

A Guide for Writing Teachers

LaRonce M. Hendricks

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A Guide for Writing Teachers is a valuable resource for teachers hoping to guide their students with sensitivity.

Eighty-seven percent of Americans lack basic writing skills, according to the 2012 National Assessment of Adult Literacy. In *A Guide for Writing Teachers*, LaRonce M. Hendricks reveals startling facts about what this deficit in writing skill costs individuals and the nation as a whole, and gives thirteen helpful tips writing teachers can apply to help students succeed.

The book explains how bad experiences with writing set students up for failure. Years of getting their papers back covered in red ink lead to psychological barriers against writing, which receives an automatic negative association. Many students believe that they are incapable of improvement; some drop courses or quit school entirely. Those who persevere may add several years to the time it would have taken them to earn their degree, adding many thousands of dollars to its cost in the process.

Hendricks stresses the need for urgent action. Millennials, she says, require support systems if they are to succeed. Some suggestions are ones that all students, irrespective of generations, will appreciate: a positive, encouraging, fun classroom atmosphere; classes led by a teacher who clearly explains the requirements for passing, lets students know that failure is not an option, and assures them of his or her support.

Hendricks encourages identification of students who are likely to have difficulties, with regard to their current abilities and to their level of discomfort with writing; this will help both students and teachers improve outcomes. Offering students bonus points for taking responsibility for their own learning is also suggested, not only to motivate personal initiative, but also to help relieve anxiety over grades.

The book makes a compelling case for the importance of writing in the development of critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and the ability to read and synthesize complex information—all skills that are currently in demand, and all of which can be taught. However, the book does not address how already overburdened writing teachers might find the time and energy to implement these suggestions.

Written in accessible language, the book is short and to the point. It is extensively referenced and includes a helpful glossary of terms. Errors in subject-verb agreement, capitalization, and punctuation are a point of distraction.

A Guide for Writing Teachers is a sensitive and valuable resource that recognizes the complex nature of writing problems, and encourages teachers to employ respect, understanding, and patience in resolving them.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May 7, 2018)

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