Annotation #1

Elbow, Peter. *Writing with power: techniques for mastering the writing process*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. Print.

8-10 bullets of information from the sources

* Freewriting is the easiest way to get words on paper and the best all-around practice in writing.” P. 12
* The goal of freewriting is the process, not the product. P. 11
* So much writing time is spent not writing- wondering, worrying, crossing out etc. get on with it and don’t be held back by whether your words are right. P. 14
* We have lots in our heads that makes it hard to think straight and write clearly: we are mad at someone, sad about something, depressed about everything- WRITE ABOUT IT. P. 15
* Follow threads where they lead and you will get to ideas, experiences, feelings or people that are just asking to be written about. P. 16
* You should exploit both intuition and conscious control in every type of writing that you do. P. 17
* You may stay on topic or you may jump back and forth- the important thing is that you’re writing. P. 18
* Regular freewriting helps make the writing process transparent. Helps you “just say it” p. 19

Connections:

Freewriting is a great way for students to write without worrying about what others think. I think that students will benefit greatly from freewriting every day in the classroom. I know that I have greatly enjoyed being able to freewrite for ten minutes in our English class this semester. It doesn’t matter what I write about, I just like that I’m writing.

How will I use the information?

In my future classroom, I will have my students free write in their journals daily. I think it will enhance creativity and allow them to get their thoughts, frustrations, or worries onto paper and out of their heads. Hopefully this process will allow them to think clearly and enable them to focus better on the rest of the work that they are asked to complete throughout the day.

Annotation #2

Robb, Laura. *Nonfiction writing: from the inside out*. New York: Scholastic, 2004. Print.

8-10 bullets of information from the sources

* Writers of creative nonfiction: Receptive of the world around you. P.18
* Uses senses when writing and researching. P. 18
* Tell stories- show don’t tell. P.18
* Let students choose their writing topics- when students write about their passions, or life experiences they willingly invest time and energy into their writing. P. 25
* Six structural patterns: sequence, compare/contrast, cause/effect, question/answer, problem/solution, and description. P.20
* Give students choices in each subject area that pertain to writing (ex: English- interview a shopkeeper, or firefighter; history- choose an explorer for a biographical sketch; science- choose a single-celled plant. P.26
* To encourage thinking: P.29
  + Whole-class discussions, writing lists, making charts, drawing, free-writing, interviewing others, reading through journals or notebooks, paired or small group discussions, posing questions about an idea, browsing through magazines and books, brainstorming
* For nonfiction writing to become creative: P. 21
  + Present mini-lessons
  + Build in time for discussions
  + Read and analyze nonfiction
  + Use writing guidelines
  + Help students view writing as an act of discovery
  + Let students choose their writing topics
  + Give your students time to write
  + Teach students the writers’ process

Connections:

This book gives many great suggestions for writers to use in order to write more creatively. A blank sheet of paper or a blank computer screen often intimidates us but in this book, the author gives ideas that writers can use to help break down that mental block. Creativity is a huge part of writing and it was one of the things that I had the most trouble with when writing essays and narrative stories.

How will I use the information?

In my classroom, I will encourage my students to use the different writing strategies provided for them to maximize their creativity. The students should use mentor texts to support the ideas. I will have my students discuss their ideas with each other so they can build on their thoughts and gain better insight for what they wish to write about. I also think it will be very beneficial for students to use freewriting time to come up with ideas for their writing. Letting students choose their own topics to write about will be a great way for them to begin enjoying the writing process without feeling pressure from their teacher.

Annotation #3

Lane, B. (2008). *But how do you teach writing: A simple guide for all teachers*. New York: Scholastic.

