What is the College Professor’s Role in Writing Development?

A Discussion Based on the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing

Susan Wolff Murphy

This Framework describes the rhetorical and twenty-first-century skills as well as habits of mind and experiences that are critical for college success.

Habits of mind refer to ways of approaching learning. The Framework identifies eight habits of mind essential for success in college writing:

- Curiosity
- Openness
- Engagement
- Creativity
- Persistence
- Responsibility
- Flexibility
- Metacognition

For example, First-Year Islanders sometimes struggle with being open to new ideas and getting engaged in coursework.

The Framework recommends these kinds of writing activities to develop these habits of mind:

Openness is fostered when writers are encouraged to
- examine their own perspectives to find connections with the perspectives of others;
- practice different ways of gathering, investigating, developing, and presenting information; and
- listen to and reflect on the ideas and responses of others—both peers and instructors—to their writing.

Engagement is fostered when writers are encouraged to
- make connections between their own ideas and those of others;
- find meanings new to them or build on existing meanings as a result of new connections; and
- act upon the new knowledge that they have discovered.

In your classes,

How would openness and engagement help students succeed?

What might these writing activities look like?

Into what project or unit could you add one of these writing activities to encourage openness or engagement?

Based in current research in writing and writing pedagogy, the Framework was written and reviewed by two- and four-year college and high school writing faculty nationwide and is endorsed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project.