ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated the experiences of creating writing portfolios in a ninth grade academic-level classroom. Twenty students in ninth grade participated in this study conducted in a suburban junior high school containing approximately 870 students in the northeastern United States. Methods of gathering data included teacher observation, student surveys, informal and formal conferences with students, and student work. Methods of analysis included analytic memos, reflective memos, narrative forms, coding, construction of theme statements, and review of student work. The students experienced a writing workshop setting, where they brainstormed, revised, and edited different forms of writing by applying writing strategies learned through mini lessons and one-on-one conferences. Additionally, students regularly reflected on their work and the work of others, compiled their self-selected work in a writing portfolio, and reflected on their overall learning through their writing experiences. Findings suggest that using writing portfolios in the classroom build students’ motivation and confidence, foster creativity, allow students to take ownership of their learning, and generate a strong classroom community. Furthermore, teachers who utilize writing portfolios in the classroom may gain insight into students’ thinking, which allow educators the opportunity to model and scaffold students’ learning effectively.