8-10 bullets of information from the sources

* “When students have a negative attitude toward writing, it will always show up in their work.” P. 22
  + Students need to enjoy the writing process- when they enjoy writing, they will be more willing to do it and their stories will become more creative and fun to read.
* “The idea was to have new readers write biological stories about people like themselves in order to provide more compelling reading, and thereby help them excel.” P. 23
  + When students read stories that they enjoy, the idea is for them to write similarly but it doesn’t always work in that way.
* “Learning to write is not about acquiring a big vocabulary or using fancy metaphors. Learning to write is about learning how to tell the simple truth.” P. 24
  + When students write the “truth” about what they know, the stories will be more interesting and will make more sense to the reader and to themselves as new writers.
* “If I let kids write about what they want to write about it may take them half an hour just to figure out what to write about. I can’t spare a half hour.” P. 25
  + A huge part of the issue for teachers when it comes to teaching students to enjoy writing is time. The teachers aren’t always able to let the students write freely without giving them a time limit and therefore the students feel more pressure causing them to dislike writing all together.
* “We need to make time, space, and choice a priority in the classroom.” P. 25
  + Teachers often forget about time space and choice as important aspects of writing but they are the most important. For students, they need a good amount of time to write, a comfortable space, and their own choices when it comes to what they write about.
* “A regular and predictable writing time allows students time to rehearse what they are going to write about in their heads, hours before it’s time to write.” P.27
  + When students know when they will be expected to write, they will have already been thinking about it prior to the writing time. I know that before I get to our language arts class, I should be thinking about what I want to write about if I have the chance to do free writing at the beginning of class instead of having a prompt. The same would go for students in elementary and middle school.
* “Let’s view the writing process not as lockstep stages but as a set of writing tools.” P. 28
  + There are so many textbooks out there that show the writing process as particular steps that you HAVE to follow when in reality they should just be there to help with generating ideas.
* Making the space for writing: clipboards for each student; writing pillows; a sofa; writing carpet squares; bean bag chairs (p. 30).
  + Students will be more apt to writing if they are comfortable in their environments. I think students would love to have a special writing space in the classroom that is just for them.

Connections:

When I was in elementary school, there were many things that I think my teacher could have done to make writing more enjoyable for me. Just the writing space could have been improved and I think it would have made a big difference for me. I was never one to really enjoy writing but I think if some simple changes were made, it would have been more exciting to write my own stories.

How will I use this information?

When I am a teacher, I will utilize a lot of this information that I found in this book. I think one of my favorite parts was when he was talking about having the designated writing time at the same time every day or class meeting. I think that this is important because like he said in the book, the students will be ready for it and they will be thinking about things that they want to write about prior to the time in which they are asked to write. I think students, especially the younger ones, need a lot of predictability in the school day and they will benefit from this type of writing exercise.

Annotation #4

Robb, L. (2010). *Teaching middle school writers: What every english teacher needs to know*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

8-10 bullets of information from the source

* “…focusing on content, honest feelings and reactions is far more important than spelling.” P. 37
  + When students (especially ELLs) are writing, they have a tendency to focus on the grammar and spelling and end up feeling defeated. If the teacher puts less emphasis on these issues, the students will feel more inclined to write more creatively.
* “Collaboration, pooling their creative energy and experiences, helped students make connections and synthesize.” P. 38
  + Working in pairs will help students come to new conclusions that they may not have gotten to without collaboration. Students can always benefit from working together and bouncing ideas off other students.
* “…the compelling questions activated the students’ creative thinking because these were relevant to their world and experiences…” p.38
  + When students read about things that they know, they will have an easier time pulling ideas and coming up with their own creative writing. Students need to feel like they can relate to the content so they will be more interested in completing the course work.
* “I wanted them to see that students won’t resist writing if they feel both connected to the text and capable of reading it.” P. 39
  + When students have the capability of reading a text, they will enjoy it more. When students are faced with information that is too difficult to grasp, they will feel defeated, making it harder for them to be involved.
* To improve reading at school: p. 39
  + Provide students with reading material they can understand independently.
  + Before writing, ask the students to discuss.
  + Use compelling questions that relate to students lives.
  + Bring collaboration to writing because middle school students are social, and collaboration can foster creative thinking

There are many different strategies that students should use to get their students involved in the material. Make sure your students are able to understand the work without too much assistance so they are actually benefiting from the content.

