

Cultivating Community, Comfort, and Creativity

Empowering Curiosity Through Writing Based Teaching Practices

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Comfort, creativity, and community are necessary to foster curiosity in a classroom environment, without which students cannot learn or grow. This concept is not new—the [David P. Weikert Center for Youth Program Quality](#) has long advanced belonging as a core value necessary to youth buy-in and advancement. But how does one develop the intangible and highly malleable conditions of “comfort” and “creativity” within curricula or alongside rigorous and challenging work? Further, how does one measure, or even prove, that qualitative experiences such as “comfort” or “creativity” can be encouraged or generated by a set of pedagogical practices any instructor, in any discipline, can learn and apply? The Writing to Learn techniques I use, as disseminated by the Bard College Institute for Writing & Thinking (IWT), advance these necessary conditions for learning and growth. This paper demonstrates how I set out to prove my hypothesis correct, and to support what I suspected was actually happening in my classes so I could more intentionally cultivate comfort, creativity, and community, and encourage other educators with my proof to embrace and explore these pedagogical tools.

I share this belief with James Adams, who lists various “perceptual, emotional, and cultural blocks that interfere with our freedom to explore and manipulate ideas” in his text *Conceptual Blockbusting: A Guide to Better Ideas*, which is excerpted and disseminated within IWT. These blocks include:

1. Fear of taking a risk, making a mistake, failing
2. Low tolerance for ambiguity: overriding desire for order and scrutiny, fear of confusion or chaos
3. Preference for judging, not generating, ideas
4. Tension: inability to relax, incubate, “sleep on it”
5. Lack of challenge: problems fail to engage interest
6. Inflexibility: inability to redefine challenge, to see a larger problem, to make the work one’s own
7. Excessive zeal: over-motivation to succeed quickly

8. Undeveloped access to all areas of imagination and all tools of thinking, inability to change tools

9. Lack of imaginative control

10. Inability to distinguish reality from fantasy

In designing Writing to Learn lesson plans and activities to use in my coursework, it is these blocks that I imagine addressing, and they inspired the qualitative survey I generated to attempt to measure how these pedagogical tools impacted, and hopefully cultivated comfort, creativity, and community, and then subsequently, curiosity. What follows is how I employed a survey of my students and the results they reported, which, in the end, prove that yes, these techniques do deliver upon these hopes, and at the very least, do not cause any harm or setbacks. I surveyed all 47 of our Year Two students in the Fall of 2022 at the beginning of the semester. In the end, I compiled 14 complete surveys. I had very poor attendance at the end of the semester on the day I closed the survey due to both finals and an illness outbreak on campus, and in retrospect, wish I had offered the closing survey earlier to prevent such poor returns. I asked the students to use a code word to identify themselves so the surveys would remain anonymous, and many forgot their code names three months later, so I also removed any surveys that did not match other surveys or did not have closing data. Another relevant piece of context is that all of these Year Two students were enrolled in the same course with me in three sections—“What is Identity?” which was the inquiry our Second Year Seminar focused upon. As a result, the studies of the class may have directly impacted the results, as students were tasked to examine who they were individually and within greater systems of societal order.

I should make clear that I am not a social scientist. I am a poet and writer. But I am also a passionate educator who cares about the students I work with, their experience in school and the courses for which I am responsible with them, so advancing my pedagogical practice is a priority to me, even if my survey methods could be improved. My Likert scale responses are more wordy and qualitative than other researchers may like, but I wanted to provide as much approachability in the survey for students as possible. I was self-conscious about them feeling like test

subjects and hoped for more authentic buy-in with more relatable responses from which they could choose.



Figure 1.

In the survey I also address some particular aspects of identity and belonging as they pertain to the context of my particular campus, which are not only important, but I believe would be irresponsible to not include. It should also be noted that Writing to Learn strategies are lifelong techniques valuable to adults and instructors as well as students, though this paper focuses on students aged 15–19 enrolled in college coursework.

Belonging becomes more complicated and sophisticated to achieve when working with adolescents, as I do at Bard Early College in New Orleans, a part of the network of early college programs supported by Bard College in Annandale, New York. Our model provides high school juniors and seniors with college coursework, and many of our students complete an associate degree alongside their high school diploma. The challenges of our program are rooted in its structure—we have students coming to college classes early from the public school system, and with that come highly differentiated skill sets including mandated Individual Education Plans (IEPs); varying levels of exposure to college norms, rigor, and pacing (for example First Generation students), and their varied psychological development as late teenagers. Our particular program in New Orleans also blends students from eight different high schools where they still maintain enrollment and loyalty, including extra-curricular teams and activities, which

certainly influence how our students consider things like “community” and “belonging.” The academic ability of our students therefore spans a wide spectrum based on their middle and early high school experiences.

While I would consider most of these challenges universal to the early college system and approach, there are further particularities and context about New Orleans that factor into our students’ sense of belonging. As of [2021 data](#), 59% of the citizens of New Orleans identify as Black, and we also have a deep institutional legacy of racial segregation in our schools. New Orleans, after all, was the home of Ruby Bridges and three other young girls, who, in 1960 famously began school in whites-only elementary schools as the federal implementation of *Brown v. Board of Education* which in theory ended racial segregation in schools.

