

C. Tell a story about a dilemma in your classroom related to literacy/communication: some challenge you or your students have had with an aspect of reading, writing, speaking or listening that you have questions about and would like to seek answers to.

I have a class of high school juniors and seniors who are good at school. They're in a bunch of advanced classes, they always make good grades, they're involved in all kinds of other things outside of school like sports and clubs and jobs and leadership activities, and it all comes really easily for them. They tell me it always has, and they expect that everything a teacher asks them to do always will be easy since that's all they've ever known.

So when they get a writing assignment in my class they assume this work will come as easily as everything else has and they rely on their first thoughts. They've always gotten a writing assignment, procrastinated (they're not that different than other students in the school), and then gotten something down on paper at the last minute. The problem - though they don't see it as a problem, of course - is that their first thoughts are usually pretty good, and teachers have always been able to compare their work to other students' who don't write as well and tell them how great they are.

Then all the sudden I get them in class and tell them that they can write better. But I struggle in getting these students to commit to that. They don't want to revise. I can get some of them to proofread or edit if I can get them to leave time for it, and they can find 'errors' in each other's papers and, not as often, find

them in their own papers, usually right before they turn them in. But I want them to really revise, to re-envision their writing, to find those places in their first thoughts that are worth a whole lot more attention than they gave them the first time.

I notice this most in some papers I read that have the student's very best idea in the last paragraph, like they've come up with it as they wrote and inserted it almost as an afterthought. I try to teach them that the writing process is exactly what takes writers from first thoughts to afterthoughts, and that those afterthoughts in first drafts are exactly what a second, or a third, or a fourth draft can be built on. But any time I mention this, in conferencing or in comments on students' essays, the response almost always is, "Oh well, it's good enough, isn't it? It works both ways, doesn't it?" It's tough to fight against that when, compared to other students' writing, it really does kind of work both ways.

I guess what I'm saying is that I want to teach my students to tinker, to want to keep messing with what they write, to always want to get it just right and never be satisfied even with getting a good grade or being told by a teacher that their work is good enough. So my question is, how do I make the biggest part of revision - seeing it again - meaningful to my students? Do I need revision strategies? Conferencing ideas? Workshop and peer review help?