

The Humanities in Our Lives

THE VALUE OF WRITING

Writing is essential for communicating with others, processing and retaining knowledge, and refining critical thinking. Students who write also expand their capacity for self-expression and develop greater confidence in their own voice. Writing ability is an important life skill, particularly in the job market. In surveys of business leaders and human resources managers, written communication skills are highly sought after among new employees.

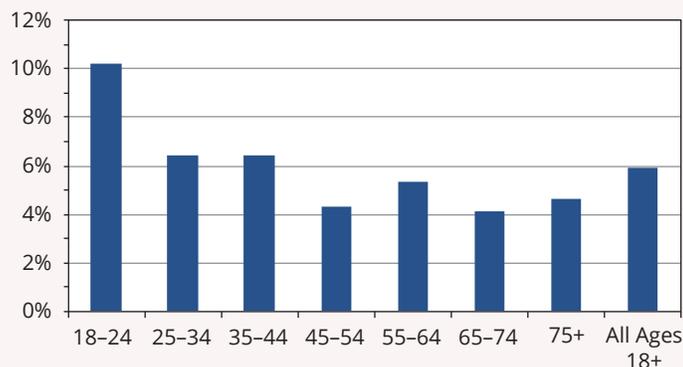
WRITING SKILLS

In a 2008 national survey, 90% of teens reported composing essays and other short writing assignments for school, in addition to drafting Powerpoint presentations, lab reports, journals, and class notes. Over half of them wrote for classes nearly every day. Yet high school students continue to see decreases in their demonstrated writing ability.

KEY FACTS

- As measured by the SAT, writing skills have consistently fallen among high school students since 2006.
- In 2011, a national exam found that half of both 8th graders and 12th graders had basic writing skills, but only a quarter had true proficiency. Another 20% failed to demonstrate even basic achievement.

Share of Americans Who Did Creative Writing in the Previous 12 Months, 2012



INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

826valencia, named after its street address in the Mission District of San Francisco, works to help under-served students in the Bay Area improve both their academic and creative writing. The group provides one-on-one tutoring in multiple locations around the city and publishes student works as books, magazines, and podcasts.

In addition to tutoring students, 826valencia offers workshops, field trips, summer programs, and college scholarships. Best of all, its main office is located behind its Pirate Supply Store, which sells things like ogre dental floss, quill pens, fool's gold, and, of course, student-written books. The proceeds support the organization's other programs.

In 826valencia's 2016–2017 survey of students, parents, and teachers, 85% of respondents reported that students had greater pride in their writing, and 91% reported stronger writing skills.

The Humanities in Our Lives series (#HumInOurLives) highlights the many and diverse forms of humanities activities in the nation, and key facts about the health of the field.

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For more on the broad trends that mark American engagement with various forms of the humanities, visit humanitiesindicators.org or email humanitiesindicators@amacad.org.

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