that students do not listen to teachers because of their greater intelligence, more extensive vocabulary, and access to important resources. Students listen to teachers for one simple reason, to pass the class. This was the first challenge that I faced: How to get students to truly listen, not
just to pass the course, to learn because they want to. Another characteristic that all teenage students seem to have in common is the audible classroom groan let out when students are instructed to write. It seems that no matter what language a student speaks, they all speak the language of frustration, annoyance, and despair at the thought of writing even a paragraph. This was the second challenge that I faced: How to encourage students to write pieces that are meaningful, challenging, and ultimately serve to improve their writing.

These two questions have challenged teachers since public school systems became the basis for all adolescent learning. How can we expect students to care deeply about their education when they are told what to learn, when to learn it and how long to study it for? In fact, this can be a source of frustration for educators as well, when we are dictated to by administration and state standards. Ironically, when students are presented with freedom of choice in the classroom, they tend to reject it in favor of the tangible expectations and solid writing prompts they are familiar with. In fact, I found myself reacting in the same manner as most students when I encountered the much less restrictive Swedish public school environment.

As I mentioned, in Sweden I could finally choose the curriculum for my courses. Yet instead of wondering at the possibilities, I found myself drowning in choices. I could literally have chosen any novel that had a class set. I browsed through the book room thinking to myself, *Am I qualified to teach this? Is this important enough for the students to spend valuable class time learning?* I realized that I had fallen into the American public school trap where there is always someone to tell you what to do: State boards tell administrators, administrators tell teachers, teachers tell students. Essentially, everyone relies on each other for instructions or an example to follow. It is no wonder that Gretchen Bernabei claims students have lost the creativity that differentiates them, because I found I had lost it too.
Once I had identified this initial panic as a simple block in creativity, I found myself able to relax and attempt to focus on what I thought was important for the students. After reviewing the Swedish standards for each course and speaking with my mentor teachers, I developed unit plans that focused on the novel *Holes* by Louis Sachar for my tenth graders, the life and works of William Shakespeare and American Culture for the eleventh grade, and a far more open ended comparative literature unit for the seniors which involved advanced novels from varying time periods.

My main objective in the Swedish classroom became developing strategies to help encourage creativity in my students; the same creativity that I found I could display when planning my lessons. In order to meet this objective, I relied on the teaching tactics I had compiled: providing students with choice and autonomy, learning about student interests outside of the classroom, and providing students with individual care and attention. By successfully utilizing these strategies I was able to increase the students’ desire to write, their enjoyment of the writing process, their attention to revision, and ultimately the finished product of their work.
Bringing Shakespeare to Life

The only fact I knew about my placement in Sweden before I arrived is that I would be teaching Shakespeare to eleventh grade students. My mentor teachers had corresponded via e-mail and expressed their interest that I share my unique English speaking view on the renowned author. This was truly a stroke of luck for me since Shakespeare was nearly the only topic I had actual teaching experience with. Due to the success of my Macbeth text translation assignment, I decided to assign this project again.

After spending some time in the classroom with the students, it was evident that I would need to modify the activity. It was incredibly unfair to expect that students who are learning to read modern-day English would be equipped to work with an Old English text. Instead, I set to work modifying the assignment so it would be appropriate for the class (See Appendix F and G). I also realized that these students might have a difficult time translating to “modern-day English” since that is not the language they typically speak. However, after spending some time in the country I was surprised to note just how pervasive American culture is in the Swedish society. Swedish Television channels play American shows, Swedish radio stations play American music, and Swedish newspapers report American news.

Much like the previous Shakespeare lesson, my goal was that students would use their understanding of modern culture to recognize Shakespeare’s unique understanding of the human condition (once it was in a form they could easily identify with). It seemed to me that if students had a familiar English-speaking context to set the scene, it would be easier to apply dialogue to the situation. Additionally, I wanted students to appreciate the theatricality of Shakespeare’s work. In order to accomplish this, I included a performance component, in which the students would need to perform their scene to the class.
This activity proved to be wildly successful. I had initially planned for the dialogue to count towards a minor in-class participation grade but the students worked so diligently on their scenes that, after a discussion between myself and my mentor teachers, we decided to count the activity as a writing and speaking grade and include the grading rubric in their portfolios. These portfolios are a collection of important student assignments throughout the year; Swedish instructors utilize the folders to assess the growth of each individual at the end of the course. The Swedish system is much more subjective in terms of grading, but at the same time, students are given ample opportunity to complete late or missed assignments. Contrary to the American system, students must be allowed to submit missed assignments as late as they want without a grade penalty on the assignment. The only way teachers are able to keep track of the responsibility component of a students’ grade is to note when each assignment is turned in. Essentially, the late work will affect the students overall performance in the class but it cannot affect performance on an individual assignment. This system is designed to benefit hard-working students who miss assignments due to illness or travel opportunities, which are far more common in Europe. The ideal is such that students should be judged on the level of work that they produce and not be penalized for any extenuating circumstances that may hinder them. In reality, the system is a logistical nightmare. The intrinsically motivated students can be relied on to turn in all assignments on time (a much higher percentage of the class than is typical of America) but there is nearly always an exception.

Missed due dates were not a problem with this assignment, which is a testament to the success of the activity. The students had spent so much time and effort drafting and revising their dialogues that the majority of groups were eager to perform in front of the class. A particularly advanced group of female students modernized the fight scene from Romeo and Juliet to a
“catfight” at a local mall between two groups of superficial girls. Instead of Mercutio dying at the hand of Tybalt, Mercutio suffers the loss of a broken nail and runs off the stage in despair. This group demonstrated (along with many others) a deep understanding of the text through their ability to place the scene in a plausible modern context and adapt the action to fit within the boundaries of the context. Yet another group established their understanding by depicting the fight scene as a drinking contest at a bar, with Mercutio losing the “battle” by passing out drunk at the bar. The purpose was for students to draw their own conclusions from Shakespeare’s work without relying on a teacher’s explanation; therefore, students were expected to develop novel translations. Allowing students the freedom to channel their creativity into an assignment of this nature enabled them to come away with a unique understanding of the text and of Shakespeare himself.

When asked to review my teaching methods at the culmination of the course many students (from both classes) listed this activity as their favorite. Responses included “My favorite activity was when we did a modern version of the “fighting scene”, “My favorite activity was Shakespeare because it was fun and it was fun to do the theatre”, “It was the Shakespeare performance, it was fun to do in a group and more creative than just read in the book”, “It was the drama we did a few weeks ago, awesome…” and “My favorite activity was learning about Shakespeare and doing the play. It was fun because I didn’t know anything about him before and it was something new with the play (we have NEVER done that before)” (See Appendix H).
**Getting Their Attention**

In my tenth grade English course, I chose to focus a unit on the novel *Holes*. This proved to be an interesting endeavor since English novels are not taught the same way in Sweden that they generally are in America. In Sweden, the novel is typically assigned as out of class reading and the students are expected to write a short essay or participate in a discussion to display their knowledge of the novel. This method is in direct contradiction with every literary practice I have studied at the university level and I had trouble employing this new approach. In America, great emphasis is placed on continuous in-class activities and discussions of literary works to ensure student understanding; Americans also tend to teach novels thematically. Because of this, it was difficult for me to adapt to the Swedish focus of enhancing vocabulary and practicing reading strategies (although this focus is logical given that English is not their native language). As a result of my inexperience with teaching methods for English as a Second Language (ESL) students, I decided to expose my Swedish students to an American unit plan. American literary teachers tend to think in units, while Swedish teachers plan by the lesson. I spent 12 years of public school learning in units and four more at the university level in addition to developing my own unit plans, which proved to be an impossible habit to break.

I planned to spend a few weeks studying *Holes* and Swedish students are not used to spending this amount of time on any one topic in an English literature class. I realized that in order for the *Holes* unit to succeed, the students would need to remain very interested in the novel. In order to spark their interest, I developed on a pre-reading activity that would simultaneously allow me to review a sample of their writing (See Appendix I). The nature of the assignment was to connect an air of mystery with the book so that students would begin reading because they were curious, not solely because it was a class requirement.
The lesson worked perfectly. The students enjoyed discussing interesting and seemingly unrelated words such as “Caveman”, “Peaches”, “Yellow-Spotted Lizards”, and “Shovel”. The only connection that I drew for the students was that each of the words introduced during the class period was directly related to the novel we were about to begin reading. The students then had to write a short story containing ten of the words. The activity turned out to be an excellent exercise in language arts because students were required to utilize new vocabulary correctly, write creatively, and essentially engage in predicting. Since the students were aware that the words were connected to the new novel, their short stories reflect their predictions of how the words might fit together and thus, predictions of plot.

