



HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER HANDBOOK

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA Department of Public Instruction | State Board of Education
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WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IN HIGH SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION

WRITING IS EXCITING BECAUSE IT'S PRODUCTIVE AND CREATIVE; IT'S WHERE THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD. YOU CAN'T WRITE AND NOT THINK. THERE ARE NO *CLIFF NOTES* FOR WRITING. WRITTEN EXPRESSION IS ONE OF OUR PRIMARY MEANS OF REFLECTING ON WHAT WE THINK AND WHAT WE KNOW.

– JIM BURKE, *teacher and author*

Writing has become a valuable tool in the high school classroom for engaging students in thinking, showing understanding, creating, communicating, and learning. Over the past ten years writing across the curriculum programs have become increasingly common in colleges and universities as well as in secondary schools. Why the move toward using writing in content area classrooms? As Scarborough (2001) points out, research suggests that writing supports increasingly complex thinking about subjects that students are learning (Langer & Applebee, 1987) and that it has been shown to improve the learning of content (Maxwell, 1996).

Traditionally, however, writing has primarily been a tool for *demonstrating* learning (literary analysis of the theme of *Hamlet*, essay question about World War I, summary of a chapter in a science textbook, instructions about how to prepare a meal, or a biographical essay about Dali). It has only been in the past thirty years that in schools we have come to see the power of writing for personal expression, writing as a tool for thinking, and writing to discover. When we blend two purposes for writing, writing to *demonstrate learning* with writing to help *facilitate learning*, we open the content area classroom to the many ways diverse writing can benefit both students and teachers.

This handbook is designed to support teachers of all content areas as they incorporate writing into their classes in ways that facilitate teaching of course content, encourage students to develop as writers, align with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and use writing as a tool for thinking. Divided into sections, the handbook provides explanation and examples of writing instruction grounded in current research and best practice.

The **INTRODUCTION** defines the concepts “writing across the curriculum” and “writing to learn,” explains what is meant by the “writing process,” discusses the philosophy behind the use of writing in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and examines purposes/audience for writing.

The **TEACHERS TOOLBOX** is written in question/answer format and presents issues that arise when writing is used in all content areas with answers that promote effective writing instruction through the teaching of course content.

The **ASSESSMENT** section of the document examines issues of evaluation and assessment and provides instructions on how to design effective assessment with examples.

The **SCENARIOS** offer snapshots of writing as part of classrooms across the curriculum.

The **RESOURCES** section is presented in the form of an annotated bibliography listing texts, online resources, and software that teachers may find helpful as they plan for the integration of writing into the curriculum.



WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AND WRITING TO LEARN

Gere (1985) distinguishes between the terms “writing across the curriculum” and “writing to learn” by the primary *purpose* of each. She says that the main goal of writing across the curriculum is to *improve the quality of writing* while the main goal of writing to learn is to *use writing as a tool for thinking and learning*. Scarborough (2001) explains that writing to learn is “subsumed under the larger umbrella of writing across the curriculum” (p. 3). She notes that it is of interest to secondary teachers with whom she has worked because it doesn’t have to be graded, doesn’t have to result in a finished product, can be used as a stepping-stone to more formal writing, and gives students a chance to interact with content material in order to gain understanding.

Another aspect of writing across the curriculum, *writing within disciplines* refers to instruction that focuses on the need for students to understand and practice the forms of communication used within the field of study. For example, in a biology classes, students would be expected to write lab reports and deliver presentations on causes and effects of human interaction within the natural world, typical activities of scientists. On the other hand, in marketing, students might write advertising proposals, and in theatre arts, students would review dramatic productions.

Farrell-Childers, Gere, and Young (1994) trace the history of writing across curriculum programs and identify four premises that writing across the curriculum programs share: a concern with student literacy, the use of writing as a tool for learning, the belief that writing should not be taught in a vacuum as skill out of the context of the disciplines, and the belief that writing is social action (meaning that students write to change their perspective of the world and affect the perspectives of others). Although writing is typically most associated with the English Language Arts curriculum, opportunities exist in all content areas for teachers to use writing to help students not only develop literacy but also deepen their understanding of course content.

A SHIFT IN UNDERSTANDING

In the 1980s, researchers and theorists identified a shift in understanding about the way writers write and how writing is learned (Hairston, 1982). However, this shift had been set into motion decades earlier. For much of the twentieth century, writing instruction in the United States had focused on writing as simply a product to be evaluated which was produced following one correct procedure which could be taught incrementally, produced quickly in a logical order, and was pursued as a primarily solitary activity (Zemelman & Daniels, 1988). What is now referred to as the process model of writing, however, challenged these notions.