* “Young writers’ psyches are fragile, and helping them understand what they’ve done well enlarges their self confidence, permitting me to address one need.” P. 54
  + When students are praised for their work, they will feel more positive and willing to continue writing. When a teacher begins with praise and then moves onto areas of improvement, the student will not feel as overwhelmed.
* “They want to take on real responsibility and control over their learning.” P. 105
  + Give the students control to write what they want to write and they will surprise you. Young children are naturally creative, but it often gets lost when they are prompted or asked to write about a certain topic.
* “I have to get to know my students over time in order to sustain their drive to write.” P. 105
  + Every child is going to be different and it is hard to have the same expectation for each student. Once you have gotten to know your students, you can then have individual expectations that you know each child will be capable of completing.

Connections:

When I am writing, I know that I am always much more excited to write about things that interest me. I think that may be the same for many students when it comes to writing. Same goes for when I am reading a book- if I am assigned to read a book, it will take me forever to get through it. If it is something I wanted to read on my own- I won’t be able to put it down. When I can relate to writing, if it’s about my life, or if it is simply a topic that I am passionate about, I will be more likely to write something interesting.

How will I use this Information?

In my classroom, I will make sure to pay attention to my students’ interests and be aware of their feelings when it comes to writing. If they aren’t interested, I’ll try and figure out how to make it more interesting for them. If they don’t want to do it, I’ll find a way to get them interested. I think paying attention to your students’ needs is the most important thing a teacher can do to make a difference in a child’s life.

Annotation #5

Tompkins, G. E. (2012). *Teaching writing, balancing process and product*. (6 ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

8-10 bullets of information from the source

* “The ideas are the heart of a composition – the message and its meaning.” Choosing a topic, focusing on the topic, identifying the genre, and developing the topic. “Writers know that they’ve developed their ideas effectively when readers keep reading because the ideas are compelling.” P. 59
  + In order for a student to write creatively, they must first come up with a creative topic. A topic that they know well will lend itself to develop onto a creative piece that readers will be interested in reading.
* Choosing personally meaningful topics: “when writers care about their topics, their voices are stronger.” P. 62
  + Voice is a huge part in creative writing. Teaching students the importance of voice will increase the quality of their writing. Allowing students to choose the topics will help them activate their voice in their writing.
* Adopting a tone: “A writer’s tone is his or her opinion or feeling about a topic; it ranges from serious to silly and casual to formal.” P. 62
  + Tone is an important aspect of writing because it determines the way the reader interprets the writing as well as how they decide on the genre that they are writing.
* Teach students how to use inventive techniques – puns, alliteration, metaphors, personification, onomatopoeia, and palindromes to enhance their writing. P. 63
* “Sometimes writers break the rules and use sentence fragments, nonstandard English, or slang to create fluency.” P. 65
  + Make sure the students understand that in certain structures, it is okay for them to break the rules. Depending on the genre, students are able to use rule breaking to create their voice. A poem for instance, will not generally have proper grammar or complete sentences.
* “As students gain experience, their writer’s voice will emerge, especially when they’re writing on topics they’re passionate about.” P. 71
  + Any writer gets better with experience. A writer’s notebook is the best way for students to gain experience because it’s their own personal place to write their thoughts without worrying about being correct of judged upon their writing. The fact that they’re writing is the important part.
* “Good writers use words effectively.” Dollar words – instead of said: cried, mentioned. Instead of noise: racket, uproar. P.72
  + Word choice is vital in creating good and effective writing. Word choice can affect the voice making it more interesting to the readers and keeping them engaged.
* Read aloud mentor texts with well-developed ideas to give students an example of how they can develop their own ideas.
* “Students learn how authors develop ideas by writing texts to accompany wordless books, such as *The Lion and the Mouse*.”
  + Having students create their own story for a book without words can enhance creativity and allow them to have fun with the assignment. Students will not feel the pressure to come up with the story all on their own because they have the pictures to guide them.

Connections:

Word choice, creativity and voice were always causing issues for me when I would write in elementary, middle and even high school. I was never taught fundamental ways to enhance my creativity when I was learning to write stories and essays. I think teachers should put more emphasis on the importance of allowing your personal voice to shine through your writing. I know that it is a difficult concept to understand because you’re trying to make your writing sound professional, but you still want it to sound interesting.

How will I use this Information?

I will use this information to find good ways to help students with their creativity and voice. Allowing students to use mentor texts as guides and wordless books to enhance ideas are great ways to teach these techniques. I will utilize both of these ideas in my classroom to help my students get creative with their writing.