The students enjoyed the activity for many different reasons. This provided a rare opportunity in class during which they were able to write nearly anything they wanted. Only a few students wrote predictable stories, merely mentioning the words; most students added a substantial amount of personality to their pieces. Many students even brought the stories home so they could have additional time to revise and add more details. One student’s story in particular stood out. She had written two full pages of text, which is quite a lot for a first year high school English student in Sweden. She had obviously taken great care to edit her writing for spelling and grammatical mistakes and composed one of the most suspenseful short stories I have ever read (See Appendix J). As a response to her evident care and effort, I shared the story with the class as an outstanding example of creative writing. After I had finished reading, I asked if the anonymous author wished to reveal their identity. This student immediately raised her hand with visible pride at the public appreciation of her work – the sort of pride that every student should feel after finishing a piece of writing. She proved my observations correct in her response to my question “What was your favorite activity?” at the culmination of the course when she wrote, “I
liked to write the story based on the words from the book. I got a really good response from you so that made it very fun!” (See Appendix K). This student is a perfect example the sort of exceptional work students are capable of producing when provided the right context and environment.
Surviving High School: Why Not Ask the Experts?

Once I had seen the impressive results of my first year students’ creative writing assignments, I set to work formulating a more challenging topic. An intriguing subject presented itself as we were nearing the end of our Holes unit. In the English book room, I discovered Louis Sachar’s follow up book to Holes, entitled Stanley Yelnats’ Survival Guide to Camp Green Lake. Since the students had already spent so much time reading and discussing the novel, I foresaw that asking the class to complete yet another assignment on the same topic would not hold their interest. The “Guide” provided the perfect option for a culminating writing assignment; using this would maintain the connection to the novel but not ask the students to continue to discuss a topic that had already been exhausted.

Initially I thought to have the students write their own chapter explaining a survival technique for Camp Green Lake but as I previously mentioned, prolonging the Holes topic would not have been effective. Besides my students were not “experts” on Camp Green Lake in the way that Stanley is considered an authority. Instead I resolved to treat my students as authorities on a topic in which they could actually display their expertise. What better subject for high school students to assert their expertise than the subject of how to be a successful high school student. Since the students were first years it would be a good exercise in reflecting on all that they had learned in the first few months of school.

In addition to regarding the students as experts, I wanted to challenge them. Rather than challenging them to display their knowledge of the novel, I felt it was more beneficial to display their knowledge of Louis Sachar. Now that we had read and discussed two of Sachar’s works, the students were familiar with his tone and general writing technique (both discussed in class). All the students professed a great appreciation and enjoyment of Sachar’s informal, sarcastic and
humorous tone and as the saying goes, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. That is exactly what they did, created a Sachar-esque “book” entitled, “How to Survive Eric Dahlberggymnasiet” (See Appendix L).

After presenting this assignment to the class, all students participated in a brainstorm session to identify potential “chapter” topics. Topics included, “How to Suck Up to Your Teachers”, “How to Stay Awake in Class… Or Pretend to”, and “How Not to Look Stupid in Front of Older Students”. While all of the chapters fulfilled the requirements (and most incited loud laughter from the reader) there was one student assignment in particular that I found impressive – “How to Prepare for a Test”. This chapter was written by a group of boys who typically do not reach their full potential in class participation. Surprisingly, by the end of the first class period, this group had generated an entire single space typed page – far more than any other group had produced and far more than they had ever produced before. This group called me over frequently to check phrasing for authenticity and to make sure their humor was apparent. As a result of their hard work they were the first group to finish and they created the most impressive final product (See Appendix M). Most students tried to emulate Sachar’s style by copying his format, structure and tone. This was completely appropriate given the nature of the assignment. However, the group of boys synthesized Sachar’s techniques with their own and created a new format, structure, and tone that successfully blended the two.

The hypothetical story the boys wrote is an example of how not to take a test, in order to highlight the behaviors they consider appropriate and necessary for test taking. This showed great creativity on their part because a component of the assignment was to make the chapter interesting. The boys found that explaining how one should take a test was quite dull and monotonous and did not nearly fulfill the word requirement of the assignment. Instead of
choosing a new topic, the boys found a creative solution to their problem. Using this technique actually stresses the importance of certain behaviors more clearly than if the writing had focused on what students should do. Additionally, there was an unusual amount of effort exuded by these boys during the initial writing and revision process. The group was clearly proud of their finished work when they called me over to review the chapter and provide any relevant feedback before submission. This is clear substantiation of how student interest and freedom of structure is essential for authentic student engagement.
Now Playing: Engaged Learners

My senior English course proved to be an invaluable experience for me. Unlike grades 10 and 11, these students elected to take English so every student in the class had a personal interest in the subject matter. The class consisted of 28 intelligent and diverse students, from various programs, which resulted in a very interesting class dynamic. I developed the Movie Pitch Project in response to the students’ obvious need to be challenged. The only element required of me for the 12 weeks I taught their course was that they should independently read a novel of their choice. I felt that the typical Swedish assessment of oral discussions or typed book reports would fall short of their potential. Thus, I created a project based on a similar assignment I completed in high school.

The assignment required students to read, understand, analyze, evaluate, create and then present – involving nearly every level of Bloom’s Taxonomy in the process. The first part of the assignment involved students reading and understanding a challenging English novel. Step two required the students to deconstruct the novel (setting, characterization, plot, theme, and symbolism) and then critique each element. Finally students needed to adapt the novel to a movie format and thoroughly plan each element in order to effectively “pitch” their movie idea to the class of “producers” (See Appendix N and O). Since this was more challenging assignment, students worked in groups of four (seven groups of four students each).

Students had five weeks to read their novel and every week groups had roughly 15 minutes of class time to discuss the focus question of the week (each week dealt with one of the five elements in the project). At the end of the five weeks students had two full class periods (total of four hours) to complete the assignment. Any additional work was completed outside of the classroom. While the culminating component of the project was an oral presentation, written
components included setting analysis, character analysis, plot description, and theme analysis (the “movie poster” depicted symbolism and included important images or objects).

Many of the student performances far surpassed my expectations. It was apparent that the groups had enjoyed both the novels and the creative aspects of the project. During the in-class working days, I made sure to move between groups and assess the levels of engagement and participation. It became clear quite quickly that this project actually helped the students to appreciate the novels more fully. They needed to take what the author had “told” them and synthesize the information in such a way that they could tell it themselves. Rather then acting as a passive reader (or even an engaged reader) who has the story told to them, the students had to become the storytellers.

Students excelled in this project. The final products were wildly creative and ranged from students who took a traditional approach with format but wrote with a “hot shot” tone as if actually “selling” the script to a producer to groups that wrote conventionally but formatted the writing with graphics, backgrounds, and potential movie quotes. After the presentations it was also clear how many of the students had a much better understanding of the novel because the assignment forced them to think through each category. A particularly troubled group initially had read Kurt Vonnegut’s Slaughterhouse Five. This is a challenging read for any native English speaker and incredibly difficult for a non-native speaker. After reading the boys were vaguely confused and spent much of the first class period desperately questioning me about the specifics of the assignment in the hopes that it would help them come to a starting point. Observations were similar during the second class period. The boys wrote, deleted, re-wrote, crossed-out, and tried to write again nearly the whole period. I allowed the group to dominate the majority of my time because it was clear that they were in desperate need of more attention than the other
groups. In fact of all the groups, I was most concerned for this one because I simply did not think they had time to complete the project.

Watching their presentation was akin to witnessing a caterpillar emerge as a butterfly. These students were simply phenomenal, utilizing technology, the whiteboard, and their own humorous personalities to command every student’s attention. After reading their written component I was further impressed. In comparison to the attempts they had made in class, there was no doubt as to the amount of time and effort they had put into the revision process. The format had been updated to a less conventional essay format to a newspaper article format “reviewing” their movie (which had already been released in theaters). Their writing was witty, entertaining, and informative and all members received the highest marks (See Appendix P). It was a proud moment as a teacher to see what my students had created. It left a lasting impression on me; the more care and attention a teacher shows to a student, the more that student’s work will reflect care and attention.
Implications for Educators

My major goal in exploring this thesis was to exercise the three techniques of encouraging individual expression, allowing freedom of structure and demonstrating care and attention towards my students in order to enhance student writing in the four areas of the desire to write, the enjoyment of writing, the act of revision, and the final product. Several of the recounted classroom experiences herein contained have demonstrated the success of applying these techniques. It is a personal belief that such a student centered approach is more beneficial for students and ultimately leads to higher quality learning. My observations along with student work and reflections suggest that this is true. Probably the best overall validation I received in terms of the benefits of increasing student autonomy, choice and trust within the classroom was the feedback I received at the end of the term from the students themselves. Swedish students self professed that the creative writing assignments conducted in the classroom were either their favorite or among their favorite activities during a twelve week period. These declarations were in response to one of my student reflection questions “What was your favorite activity?” I found this incredibly surprising, especially considering that only three short months before the students were audibly irritated at the thought of putting pen to paper. By allowing students to take control of their own learning, they obviously enjoyed the process. At the culmination of my American student teaching experience, where I was not able to exercise as great a degree of autonomy on behalf of the students, more continued to profess their dislike for writing.

