

STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COLLINS WRITING PROGRAM IN THE MINNEAPOLIS, MN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Executive Summary by Christine Maefsky

The Collins Writing Program professional development course survey, conducted in the fall of 2007, reflects the responses of 68 Minneapolis Public School teachers, K-12, who took a year-long Collins Writing Program course between 2004 and 2007. Participants in the course represented the broad spectrum of curriculum content areas, student populations and schools. The overall rate of return of the survey by teachers was 60%. Analysis of the results indicates that there were no discernable patterns of difference in response related to the length of time that had passed since the teachers took the course.

The intent of the survey was to evaluate the effectiveness of the training based on teachers' perceptions. Questions were structured to indicate teachers' perceptions about both their own teaching practice and their students' writing performance prior to taking the Collins Writing Program course and after taking the course.

Results of the survey indicate a highly positive perception about the Collins Writing Program and the effect the course had on both teacher practice and student performance. Questions related to teacher practice specifically targeted those practices that have been shown to positively impact student performance in writing and content learning. Following are the questions and the pre- and post-course agree/strongly agree responses.

DESIRABLE TEACHER BEHAVIORS	PRE- COURSE	POST- COURSE
1. I use writing as a tool for engaging students in thinking and learning.	18.8%	83.6%
2. I expect my students to write frequently.	53%	88%
3. I have students keep their writing in portfolios.	14.7%	72.1%
4. I expect my students to engage in peer editing.	14.7%	54.8%
5. I use timely, focused, corrective feedback.	33.8%	86.8%
6. I use writing prompts with expectations for complex thinking: analysis, synthesis, evaluation.	19.1%	91.2%
7. My writing assignments are engaging with clear expectations.	66.2%	95.7 %
DESIRABLE STUDENT PERFORMANCE		
8. My students are motivated to write.	25%	88.2%
9. My students feel comfortable using writing as a tool for thinking, learning and communication.	14.7%	86.8%
10. My students' writing improved in both quantity and quality after I began using the Collins Writing Program.	N/A	98.7%

The final question captures teachers' perceptions about their students' overall writing performance. It shows that the overwhelming percentage of teachers (almost 99%) feel that, as a result of their taking the Collins Writing Program course and implementing its strategies and techniques, their students' writing improved in both quantity and quality.

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