Decades later, our school system remains segregated along racial and socioeconomic lines, which often overlap. According to the [Cowen Institute at Tulane University](#), 75.4% of students enrolled in public school identify as Black, and less than a quarter (24%) of them attend schools rated an A or B by the State of Louisiana. 45% attend C rated schools, and 30% attend D/F rated schools, which run the risk of losing their charter and being absorbed by other charter management organizations. Conversely, 75% of white students attend an A or B school and fewer than 5% of white students attend a D or F school. Further, New Orleans has one of the highest rates of enrollment in private K–12 schools in the nation at 25%, which results in over-representation of students from low-income households in public schools. At Bard Early College New Orleans (BECNO), 95% of our student population identifies as Black, over 68% of our students definitely qualify for free/reduced lunch with only 4% definitely not. 88% qualify for federal Pell Grants. This is all further complicated by our post-Hurricane Katrina educational landscape, in which our public school system, as of summer 2019, is [100% charter managed](#) and has become a progenitor of the school choice movement. Students attend from all over the metropolitan New Orleans area, often getting on a bus before six a.m..

This is relevant because school culture and belonging have a different flavor in New Orleans, where high schools march prominently in Mardi Gras parades and their bands “battle” for prestige and reputation. As adults, we are frequently asked “where did you go to school?” as a first question of introduction instead of what kind of work we do, and the question is not asking for college or professional school—it asks about high school. The answer immediately gives the interrogator all kinds of information about economic status, religious affiliation, and neighborhood—though neighborhood preference is now rarely considered in the school choice movement. Answer the question with college or professional school, and one is immediately marked as an outsider, a non-na-

tive, and therefore potentially treated with skepticism. This is a community that has been hurt by “carpetbaggers” and rampant gentrification, and there are certain social codes in place as a result.

School belonging is, therefore, a very complicated and nuanced cultural conversation and marker of identity with ambivalent generational pain and pride attached. Factor in that many of our students work outside jobs or otherwise support their families with dependent care and labor, and having energy to be curious and confident at school becomes very complicated. Disenfranchisement and distraction can instill negative ideas of self-worth and ability. Divide all this down to the classroom level with 16-22 students from eight different schools, and factor in that I am a white woman, and community-building takes on an entirely new meaning. It was in musing about the particulars of our classroom composition that I chose to include this survey question:

Question 4: Circle as many of these experiences that contribute to a safe classroom community for you (and write any others in):

Hearing everyone else’s thoughts, not just the folks who we can rely upon to contribute to the discussion

Being pushed a little out of my comfort zone to try something new

Sharing a key identity marker with my instructor (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc)

Sharing a key identity marker with my peers (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc)

Consistent routines in the coursework or class time

Seeing others do the exact same work or task that I am

Seeing others do the exact same work or task that I am and seeing that our results can be very different and individual from each other

Having the opportunity to provide feedback to my peers

Having the opportunity to provide feedback to my instructor.

The results are shown in Figure 2. The stars mark gains, the dots stasis, and the one x, a decrease. This identity question I find very interesting in another context—that these students, while Year Two college students, are also high school seniors applying for college at this time period. It is in this fall semester they are finalizing their first choices and “safety schools,” and really trying to come clear about what they want from where they will go next. For most of our students, this includes confronting a decision about PWIs and HBCUs, and what sort of college community they hope to find as a good fit. I found it very interesting that it became *less* important to two students that they share a classroom community with others who look like them. It also is significant that the greatest gain represented on this return reflects peer relationships around their work. Through the course of the semester,

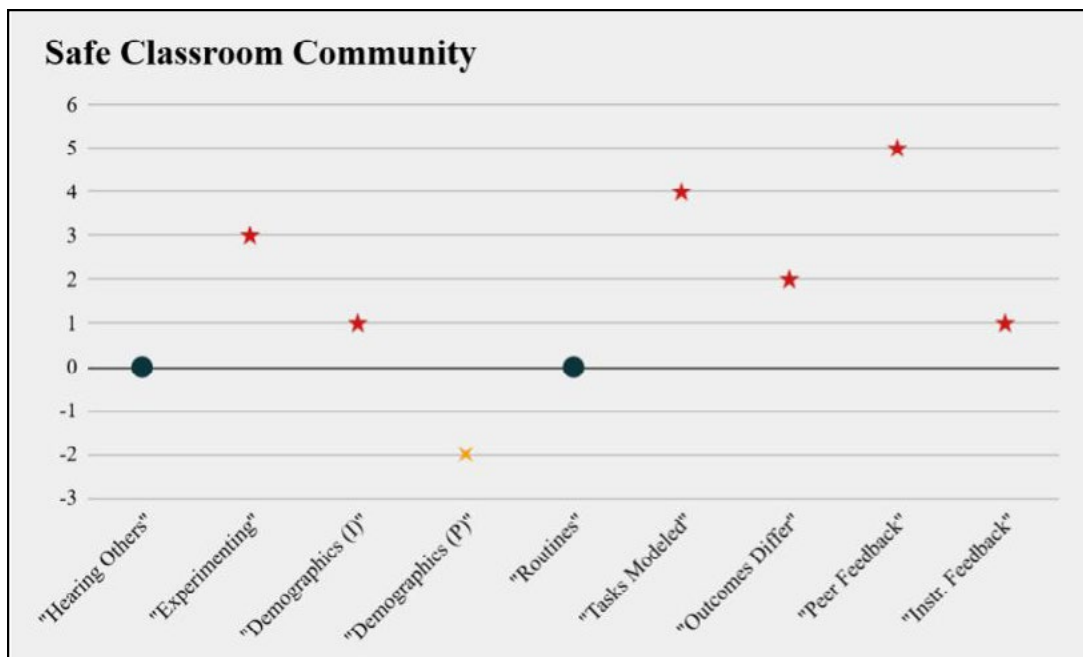


Figure 2. Results of Question 4.

they grew to recognize and value each other's opinions and evaluation, a distinct marker of community-building, which can only result after taking safe social risks. As many of our students, being in the top of their class, are quite competitive, this represented a neutralizing of a "crabs in the bucket" mentality shifting more toward "a high tide raises all boats."