After experiencing the Swedish school system, aspects of improvement for the American school system became clear. A major difference between the systems is the level of autonomy already in place for the Swedish students. There are no truancy laws in Sweden. Students are expected to attend classes or suffer the consequences (missing information or sacrificing an
afternoon to stay after school). If they are chronic truants or F students, they can continue attending until they eventually pass or choose to drop out. The public schools also generally trust Swedish students more than American students as well. Swedish students may leave the school grounds at any time and return at any time within school hours. The students are treated as adults and the difference in maturity is evident on the whole.

Although Swedish students may leave the classroom at any point during the lesson without permission of the teacher, there was only one student in twelve weeks that did this and it was not one of my students. Conversely, there were a few students in my American classroom who were suspended for days for leaving school grounds early and one who was suspended for taking an alternative mode of transportation home without written consent. I have found the majority of Swedish students to be exceptionally mature and respectful, which seems to indicate that the American students are less so. This revelation does not surprise me in the least. While Swedish students are given trust and responsibility, American students face strict rules and harsh consequences. It also does not surprise me that in the Swedish atmosphere, students are intent on learning and in the American environment it appears that many students are focused on finding a way out of learning. If American students were treated in the same mature manner, there is no doubt in my mind that the majority of students who rebel now would rise to the challenge.

As one teacher, I cannot change the laws on truancy or school transportation or allow students to wander off school grounds; I can treat my students as adults and expect a mature response. In my classroom this will look like many student centered writing projects during which students will discover knowledge for themselves rather than listening to me tell them how to learn what I want them to know. An observer would also see a variety of individual approaches with attentive suggestions from me to my charges.
Writing can be the most difficult aspect of English for students. Many feel inadequate and many more feel overwhelmed. By providing choices to my students, I essentially told them that they are mature enough to make decisions about topic, form and language themselves. Their knowledge of writing is not inadequate. By paying attention to my students’ needs and caring about each individual I tried to quash the overwhelming feeling that can accompany the assignments. Once these two obstacles were removed, students could really begin learning and participating wholly in the writing process. After observing students in the classroom and reviewing student works and responses it was clear that the result is an increased desire to write, an enjoyment of writing, attention to revision, and pride in the final product.
Work Cited


Appendix A

Lesson Plan for ToonDoo Assignment

Title: ToonDoo

Subject: Language Arts (English)

Grade Level: 12

Objectives:
- Students will rewrite a passage from Macbeth in modern day language.
- Students will create a comic using ToonDoo.com to illustrate the chosen lines.

Pennsylvania Academic Standards:
Subject: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening
Area 1.3: Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature
  Grade 1.3.11: Grade 11
  Standard A.: Read and understand works of literature.
  Standard F.: Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.
Area 1.5: Quality of Writing
  Grade 1.5.11: Grade 11
  Standard C.: Write with controlled and/or subtle organization.
    · Sustain a logical order throughout the piece.
    · Include an effective introduction and conclusion.
  Standard D.: Write with a command of the stylistic aspects of composition.
    · Use different types and lengths of sentences.
    · Use precise language.

Materials and resources:
- Computers and Internet to access www.ToonDoo.com
- The Tragedy of Macbeth packet from Pearson Education, Inc. for each student
- Pens/Pencils

The number of computers required is 1 per student.
Students Familiarity with Software Tool: The students will need to be familiar with the class set of laptops and will need to navigate the website www.ToonDoo.com in which they will receive instruction.

Lesson Procedures:
9:54-10:10 (16 minutes) - Students will share their homework with a partner (a response to "Did the play end the way you thought it would? Why or Why not?" and "Do you think Macbeth got what he deserved? Why or Why not".)

10:10-10:20 (10 minutes) - Hand out Macbeth ToonDoo project. Read through assignment sheet and answer any questions.
10:20-10:25 (5 minutes) - Students will sign onto laptops and go to www.ToonDoo.com. Students will need to create an account name and password, which will be written at the top of their Macbeth packets.

10:25-10:30 (5 minutes) - Briefly demonstrate how to navigate ToonDoo and point out features (such as speech bubbles and characters) that will need to be included in their final copy.

10:30-10:37 (7 minutes) - Students can acclimate themselves to the website and begin work on the assignment.

10:37-10:38 (1 minute) - Students pack up.

** If the class is not finished the packet at the beginning of the period that will be completed first. If this is necessary, students will create an account in this class period and the following class period will begin with a brief demonstration and then students will begin work on their comic.

**Assessment:**
The assessment for this project will be based on completion and inclusion of the main components. To receive full credit the students will need to turn in their work on time. They will need to include background, characters and speech bubbles in each frame of their comic. Students will also need to correctly translate at least 15 lines of dialogue from Macbeth into modern day language. This will be worth one project grade. See Appendix B for further details.

**Lesson Analysis and Reflection:**
This lesson was shifted quite a bit. Since the prior days discussion was less satisfactory than I had anticipated, I didn’t see the point in forcing students to revisit a topic they clearly had no interest in. Instead, we jumped right into the explanation of the assignment sheet, which was a good decision because it took far longer than I had expected. We were able to go over the rubric section by section, so I could ensure that all students understood the requirements. I feel that it is of the utmost importance to spend as much time as necessary reviewing the instructions for any and every assignment. Students should have a clear understanding of the expectations so that they have every opportunity to succeed.

I had hoped to spend more time with the students on the actual website since I will not be in school for the next few class periods due to the university’s Spring Break. However, my mentor teacher is very familiar with the website so I feel confident that she will be able to address any problems that arise. Additionally, these students are comfortable with the class set of laptops and regularly encounter new website designs so I believe they will be successful with the assignment.
Appendix B

Macbeth ToonDoo Rubric

To demonstrate your knowledge of Macbeth and understanding of Shakespeare’s language, you will translate at least 15 lines of Shakespearean dialogue from the scenes we read in class into modern day language. You will type these lines in a word document in typical play format (The characters name in all capitals and then the line). To illustrate your lines, you will create a short comic strip, which will show at least two characters from Macbeth speaking in modern day language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3 points</th>
<th>2 points</th>
<th>1 point</th>
<th>0 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>15 or more lines of text are translated</td>
<td>10-14 lines are translated</td>
<td>5-9 lines are translated</td>
<td>Less than 5 lines of text are translated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>The translated lines make sense and use classroom appropriate language</td>
<td>Most of the translated lines make sense and use classroom appropriate language</td>
<td>Some of the translated lines make sense and use classroom appropriate language</td>
<td>None of the lines make sense and/or do not use classroom appropriate language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Student uses at least 3 lines of dialogue in speech bubbles</td>
<td>Student uses 2 lines of dialogue in speech bubbles</td>
<td>Student uses 1 line of dialogue in speech bubbles</td>
<td>Student does not include any dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student includes at least 2 frames</td>
<td>Student includes one frame</td>
<td>Student does not use any frames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student includes at least 2 characters</td>
<td>Student includes one character</td>
<td>Student does not include any characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Elements</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student includes and appropriate background and any additional “props”</td>
<td>Student includes a background that is inappropriate/ unrelated and any additional “props”</td>
<td>Student does not include a background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Student work is creative and flows well</td>
<td>Student work is creative but does not flow</td>
<td>Student work lacks creativity or does not flow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Product</td>
<td>Student turns in a one page word document including heading, ToonDoo comic, and 15 lines of text that demonstrates understanding of the text and assignment</td>
<td>Student submits a word document with only 2 of 3 elements that demonstrates understanding of text and assignment</td>
<td>Student submits a word document with only 1 of 3 elements and does not demonstrate sufficient understanding of text and/or assignment</td>
<td>Student does not submit anything or uses inappropriate format and does not demonstrate understanding of text and/or assignment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Sample Student Work – Macbeth ToonDoo Assignment
# Macbeth ToonDoo Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3 points</th>
<th>2 points</th>
<th>1 point</th>
<th>0 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text</strong></td>
<td>15 or more lines or text are translated</td>
<td>10 - 14 lines are translated</td>
<td>5 - 9 lines are translated</td>
<td>Less than 5 lines of text are translated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Translation</strong></td>
<td>The translated lines make sense and use classroom appropriate language</td>
<td>Most of the translated lines make sense and use classroom appropriate language</td>
<td>Some of the translated lines make sense and use classroom appropriate language</td>
<td>None of the lines make sense and/or do not use classroom appropriate language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogue</strong></td>
<td>Student uses at least 3 lines of dialogue in speech bubbles</td>
<td>Student uses 2 lines of dialogue in speech bubbles</td>
<td>Student uses 1 line of dialogue in speech bubbles</td>
<td>Student does not include any dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
<td>Student includes at least 2 frames</td>
<td>Student includes at least 2 frames</td>
<td>Student includes one frame</td>
<td>Student does not use any frames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters</strong></td>
<td>Student includes at least 2 characters</td>
<td>Student includes one character</td>
<td>Student does not include any characters</td>
<td>Student does not include any characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Elements</strong></td>
<td>Student includes an appropriate background and any additional &quot;props&quot;</td>
<td>Student includes a background is inappropriate/unrelated and any additional &quot;props&quot;</td>
<td>Student does not include a background</td>
<td>Student does not include a background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creativity</strong></td>
<td>Student work is creative and flows well</td>
<td>Student work is creative but does not flow</td>
<td>Student work lacks creativity or does not flow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Product</strong></td>
<td>Student turns in a one page word document including heading, ToonDoo comic, and 15 lines of text that demonstrates understanding of the text and assignment</td>
<td>Students submits a word document with only 2 of 3 elements that demonstrates understanding of text and assignment</td>
<td>Student submits a word document with only 1 of 3 elements and does not demonstrate sufficient understanding of text and/or assignment</td>
<td>Student does not submit anything or uses inappropriate format and does not demonstrate understanding of text and/or assignment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Lesson Plan for Cover Letters

Title: Cover Letters

Subject: Language Arts (English)

Grade Level: 12

Objectives:
- Students will be introduced to cover letters and their purpose.
- Students will apply knowledge of cover letter “language” to a real life situation.