By 1966 with the Anglo-American Conference on the Teaching of English held at Dartmouth College, the process model was beginning to emerge. The British emphasis on a “personal growth model” for English instruction had a deep impact on U.S. conference attendees who began to think about

how writing could be used for self-development as well as self-discovery (Dornan, Rosen, & Wilson, 2003). Researchers and theorists such as Murray (1968), Macrorie (1968, 1970), Elbow (1973), Emig (1971), and Graves (1975) wrote texts which challenged prevailing ideas about how writing was learned and how it should be taught (Dornan, Rosen, & Wilson, 2003). Over the next thirty years researchers and teachers continued to apply these new understandings and a body of research developed.

In line with these new understandings of how writers learn to write, Dornan, Rosen, & Wilson (2003) advocate a holistic approach to literacy development rather than a fragmented skills approach, and they recommend bringing together the pedagogies of three instructional approaches to the teaching of writing: emphasis on personal connection; rhetorical traditions which focus on

issues of structure, purpose and audience; and the tradition of using writing as a tool for social action. Their blending of these instructional approaches work well within the context of a writing across the curriculum program, and their seven assumptions about the teaching of writing provide a valuable framework for planning instruction. In particular, they articulate the following beliefs:

1. Writing is thinking.
2. Writing is a language process.
3. We learn to write by writing.

4. Development of our own writing can be facilitated by being more conscious of our writing processes.
5. Writing is a socially constructed process.
6. We not only learn to write, but we write to learn.
7. The young writer benefits from some direct instruction. (pp. 3-8)

By recognizing the complex nature of writing, teachers can construct a classroom environment that engages and supports students yet challenges them to stretch as learners.

THE WRITING PROCESS

In the process model, writing is seen as a process to be experienced rather than merely a product to be read and graded (Zemelman & Daniels, 1988). In addition, teachers recognize that writing for a variety of purposes and audiences affects the form, content and tone of the writing. Research shows that individual writers vary their processes, and that these processes tend to be recursive rather than strictly linear. As a result, the pace of writing may be slow since writing is often a social activity and the writer's task is to create meaning. Finally, teachers have learned that writers benefit from attempting entire texts rather than moving only from word to sentence to paragraph to whole text.

Terms such as "prewriting," "drafting," "revising," "editing," and "publishing" are often used to refer to stages in the process, but it is important to remember that not all pieces of writing will go through every part of the process and that the process tends to be **recursive** (moving back and forth among the parts of the process) rather than linear (starting with prewriting and moving straight through each part of the process in isolation). Writers may find themselves editing while drafting, using prewriting activities to develop their ideas in the middle of the composition, or revising and editing simultaneously. In fact, individual students will differ in their writing processes, and even the same student may use different processes for different assignments. As a result, there is no one "process" that all writing should go through or that every teacher should use with every assignment. However, the following explanations and suggestions may be useful during particular stages of the writing process.

Prewriting

"Prewriting" refers to activities done prior to or during early drafting which engage students in thinking about and gathering ideas. Students can benefit from "free association" techniques (such as brainstorming, listing, clustering, visualization, or freewriting) as well as more structured techniques (such as the use of graphic organizers, outlining, or questioning). They also benefit from activities that engage them authentically in an experience (such as a seminar discussion of ideas, a lab experience, an artistic process, a sensory activity) which leads into an opportunity to write about the experience or the issues that it raised.

Soven (1999) recommends that teachers use the following steps when introducing students to a prewriting activity:

- explain the purpose of the technique being used
- model use of the technique
- allow students to experiment with the technique
- ask the students how it felt to use the technique.

Soven also recommends that teachers help students understand that not all techniques work for all writers or for all writing situations and that while prewriting activities may take time, they can help make the actual writing of the paper much more productive.

Drafting

“Drafting” refers to the actual process of composing during writing. When students are involved in drafting their writing they may need support developing their thinking, figuring out how to say what they want to say, finding a form for their writing, or getting past “stuck” places. Zemelman & Daniels (1988) suggest that teachers can help students during the drafting stage through the following:

- conducting teacher-student conferences
- providing in-class time for writing when appropriate
- helping students understand the writing process
- demonstrating ways to get “unstuck” (such as focused freewriting or temporarily changing the audience for the writing)
- giving students mental space by not emphasizing editing and evaluation too early in the process.

