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Writing proficiency and Habits

Have you ever been in the midst of writing something, had great Ideas but just couldn’t seem to put them together? Have you felt well organized but still felt distracted and drifting off topic? A simple explanation for this could be revealed by doing a self study on yourself. In doing this experiment for myself I learned habits and routines that benefited me and I will discuss how anyone can be helped by this process. As the expert of the self study process Sondra Perl explains, “This study is an illustration of the way in which a theoretical model of the composing process can be grounded in observations of the individual’s experience of compoising”(211) By conducting this self study, one can learn routines and environments that allow them to write their best and be as efficient as possible. They can also predict and plan ahead based on where on how they work best.

**Methodology:**

For one full week, I gathered data about everything I read and wrote that produced work. Meaning not every single word I read on a street sign, but everything I read or wrote in order to accomplish something. For example, an obvious one is reading my biology book to study for an exam. Another example is researching on my computer about sports and reading articles about professional athletes. Those two examples bring up both types of reading. The first example with my biology book is strictly more for work, while the online articles are more for pleasure and for fun. Both still are accomplishing work and have a reason for reading. After logging what I read and write I determine the intensity, the affect and the productivity of the work. I gave each a number one through five depending on how hard I was working, how I felt I was doing on it and how much I actually got done. This is a great way to organize your data because after the week is finished you have all the numbers lined up and you can clearly find similarities and differences between times, activities and ratings. As Sondra Perl elaborates, “…The composing process is now amenable to a replicable and graphic mode of representation as a sequence of codable behaviors. The composing style sheets provide researchers and teachers with the first demonstrable way of documenting how individual students write”(211). In other words by doing this self study in this manner, the way individual students write can be compared visibly more easily and widespread. With this information teachers can use all the student’s results as a way to teach them specifically what they need. In Sondra Perl’s article, “The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers”, she describes a self examination study involving coding one’s own writing process to later examine their results. She codes different aspects such as planning, interpreting, repeating, and even writing silently. After coding the entire process of writing a piece of work, the subject now has a way of seeing the continuous and different behaviors they have during their writing. Similar to the method I used of collecting data, the subject can now see more clearly what he or she can improve on and what can be modified. From the coding process, one can find patterns that benefit their writing just as a week long study brings patterns to be seen easier.

**Findings:**

As a result of this experiment I noticed certain times I was the most productive. I also learned the environment I was in helped me be the most efficient. From my data I collected I noticed I completed my work most effectively during the mornings first thing after I wake up. After realizing this I thought about it and it seems there is a number of factors why this is. First, when I first wake up I have the most energy and I feel the most relaxed. I don’t feel I need to get out of the dorm like I do sometimes when I am stuck inside all day. Also I don’t feel tired like I do when I get back from having classes all day and don’t feel like moving. Another factor is that I am usually the only one awake in the morning, so it is nice and quiet and there is no distractions from my roommates, either playing video games or listening to music or anything. Lastly, in the mornings there is not too much going on yet so I feel all I could do is do my homework and get things done. For example, there aren’t any sports games on tv yet that I’d like to watch. As well as there is no one at the gym yet to play basketball with, which I usually do. Time management helps me be most productive because I can set times to get my work done and set aside times to do activities for more enjoyment. Learning these aspects of my routine help me plan my work better and be as productive as possible. I now know that I work best in the morning and in quiet environments so planning my work during these conditions I can be more focused and ultimately write better.

**Conclusion:**

After conducting this experiment, my daily routines for getting my work done were brought into clear perspective. I am now able to approach my day with an organized efficient way to get everything done. I can use my time wisely and plan when I will do certain things to be the most productive. All my usual habits, good or bad, can now be used to my advantage and I can capitalize on my new found knowledge. Not only did I learn how to become more productive but I can be less stressed. I can assign more difficult assignments for the times when I am most alert and my affectiveness is highest. This can also result in more time to do things I like to do to relieve stress, such as basketball and working out. This self study will benefit anyone because learning when you work best and under what conditions, can only help become more productive and focused. I am a very efficient person in general so perfecting my routines really helps me get everything done as well and as quickly as possible. As well as leaving more free time to do anything I want, not to mention better grades. Students who follow through with this study may feel they have learned more about their composing process than they would if a teacher tried to teach them a systematic way to write.

Works Cited

Perl, Sondra. “The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers.” *Research in the Teaching of English* 13.4 (1979): 191-215. Print.