Pennsylvania Academic Standards:
Subject: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

Area 1.4: Types of Writing
Grade 1.4.11: Grade 11
Standard E.: Write a personal resume.

Area 1.5: Quality of Writing
Grade 1.5.11: Grade 11
Standard A.: Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
  · Identify topic, task and audience.
  · Establish and maintain a single point of view.
Standard B.: Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
  · Gather, determine validity and reliability of, analyze and organize information.
  · Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.
  · Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus.
Standard C.: Write with controlled and/or subtle organization.
  · Sustain a logical order throughout the piece.
  · Include an effective introduction and conclusion.
Standard D.: Write with a command of the stylistic aspects of composition.
  · Use different types and lengths of sentences.
  · Use precise language.
Standard F.: Edit writing using the conventions of language.
  · Spell all words correctly.
  · Use capital letters correctly.
  · Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
  · Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
  · Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).
Materials and resources:
- Handout: Cover Letter Do’s and Don’ts
- Pens/Pencils
- Paper

Lesson Procedures:
9:54-10:09 (15 minutes) – Assigned Reading (AR)
10:10-10:15 (5 minutes) – Hand out Cover Letter Do’s and Don’ts and go over each section
10:15-10:20 (5 minutes) – Students will need to create a cover letter selling themselves as the perfect prom date (what basic skills do you have? What sets you apart from someone else? → dancing skills, transportation, friends, pre-party, after-party?)
10:20-10:25 (5 minutes) – Students will share with a partner who will tell them whether they have gotten the “job” or not – What else would you like to have seen included in the letter?
10:25-10:30 (5 minutes) – Student volunteers to share?
10:30-10:37 (7 minutes) – Students can begin to work on their own cover letter for their dream job. Tell students to include specifics, such as job name and appropriate heading. What makes you uniquely qualified for this job?
10:37-10:38 (1 minute) - Students pack up

Assessment:
The students will be assessed in two ways: they must follow the handout illustrating cover letter do’s and don’ts and they must also follow the MLA format for a formal letter. See Appendix D for further details regarding the class handout. Since the cover letter is the first sample of work a potential employer encounters, students need to understand how important it is to be precise in all aspects of the letter. For this purpose, one half of a point will be taken off for every mistake present in the cover letter including spelling or grammar mistakes, format mistakes, nonsensical sentences, irrelevant or inappropriate information, etc. Additionally, to reinforce the idea that a resume and cover letter should be updated periodically, students will be allowed the opportunity to revise their original submissions for a higher grade. This will be made optional although my hope is that many students will want to take advantage of this activity to achieve a higher grade for the marking period, particularly the students in the class who are in danger of not passing.

Lesson Analysis and Reflection:
This lesson did not go nearly as planned. Since the class had been working on resumes for the past few days, I thought that a bit of creative writing would be a welcome change from the tedious nature of perfecting a resume. Apparently I was incorrect. After we had finished reviewing the handout, I told the class that they should use the skills discussed to write a brief letter outlining why they would be the perfect prom date. With senior prom coming up in a few weeks I had anticipated that this would be a topic of interest. Instead, the students nearly held a
mutiny in the classroom in response to my suggestion. Many students refused with the rationale that they were not attending prom so this was a pointless activity and many more students protested due to the fact that they already had a date and this was unnecessary. After trying to calmly convince the students of the merit of the activity I had to resort to my authority as a teacher and tell the class that I expected their letter to be handed in for class participation.

I seemed to surprise the class when I sat down in an empty student desk myself and wrote my own “prom cover letter” to model for the students what exactly I was looking for. I read my letter aloud once I was finished and this seemed to calm the class down quite a bit. I was even able to get two volunteers to read theirs aloud to the class. I then briefly pointed out in the student letters some techniques that we had discussed earlier in the class but I could see that I did not have the classes’ attention. Rather than force the issue, I decided to end the discussion and allow the students the last few minutes to brainstorm about potential points to include in their cover letters.

Overall, I felt that I handled the situation well although I now wish that I had modeled a letter of my own before instructing the students to write one. I feel that many of the students rebelled because they were not clear of the expectations. If I had read a sample letter and shown the students I only expected a few sentences in the form of an informal letter, I think they would have been more receptive to the activity.
Appendix E

Cover Letter Class Handout

Cover Letter Do’s and Don’ts

Cover letter tips #1: The first rule of cover letters: Never use a generic cover letter with only: "To Whom It May Concern." With tons of work on your desk, would you be interested in such a mass mailing? You would probably consider it junk mail, right? You would be much more likely to read a letter that was directed to you personally and so would human resources professionals.

Cover letter tips #2: Every resume sent by mail or fax needs a personalized cover letter even if the advertisement didn't request a cover letter.

Cover letter tips #3: Resumes sent by e-mail don't need a cover letter. Use only a quick paragraph with three to five sentences telling your reader where you heard about the position and why your qualifications are a perfect fit for the position's requirements. E-mail is intended to be short, sweet, and to the point.
A letter to a recruiter requires different information than a letter in answer to an advertisement. A targeted cover letter that tells a story and captures your reader's attention is ideal.

Cover letter tips #4: DROP NAMES in the first paragraph if you know someone in the company. Hiring managers take unsolicited resumes more seriously when they assume you were referred by one of their employees or customers.

Cover letter tips #5: The second paragraph (or two) is the perfect place to mention specific experience that is targeted to the job opening. Here is where you summarize why you are absolutely perfect for the position. Really SELL yourself. Pick and choose some of your experience and/or education that is specifically related to the company's requirements, or elaborate on qualifications that are not in your resume but apply to this particular job. If you make mention of the company and its needs, it becomes immediately obvious that your cover letter is not generic. Entice the reader to find out more about you in your resume. DON'T MAKE THIS SECTION TOO LONG or you will quickly lose the reader's interest.

Cover letter tips #6: The closing should be concise. Let the reader know what you want (an application, an interview, an opportunity to call). If you are planning to call the person on a certain day, you could close by saying, "I will contact you next Tuesday to set up a mutually convenient time to meet." Don't call on Mondays or Fridays if you can help it. If you aren't comfortable making these cold calls, then close your letter with something like: "I look forward to hearing from you soon." And remember to say, "Thank you for your consideration" or something to that effect.
Appendix F

Lesson Plan for Shakespeare Dialogue Activity

Title: Shakespeare Dialogue Activity

Subject: ESL, Language Arts (English)

Grade Level: 10

Objectives:
- Students will revise their writing by correcting mistakes in grammar and spelling.
- Students will translate a scene from Romeo and Juliet into a modern day context and language.

Swedish Goals:
Upon completion of the course, students should:
- have a basic orientation to English literature from different periods
- be able to read, summarize and comment on the contents of longer literary texts
- have the ability to present contents in writing in a clear and well-structured way, as well as be able to express themselves in a varied and personal manner with respect to the audience and the situation

Pennsylvania Academic Standards:
Subject: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening
Area 1.3: Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature
Grade 1.3.11: Grade 11
Standard A.: Read and understand works of literature.
Standard F.: Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.
Area 1.4: Types of Writing
Grade 1.4.11: Grade 11
Standard A.: Write short stories, poems and plays.
· Apply varying organizational methods.
· Use relevant illustrations.
· Utilize dialogue.
· Apply literary conflict.
· Include varying characteristics (e.g., from limerick to epic, from whimsical to dramatic).
· Include literary elements (Standard 1.3.11.B.)
· Use literary devices (Standard 1.3.11.C.).
Area 1.5: Quality of Writing
Grade 1.5.11: Grade 11
Standard A.: Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
· Identify topic, task and audience.
· Establish and maintain a single point of view.
Standard B.: Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
· Gather, determine validity and reliability of, analyze and organize information.
· Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.
· Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus.
Standard D.: Write with a command of the stylistic aspects of composition.
· Use different types and lengths of sentences.
· Use precise language.