Annotation #6

English in Texas. (2005). *Embracing Excellence*, *35*(1), 1-64.

8-10 bullets of information from the sources

* “Writers learn to write from other writers.” P. 6
  + Using mentor texts in the classroom is extremely important. As a teacher, I should also model proper writing procedures.
* “They are making decisions and using techniques they believe will make their piece effective.” P.6
  + Using examples from other writers helps students with their own writing.
* “Students listen to the same piece of writing twice. During the first reading, students listened like readers, comprehending the events or facts the author was conveying. During the second reading, students were instructed to listen like writers, noticing the author’s crafting techniques.” P.7
  + This is a great way for students to get new ideas to add to their writing. If students listen or read a piece of writing multiple times, they will pick up more of the techniques and be able to use some of those techniques in their own writing.
* “Voices are composed of many forces: our family, genetic background, ethnic heritage, childhood neighborhoods, present neighborhoods, and roles in life.” P. 8
  + There are many things that will enhance a person’s writing, especially their personal experiences.
* “You always have your voice when there is something you really need to say.” P. 9
  + It is always easier for students to write about things that they are interested in. Students will be more explicit when they are familiar with the topic and will have an easier time transferring their thoughts.
* “Nobody will write well unless he gets into his ear and into his metabolism a sense of how the language works and what it can be made to do.” P. 7
  + You have to really immerse yourself in the writing for it to be good writing.
* “The lack of striking words, revealing specifics and idea development created a very generic, voiceless letter.” P.7
  + You have to have striking words, revealing specific details, and very developed ideas for your writing to be creative and enjoyable.
* Precise vocabulary, character development, dialogue, repeating phrases, and revealing details.
  + These are all important characteristics to have in writing.

Connections:

Voice was always an issue for me in my writing, and I want to help my students overcome their issues with their writing. I know that voice and creative writing go hand in hand and I think tackling voice will enable you to write more creatively.

How will I use the information?

As a teacher, I will use as many mentor texts as possible in my instruction to give my students a foundation for them to use to grow into creative writers. Students can pull characteristics and techniques from other authors to enhance their own writing and make their writing more interesting and fun.

Annotation #7

Glover, M. (2009). *Engaging young writers*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

8-10 bullets of information from the sources

* Balance of control: “The teachers in these first-grade classes understood that there needs to be balance of control regarding the learning that is taking place in the classroom.” P.36
  + There is a grey area between letting the students determine what they’re learning and having the teaching completely control what the students are learning.
* Student ownership: “The end result was that students understood that their opinions, ideas, and decisions were valued parts of the process. P.36
  + Students should feel important in the classroom. It is the teacher’s job to make sure the students are feeling appreciated and that their input is valued.
* Student interest: “These students developed what physicist Richard Feynman describes as ‘the pleasure of finding things out.’” P.36
  + When students are able to explore new ideas in the classroom at their own discretion, they will be more interested in the content overall.
* Time: “These teachers allowed students the opportunity to struggle with questions over a long period of time.” P.37
  + When a question isn’t answered right away, the students will get more curious about the answer and go explore on their own to come to a conclusion. If a teacher always answers student questions that moment, they won’t have anything to figure out on their own.
* Choice of topic, choice of when to write, choice of genre, choice of length, choice of paper. P. 42-43
  + Choice is a major component of the writing process. Giving students choices in different areas creates more independence and enjoyment in the writing process.
* “Topic choice is perhaps the most important source of energy for writing.” P. 42
  + Once a topic is decided on, the students will have the power to explore those ideas and come up with ways to execute the piece.
* “If we want children to be passionate about their writing, then allowing (and encouraging) them to choose topics that matter becomes crucial.” P. 43
  + If students are always given writing prompts, there is no room for creativity. Students need the opportunity to explore their own writing topics to come up with things they care about and that are relevant to their lives at that moment.
* “By focusing on the entry points of meaning, choice, and purpose both in learning in general and in writing specifically, and by working to nudge (not push) our own development as educators, we can nurture memorable learning for children.” P. 48
  + Students are going to remember things they had more input on than they would if it was just given to them right away. When students come up with ideas on their own, it will mean more to them and they will value it more in the long run.

