A Brief Introduction to Holistic Scoring

What is Holistic Scoring?

Holistic scoring is a way of looking at student work that allows us to consider all features of the writing (ex: organization, language, conventions, etc.) equally; No feature is more important than another.

When scoring holistically, the scorer uses a rubric with numbers that correspond to the descriptions of features of writing at each level of performance. The scorer evaluates the writing by choosing the level in which the student showed a *PREPONDERANCE of features that match that level's description. It is important to note that the student may have features of his or her writing that correspond to other levels, but the scorer is looking for a preponderance of features that correspond with one category.

Why is Holistic Scoring Useful for Evaluating the Process Writing Assessment?

- It is a relatively quick way to evaluate writing.
- It is a more "authentic" real world reading (meaning it gives you a general sense of the writing).
- It focuses on what the writer does BEST.
- It is what the mandated STAR assessments and CAHSEE exam use, and therefore prepares students and teachers for the way student writing will be evaluated by the state.

Tips and Pointers for Holistic Scoring:

- Know your biases ahead of time (ex: "It drives me nuts when kids use capital letters with reckless abandon…"). If you don't know your biases, a good way to find out is to look at a random piece of student work, and jot down what jumps out at you first.
- Make a conscious effort to drop your biases – for example you may want to write them down first, and then ceremoniously discard the piece of paper.
- Let go of the labels for each rubric level, and instead focus on the descriptive features.

preponderance: \pri-ˈpän-d(ə-)rən(t)s\ n.

1. a superiority in weight, power, importance, or strength.

2. a: a superiority or excess in number or quantity b: MAJORITY

Source: Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary