Abstract
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This paper makes the case for incorporating expressive writing - a form of self reflective writing - in a high school context to promote mental health and to improve writing skills. Mental health services in high schools are generally lacking due to the focus on special education and budget problems. There is also a need to improve the quality of high school writing to adequately prepare students for higher education.

Quantitative and qualitative sources were collected, read and synthesized to evaluate the feasibility of this idea. Research focused on work from expressive writing researcher James Pennebaker and related psychological studies. Writing research focused on work by Toby Fulwiler, Wendy Bishop, James Britton and Peter Elbow. Expressive writing prompts from sources were collected and organized into an appendix to demonstrate writing variability.

Research on expressive writing found physical and psychological health benefits such as improved immune system functioning and decreased symptoms related to stress, depression and anxiety. The limited sources on adolescence indicate that while they enjoy moderate benefits, compared to adults, they could benefit from more frequent writing sessions.

Expressive writing has been found to increase working memory capacity, which is important for the writing process. Writing research seems to indicate that good writing needs to stem from students’ personal experiences, which is supported by reports of journaling in college classrooms who use expressive writing-like themes. Exploring one’s inner voice and creating self awareness creates voice and deepens one’s critical thinking and cognitive skills required for academic writing.

Expressive writing seems to be a unique solution for high schools to cheaply promote mental health and foster a strong voice for writing. The frequency needed for high school students to feel health benefits of expressive writing will grow their working memory capacities and provide them space to develop voice.