

Project Year

2002

Project Team

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Project Title

Democratic Writing

Audience

This web resource was specifically developed for classes in the Expository Writing Program, but it would be usable in any class with a collaborative writing assignment.

Pedagogical Issue

Collaborative writing and editing are important components in the teaching of writing, but they are usually restricted to the classroom. It is difficult to ensure everyone's equal and interested participation. The need to reach consensus often results in browbeating and other forms of social persuasion. Current web-based writing aids at most include static examples and a bulletin board.

Solution

The Democratic Writing system will allow students to anonymously nominate and vote on words or sentences in a growing text through a web-based interface, as well as give them basic editing abilities. The strict equality imposed by the voting system will give every student equal voice and incentive in writing the text. It will also ensure a sense of fairness when students are graded on their collective work. The web-based interface will enable the writing to take place over the course of a week or month without being restricted to intermittent classroom bouts. A discussion board will allow students to debate the evolution of their draft. The proposed democratic writing tool has the potential to provide an improved learning environment, in the form of a fair and equal system of writing that gives everyone equal say, allows ongoing and shifting strategies and arguments, and preserves a full record of the avenues explored.

Technologies Used

MySQL, PHP, Web Development

A link to the Democratic Writing site is available here:

http://www.democraticwriting.com/DW_index.php