

Benefits of Low-Stakes Writing

For Students	For Teachers
<p>LSW helps students <i>involve themselves more</i> in the ideas or subject matter of a course by helping them <i>find their own language</i> for the issues of the course.</p> <p>LSW bolsters their confidence in reaching understanding of class materials <i>through self-interrogation</i>.</p> <p>LSW can increase the quantity and quality of class discussions.</p> <p>Students develop the habit of relating new information to other areas of inquiry and to their own lives.</p> <p>Low stakes writing <i>improves the quality of students' high stakes writing</i>. By assigning frequent low stakes pieces, students will have already done lots of writing before we have to grade a high stakes piece.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>“When students do high stakes writing they often struggle in nonproductive ways and produce terrible and tangled prose. When they do low stakes writing, their prose is usually livelier, clearer, and more natural—often more interesting—in spite of any carelessness and mistakes.”</i> (Peter Elbow)</p>	<p>LSW gives us a better view of how students are understanding the course material and reacting to our teaching. We get a better sense of where the class is at and what we can do to reach the learning goals we set for a class.</p> <p>We can see better the interactions between their thinking about course material and their thinking about other realms of their life, between their thinking and their feeling. <i>We get better glimpses of them as people.</i></p>

Based on:

Anson, Chris M. and Deanna P. Dannels, “The Heart of the Matter. Writing, Speaking, and Inquiry-Guided Learning,” 219-127. In *Teaching and Learning through Inquiry*. Ed. Virginia S. Lee. Stylus Publishing, 2004.

Elbow, Peter. “High Stakes and Low Stakes in Assigning and Responding to Writing.” *New Directions in Teaching and Learning*. 69 (Spring 1997). 5-13.