Although the drafting phase may be seen by some as a primarily solitary activity, teachers can emphasize the social nature of writing by involving students in collaborative activities such as conferences (with teachers or peers), group brainstorming sessions about problems that have arisen in the writing, class discussions about content, and research (which helps the writer form a social connection through the process of putting his or her work in the context of what else is known about the topic).

Revising

“Revising” refers to changes made in the content and structure of writing to achieve a particular purpose. Students often avoid revising because it is hard work; they may tend to fall in love with their own words; they find it painful to read their own writing; many don’t know what to actually think about or “do” when they revise other than correct mistakes; and they sometimes think that they have to do it all on their own without any collaboration or support (Soven, 1999).

Therefore, teachers may find that it is worth the effort to make the revising process “visible” to students by modeling specific revising techniques, allowing some class time for revision, conferencing with students, creating structured opportunities for revision (using a guidesheet, for example), focusing revision on a few specific things (such as developing details or increasing sentence variety), and offering overt instruction in revising techniques.

The National Association of Educational Progress has identified eight types of revising that can be useful when teachers want to discuss revising with the students (Soven, 1999). They include the following:

- **HOLISTIC REVISION** (the changes are so major that a new product is produced)
- **INFORMATIONAL** (content is added or deleted)
- **ORGANIZATIONAL** (parts of the essay are revised or reordered)
- **TRANSITIONAL** (short transitional sections are added, changed, or deleted)
- **CONTINUATIONAL** (the paper is extended by adding to the end of it)
- **STYLISTIC** (words, phrases, or sentences are substituted to achieve greater clarity or emphasis)
- **GRAMMATICAL** (changes made to grammatical conventions)
- **MECHANICAL** (changes in spelling, punctuation, underlining, or capitalization).

By helping students set specific goals for their revision of a particular draft, teachers can emphasize that revision can be concrete, focused and goal-oriented.

Editing

Although the terms “revising” and “editing” seem to be used interchangeably sometimes, editing is a particular type of revision focusing specifically on language conventions and mechanics. Teachers can help students during the editing process by engaging them in peer editing opportunities, conferencing with students about error patterns that are evidenced in their writing, and guiding students through the editing process by focusing on targeted errors (such as correct use of commas or spelling new content area terminology).

Students may begin their editing by focusing on editing errors that cause confusion or draw attention away from the content of the piece and then move to errors that may cause the reader to make negative judgments about the writer based on how “correct” the composition seems to be. Hairston (1981) found that the following errors are considered the most serious or stigmatizing by business and professional people: nonstandard verb forms in past or past participle (ex. “brung” instead of “brought”), lack of subject-verb agreement (ex. “we was” instead of “we were”), double negatives (ex. “there has never been no one here”), and objective pronoun as subject (ex. “him and Richard”) (Weaver, 1996, p. 112). Other serious errors noted in her study, however, included items such as the following: sentence fragments, run-on sentences, noncapitalization of proper nouns, lack of subject-verb agreement.

Many teachers recommend that students be encouraged to wait until they are nearing the final draft of a piece of writing to focus heavily on editing because they may spend time editing sections that will eventually be revised or deleted. Also, editing prematurely can inhibit some writers. Strong (2001) points out, however, that others believe that editing issues such as punctuation are part of the “meaning-making” and should be part of the process all along (Cordeiro, 1998) or that working with students on something like punctuation, where there may be immediate results, can help encourage students as writers (Collins, 1998). Although students will find spell or grammar check tools on word processing programs to be helpful as they edit, they also benefit from modeling or direct instruction in how to approach the task of editing.

Depending upon the composition of the class, discussion of dialect may be appropriate when approaching editing issues with students. Some students may feel that criticism of their dialect is criticism of their culture. Although members of society often judge each other on the perceived “correctness” of the language being used, linguists emphasize that “... it is essential that practitioners appreciate the complexity and naturalness of community language patterns” (Wolfram, 1991, p. 265). Wolfram (1991) maintains that “Professional students of language typically use the term dialect as a neutral label to refer to any variety of language which is shared by a group of speakers” (p. 2). In short, students need to understand that language is not “good” or “bad”; rather, they need to be made aware of the social judgments that are made based on language usage so that they can be empowered to make conscious choices about their own usage.

Publication

“Publication” generally refers to the time when writing is read by the targeted audience. At times this may be a specific audience outside the school (such as a member of the school board, visitors to a website, judges of a writing contest, family members). However, teachers can also publish student writing by simply making it “public”: allowing students to collaborate on a book of collected writings on a topic of general interest to be placed in the school media center, create writing to be read by incoming students, or make student writing public on bulletin boards or in class newsletters. Although publication is certainly not required for every writing activity, it can be a powerful learning experience when students receive feedback from a real audience about their writing. It can also serve as an incentive for students to polish the composition.