Connections:

In my high school, the students were given a lot of freedom in our English classes. Whether it was working on a project, or writing a paper, we did not always have to follow strict guidelines and there was always room for creativity. I gained a lot more powerful tools for my writing during instruction because of the way our teachers viewed instruction. I have never had negative feelings towards writing because there wasn’t very much pressure put on us to do everything perfectly. I enjoy free writing and I think it is important for teachers to teach writing in a way that will be fun for their students and make it relevant to their lives.

How will I use this information?

In my classroom I want to make writing fun for all students. I know it will be difficult to reach every one of them, but I know that it will be important for my students to enjoy some sort of writing. Even if it is them drawing a picture and then writing about what they drew, that shows creativity. Choices are going to be huge in my classroom, and I will make sure that my students understand that their input is always valued and that they feel like what they are doing is important.

Annotation #8

Olthouse, J. M. (2012). Why I Write: What Talented Creative Writers Need Their Teachers to Know. *Gifted Child Today*, *35*(2), 116-121.

8-10 bullets of information from the sources:

* Students need teachers who
  + provide structured writing time and clear deadlines
  + value the message of the work more than the format
  + use books as models
  + develop a sense of community
  + give constructive feedback
  + honor students’ personal writing goals
  + specifically assessed creativity
  + recognize that sometimes writing was therapeutic rather than productive
* “According to the research, some students become writers in spite of school, not because of it.”
  + There are many reasons why students like and dislike writing and most of it has to do with their schooling.
* “The difference between these two students and the other six was that these two had developed the discipline to write outside of class time; their high school English classes afforded no time for creative writing. Conversely, the other students stressed that, because they no longer had structured writing times or deadlines, they found little time in their busy schedules for a talent they had honed in middle school.”
  + All students will react differently to writing- some will make time for it, others don’t. Creative writing often begins as an outlet such as journal writing.
* “Madison described her experience with formula writing in the English classroom: There’s a formula. [It’s] “TS3XSS” which means topic sentence, three examples, and a summary sentence for each paragraph. So she grades on your form and how much [sic] paragraphs you have. She doesn’t actually grade it on how the story goes.”
  + Teachers tend to forget about content and focus on the structure. The content is more important, if not the MOST important.
* “Teachers emphasized the look of a paper by allotting as much as 50% of the final grade to grammar and mechanics. The talented writers I talked with are motivated to get A papers. They probably, therefore, only need 10% of their grade allotted to surface-level features.”
  + Students will cater to the way that their teacher grades. If the teacher is more focused on grammar, they’ll just make sure there aren’t any grammar mistakes but write random information that makes sense but doesn’t have as much thought put into it.
* “A researcher who interviewed creative writers found that there was little outlet for their creativity in the classroom; restrictions such as time, grades, and topics limited them, and teachers valued grammar and spelling more than imagination.”
  + The STAAR test focuses on grammar and spelling more than content, so that’s what the teachers will focus on.
* “An A or a 100% on a paper with no substantial feedback is not a compliment—it’s an insult. It implies that the writer is good enough and has no room to grow.”
  + Even if a student is very talented, they still need feedback. Pushing high students to perform better is equally as important as pushing struggling students to do better.
* “In fact, when I presented my research to an eminent professor visiting our institution, she said “Yes this is interesting but what about when these students have to do real writing in college?” The focus is on college, careers, and testing...”
  + REAL writing- all writing is really writing. The focus should be on the success of the student in areas that they excel in rather than what a test is looking for.

Connections:

I have been given projects and essays back with a good grade at the top without any sort of feedback and it is frustrating. Even if I did a good job, I want to know why. I want to know what I did well, and I want to know what I could have done better. A perfect paper does not exist. It will always be subjective and students need to get some sort of feedback whether it is good or bad.

How will I use this information?

As a teacher, I will pay close attention to the feedback that I am giving my students. I know it is unrealistic to give extensive feedback for every assignment that a student turns in, but I will make sure they receive sufficient feedback on a regular basis. The students will benefit greatly from know what they did well and what they could improve upon.