So how is this community-building accomplished using Writing to Learn techniques? A premise underscoring this pedagogical approach is that writing is a social activity—made so by the sharing of it. Freewriting, focused by a prompt, is solicited to be publicly shared verbatim. In this manner, we all give voice to the thoughts we created, we live with what we wrote, knowing that it is "free" form and unedited and, therefore, still in progress. We can test these thoughts out loud and internally compare them to what others are saying—both in similarity and difference. Focused Freewriting allows students the opportunity to prepare their comments ahead of time instead of needing to improvise on the spot when called upon, and, as a result feel more confident in their response. It also equalizes the table, democratizing the room so that the more extroverted voices do not dominate and the shyer voices can be amplified. The instructor writes and shares along with the students, balancing the expertise and confidence, and thereby lowering the stakes, and instead of overly praising or not any one student's work, greets each sharing with a simple, "thank you."

Several of the blocks from Adams' list earlier are encountered here. A safe, practiced space is created to challenge the fear of making a mistake or taking a risk (#1), as well as a fear of confusion or chaos (#2). When a student has an orderly and predictable means for responding, this anxiety is reduced. But also, by hearing what others respond, they will recognize if others are also confused or struggling to grasp a concept, and will feel less alone. Preparing their writing before sharing allows for idea generation instead of judgment (#3) against others and provides flexibility to make the work one's own (#6) and see it their own way before others pollute or complicate the thoughts further. This gives them imaginative control (#9) and can moderate excessive zeal (#7), especially when students must write through the entire time given to respond, another tenet of Writing to Learn. The instructor has the leisure to either tell the students how long they will be writing (for example, five minutes) or allow them the perception of "infinite time" to just write and explore. But no matter what, no one can get to the answer "first" or finish before anyone else, and thereby implicitly apply pressure to others in the room. As a result, these techniques work beautifully in a highly differentiated group of learners as they come to work where they are, at their own pace.

I crafted the first three survey questions to hopefully demonstrate how focused freewriting (or loop writing)

built and reinforced this confidence and relationship between content creation and social sharing.

Question 1: When it comes to speaking in class and sharing my thoughts about the reading or topic we're discussing, I feel:

Very Confident

Somewhat Confident

Maybe I'll join in after I hear others

No way, not talking, no thanks

Question 2: I feel more confident sharing my thoughts about the reading or topic we're discussing after doing some freewriting in response to a prompt first.

True/False

Question 3: What is your experience with freewriting in response to prompts to explore your thoughts?

I've done it enough that I'm used to it and comfortable

I know what it is but it still doesn't feel natural

I've heard of this teaching technique but not really done it before

I've never experienced this before

Because most of these students had already spent a year in college coursework with us (there were some students who came to us their senior year of high school and were therefore enrolled in Second Year Seminar despite it not actually being their second year) and there are other BECNO faculty members that use these techniques, I wanted to gauge how foreign this pedagogical approach to our coursework would be for them. We are a small faculty with only five full-time professors and a 70% adjunct workforce. While we are fortunate to have several adjunct faculty return repeatedly to teach with us, the overwhelming majority are revolving, and therefore not necessarily steeped and practiced in using Writing to Learn techniques. There was a chance that many had not been asked to lead or facilitate a class in this manner before, or if they had, that this culture of teaching was still new or unpracticed for them.

For question one, there was substantial growth, with four students moving from "maybe I'll join in after I hear others" to either "Very" or "Somewhat Confident" by the end of the semester. There was no loss of confidence.

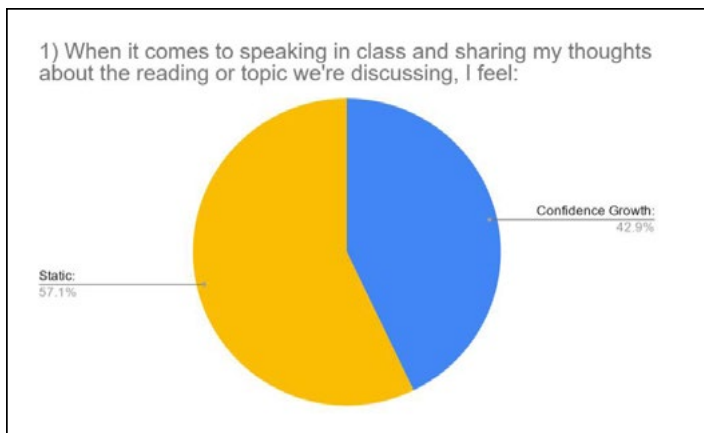


Figure 3. Results of Question 1.

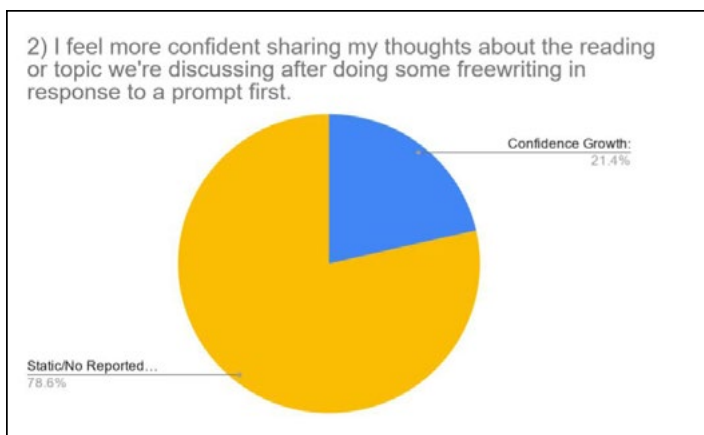


Figure 4. Results of Question 2.

