WriteToLearn in the Classroom

Growing Literacy for Every Student

Pearson
Mrs. Davis is a seventh grade English language arts teacher. She has 117 students in her classroom, 12 of whom are English language learners. With college and career readiness standards firmly in mind, Mrs. Davis is looking for new ways to teach argumentative essays and citation of sources without doubling her grading time.

She’s excited to try the proven, research-based online literacy tool her administrators have adopted for the district: WriteToLearn™.

Automated essay scoring & reporting

In the first few weeks of school, Mrs. Davis assigns an essay prompt to see where her students are and gauge just how much they’ve forgotten over the summer. Her students each log in to their own accounts and type their essays in the program.

As soon as her students submit their drafts, WriteToLearn provides immediate scores and feedback that support the College and Career Readiness standards. Some students pass after revising their essay just once. Others use all six attempts she’s given them as they work towards a passing score.

The overview report tells Mrs. Davis which writing skills she needs to review with her students and gives her an early indication of who might need extra support.
“I found WriteToLearn to be a great diagnostic tool to determine student weak areas which would pinpoint their specific needs. It was a quick way to allow me to individually help each student improve their writing.”

Deanna Eiland, English Teacher
Cross-subject content

Mrs. Davis’ colleague, Mr. Jones, teaches seventh grade Social Studies in the same school. He will be using WriteToLearn to seamlessly incorporate reading and writing development into his current curriculum.

To capture his students’ attention early on, he starts the year by assigning a reading passage on “Foundations of Geography”. The students first complete a vocabulary exercise with words from the passage. Then they read the passage and write a summary of what they’ve read.
Among the teachers’ new students are Jack Jones and Anna Gonzales. Jack is excited to be back in school. But when it comes to writing, he has a hard time organizing his ideas. He didn’t pass the first essay assignment right away. The student scoreboard and writing tips made it easy for him to see how he could improve his essay, and he passed on the third attempt.

With its personalized activities page, WriteToLearn feels like the computer games Jack’s mom let him play over the summer. When he logs in, he can see what he’s been assigned, whether his teachers have added any comments, and how close he is to completing his assignments. Each time he works in WriteToLearn he tries to beat his personal record.

Jack’s Activity Page shows that he passed his essay and has a summary assignment to begin.
Support for struggling students

Anna is one of Mrs. Davis’ English language learners. She’s quiet and rarely participates in class discussions. She struggled with the first writing assignment of the year, but after Mrs. Davis started using the ELL rubric for her and showed her all of the language tools in WriteToLearn, Anna knows that she’s improving.

If she doesn’t understand part of Mr. Jones’ summary passages or instructions, the text-to-speech function reads it aloud to her. Or she can use the spot word translation if she runs into an unfamiliar word. The vocabulary exercises before the summary activities also help her learn new words before she reads them in the passage and improve her reading comprehension.

Select essay prompts are designed specifically for English learners and provides essay writing advice to help English learners focus on the fundamentals of writing.

“I really like it a lot—my favorite thing about it is that they can have their writing read back to them. The kids like this, too. I often ask them to read it to themselves.”

Kristina Kitler, Teacher,
Seacoast Charter Academy, Jacksonville, Florida
Less time grading, more time teaching

Halfway through the year, Mrs. Davis is amazed by the amount of writing her students have done. Each student has written a total of 11 essays and summaries, more than they did all year last year.

Instead of spending all her time grading, Mrs. Davis logs in regularly to see how each student is doing and provides comments to encourage each student and tell them what she wants them to work on next time.

At parent-teacher conferences, the student reports make it easy to show parents all of the assignments their children have completed to date, the progress they’ve made so far, and the areas where they need to focus on to improve their overall scores.

Easy curriculum integration

As he completes his Social Studies lesson plans, Mr. Jones is pleased to find a healthy mix of reading passages, some from Pearson imprints he’s used before. The variety makes it easy for him to choose passages that align to his curriculum.

Also, the Lexile and Reading Maturity Metric information for select passages allow him to steadily increase the complexity of the texts he assigns throughout the year and even personalize assignments based on student skill levels.
The printer-friendly feature makes it easy for both teachers to use reports in parent-teacher conferences.

Mr. Jones chooses from a large selection of summary activities available in his subject and grade-range.

“This is great! I spend my life grading essays, told other teachers in the department ‘it will change your life!’”

Rob Rose, Teacher, River City Science Academy
Improving Learning Outcomes for All Students

In the Spring, Mrs. Davis and Mr. Jones meet to discuss the effectiveness of WriteToLearn. They are astonished to realize just how much reading and writing their students have done—and how much more time they have to focus on teaching.

How WriteToLearn’s automated scoring adds up:

- 117 students
- 22 essays and summaries assigned per student
- 6 submissions per assignment
- 15,444 drafts evaluated with feedback
- 1,930 days to grade drafts by hand, 2 hours per day
- 3,890 hours saved by using WriteToLearn
In addition to the number of assignments, the reports show that with all this reading, writing, and vocabulary practice students are making significant progress in their literacy skills through the year. This progress is easy to see when the teachers compare an individual student’s essays from August and February.

**State assessments results**

As testing season gets closer, Mrs. Davis assigns essay prompts, similar to those on the state assessment, and adjusts the settings so that her students have three attempts to pass an essay instead of six. Then, a few weeks before the test, she assigns a new essay with one attempt, and turns off the support tools to mimic the testing experience.

On test day, Jack, Anna, and their classmates are comfortable with the state assessment format, because the experience is just like the essay assignments they’ve done all year round in WriteToLearn.

When the scores come in, student performance on state writing assessments reflects their WriteToLearn progress reports. Overall, the school’s seventh-grade scores improved by 23% in the first year of using WriteToLearn.

WriteToLearn’s comprehensive literacy approach has been a key tool to help these teachers improve student learning outcomes—better readers become better writers and better writers become better readers.

Scoreboards show the progress one real-life student made from August to February. The August attempt (top) was with multiple feedbacks and the spelling, grammar, and repeated content check turned ON. The February attempt was with only one feedback and all helps turned OFF.

“Before WriteToLearn, I had never seen a student get a perfect score on the state writing exam. In 2013, 13 out of my 52 seventh graders earned them. That’s a quarter of the class!”

Terri Dalsted, Middle School Writing Teacher

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1 While Mrs. Davis and Mr. Jones are fictional teachers, this data comes from the 2012-2013 school year of WriteToLearn customer Jeff Pence, a 7th grade English language arts teacher from Dean Rusk Middle School in Canton, GA.

2 While Jack, Anna, and their classmates are fictional characters, this data comes from the 2011-2012 student test results of Washington state middle school teacher Terri Dalsted, a real-life WriteToLearn customer.
Contact Us

www.WriteToLearn.net

1.866.842.7428

Email:
learningassessments@pearson.com