Materials and resources:
- Shakespeare Dialogue Rubric
- Paper
- Pens/Pencils

Lesson Procedures:
10:15-10:30 (15 minutes) – Students will make corrections in spelling and grammar to short stories they wrote for a previous assignment.

10:30-10:45 (15 minutes) – Introduce students to the dialogue activity and review the components of the rubric to ensure student understanding of the requirements.

10:45-11:30 (45 minutes) – Students will form small groups and begin to work on the activity. Each group will need to identify a scene from Romeo and Juliet to modernize and work through the text line by line

Assessment: The assessment for this assignment is outlined in the accompanying rubric (Appendix F). Students will need to follow the directions and complete all categories to receive full credit. The components include modernizing the context (setting) of the scene and the dialogue appropriately. Students will also need to present their dialogue to the class.

Lesson Analysis and Reflection: This lesson was taught to two different classes and both times was incredibly successful. Initially I had anticipated only one class period for the students to work on this dialogue activity and planned to count the activity as a minor assignment. However the students were so animated during the period that they asked for more time to work on their scenes. I could tell the students were having fun as well as really trying to understand the text. This activity was clearly of value to them so I extended the project time and gave the students another class period to work on their dialogues before they performed.

The students seemed to enjoy the fact that they were able to write something in English that was not a formal essay. Additionally, I think nearly all the students gained a deeper understanding of Shakespearean text and the Old English language after applying it to a situation that they had experience with. In this way, the themes that William Shakespeare presented in Romeo and Juliet became clear to the students.
Appendix G

Shakespeare Dialogue Rubric

Shakespeare in the real world

For this in class assignment, you will be required to work in partners or groups and choose one of the scenes we have read from Romeo and Juliet. The number of group members will depend on which scene you choose: the balcony scene will involve partner work and the fight scene will involve a group of four. You will then “translate” or adapt Shakespeare’s scene into a modern day context. Choose a setting for your scene as well as the main conflict. Then, loosely follow Shakespeare’s text to create your own dialogue for your scene – but make sure it is in modern day English! (ie. The type of language you might hear on Gossip Girl or Entourage). After you have prepared your scene, you will present it to the class in partners or groups by each playing one of the characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>1 - IG</th>
<th>2 - G</th>
<th>3 - VG</th>
<th>4 - MVG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting is not identified or described</td>
<td>Setting is identified; audience may be confused by some aspects of the scene</td>
<td>Setting is described; audience mostly knows the context of the scene</td>
<td>Setting is thoroughly described; audience is provided with any pertinent information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Adaptation | Setting is not appropriately adapted to a modern-day context | Not all aspects of the scene have been included in the adaptation or may be confusing | The scene is adapted to a modern-day context | The modern-day context of the scene is creative and appropriately adapted |

| Dialogue | The dialogue includes inappropriate language or does not make sense | The dialogue is in modern-day English, uses correct grammar | The dialogue is in modern-day English, uses correct grammar and attempts to follow the original text | The dialogue is in modern-day English, uses correct grammar and follows the same theme as the original text |

| Presentation | Presentation is not rehearsed or is not taken seriously | Presentation is rehearsed | Presentation is rehearsed and students speak loudly and confidently | Presentation is rehearsed and performed smoothly, students speak loudly and confidently, voice is expressive of characters emotions |

| Group Collaboration | Group member does not participate in one or both of the areas being assessed | Group member participates but is slightly distracting and causes group to be “off-task” | Each group member contributes to the writing process and the presentation; does not cause group to be “off-task” | Each group member actively participates and contributes to the writing process and the presentation; helps group stay “on-task” |
Appendix H

Student Feedback (B Course)

“My favorite activity was when we did a modern version of the “fighting scene”

“My favorite activity was Shakespeare because it was fun and it was fun to do the theatre”

“It was the Shakespeare performance, it was fun to do in a group and more creative than just read in the book”, “It was the drama we did a few weeks ago, awesome…”

“My favorite activity was learning about Shakespeare and doing the play. It was fun because I didn’t know anything about him before and it was something new with the play (we have NEVER done that before)”
Appendix I

Lesson Plan for Introduction to Holes

Title: Intro to Holes

Subject: ESL, Language Arts (English)

Grade Level: 10

Objectives:
- Students will engage in pre-reading activities to generate interest in the novel Holes.
- Students will write a short story including 10 words from the novel Holes.

Swedish Goals:
Upon completion of the course, students should:
- be able to formulate themselves in writing in order to inform, instruct, argue and express feelings and values, as well as have the ability to work through and improve their own written production

Pennsylvania Academic Standards:
Subject: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

Area 1.4: Types of Writing
Grade 1.4.11: Grade 11
Standard A.: Write short stories, poems and plays.
· Apply varying organizational methods.
· Use relevant illustrations.
· Utilize dialogue.
· Apply literary conflict.
· Include varying characteristics (e.g., from limerick to epic, from whimsical to dramatic).
· Include literary elements (Standard 1.3.11.B.)
· Use literary devices (Standard 1.3.11.C.).

Area 1.5: Quality of Writing
Grade 1.5.11: Grade 11
Standard C.: Write with controlled and/or subtle organization.
· Sustain a logical order throughout the piece.
· Include an effective introduction and conclusion.
Standard D.: Write with a command of the stylistic aspects of composition.
· Use different types and lengths of sentences.
· Use precise language.
Standard E.: Revise writing to improve style, word choice, sentence variety and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how questions of purpose, audience and genre have been addressed.
Standard F.: Edit writing using the conventions of language.
· Spell all words correctly.
Use capital letters correctly.
Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).

Materials and resources:
- Word Search Handouts
- Paper
- Pens/Pencils
- Dry Erase Markers

Lesson Procedures:
11:05-11:15 (10 minutes) – Introduce students to the 10 seemingly unrelated words listed on the board related to the book Holes. Instruct the class to order the words in terms of most to least helpful items to bring to camp.

11:15-11:25 (10 minutes) – Review what the students have decided by making a class list on the board. The students do not yet know how the words are related.

11:25-11:35 (10 minutes) – Hand out word search with 12 new words also related to the novel. The first student to finish wins a candy bar!

11:35-12:00 (25 minute) – Explain to students that all the words are related to the new novel they are reading but before we begin they will write their own stories using at least 10 of the words. Allow students the rest of the period to create a short story using at least 10 of the words that we worked with today.

Assessment: In order to receive full credit the students will need to complete a story that includes 10 words that were introduced in class. The students can construct the story however they wish, but should use appropriate grammar and spelling at all times.

Lesson Analysis and Reflection: I think this lesson really served to “hook” the students into the reading material. The novel Holes can be slightly confusing since it follows three different story lines that occur at three different time periods but I think that working with these words will help the students recognize familiar elements when reading. The students also seemed to enjoy writing their own creative stories; many students opted to finish their stories at home because they felt that 25 minutes was not enough time for them to fully develop their ideas. There was even one student who became so focused on the plot of his story that after the first few lines he forgot to include the vocabulary words but instead produced a very well written piece about a mysterious disappearance at a summer camp. Overall, the lesson went very well and the student pieces really served as a good way to familiarize with the students writing abilities.
When I was a kid I lived on an ordinary street in an ordinary city. With my completely ordinary family. But on my street there was a big yellow house. And in the house lived a lady who was everything but ordinary. Her name was Madame Zeroni. She was a very strange lady. She had long white hair and she was always dressed in a long black dress. Me and my friends were sure that she was a witch. One of my friends, Stanley Velkats, once told me that Madame Zeroni’s house was filled with scary animals like poisonous lizards and rattlesnakes. That’s why I never ever went near her house. But one evening I didn’t have a choice. Me and Stanley were hanging out in my basement and in the lack of something to do, we started to flip a coin. The winner of every round came up with a punishment for the loser. When I had lost for the fourth time, Stanley looked at me with something mean in his eyes. "You have to break in to Zeroni’s house." First I went completely cold and started arguing. But since I knew Stanley for almost my whole life, I realized he wouldn’t let me escape. Five minutes later we were heading down the road towards Madame Zeroni’s house. When we had reached the garden we hid behind a big tree that was filled with big peaches. I could see someone moving inside the house. And exactly when Stanley opened his mouth to say something, Madame Zeroni came out through the door. She looked even more scary than she usually did. She was carrying a bag and a shovel. Madame Zeroni was going somewhere. That would make it easier for me to complete my mission. "We follow her," Stanley suddenly
on the beach. She pushed it towards the water.

"What do you think she is doing?" I asked Stanley. But Stanley was no longer by my side. He had sneaked away and now he was looking at the shovel and the bag. I could see how he stiffened. When he came to me he looked terrified.

"What is it?" I asked. "What did you see?"

"The bag" he said. "It was a suitcase, with YOUR name on it!"

"But" I said. "What would she do with a suitcase with my name on?".

Stanley's eyes were wide opened. "Tom" he said to me. "She's a witch! She could do anything!"

