

Helena High School Significant Writing Program

A genuine writing program is a cumulative process. This continuous and inclusive writing program guarantees the best learning and most individualized instruction for all students. Additionally, such an emphasis on and commitment to writing promotes an active focus on student performance and growth, grades 9-12. By balancing and linking the instruction of literature with the instruction of writing, this program requires direct instruction in the writing process and allows for a variety of evaluative assessments, including portfolios, conferencing, peer-editing experiences, and formal responses by the teacher. Students learn to use language creatively and effectively by prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, evaluating, and publishing their own writing and the writing of their peers. Students practice the components of writing, including organization, development, mechanics, grammar, and usage.

Developing writing voices of their own, students write frequently for a variety of audiences and purposes, including at least two major compositions each quarter. A variety of writing models is included. All levels write responses to literature and media. Grade Nine concentrates on the paragraph structure, the citation of research, informal essays, and narratives. Grade Ten includes the multiple paragraph formal essay, the formal research essay, the narrative essay. Grade Eleven continues the emphasis on the critical-analytical essay, the comparison-contrast essay, and a research-based essay. Grade Twelve includes a focus on the literary analysis/critique, the narrative essay, and a research-based essay, as well as technical writing skills such as the business letter and resumes.

Since the beginning of our formal adoption of the Significant Writing Program (1995-1996), we have worked extensively on refining and improving both the teaching and the assessment of the Program. As a result, student skills in all the facets of writing have grown remarkably, as has been noted by teachers in all the facets of writing. We intend to work for continued improvement and growth.