

Public Abstract

First Name:Amy

Middle Name:Alison

Last Name:Lannin

Adviser's First Name:Roy

Adviser's Last Name:Fox

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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This study examined the experiences of students in regular freewriting sessions. Freewriting is defined as nonstop writing during which the writer may freely move through topics but may not stop writing. In a packed school curriculum, why would teachers use freewriting? What advantages and disadvantages would they encounter? This study sought to explore students' experiences with and attitudes towards freewriting. Other studies have been conducted on the results of freewriting on writing performance, but fewer studies, especially at the middle-secondary level, have explored the experiences students have in freewriting.

Freewriting has been pushed aside in the focus on test-preparations, quite often. However, freewriting gets to the key factor in success with writing: developing fluency. Fluent writers can think more clearly on paper and can use writing to learn in content areas. In addition, writing can provide benefits beyond the learning experiences, such as writing that is healing and the experience of flow that can result in focused writing. Such sustained experiences with writing, as this study explored, build fluency in student writing, generate motivation to write, and promote flow experiences for student writers.

This qualitative case study included some quantitative data as well, thus a form of mixed method research was conducted, including interviews, student writing, observations, surveys, fluency measures, and writing apprehension scales. Data was collected over 18 weeks involving 17 eighth and ninth graders in two reading classrooms and their teacher. Students completed five-minute freewrites most every day for 18 weeks as part of their classroom warm-up.