Suddenly we heard Madame Zerom's voice.

"Boys! I know you're here. There's no idea trying to escape. I will get you sooner or later. And when I do..." Then she started laughing, loud and mean. That's when me and Stanley started running.
Appendix K

Student Feedback (A Course)

1. I liked to write the story based on the words from the book.
2. I got really good responses from you so that made it very fun!
3. I also liked reading the book.
Appendix L

Lesson Plan for Eric Dahlberg Survival Guide

Title: Eric Dahlberg Survival Guide

Subject: ESL, Language Arts (English)

Grade Level: 10

Objectives:
- Students will be able to read English text out loud with minimal errors in pronunciation.
- Students will identify writing techniques (ie. satire, irony) and synthesize these techniques into their own writing.
- Students will identify and describe unique aspects of their school culture.
- Students will present these cultural aspects coherently to an "outsider" (someone unfamiliar with their customs).
- Students will write with proper grammar and spelling.

Swedish Goals:
Upon completion of the course, students should:
- be able to read and understand simple literature and through literature acquire a knowledge of cultural traditions in English-speaking countries
- be able to formulate themselves in writing in order to inform, instruct, argue and express feelings and values, as well as have the ability to work through and improve their own written production
- have a knowledge of social conditions, cultural traditions and ways of living in English-speaking areas, and be able to use this knowledge to compare cultures
- be able to present aspects of their own culture and country to persons from a different cultural background

Pennsylvania Academic Standards:
Subject: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening
Area 1.3: Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature
Grade 1.3.11: Grade 11
Standard A.: Read and understand works of literature.
Standard C.: Analyze the effectiveness, in terms of literary quality, of the author’s use of literary devices.
  · Sound techniques (e.g., rhyme, rhythm, meter, alliteration)
  · Figurative language (e.g., personification, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, satire)
  · Literary structures (e.g., foreshadowing, flashbacks, progressive and digressive time).
Standard F.: Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.
Area 1.5: Quality of Writing

Grade 1.5.11: Grade 11

Standard A.: Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
· Identify topic, task and audience.
· Establish and maintain a single point of view.

Standard B.: Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
· Gather, determine validity and reliability of, analyze and organize information.
· Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.
· Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus.

Standard C.: Write with controlled and/or subtle organization.
· Sustain a logical order throughout the piece.
· Include an effective introduction and conclusion.

Standard D.: Write with a command of the stylistic aspects of composition.
· Use different types and lengths of sentences.
· Use precise language.

Standard F.: Edit writing using the conventions of language.
· Spell all words correctly.
· Use capital letters correctly.
· Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
· Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
· Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).

Materials and resources:
- Computers
- Whiteboard
- Dry Erase Markers
- Paper
- Pens/Pencils

The number of computers required is 1 per student.

Students Familiarity with Software Tool: The students will need to be familiar with their personal laptops and be proficient in Microsoft Word (or similar text editing software).

Lesson Procedure:
9:50-9:55 (5 minutes) - Greet students and focus their attention on English after a long break. Remind students of the project we began before the break. The project is to create a "survival guide" to high school. This project is in response to the novel Holes by Louis Sachar and the short follow up novel by the same author entitled Stanley Yelnats' Survival Guide to Camp Green Lake.

9:55-10:00 (5 minutes) - Show students the list of topics they brainstormed before break. Ask if students thought of any new topics during the vacation. Tell students to form groups of 2 or 3 and discuss which topics they find interesting.
10:00-10:05 (5 minutes) - Assign each group of students a topic. Each group must have a different topic so if the group has a topic that is not already on the board they may choose that topic. Otherwise groups will be called on randomly to choose a topic from the board.

10:05-10:10 (5 minutes) - Explain to students that each group will write a "chapter" of the Eric Dahlberg Survival Guide. Remind them of Stanley Yelnats' Survival Guide to Camp Green Lake. Hand out copies of the text to each group.

10:10-10:30 (20 minutes) - "Popcorn" read the last 2 chapters in the Survival Guide ensuring that students understand and can pronounce the majority of what they are reading.

10:30-10:40 (10 minutes) - Discuss techniques that Louis Sacher uses in the Survival Guide as well as Holes such as irony and satire. Explain to students the requirements of the Eric Dahlberg Survival Guide assignment.

10:40-10:50 (10 minutes) - Students may take a break.

10:50-11:30 (40 minutes) - Students should work within their groups for the rest of the period to complete their chapters of the class survival guide. I will help groups to generate ideas/begin to write their chapters.

Assessment:
The major form of assessment for this project is the final product of each individual chapter of the class survival guide. Students will be graded based on the typical Swedish grade system, achieving one of the following grades; MVG - pass with distinction, VG - pass at an advanced level, G - Pass, IG - Not passing. The purpose is to give students the opportunity to write creatively while also analyzing their own culture (which they may have taken for granted before). Requirements include a minimum of 400 words, illustration, and evident effort to imitate Louis Sachar’s writing style. The students will be presenting this to an "outsider" (me) as well as the rest of the class so they must thoroughly explain each cultural phenomenon. Students will also be assessed by how they are able to work together in pairs and groups as well as their English usage in the classroom. Informal types of assessment will include how the students perform during the oral reading, which will simply serve as an informative process for me, identifying which students may need more help and attention from me. There are also many checkpoints built into the lesson in which I will ensure student understanding before moving on to the next step. If needed, any of these short blocks can be expanded upon to provide a more detailed description of the assignment. Ultimately, students will have time to revise these “chapters” and form the entire project into an actual guide to be made available to international students or first-year students.

Lesson Analysis and Reflection:
This lesson went particularly well, the students seemed really excited that they were being treated as “experts”. In fact, I’ve never seen them work so hard. Every single group of students was on task and the majority spoke in English for nearly the whole lesson. This is particularly challenging since they are first year students and not used to speaking in English for such a long lesson, not to mention they each have a laptop which can prove as much of a distraction as it can a resource. I also noticed that many students produced more writing than usual during a typical
class period. There were two groups of boys in particular who tend to write the bare minimum amount that really excelled during the class. They had filled nearly an entire page single spaced by the end of the period which is I found very impressive.

The only slight bump during the lesson took place when the students were meant to respond to the reading and provide information about the author’s writing style. This could have been due to many factors, which I venture to guess all combined to influence the class attitude. Usually this group is particularly interested in participating however it was like pulling teeth to get the students to volunteer. One factor is that my American and Swedish supervisor were there to observe me so there were two extra teachers in the room, the students had just returned from a week long vacation, and the students only had about 5 minutes until their mid-class break. I believe all of these factors combined to keep the students a bit more silent than usual.
Appendix M

Sample Student Work – Survival Guide to Eric Dahlberggymnasiet

How to be prepared for a test

It was a Friday in June and I had a math test, it was the last math test of the year. I woke up that morning and realized my alarm clock was dead so I was late for school. So I jumped up from the bed and made myself a quick breakfast. I skipped brushing my teeth and ran to the bus and missed it by about 2 seconds. I had to wait for the next bus because it’s too far for a walk. I realized if the next bus was late I would miss the test. Lucky for me the next bus wasn’t late. When I stepped on the bus for some reason my bus card didn’t work so I had to pay with my pocket money. Then I realized I’ve forgot my wallet in the pocket in the jeans from yesterday. Lucky for me I live close to the bus station so I asked the driver if he could wait for me while I ran to get my wallet. He told me that it was no problem because he was a bit too early anyway. So I ran the fastest I could. I couldn’t find my jeans then I remembered that my mother washed them the day before so I called her phone and she told me she put it in my bag, when I looked after it was there so I had it on myself all the time. Now I only had to run back to the bus. I was lucky the bus was a little early so he could wait for me. So I paid for a ticket and went to a seat. It was 20 minutes to the school with bus and the test starts in 30 minutes. The bus got a flat tire so we had to wait for an extra bus in about 5 minutes. Finally the extra bus arrived and all of us passengers could take a seat. We had 15 minutes left to the school and the test starts in 20 minutes. When I finally arrived to the school and open up my locker and took my notes and when I closed the locker I broke my pen because I had to bend over to pick up my keys and I started to panic. I started to search for a pen that I could borrow from a friend; luckily for me my friend Jonathan had two pens so we had one each. When I took the pen I started to run to the classroom. From all the stress I forgot which classroom we had. So I had to run back to the locker and find my calendar where I had the paper with all my lessons and classrooms. It was in the other side of the school and I still had 3 minutes left so I ran and ran and ran… the entire school watched strangely at me when I ran. When I finally made it to the classroom I opened the door and screamed “I made it!!!” and my teacher and classmates were watching me as I was a freak because I looked confused, stressed and tired. I went to the teacher’s desk and asked if I could get the test.

“What test”, the teacher asked me.

“The math test we should have today”, I said.

“The math test is next Friday”, she said
Then everybody started laughing at me and I felt really embarrassed and I asked my teacher if I could go home for the day. She asked me why so I told her that I didn’t feel so good.