TYPES OF WRITING IDENTIFIED IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARD COURSE OF STUDY

The four forms of communication identified in the *North Carolina English Language Arts Standard Course of Study* (1999) serve as a useful guide for considering some of the kinds of writing students may do in school.

- The first type, **EXPRESSIVE**, is the most personal in nature as the writer explores and shares personal experiences or insights.
- The second type, **INFORMATIONAL/EXPLANATORY**, involves a writer giving information to explain situations or ideas as a way of teaching.
- The third type, **ARGUMENTATIVE**, involves defining issues and proposing reasonable solutions.
- The fourth type, **CRITICAL**, involves interpreting, proposing, and judging.

Although writing can be classified for purposes of organizing instruction or helping students recognize features common to a particular kind of communication, these types are not meant to offer a rigid categorization scheme. According to the *English Language Arts Standard Course of Study* (1999),

While the goals of communication differ in their social context (purposes, audiences), there are elements that overlap. For example, in an editorial that presents an argument, a writer may illustrate a point by relating a personal experience; or a critic interpreting a television show may, for part of the essay, take on an informational stance to give the reader some factual background.

The *English Language Arts Standard Course of Study* advocates for a spiraling curriculum that identifies a particular focus for each grade yet incorporates elements of all four types of writing across the four years of high school.

PURPOSES AND AUDIENCES FOR WRITING

Kirby and Liner (1988) write that “One of the most desirable sensitivities to cultivate in growing writers is a heightened ability to ‘feel’ an audience out there as they write. Students develop distinct voices as they learn the control they have over their readers” (p. 154). Many students are used to writing “for the teacher” only, so they may need help seeing how they can make intentional choices in their writing with a specific audience in mind. They also may need help seeing how understanding the purpose for the writing can help them make those choices. For example, knowing that the purpose of a particular composition is to persuade a skeptical audience, a student learns to pay special attention to word choice and understand how certain words will be perceived by that audience.

To achieve this goal, students need to learn that writing does not occur in a vacuum. As stated in the *English Language Arts Standard Course of Study*,

A communication environment includes the following: a message sender, a message, a message receiver, and a social setting with relevant subject matter. To become proficient and skillful users of language, students should understand and demonstrate control of these elements of communication and employ language for different purposes, to different audiences, and in different contexts (**why**, to **whom**, and in **what situation**).

When they write for a variety of purposes and audiences, students make choices not only about what they say but how they say it. They ask questions about what the audience might already know, what political or philosophical perspective the audience might have, or what their goals are in writing for this particular audience. They begin to see their writing in the context of something larger than just the classroom, and they can judge the effectiveness of the writing in light of whether or not it is likely to achieve its purpose rather than just what numerical grade it might receive.

COMPOSING FEATURES

Based in the philosophy of the *North Carolina English Language Arts Standard Course of Study*, five features have been identified by North Carolina educators as key to effective writing. Not only will these features be assessed on state writing tests, but they also provide a framework and common vocabulary for teachers to discuss writing within their own classroom assignments.

In *Understanding the North Carolina Writing Assessment Scoring Model at Grades 4, 7, & 10*, the NCDPI Testing Section provides the following descriptions of each feature:

Focus

Focus is the topic/subject established by the writer in response to the writing task. The writer must clearly establish a focus as he/she fulfills the assignment of the prompt. If the writer retreats from the subject matter presented in the prompt or addresses it too broadly, the focus is weakened. The writer may effectively use an inductive organizational plan which does not actually identify the subject matter at the beginning and may not literally identify the subject matter at all. The presence, therefore, of a focus must be determined in light of the method of development chosen by the writer. If the reader is confused about the subject matter, the writer has not effectively established a focus. If the reader is engaged and not confused, the writer probably has been effective in establishing a focus.

Organization

Organization is the progression, relatedness, and completeness of ideas. The writer establishes for the reader a well-organized composition, which exhibits a constancy of purpose through the development of elements forming an effective beginning, middle, and end. The response demonstrates a clear progression of related ideas and/or events and is unified and complete.

Conventions

Conventions involve correctness in sentence formation, usage, and mechanics. The writer has control of grammatical conventions that are appropriate to the writing task. Errors, if present, do not impede the reader's understanding of the ideas conveyed.