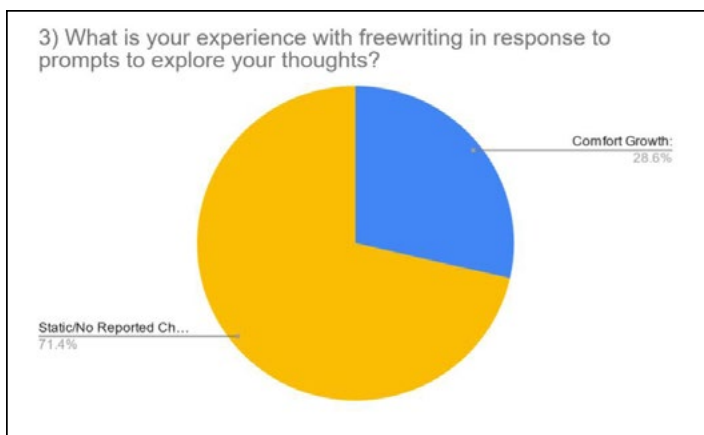


Figure 5. Results of Question 3.

Question two also demonstrates a growth in confidence, and no loss.

Question three reflects the same, with the important note that 12 of 14 students reported they had “done it enough to be used to it and comfortable” as opposed to choosing, “I know what it is but it still doesn't feel natural.” This was

a major achievement in norming, and spoke to the need for consistent practice and routine in the classroom. One example of this was starting each class with a Private Freewrite for four minutes in which students did not have to share this writing. It was time provided only for them to clear their minds to prepare to work for the next 90 minutes. If I moved too quickly from announcements into class time, students would correct and interrupt me to request the private writing time, which was a fantastic demonstration not only of their comfort with the technique and their comfort with me, but also their value of practice. This was one of the anecdotal comments I was able to capture about the Writing to Learn techniques fostering creativity: “I need to get rid of everything else that's going on with me in order to really be able to sit and create something new for myself.”

One funny assumption I made came from casual conversation with students in the past who had told me they never learned cursive. After watching them agonizingly print slowly and wondering if this slowed down their freewriting or taking of notes in class, I asked if they had ever learned script. As digital natives, they are very comfortable typing, but Writing to Learn asks for pen and paper usage to disarm the neurological consequences of screens and encourage cross-hemisphere brain connections as well as foster creativity through sketching and abstractions.

My assumption was met with clear rejection in survey Question #8, as most claimed to already write in cursive or that they felt they wrote by hand fast enough that cursive was not an issue. I was glad to see none of them use it as an excuse not to write by hand, but I also wanted to be sure to include some concept of physical comfort in my survey. I also did not have any students during this semester with special needs that required assisted writing or other support, but of course would offer modifications to any technology needed for student ability, including being online if necessary. Pen and paper is simply the foundation we try to start with if possible.

That said, there are other barriers, including one it took me some time to discover, which was that of a resistance to sequenced, timed freewrites in a sustained manner, as are done with the Writing in the Zones exercise. Because this extended Loop Writing can follow as many as eight prompts with at least five to eight minutes of writing for each prompt, and the writer is asked to write the entire time to discover depth and nuance in their writing, it is already a challenge of focus and patience for even the most practiced writer. At first I thought students struggled with this simply because of the developmental maturity needed to sit still, quietly, with one's own thoughts for so long, but I realized that so much of their K-12 education, depending on the school culture that they came from, relied upon timed activities in which there were obnoxious alarms or counting-down clocks punitively glaring down

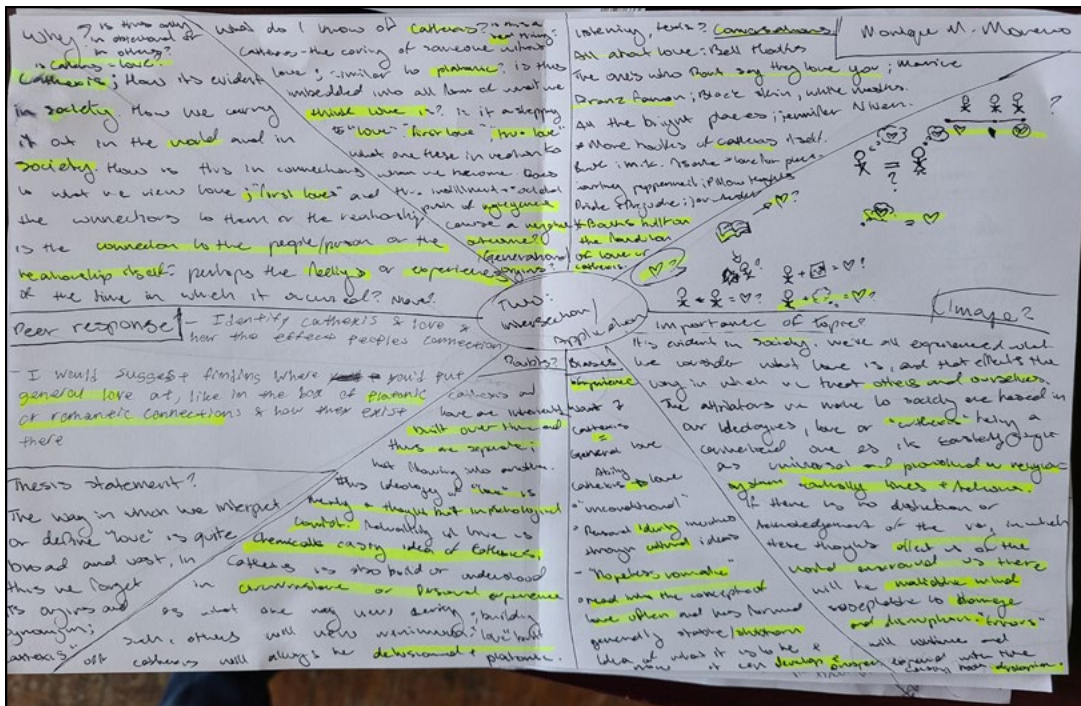


Figure 6. Writing in the Zones.

