

Guiding Principles of a Laboratory Writing Classroom

What is Laboratory Teaching in Writing Classrooms?

Laboratory Teaching, first introduced in the composition classroom by Franklin Genung at Amherst and Fredrick Newton Scott at the University of Michigan in 1894, is a classroom management methodology and pedagogy that believes students learn by writing in session. Hence, laboratory teaching, following the guiding principles of providing a **flexible, collaborative, and student-centered** work environment with **comfortable environmental factors** and the use of **technology** in myriad forms, allows students opportunities to develop their own processes for writing and engaging the world.

Laboratory Teaching's Guiding Principles.

Guiding Principles

- Introduce **Flexibility** as a central tenet of the instructor's Laboratory methodology:
 - “This method of work calls for strong teachers . . . She must be equally ready on a hundred points” (Search 169).
 - “While the scientist must specialize, the English student who hopes to teach her specialty, must as far as possible make all knowledge her province” (Lewis 19).
 - “None of the activity of the laboratory should be fixed or rigid . . . The writing laboratory should be what the classroom often is not—natural, realistic, and friendly” (“The Organization and Use” 17-18).
- Provide **collaborative** work environments between the instructor and students and between students:
 - “a warm-hearted, enthusiastic, co-operative teacher will always make the willing and energetic pupil” (Search 159).
 - “The Laboratory Method in English Composition” includes “inspiring directors [and] pupil's assistants” (Buck 507).

- Ensure a **student-centered** work environment:
 - “Every room is a true studio or workshop, in which the pupils work as individuals. The province of the teacher is not to line up the pupils and to consume time by entertainment, lecturing, and development of subjects; but to pass from desk to desk as the inspiring director and pupil’s assistant, with but one intent and that the development of the self-reliant and independent worker” (Search 158).
 - Guided practice with a teacher close-by for consultations provides teachers with further opportunities in modeling how a writing process may work within the frame of the individual student’s perspectives on writing.
- Ensure **comfortable environmental factors** to enhance the student learning experience:
 - “More than half of the achievement of the writing laboratory, I am sure, can be attributed to the fact that conferences with the student take place when the student is writing” (Appel 75).
- Promote **technology** as a learning tool in the composition classroom:
 - In the Pueblo program, “the individual work is systematized, and a carefully kept record shows the advancement of the various pupils” (Search 159).
 - “Pupils learn to write by writing” (Hopkins 2).
 - Each class “is an English class” (Zeigler 145).

While technology is a component of the Laboratory classroom, this classroom design guards against an unguided use of AI. Laboratory Teaching makes explicit the use of in-session writing to offer guided practice in writing while students are writing. As such, with writing in-session, we see in real-time what students are writing and how they are writing, lending that activity to a host of instructional moments. This, in turn, allows instructors further opportunities to develop students’ use of AI in the Laboratory Writing classroom.

Works Cited

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