UTAH COMPOSE
FORMATIVE WRITING TOOL

Best Practices

Utah Compose provides a robust platform for teachers to customize, manage, and deliver individualized writing instruction.

Integration

- Partner with a content-area or ELA teacher to allow for cross-curricular collaboration while providing students with opportunities to write for different purposes and in different contexts as well as reinforcement of skills and information in both areas.

- Add ESL and special programs teachers to courses to offer support, feedback and/or scoring for special-needs students.

Differentiation

- Assign students different scoring levels within the same course to provide challenge for gifted students and scaffolding for ESL or IEP students.

- Encourage ESL or special programs teachers to provide comments, sticky notes, messages, and other feedback throughout the writing process.

- Use the "Recommended Prompts" feature to assign different prompts and/or stimulus material to differentiate for students within the same course.

- Show students how to locate and use the accessibility options, including the ability to add overlays, change background and text color, use a line reader, and change font size.

- Provide earphones for students who need lessons read aloud.

Assignments

- Balance writing assignments among the three writing genres: argumentative, informative/explanatory, and narrative.

- Align prepackaged prompts with regular instruction or create new prompts.

- Increase the complexity of the assignment and incorporate reading skills by adding stimulus material in the form of videos, webpages, articles, graphics, etc.

- Share prompts with other teachers to provide students with a wider variety of options for writing.

Lessons

- Assign lessons to whole classes or individual students, according to identified needs. Lessons are set to beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels.

- Encourage students to complete lessons recommended by their individualized score reports.

- Track the time students spend on lessons in the Usage report.

Reports

- Encourage student self-regulation by having students regularly analyze their own reports and to set goals accordingly.

- Invite students to share their writing goals and success with parents at student-led conferences.

- Analyze reports to make instructional decisions.

- Use reports to inform individualized planning and reporting for IEP and SST meetings, LEP/ESL recommendations, RTI goals, parent/ teacher conferences, and progress reports. Reports can be exported and aggregated or disaggregated as needed.

- Utilize reports for formative, rather than summative, purposes.

Support During the Writing Process

- Encourage the regular use of graphic organizers to plan essays.

- Show students how to refer to their organizers or previous drafts while writing and revising.

- Enable or disable the timer for any one prompt based on student and curriculum needs.

- Show students that they can also hide the timer if it is distracting.

- Set a maximum number of essay drafts students can submit for a prompt in the prompt's Advanced Options.

- Set the in-text spelling and grammar feedback to appear on the second or third draft drafts so that students focus on the content of their writing when they begin revising rather than on mistakes in spelling and grammar. Students can also hide this feedback themselves.

- Enable the Peer Review feature to provide students with valuable practice in editing and revision while developing collaboration and analytical skills.

Celebrating Successes

- Keep the focus on improvement and development in writing skill rather than on scores.

- Commend students for time spent using the interactive lessons.

- Encourage students to show Utah Compose to their families. Share the Utah Compose link through regular updates to parents.

- Display student writing regularly.

- Host a "Publishing Party" at school and invite community members to listen as students read their essays aloud.

- Print essays and bind them into a book.

- Have students read essays to younger students in the school or district (e.g., Read Across America Week).

- Hold essay contests.

- Recognize students for improvement, initiative, and collaboration.