Support and Elaboration

Support and Elaboration is the extension and development of the topic/subject. The writer provides sufficient elaboration to present the ideas and/or events clearly. Two important concepts in determining whether details are supportive are the concepts of relatedness and sufficiency. To be supportive of the subject matter, details must be related to the focus of the response. Relatedness has to do with the directness of the relationship that the writer establishes between the information and the subject matter. Supporting details should be relevant and clear. The writer must present his/her ideas with enough power and clarity to cause the support to be sufficient. Effective use of concrete, specific details strengthens the power of the response. Insufficiency is often characterized by undeveloped details, redundancy, and the repetitious paraphrasing of the same point. Sufficiency has less to do with amount than with the weight or power of the information that is provided.

Style

Style is the control of language that is appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context of the writing task. The writer's style is evident through word choice and sentence fluency. Skillful use of precise, purposeful vocabulary enhances the effectiveness of the composition through the use of appropriate words, phrases and descriptions that engage the audience. Sentence fluency involves using a variety of sentence styles to establish effective relationships between and among ideas, causes, and/or statements appropriate to the task.

**Please also note that the composing features that are to be observed assume specific meanings when applied to student responses. In order to demonstrate a reasonable level of control in any of the features above, the student must have written a sufficient amount.*

SUPPORTING STUDENT WRITERS

Olson (2003) points out that instructional scaffolding is an effective model for supporting student writers as the teacher “... analyzes the language task to be carried out by the students, determines the difficulties the task is likely to pose when students undertake it independently, and designs guided practice activities in strategies that enable students to complete the task successfully” (p. 19). Adapting the five components of effective instructional scaffolding proposed by Langer and Applebee (1986), Olson argues that instructional scaffolding involves the following:

- **Ownership:** Providing students with a sense of purposefulness
- **Appropriateness:** Selecting tasks that build upon students’ existing reading, thinking, and writing abilities and that will stretch students intellectually
- **Structure:** Making the structure of the task clear and guiding students through the specific task so that it can be applied to other contexts
- **Collaboration:** Promoting collaboration among students and between students and the teacher so that meaning can be constructed and shared collaboratively
- **Internalization:** Transferring control to the students as they gain competence and can apply the strategies independently. (p. 20)

When teachers use writing to reinforce and extend teaching in the content areas, they can support their students throughout the process by intentionally scaffolding their instruction so that students are given an opportunity to make sense of the content in intellectually challenging ways. Using what they know about course content, the writing process, and their own students, teachers can design instruction that engages their students in writing that is meaningful, authentic, and stimulating.



TEACHER TOOLBOX

EXERCISING LANGUAGE IS THE WORK OF A LIFETIME – A CRADLE-TO-GRAVE ADVENTURE
IN WHICH WE EXTEND AND REFINE OUR ORAL AND WRITTEN SKILLS – AND THE
COACHING OF WRITING MAY USEFULLY BE CONSIDERED A LIFETIME SPORT, ONE THAT
CAUSES SUFFERING TO TEACH US HUMILITY AND THEN OFFERS UNEXPECTED MOMENTS
OF JOY TO TEACH US HOPE AND COMMITMENT AND PROFESSIONAL PERSEVERANCE.

– WILLIAM STRONG, TEACHER AND AUTHOR

The “Teachers Toolbox” is designed to offer concrete ways that teachers can support writers during all stages of the writing process. It is organized in a question-answer format with questions grouped under the following headings:

- Incorporating Writing into the Content Area Classroom
- Supporting Student Writers Through Conferencing
- Developing Focus and Purpose in Writing
- Organizing Writing
- Using Support and Elaboration Effectively
- Dealing with Issues of Style and Audience
- Focusing on Language Conventions.

As Olson (2003) points out, “...one of the key differences between experienced and inexperienced readers and writers is that experienced readers and writers are strategic: They purposefully select and implement strategies in order to construct meaning. In order to become strategic, inexperienced readers and writers need both the knowledge and the motivation to select, apply, and monitor their use of strategies” (p. 101). The suggestions that follow build upon the idea that teachers can combine direct instruction, modeling, practice, and coaching to support student writers of all ability levels.

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INCORPORATING WRITING INTO THE CONTENT AREA CLASSROOM

DOES ALL WRITING HAVE TO END WITH A FINAL, PUBLISHED WORK?

Writing can be done for many different purposes, only some of which culminate in a final, published work. In fact, writing can be used as a tool for learning, not just showing what was learned, in all disciplines.

Writing to Prompt Thinking and Discussion

Cruz (2001) recommends several activities that can help students use writing as a prompt for thinking. First, she recommends “think-pair-share.” This quick activity can be used when introducing a lesson, checking for comprehension, or helping students review material. It simply asks students to respond individually to a prompt, share the response with a partner, and then discuss responses as a whole class.

