



Writing Coaches of montana

“Community Mentors Coaching Young Writers”

The mission of the Writing Coaches of Montana is to help students think critically so they can become confident and competent writers by graduation. The program began 25 years ago in Missoula, expanded to Ravalli County, and then to the Whitefish schools (entering its 5th year) and Columbia Falls schools (entering its 2nd year).

How it Works

- Coaches meet one-on-one with middle school and high school students, coaching them through first and second drafts of writing assignments, and with the mindset of helping the student so he or she can become a better writer.
- Coaches commit to only two class periods at a time (each for the first or second draft), coaching two or three students per period. A coaching period typically runs about 90 minutes.
- Coaches sign up to volunteer on the Writing Coaches of Montana website, www.WritingCoachesOfMontana.org, or by contacting Rita Braun, Director of Flathead Writing Coaches at rita@writingcoachesofmontana.org or 406.314.3751.
- When a coaching session is scheduled, coaches are notified via email and then directed to sign up for coaching sessions through [Signup Genius](#). The signup includes information about the teacher and class location, the class time, and notes about the writing assignment.
- Typical assignments are the five-paragraph essay: Thesis statement, three supporting arguments, and conclusion.
- Students read their writing assignments out loud. Coaches follow the reading by asking questions that help students think more critically—in other words, questions that help students figure out what he or she really thinks or believes, why, and how to form convincing arguments.

Training

Coaching training is held in the fall and spring of each school year. The fall training for the 2019-2020 school year will be held at Whitefish High School on November 4, 2019, from 6pm to 8:30pm. *This training is mandatory for first-time coaches.*

Attending the training is time well-spent, even for experienced coaches, as it helps them become a more confident coach. Attendees receive helpful coaching materials

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and coaching tips, view a video of an actual training session, and conduct a mock coaching with a fellow attendee, swapping the roles of coach and student.

If You Think You're Not a Good Writer...

While good writing includes strong words and proper grammar and punctuation, this program leans on coaches to help students think critically:

- What is it that you believe?
- Why?
- What have you learned from it?

The first session is typically spent helping students answer these questions, then conducting a review during the second session on how they expressed their answers. You will encounter the rainbow of writing talent, from students who can write excellent first drafts, to students who need help determining what they will write about.

Who to Contact for Questions

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