at them. These timing systems were not used to push a writer in a Pomodoro Technique fashion, but rather to shame or threaten them into working.

I only discovered this upon walking down the hallway outside a ninth grade classroom elsewhere in a building, hearing the startling timer go off, and then the teacher holler that it was time to turn in their exit ticket or risk detention, that I realized I was working against some negative connotations and experiences of timed work that felt very micro-managing instead of liberating. I was able to repair this by framing the writing and exercise differently: that this was intended to build depth and nuance, and to allow a student to forget about time, rather than be hyper aware of trying to get something done in a too short amount of time. The timer could be allowed as a way to let a student escape other demands or temptations by trusting the time that was carved out to work.

The writing and concentration can be a new, and therefore tiring, experience for students, especially for that aforementioned Writing in the Zones activity, which involved an hour of quiet, internal focus as they wrote to begin an essay. I could see when students were challenged or lagged, but for the most part they did well. After class, I solicited personal interviews from three students I perceived to perhaps struggle with the exertion of it, and they all reported back that they enjoyed the exercise, that it was difficult and challenging, but that they felt more prepared to engage their essay and they were grateful for it. They also agreed that they would try to do something similar on their own for the next essay they were assigned. The struggle I witnessed was attributed to, “never

having done work like that before,” and “the quiet in the room was a little weird for me. I’ve never sat in silence and worked with other people like that before.”

That carrying forward of work done in class to actual content retained or pursued speaks to Adams’ blocks about students feeling a “lack of imaginative control” (#9), “inability to change tools” (#8), “lack of challenge” (#5), and “inability to distinguish reality from fantasy” (#10), which can be achieved through asking students to process their writing and experience. Who do they conceive they are or want to be, compared to who they actually are and how they work? I hoped to help students draw connections between what they were thinking and learning in class and what they needed to create and complete for assessment when they left the room, and ultimately, left our program. How might these pedagogical approaches actually influence their process as thinkers, learners, and humans, not just students? Wouldn’t this impact their ability to create? To be confident that they *can* create?

Question 7: Circle all of the approaches or techniques you find helpful to complete assignments:

- Using my notes from class
- Peer review or tutoring
- Challenging a text I believe is incorrect or flawed
- Sketching
- Using quotes from a text

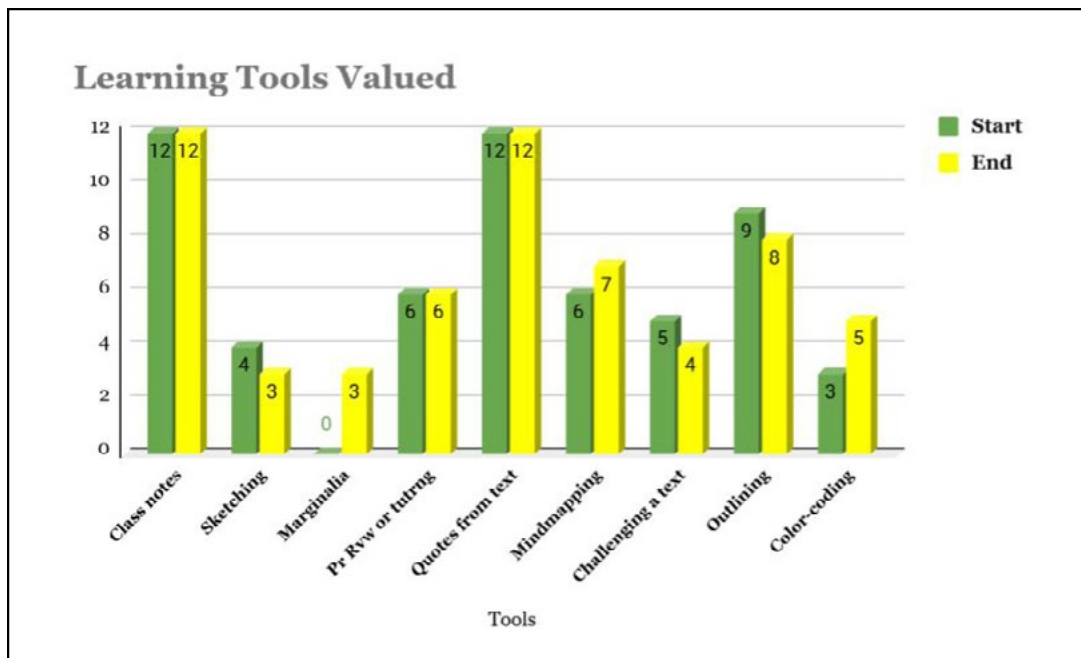


Figure 7. Results of Question 7.

Outlining

Marginalia

Webbing or mind-mapping

Color-coding to organize

Question 9: How confident do you feel when it is time to write an essay?

