

## Writing Process Competencies

Roy Peter Clark, Poynter Institute for Journalists

"Boredom is a disease of epidemic proportions- Why are our schools not places of joy?"  
- John Goodland, *A Place Called School*

I understand why writing curricula are often developed around genres, but what would it look like -- just wondering -- if the curriculum were built upon a foundation of competencies that were essential WHATEVER GENRE happens to be assigned or chosen?

What would those competencies be? Also, perhaps, defined as outcomes:

1. The ability to see the world as a storehouse of story or essay ideas. The capacity to take ownership of assignments to transform them into compelling ideas.
2. The ability to act as hunter and gatherer: of information, details, scenes, evidence, images, the stuff that will eventually fill the form.
3. The ability to narrow the topic and find within the available evidence a focus, a central point, a nut, a theme.
4. The ability to discover the appropriate genre, form, platform, medium in which to select, organize, develop, and deliver the material to the desired audience.
5. The ability to overcome obstacles such as procrastination or writer's block for the purposes of developing an initial draft, designed to fulfill the mission or purpose of the project or assignment.
6. The ability to revise the work, not just the draft, but all the steps in the process.

I realize that this is "old magic," the stuff we learned from the likes of Don Murray and Don Graves. As a professional writer, I realize I am describing not a curriculum but a set of behaviors, literate behaviors. Those behaviors, I was once taught by Shirley Brice Heath, can be boiled down to reading, writing, and talking about reading and writing. Aren't those the things that students should be practicing at home and in the classroom? Thanks for tolerating these reflections. -- Roy Peter Clark