A second technique she recommends is called “response/remembrance.” After students have received new information through reading, lecture, performance, or video, they are given several prompting questions (such as “What do you remember?”, “What intrigued you?”, or “What do you wonder about?”). They then select questions for their response and share with the class.

A third technique is “collaborative notetaking.” This can be especially helpful for difficult texts because students are instructed in class to read only one section of text at a time. After the reading, students individually write down the main points on five- by seven-inch index cards, discuss their responses with the class, and add information they missed.

A fourth activity that Cruz recommends is the use of letters (sent or unsent) in which students summarize the main points of a lesson to share with an interested reader (a friend, family member, or historical figure). A variation on the activity involves writing the letter from a different perspective (for example, a homeless mother of two, an engineer) to a public audience (such as a credit agency or school board). All of these activities lend themselves to in-class discussion or further development if desired.

The Use of Journals

Many teachers have also found journal writing, typically ungraded and not polished, to be useful. Christenbury (2000) identifies several different types of journals which may be used with students in order to increase fluency as well as work with course material:

- **Personal journals** (*which tend to be introspective*)
- **Writer’s journals** (*where students can record snippets of writing or writing ideas*)
- **Dialogue journals** (*written on one side of the page with space left on the back for another student or the teacher to write back*).

Journal entries, which can be done both in and out of class, can be written on topics initiated entirely by the student or can be in response to a prompt provided by the teacher.

The Use of Learning Logs

Like journals, learning logs are typically done in class and not graded. However, the learning log differs from a journal because it is a tool for reflection rather than a place to deal with personal experience or respond only to texts. Learning logs often involve the use of a prompt related to material that has been covered or an activity experienced in class (Christenbury, 2000). Olson (2003) writes, “Cognitively, the learning log is a place for students to think out loud on paper – to ask questions, sort through and organize information, monitor their understanding, rethink what they know, and reflect upon and assess what they are learning” (p. 117). To be used most effectively, they should be completed regularly (once a week, at the end of each class period, at the end of a unit). They are helpful for teachers as well as students because they can give teachers insights into students’ development.

Informal Response Activities

Teachers can also create informal response activities to engage students in content. Zemelman and Daniels (1988) recommend that teachers consider three things when creating these kinds of response activities: What are the key ideas or concepts for students to think about? What kind of thinking would be most effective for students to connect with this content? What kinds of activities will encourage this kind of thinking about this content?

Students can respond to course content in a variety of ways. One way is through a “sensual description” activity in which they are exposed to course content (an abstract painting, a historical document, a theory, a fact) and respond using their senses. Students can list sensory details that emerge upon exposure to the content. Another way to respond to the content of a lesson is to write a dramatic dialogue between two opposing characters, theories, or historical interpretations of an event. Students can also respond by writing an informal analysis of his or her thinking (for example, by explaining what he or she understands about a chemistry experiment up to the point where he or she becomes confused).

E X A M P L E

In Geometry, students are encouraged to articulate their understandings of concepts (beyond just memorized definitions) by writing brief, informal paragraphs comparing items such as the following: geometry-algebra, line-plane, or equation-graph (Kenyon, 2000). These informal paragraphs become a source for class discussion as well as a way for students to review material and clarify understanding.

E X A M P L E

*In Instrumental Music III, students complete a “sensual description” activity to help them listen closely when being introduced to a composition before they sight read it (the focus of this activity is to engage the musicians as careful listeners rather than stressing strict sight reading skills). Without identifying the composition by name, the band director instructs students to close their eyes and listen to the piece one time through. He/she encourages students to listen with all of their senses and provides the following prompts: What does the music sound like? What visual images come to mind? What textures does the music bring forth? What smells/tastes can be associated with the sounds of the music? After listening, students select one sense to focus on and share their response quickly in pairs. The band director then identifies the piece of music as **Symphony No. 1** (“In Memoriam, Dresden, 1945”) by Daniel Bukvich and shares historical information on the bombing of Dresden. The band director then plays the music a second time, this time telling students to list words or phrases that come to mind as they listen. The response may be in the form of a list, scattered words and phrases or even in paragraphs and is shared informally. Finally, the band director identifies the four movements of the piece by name and engages students in a discussion of the musical devices that the composer used to achieve varied effects in each section of the composition. The activity allows students to preview the piece and connect to it with their senses before sight reading it.*

WHAT ARE SOME WRITING ASSIGNMENTS I CAN USE WITH MY STUDENTS TO PROMPT THINKING OR HELP MY STUDENTS SHOW UNDERSTANDING IN INTERESTING WAYS?