Very

Somewhat

I can do it but it's a chore

I struggle a lot

I can't do it/am not confident

The chart for question #7 demonstrates that students valued more tools than they had in the beginning, with the exceptions of sketching, outlining, and challenging a text. I was offered one comment about "challenging a text" in class that might supplement this data. In response to a "believing and doubting" writing exercise, the student said that often "challenging a text" felt like staying "rooted in place" and only "dwelling with what was wrong in the world." He added that he wanted to "focus his energy on solutions" and would spend less time pointing out "what others get wrong all the time." While I can't know if that is the same student in the survey, the comment holds value I think for demonstrating gains in both confidence and creativity, particularly since the student could be so cer-

tain that what he thought was valuable and worth exploring. I was also particularly relieved to see that marginalia gained ground and that evidence such as class notes and quotes from the text did not fall off.

The data for Question 9 demonstrate growth all around, even from the self-report of "I can't do it," moving into "I struggle a lot" which is, at the very least, an improvement. Most students gained from "I can do it but it's a chore" to being "somewhat" or even "very" confident. The results from this question were gratifying, as they demonstrate the ability of students to leave the classroom and maintain momentum on their own to complete their work. This independence is crucial to their own self-concept as they move into other spaces.

Question #6 asked them to directly identify themselves.

Question 6: I consider myself very creative.

Yes, so true

Yeah, I have my moments

I'm not sure

Meh: I'm more comfortable with someone telling me what to do and how

No

Here we again see an advance or growth in the self-concept of being creative, which I think is best articulated in the opportunity they had to write in their own ideas. What is most elucidating for me is their demonstration of

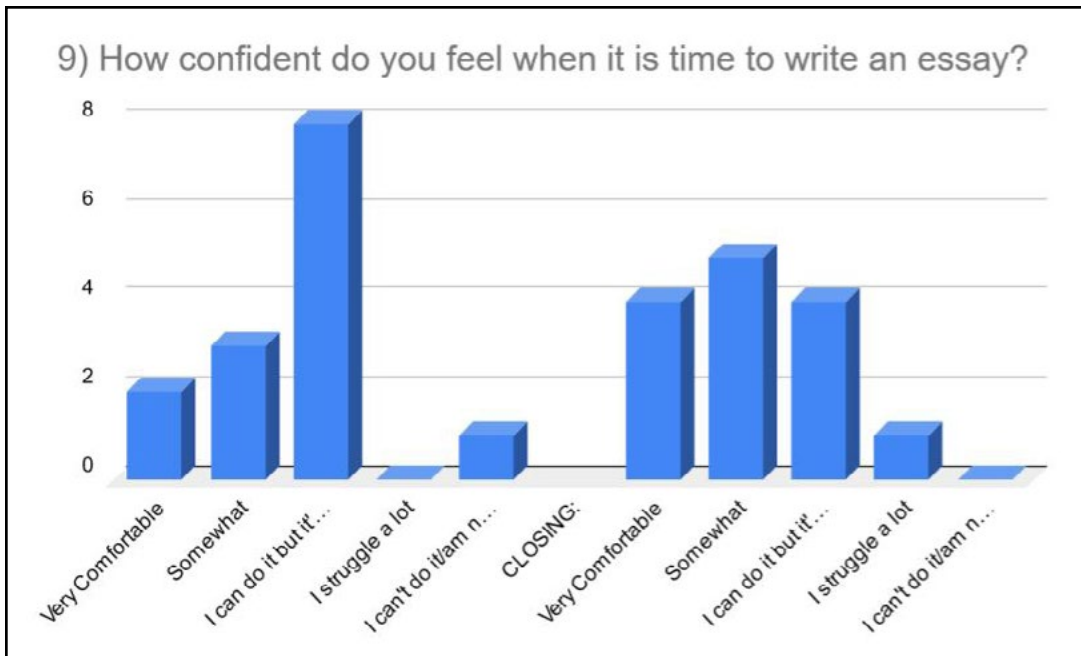


Figure 8. Results of Question 9.

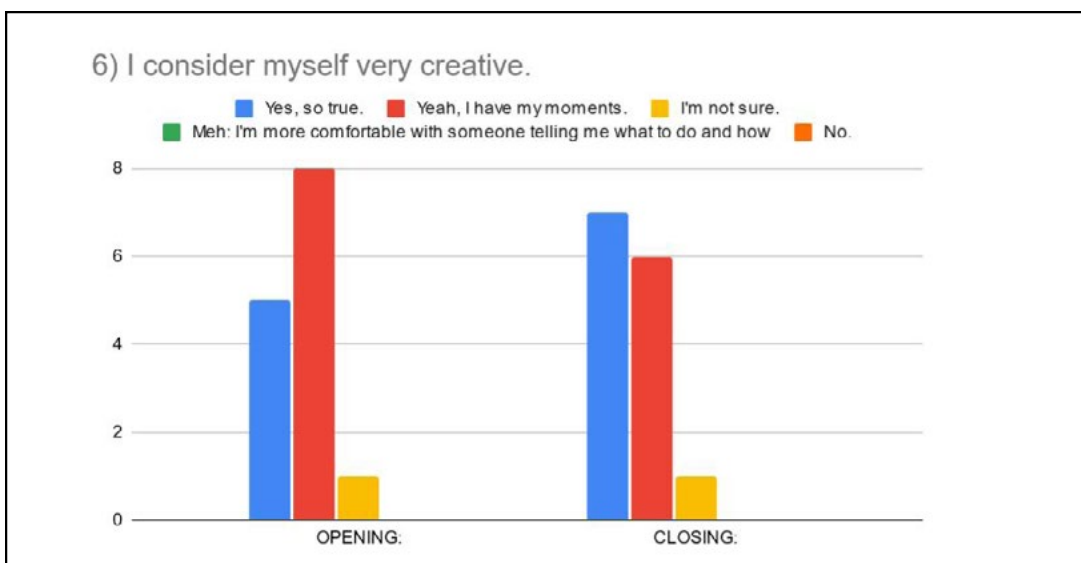


Figure 9. Question 6.

moving out of extrinsic motivation and looking for what others think of them to intrinsic motivation and, more importantly, embracing the concept of creativity as the ability to think and create for oneself beyond the stereotypical occupations of “artists.”

