

Teacher Guide: Evaluating Essays

In order to be good writers, it is essential that students are able to recognize and evaluate all types of essays. The following activity focuses on assessing different types of essays with various problems.

Step One:

Make all necessary copies of *Evaluating Essays* (p.47), *Essay #3* (p.48) and *Essay #4* (p.51), according to the number of students in your class.

Step Two:

Explain the necessity of being able to evaluate and assess different essays, including the importance of being able to recognize what makes good and bad writing.

Step Three:

Read *Essay #3* aloud in class. Place the transparency (p.116) of the essay on the overhead projector, and using an overhead marker, take your students through the process below.

1. As a class, have students write on their copy of *Essay #3* while teacher writes on overhead. Circle any misspellings, punctuation errors, or other obvious problems.
2. Have students fold a blank piece of paper in half, lengthwise. Place the blank overhead (p.117) on the projector.
3. As a whole class, evaluate the "good" and "bad" elements of the paper.
4. Record the good points of the essay on the "Plus" side; include notes such as: has five paragraphs, has a title, attempts a thesis statement, good spelling, etc.
5. On the "Minus" side, include notes such as: title is boring, thesis statement is too short and uninteresting, choppy sentences, boring vocabulary, topic sentences are not at the beginning of each body paragraph, no challenge, etc.

Step Four:

1. Once you have evaluated the essay, place the transparency copy *Essay Evaluation Rubric* (pp.118-119) on the overhead projector.
2. Explain how a rubric works, taking the students through the process of assessing an essay.
3. As a class, assign *Essay #3* a score, according to your findings. Be sure to evaluate each essay based on the requirements of that particular type of essay, as well as how well the writer fulfills those requirements.

Step Five:

1. Have students divide into small groups.
2. Hand a copy of *Essay #4* to all members of each group.
3. Explain to the class that they will complete the same process as above, evaluating and scoring *Essay #4* as a group.
4. Once all groups have completed the evaluation and scoring process, have each group tell the score they gave the essay, plus their reasons for their score (from the evaluation chart). After each group has spoken, discuss any discrepancies and/or similarities. If there is conflict, have each group defend and discuss their score with evidence from their evaluation charts.

****For further practice: make copies of Essays #5-10 (pp. 52-57) and have students complete the process above as individuals or in small groups.***