Students do not have to write polished reports in order for an activity to help them learn course content, show understanding or develop their writing skills. Brief, informal writings, for example, can be used by themselves or as a step toward a more formal, polished assignment. The following activities can be adapted to any content area.

HOT CARDS. Students are given a note card and instructed to respond to a prompt. If the teacher wants to check for understanding, he or she can instruct students to write three quick sentences summarizing what they learned in class that day, list 10 facts about a topic, write five quiz questions they would like to be asked about the day's lesson, or give a quick explanation of their understanding of a concept. If the teacher wants to find out where students are having difficulties, he or she can instruct students to list any questions they have about the topic, tell about something they don't understand right now, or describe something that confuses them. The teacher can either check the cards after class or can use a few minutes of class time to address questions/comments on the cards with the class. The benefit of using note cards rather than paper is that they can be easily sorted, they limit the amount of information the student needs to provide, and they can be easily stored for later use.

VENN DIAGRAMS. Students are given two or more concepts and are told to draw interlocking circles that overlap in some places but are separate in others. They then write in what they know about each concept. They show their understanding of each concept's relationship to other concepts by writing information that is "shared" by concepts in the part of the circles that overlap and the information that is distinct to each concept in the outer part of the circle.

TELEGRAMS. Students are instructed to write a telegram summarizing the day's lesson or their understanding of a concept. Because telegrams make an economical use of language, students must choose their words carefully to be concise yet get across meaning.

ANTICIPATION GUIDES. An anticipation guide (Burke, 1999) consists of a list of statements about a topic that bring to light differences of opinion. Statements such as the following tend to promote thinking and discussion: "All people are born basically good," "Science gives us definite answers to the questions we ask," "Math requires creativity," "The internet has improved life for everyone," or "Art is only effective when it causes controversy". More specific statements can be designed for any type of unit. The student indicates that he or she either agrees or disagrees with the statement. Next, the student can be asked to write a brief paragraph about the statement that he/she feels the most strongly about. Students then discuss the statements in small groups or as a class.

LETTERS. Students write letters between two historical figures, literary characters, or current newsmakers to show not only their understanding of a concept but their ability to see it from more than one perspective.

CUBING. Cubing (Mondschein-Leist, 1997) allows a student to consider a subject in six different ways. Students are instructed to visualize a cube with different instructions on how to respond to the subject written on each side. The instructions are as follows: describe it, compare it, associate it, analyze it, apply it, argue for or against it.

CROSSWORD PUZZLES. Individually or in pairs students generate crossword puzzles using a list of terms related to a unit of study. Then, they can swap puzzles with other students as a way of reviewing content. The students focus not only on the terms themselves but also on writing the clues in their own words. Puzzles can be created online at <http://www.puzzlemaker.com>.

ACROSTICS. An acrostic is a poem that is formed by writing a word down a page and using the letters in the word to begin each line of a poem. For example, Bachman-Williams (2001) provides the following sample acrostic from a science class:

Blood brings oxygen
Records memories
Always working
Imagining plans
Neurons tell the body what to do (p. 14)

Students can write acrostic poems to show their understanding of the qualities of concepts, historical figures, or terms such as “Euclid,” “alternative energy sources,” “simile,” “Doppler Effect,” “New Deal,” “Cubism,” “health risks,” and “pitch.”

STEPPINGSTONES. Progroff (1992) uses the term “steppingstones” to refer to “...those events that come to our minds when we spontaneously reflect on the course that our life has taken...” (p. 76). He recommends sitting in silence and then making a list of 10 or 12 items that come immediately to mind. Students can use this technique in a variety of content areas to recall content and crystallize their understanding. For example, they can be instructed to pretend to be a character from a novel and write a list of steppingstones that character would identify as “events” that come to mind when reflecting on his or her life. Or, students could be instructed to think of a modern invention such as the automobile, the internet, or the use of a pig’s heart for transplants and make a spontaneous list of “steppingstones” that led to that invention or discovery. These steppingstones can then be used as a product for class discussion of the evolution of knowledge in a field of study.

THIRTEEN WAYS. Worsley & Mayer (2000) recommend using the poem “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” by Wallace Stevens to encourage students to approach a topic from several different angles or to view the topic in surprising ways. The more specific the topic the better, but most anything lends itself to the activity. Students can create poems modeled on Stevens’ poem on topics such as syncopation, a cell, light, the internet, a retiree’s budget, *pi*, a comma, *Guernica* by Picasso, or the atom bomb.