**Think about**

- Get an alarm clock that’s OK!
- Get to the bus station in time.
- Bring bus money in case your bus card doesn’t work.
- Check your wallet the day before.
- Have an extra pen with you.
- Write down the day of the test in your phone.
Appendix N

Lesson Plan for Movie Pitch Project

Title: Movie Pitch Project

Subject: ESL, Language Arts (English)

Grade Level: 12

Objectives:
- Students will correct mistakes in grammar and spelling.
- Students will create initial plans for the Movie Pitch Project.
- Students will read and understand a challenging text.
- Students will orally summarize and explain the text.
- Students will listen and understand all students in the group.

Swedish Goals:
Upon completion of the course, students should:
- be able to read literature from different periods and different genres, as well as be able in their reading to reflect on textual contents and form from different perspectives

- be able to provide information orally in a structured way

- be familiar with developments in one of more areas such as politics, societal life, religion, literature, film, art or music in an English-speaking country

- be able in different contexts to introduce and actively participate in oral communication of varying types, and be able to use English flexibly and purposefully, in both formal and informal contexts

Pennsylvania Academic Standards:
Subject: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening
Area 1.1: Learning to Read Independently
  Grade 1.1.11: Grade 11
  Standard C.: Use knowledge of root words and words from literary works to recognize and understand the meaning of new words during reading. Use these words accurately in speaking and writing.
Area 1.3: Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature
  Grade 1.3.11: Grade 11
  Standard A.: Read and understand works of literature.
  Standard B.: Analyze the relationships, uses and effectiveness of literary elements used by one or more authors in similar genres including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone and style.
Standard C.: Analyze the effectiveness, in terms of literary quality, of the author’s use of literary devices.
   · Sound techniques (e.g., rhyme, rhythm, meter, alliteration)
   · Figurative language (e.g., personification, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, satire)
   · Literary structures (e.g., foreshadowing, flashbacks, progressive and digressive time).

Standard F.: Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.

Area 1.5: Quality of Writing
Grade 1.5.11: Grade 11

Standard A.: Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
   · Identify topic, task and audience.
   · Establish and maintain a single point of view.

Standard B.: Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
   · Gather, determine validity and reliability of, analyze and organize information.
   · Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.
   · Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus.

Standard C.: Write with controlled and/or subtle organization.
   · Sustain a logical order throughout the piece.
   · Include an effective introduction and conclusion.

Standard D.: Write with a command of the stylistic aspects of composition.
   · Use different types and lengths of sentences.
   · Use precise language.

Standard F.: Edit writing using the conventions of language.
   · Spell all words correctly.
   · Use capital letters correctly.
   · Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
   · Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
   · Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).

Area 1.6: Speaking and Listening
Grade 1.6.11: Grade 11

A.: Listen to others.
   · Ask clarifying questions.
   · Synthesize information, ideas and opinions to determine relevancy.
   · Take notes.

C.: Contribute to discussions.
   · Ask relevant, clarifying questions.
   · Respond with relevant information or opinions to questions asked.
   · Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of others.
   · Adjust tone and involvement to encourage equitable participation.
   · Facilitate total group participation.
   · Introduce relevant, facilitating information, ideas and opinions to enrich the discussion.
   · Paraphrase and summarize as needed.
E.: Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.
- Initiate everyday conversation.
- Select and present an oral reading on an assigned topic.
- Conduct interviews.
- Participate in a formal interview (e.g., for a job, college).
- Organize and participate in informal debate around a specific topic. Use evaluation guides (e.g., National Issues Forum, Toastmasters) to evaluate group discussion (e.g., of peers, on television).

F.: Use media for learning purposes.
- Use various forms of media to elicit information, to make a student presentation and to complete class assignments and projects.
- Evaluate the role of media in focusing attention and forming opinions.
- Create a multi-media (e.g., film, music, computer-graphic) presentation for display or transmission that demonstrates an understanding of a specific topic or issue or teaches others about it

Materials and resources:
- Student letters of complaint
- List of novels
- Four copies of each novel
- Movie Pitch Project assignment sheet and rubric
- Five copies of each article relating to the mosque
- Computer
- Projector and speaker system

The number of computers required is 1.

Lesson Procedure:
2:45-3:15 (30 minutes) – Students absent last week will correct the letters of complaint, review the novel choice list, form groups of four and each group will sign up for a different novel. Inform students that they can change their novels to another novel on the list, provided no other group has signed up for it.

Students who were present last week and have already completed these activities will have time to work independently: begin reading novels, complete exercises in book, or meet with groups to discuss any questions/concerns that may have arisen.

3:15-3:45 (30 minutes) – Review Movie Pitch Project assignment sheet and rubric to ensure all students understand what is expected. Answer any student questions.

3:45-3:55 (10 minutes) – Students will meet in groups to determine how many pages/chapters they will need to read each week. It is important that all students in the group are “on the same page” because they will be allotted class time each week to discuss the developments in plot, character, theme, etc. If all group members cannot discuss the same point in the novel then valuable class time will be waster.

3:55-4:10 (15 minutes) – Students may take a break.

4:10-4:20 (10 minutes) – Watch a clip highlighting the Mosque debate occurring in America over the potential mosque site near Ground Zero. Briefly discuss the background of the debate
for students. Explain the Mosque debate assignment. Students will each be assigned one of five recent news articles to read. While reading, students should pay close attention to the main idea (thesis) of the article, what side of the argument the author supports, whether the article is effective in convincing readers of the authors viewpoint – why or why not, and also to make note of any unfamiliar phrases or vocabulary words.

4:20-4:35 (15 minutes) – Students will have time to read their articles.

4:35-5:00 (25 minutes) – Students will form groups consisting of five members (each member will have read a different article). For the duration of the period, students will discuss their article with their group members, paying close attention to the focus questions.

Assessment: Upon completion of the assignment students will be assessed according to the Movie Pitch Project Rubric (Appendix N). This rubric has three major focus points: content, group collaboration, and individual presentation skills. In the content section, students will need to identify setting, major characters, significant plot points, overarching themes, and important symbols in their respective novels. In the group collaboration section, students should work well together and contribute equally to the final project. As individuals, students will be assessed on their grammar, vocabulary usage and general oral speaking skills (eye contact, volume, use of notes, etc.). Students will be assessed in each category using the typical Swedish scale of IG (not passing), G (passing), VG (pass with distinction), and MVG (pass with special distinction). For more detailed information see attached rubric.

Lesson Analysis and Reflection: This lesson went very well compared to the previous weeks lesson. The previous week, administrators mistakenly informed students that they did not have English class. As a result, less than half of the class (12 students) was present and thus the lesson ended quite early. This impacted the structure I had developed for the Movie Pitch Project since this class meets only once a week.

However, the class responded very well to the assignment after reviewing the rubric. There were many questions for clarification purposes since students had never encountered a project of this nature before but the questions stemmed more from interest and curiosity than confusion. For example, students did not know what a “pitch” was in the context of cinema terminology but once I explained that it was a concise presentation typically performed in front of potential movie producers the class seemed quite excited. An area of particular interest was the character analysis, in which the students would need to choose actors to play their characters and defend their choices based on characterization present in the novel. Questions ranged from, “Do they have to be famous?” to “Can they be dead?” to “Do they need to be an actor already?” Clearly the students were at the very least interested in the project.

Reading and discussing about the mosque debate in America went very smoothly as well. I began by introducing the topic and showing a short news video that I felt presented both sides of the debate. Some students had already heard of this news story and were interested to learn more specifics. Additionally, anything that has to do with the U.S. and 9/11 or terrorism is a hot topic with them. Next period we will use knowledge of the articles to have a short in-class debate.
Appendix O

Movie Pitch Project Assignment Sheet

Movie Pitch Project
For this project, each group will need to “pitch” their movie idea (novel) to a group of producers (the class) in hopes of having their movie chosen to be put into production. However, the producers can only afford to make one movie, so you must convince them that your movie is the best! In order to convince them, you must include information about the action (plot description), casting (character analysis), set location (setting), and target audience & marketability (theme analysis), as well as a potential movie poster (visual depiction). Needless to say, everyone must read the entire novel and each group member must contribute to the project. There will be class time to work with your groups, however if your group does not finish within the allotted class time, it is your responsibility to meet outside of class to finish.

Movie Poster (Visual Depiction) – This should illustrate the tone of the novel. For example, if your novel is about the brutality of war then you may want to include colors like black or red or images of weapons or the aftermaths of war – you would probably not include pictures of rainbows and smiling children. How your group decides to make this poster is completely up to you. You could use computer programs such as Photoshop or you may simply want to draw on paper. The poster can be as large as your group chooses but it must be at least the size of a computer paper (A4).

Set Location (Setting) – Where is your novel located (in place and time)? You will want to identify the country that the novel takes place in, as well as the time period. How does this contribute to the message of the novel? Do you think either the place or time period should be altered for the audience to better understand the movie? If your novel was originally set in 18th century England but your group feels that the movie should be filmed in 21st century China then you will need to thoroughly explain why and also how this will change/enhance the author’s message.