Question 11: What does it mean to you to be creative?

See [Table 1](#) for results.

An observation to note here is the connections students make between liberty or freedom and creativity, and that freedom can also feel like authentic individuality. One ad-

justment that we see many students struggle with at this level of their academic career is the need to move from always having the right answer to being able to think and create and analyze for themselves. Our students are typically at the top of their classes already, and since we pull from eight different schools, that means we are getting the top 10% eight times. These are students who are often not accustomed to getting the “wrong” answer, or doing poorly on an assessment. These are students who are observant and have learned how to play the educational game of determining what their teachers want in order to get the grade they desire. They are also often students who have rarely been challenged and in coming to early college, suffer deeply with “imposter

Code Name	Opening Definition	Closing Definition
"Blank"	"It means your thinking and thoughts are different and unique from others."	"It's to come up with your own idea."
"Therbo"	"To have many ideas and taking action to create a lot of stuff."	"Thinking out the box."
"Desiree F./7"	"To pour your heart out and be who you truly (sp) are in your own response, work of art."	"Can take something and make it fun."
"Flamingo2004"	"To let your thoughts and ideas to be interpreted in different ways."	"To think and express yourself freely."
"Peter Parker"	"To think freely on thoughts without solely adopting the ideas of others but instead building on them as an individual."	"Having the ability to create or think differently or without restraints."
"Joseline Hernandez"	"Thinking outside and using resources."	"Thinking outside of the box, making something new if its ideas on something physical."
"Trackhawk"	"To step out of the box to do an assignment."	"To come up with things that others haven't heard often or be good at things on spot."
"Laila"	"I'm not sure how to explain."	"I truly don't know how to answer this but bringing many different things joyful, sad, etc. into this you love." (sic)
"NBAYoung-boy"	"Thinking outside the box."	"Able to think of something no one else is able to."
"Panda Bear"	"To be creative to me is to take something old or new and reinvent it into something of my own. To think outside the box."	"I think it means to me to be different and to show your train of thoughts."
"Batman"	"Having artistic talents or writing skills."	"To be able to push yourself to think outside of the box."
"Great"	"To be able to create new ideas from nothing."	"To me, when it comes to being creative I view it as coming up with an original idea or taking an old idea and doing something unique with it."
"Ibethinkin-boutu"	"To have full ability to be as creative, unique, and different as you want with no judgment."	"To be creative is to create your own opinions and thoughts. Having your own creative freedom to express yourself."
"cram"	"Be open-minded and voice your opinions, whatever that may be."	"Having your own unique ideas or having an open voice."

Table 1. Results of Question 11: What does it mean to you to be creative? (answers sic, or are confused by illegibility)

syndrome" or a total reset of self-concept because they suddenly don't feel as "smart" or capable as they were a few months before. That students learn to leave behind people-pleasing and engage their own interests and abilities is a meaningful triumph, and to see them value intellectual "fun," and self-expression is evidence that these Writing to Learn practices work to further comfort, creativity, and community.

This confidence and liberation is captured in one more way in the survey, in which they were allowed to contribute as they wished.

Question 12: Feel free to write in any other thoughts or comments that seem relevant to you.

None of the students had anything to add in the opening survey, but at the close, "Flamingo2004" says, "I love being challenged in the classroom." It is a simple sentence, but this statement not only demonstrates the excitement

of challenge, but the confidence that they can handle the challenge, and excel from it. “Laila” says, “I struggled a little at the beginning of the year, but [this course] has helped me gain more confidence and be a better person.” (It should be noted that “Laila” and “Joseline Hernandez” are aliases: there were no enrolled students with those given names.) “Cram” adds that, “I’m willing to try new things because I don’t know if I like it or not until I do it.”

These students are also representing a level of earned trust for the instructor that comes from a pairing of attentive deep listening as well as doing the work in the classroom right alongside them. When they saw me work and struggle and be vulnerable and share, it only contributed to their investment and invited them to join in as I modeled these learning strategies and approaches.

The goal is not to have “successful” students in the traditional sense of high grades and GPA as much as it is to empower other humans to embrace their capacity to slow down and be curious, and then take the time to build community and confidence within it. In asking students to do the Writing in the Zones work in preparation for their upcoming project, I showed them my own for this paper. The hope is that they build out the toolbox of approaches available to them to incorporate into their work and life in whatever way they need to think and create in the future.

Finally, question #5 attempted to directly measure curiosity.

Question 5: When it comes to being curious about the topic of the coursework, even if you’re unfamiliar with it, how curious are you? Circle one answer that best suits you.

