

Ideas for Scaffolding High-stakes Assignments

Low-stakes writing. Begin by using techniques like the dialogue, the reading journal, or the multi-entry journal to help students learn to work with the words of others.

Project Proposal. Before students begin to compose, ask them to submit a proposal explaining the scope of their project, the question they plan to pursue, and their plan for how to proceed.

Thesis Workshop. One of the hardest parts of writing an essay is coming up with a good thesis. Spend a portion of the class hour discussing thesis development using specific examples.

Modeling. Provide students with models of the type of writing you hope to see in response to this assignment. You may use professional writing, your own writing, or student writing, writing that is “complete” and finished, or writing that is still a work in progress. Be sure to have a discussion about the features of writing that work or don’t work and why.

Sequenced Due Dates. Rather than assign a complete draft on a single day, instructors may decide to collect sections of the essay at various times.

Multiple Drafts. Require multiple drafts of a given assignment and offer revision comments as students move toward the final version of their essay.

Peer Review. Set up peer review groups and provide guidelines for response.

Cover Letters. Have students submit copies of their drafts with their final work as well as a cover letter discussing the “process” of their research, writing, and revision. This will help both teacher and student evaluate the final work.