Casting (Character Analysis) – Identify the novel’s main characters and choose actors/actresses who would be particularly suited to play the part. Provide a detailed explanation of each character’s physical/emotional/mental state and why each actor/actress would be perfect to portray them. This means you will need to assess the actors/actresses looks (although we all know looks can be fairly easily altered) as well as their past work.

Action (Plot Description) – What’s a movie without the action? Producers don’t want to read an entire 400 page script at a pitch meeting so your group needs to provide a thorough but brief summary of your novel, which focuses on a few key plot points. Consider what makes the book important (ie. themes) and then identify which scenes best illustrate these themes. Be sure to “set the scene”! Remember, you want the producers to pick your movie so you really need to frame the story so that the rest of the plot makes sense.

Target Audience and Marketability (Theme Analysis) – One of the most important things to consider for a producer when choosing a movie is will this movie make money? The producers want to know what kind of people will want to watch this movie – this is where the novels’ themes are important. It is your job to identify the themes in the novel and thoroughly explain why they are important and how the novel treats them. What sort of people will care about the theme? Old, young, girls, boys? Essentially, why would anyone spend their precious time reading this novel?

It is your job to convince everyone in the room that your novel is the best and provide persuasive evidence to support your claim!
## Movie Pitch Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaboration with Peers</th>
<th>1 - IG</th>
<th>2 - G</th>
<th>3 - VG</th>
<th>4 - MVG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Often is not a good team member.</td>
<td>Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group but sometimes is not a good team member.</td>
<td>Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Does not cause &quot;waves&quot; in the group.</td>
<td>Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Tries to keep people working well together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie Poster (Visual Depiction)</th>
<th>1 - IG</th>
<th>2 - G</th>
<th>3 - VG</th>
<th>4 - MVG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movie poster is not relevant to the novel OR does not meet the specifications.</td>
<td>Movie poster is mildly confusing OR does not fully meet the specifications.</td>
<td>Movie poster is clearly attempting to reflect the importance of the novel.</td>
<td>Movie poster appropriately reflects the importance of the novel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set Location (Setting)</th>
<th>1 - IG</th>
<th>2 - G</th>
<th>3 - VG</th>
<th>4 - MVG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is no description of setting OR the description is nonsensical.</td>
<td>The description of setting is minimal or confusing.</td>
<td>The description of setting is accurate.</td>
<td>The setting is thoroughly described and is discussed in relation to the plot/theme of the novel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casting (Character Analysis)</th>
<th>1 - IG</th>
<th>2 - G</th>
<th>3 - VG</th>
<th>4 - MVG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The main characters are not identified OR there is no explanation of casting choice.</td>
<td>The main characters are identified but not described; there is minimal reasoning for each casting choice.</td>
<td>The main characters are correctly identified and described; there is evidence of reasoning for each casting choice.</td>
<td>The main characters are correctly identified and described; there is a compelling explanation for each casting choice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action (Plot Description)</th>
<th>1 - IG</th>
<th>2 - G</th>
<th>3 - VG</th>
<th>4 - MVG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The plot is inaccurately described OR major scenes are omitted.</td>
<td>The plot is not clear OR major scenes are not explained clearly.</td>
<td>The plot is accurately described and some major scenes are explained.</td>
<td>The plot is thoroughly and accurately described and major scenes are highlighted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Audience and Marketability (Theme Analysis)</th>
<th>1 - IG</th>
<th>2 - G</th>
<th>3 - VG</th>
<th>4 - MVG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major themes are incorrectly identified OR there is no evident relationship between theme and text.</td>
<td>Some major themes are identified and described with weak or irrelevant examples from the text.</td>
<td>All major themes are identified and described with some examples from the text.</td>
<td>All major themes are identified and described in conjunction with relevant examples from the text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization of Presentation</th>
<th>1 - IG</th>
<th>2 - G</th>
<th>3 - VG</th>
<th>4 - MVG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation is not organized OR has no introduction or conclusion; some group members do not contribute to presentation.</td>
<td>Presentation is somewhat organized with a weak introduction and conclusion; presentation is not divided equally between group members.</td>
<td>Presentation is organized with an introduction and conclusion; each student presents a portion of the presentation.</td>
<td>Presentation is logically organized with a strong introduction and conclusion; students are assigned equal portions of the presentation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Rarely uses correct grammar.</td>
<td>Sometimes (70-80%) uses correct grammar.</td>
<td>Mostly (80-95%) uses correct grammar.</td>
<td>Always (95-100% of time) uses correct grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Uses several words or phrases that are inappropriate for the audience.</td>
<td>Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Gives insufficient explanation for any new words.</td>
<td>Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Gives brief explanation for any new words.</td>
<td>Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Clearly defines words that may be new to most of the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Engagement (Volume &amp; Speaks Clearly &amp; Eye Contact)</td>
<td>Volume often too soft to be heard by all audience members; often mumbles or cannot be understood; does not look at audience.</td>
<td>Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 80% of the time; can be understood but makes mistakes; attempts to make eye contact with audience.</td>
<td>Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 90% of the time; can be understood clearly with few mistakes; uses notes appropriately and makes eye contact with audience.</td>
<td>Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members throughout the presentation; can be understood clearly throughout the presentation; uses notes sparingly, makes eye contact with audience throughout the presentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix P

**Sample Student Work – Movie Pitch Project**

| **Title:** Public Defender One
| **Director:** J. Miller

| **Synopsis:**
| A public defender fights against the system to help indefensible defendants win their cases. A young lawyer joins her team to face the next big case of their lives - the trial of the century.

| **Strengths:**
| - Strong character development
- Engaging plot
- Emotional resonance
- High stakes

| **Weaknesses:**
| - Predictable plot
- Lack of innovation
- Technical issues

| **Proposed Solution:**
- Rewrite plot
- Introduce new characters
- Improve technical issues

| **Budget:**
| $2.5 million

| **Timeline:**
| 3 months

---

**Note:**

- **Production:**
- **Distribution:**
- **Marketing:**

---

**Name:**

---

**3.25**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Identify the goal of the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gather information and data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Organize the content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Create the presentation structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Design the visual elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Practice the delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rehearse the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Deliver the presentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tips and Techniques**
- Always have a backup plan.
- Engage with the audience.
- Use visual aids effectively.
- Practice, practice, practice.
Academic Vita of Katherine Elizabeth Curran

E-Mail Id: KEC5117@psu.edu

Education
B.S. in Secondary Education English/Communications Option
Minors in English and Psychology
Honors received in Secondary Education

Thesis Title: HOW TO CREATE AUTHENTIC WRITING IN THE CLASSROOM:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AMERICAN AND SWEDISH PUBLIC SCHOOL
STUDENTS
Thesis Supervisor: Anne E. Whitney, Assistant Professor in Language and Literacy Education

Work Experience

Student Teaching
August 30 to November 19, 2010
Erik Dahlberggymnasiet (High School), Jönköping, Sweden
• Collaborated with Swedish instructors and administrators
• Developed units about the works of William Shakespeare, Cultural Inquiries, and Holes
  by Louis Sachar appropriate for ESL students grades 10-12
• Adapted teaching techniques to suit the needs of ESL students
Supervisor: Ulla Lundgren and Jason Whitney

Pre-Service Student Teaching
February 15 to April 9, 2010
Bald Eagle Area High School, Wingate, PA
• Created lessons about the works of William Shakespeare and Cover Letters/Resumes
  appropriate for Grade 12 students
• Taught students utilizing techniques learned at Penn State University
Supervisor: Carol Ann Colyer

Imbedded Study Abroad Program
March 5 to March 16, 2009
Erik Dahlberg and Bäckadal (High Schools), Jönköping, Sweden
• Engaged in cultural discussions with Swedish students
• Discussed educational practices with Swedish faculty
• Observed Swedish classroom practices
Supervisor: Jamie Myers

Comprehensive Studies Program
October 2007 to May 2009
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
• Mentored and tutored students in English as a Second Language, Psychology and
  Statistics
Supervisor: Bao-Ming Li
ESP Program
January 2008 to May 2008
Centre Learning Community, State College, PA
• Designed a Cheerleading and Gymnastics club as part of the after-school program
• Instructed students in beginner and intermediate level cheerleading and gymnastics skills
• Organized and choreographed a culminating performance for parents and peers
Supervisor: Kathy Morrow

Volunteers in Public Schools
October 2006 to May 2007
State College High School, State College, PA
• Tutored students in English, Geometry, and Pre-Calculus
Supervisor: Catherine Lehman

Awards:
ETS Recognition of Excellence
June 12, 2010
Awarded by The Educational Testing Service (Praxis Series) to acknowledge scoring within the top 15% of all test takers for the English Language, Literature, and Composition: Content Knowledge exam.

Professional Memberships:
Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)
November 2009 to present