Yes, I’ll go look up extra things we studied in class to learn more

Yes, I might not do extra research, but I enjoy continuing the discussion or talking about the books outside of class

Maybe, I’m not really sure yet, but I’m open

Nah, this course topic really isn’t for me and I just want to get the grade I need

No. I don’t need to know anything about this

It is true that in writing this question, I equated “curiosity” with “open-mindedness,” but I will stand by that choice. One complaint we often grumble about in the faculty lounge is that if our students are seemingly “entertained” by a text, if they just didn’t absolutely love it or get “hooked

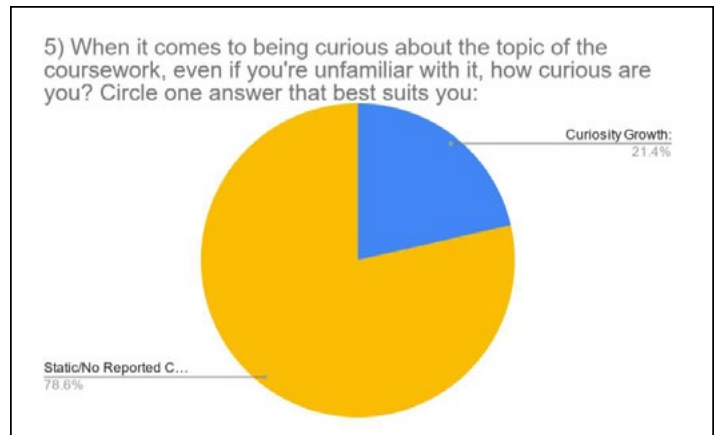
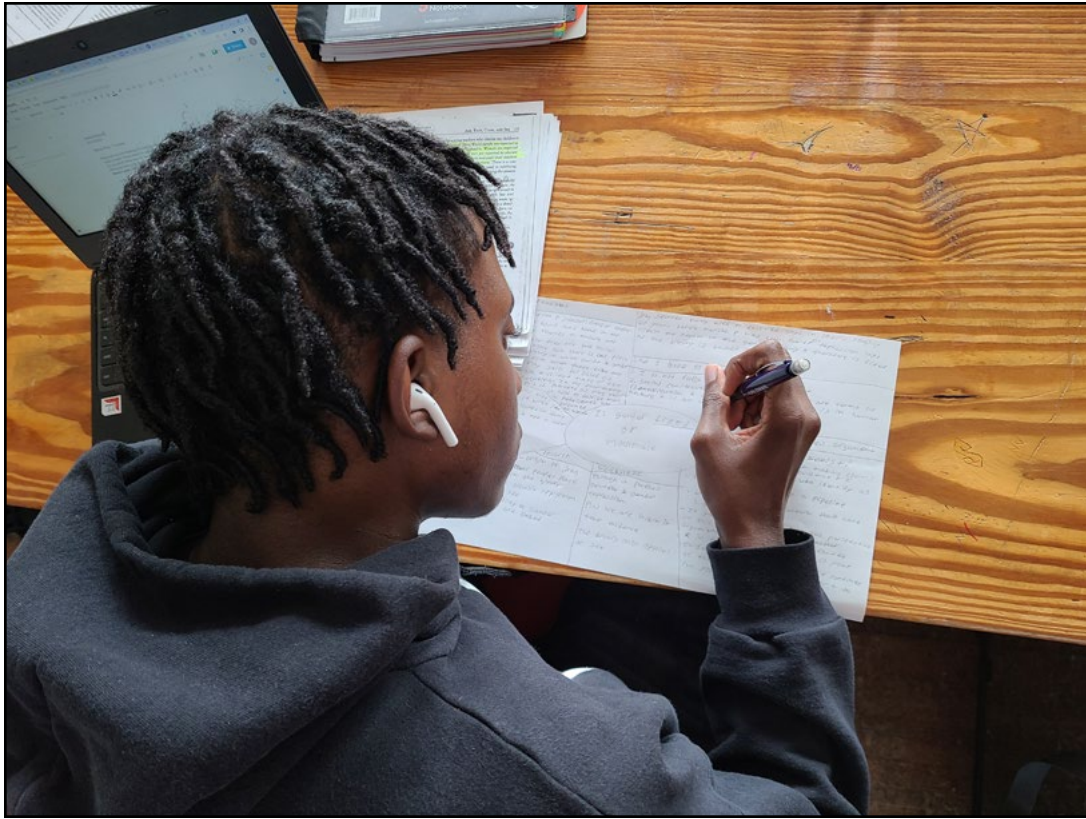


Figure 10. Results of Question 5.

in” by it, then they claim it isn’t “good.” A goal I have is to help students move out of this absolute thinking from the binaries of amazing to awful, but to ask them to think about value. We might really be bothered or disagree with a text, but that doesn’t mean it didn’t help us to think about something meaningful or have a discussion that might not have occurred without it. Curiosity can also look like simply being open to something new, testing it, trying it out, debating it, before then finding one’s own place in the conversation about it. I also hoped that with this goal of building curiosity, students would move out of the dangerous prioritization of grades and assessment and into critical thinking and self-actualization. The results again showed no backsliding, and modest growth, with no one in the closing survey landing in the “nah” or “no” choices.

While this again might speak to trust earned in the course and its resulting community, it also feels relevant to mention that a priority on our campus, especially in Seminar, is to choose culturally relevant texts that balance contemporary intellectual debates with their ideological genealogy. But the Writing to Learn practices help students build their own relationships to these ideas and texts and take their place in the conversation so they build ownership and authorship—confidence and creativity.

In a world where AI is rapidly de-escalating student investment in their own finished product, it is our duty as educators to be tending to their entire mind and person as students and humans, not just helping them manage and churn out assignments to be assessed. Whether in science or math, the arts or the humanities, if we focus on helping students value their thought, their curiosity, and their right to be heard, they will explore and develop the discoveries and art that speak to what it means to be human, and what our future will demand of not just our survival, but our pleasure and consideration of life. These Writing to Learn practices do exactly that.



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