BRAINSTORMING. Perhaps best known as a technique for prewriting, brainstorming can take many forms and can also be used as a way of gathering and/or organizing information throughout the writing process. Students can be instructed to brainstorm by making lists, by webbing (put a concept in a circle in the middle of a page and “web” out associations with that concept), or creating concept maps. Teachers can use brainstorming activities at the beginning of a unit to help students gather prior knowledge about a topic, during the drafting stage of writing if a student gets stuck and needs more ideas, or as a prewriting activity during topic generation.

EXIT SLIPS. To use exit slips (Olson, 2003) students are instructed to spend the last five minutes of class reflecting on what they learned that day. They summarize it, write questions about it, share something that puzzles them, or describe an insight. As they leave class, they hand the exit slip to the teacher standing at the door.

THINKING WITH PROSE. Kenyon (2000) suggests that students in geometry who are having a mental block while trying to complete a proof may benefit from writing out their thoughts and frustrations to “unload” their memories. Eventually, this process may allow them to organize information more effectively so that they can experience success with the two-column proof. This technique could be adapted to any content area where the “form” of the activity inhibits student thinking.

BUMPER STICKERS. To help students elicit the essence of a historical period, scientific discovery, health danger, artistic technique, or technological concept, students can be instructed to create a bumper sticker advertising or taking a position on the concept being studied. Students should be reminded that bumper stickers are short and capture the essence of something in a memorable way.

LECTURE INTERRUPTIONS. Interrupt a lecture at a surprising moment with a five-minute quickwrite (Worsley & Mayer, 2000). Students can be instructed to make a quick list of information they remember from the lecture so far (without looking at their notes) or review their notes to list higher level questions or just questions borne of curiosity that might be raised about the information presented so far.

COUPLETS. Students create couplets (two rhyming lines with a regular rhythm) about terms such as “macroeconomics,” “behaviorism,” or “topology” to help them remember the meaning of the term as well as distinguish the term from others (such as microeconomics, behavior, or topography). For example, astronomy helps us understand the stars; astrology helps us know what fate is ours.

TIME-LAPSE WRITINGS. Students are given a topic for freewrites to be completed at several different points during a unit (all on this same topic). The write about the topic before it is introduced, at least once during the unit, and at the end of the unit. The teacher collects these freewrites and gives them back to students at the end of the unit for reflection. Students then write a final five-minute paragraph describing the progression of their thinking about the topic as the unit progressed.

METAPHORS. Students can generate metaphors (surprising comparisons between things that are not usually thought of as similar) to help illustrate their understanding of a concept, historical event, musical style, or technological innovation. For example, they can create a metaphor for items such as a state lottery, jazz, graph, e-commerce, Victorian Age, pollution, physiology, or New Criticism. For example, the heart is the engine of the body, pumping blood to keep the machine running.

WANT ADS. Students can create want ads to show their understanding of literary characters or historical figures by composing want ads that depict something the person seeks, wants to sell, or could offer as a service.

SNAPSHOT SUMMARIES. After students work collaboratively on an activity, they individually write a five-minute snapshot summary of the content of the discussion, activity, problem-solving opportunity, or experiment that they just experienced. They then regroup briefly to compare “snapshots” and add to or correct their snapshots as necessary to provide a record of details for later review.

E X A M P L E

In Psychology, students write acrostic poems using names of some major theorists (such as Kohlberg, Maslow, Piaget, and Freud) to capture the essence of their beliefs and theories as a way of reviewing content in the class.

E X A M P L E

In Healthful Living, students complete an anticipation guide on the topic of weight management prior to a unit on that topic. The anticipation guide consists of the following statements (students mark either “agree” or “disagree”):

- *Anyone can lose weight if he or she tries hard enough.*
- *It is possible to lose too much weight.*
- *Weight has little to do with a person’s actual “fitness” level.*
- *Proper diet is more important to weight management than physical activity.*
- *People should be encouraged to feel good about their weight, whatever it is.*
- *Weight management is best learned at home.*
- *Chronic diseases can be affected by weight management.*
- *Dieting is the best way to manage weight.*

After students complete the anticipation guide, the teacher instructs them to select one statement with which they agree or disagree most strongly and write a paragraph explaining their opinion. Then, through class discussion, the teacher uses this writing to help students better understand the preconceptions and beliefs that they bring to the unit. Teachers ensure that students challenge myths that they may have about weight management and provide accurate information for them. At the end of the unit, students write an essay answering one of the following questions: “What is effective weight management?”, “What effect does nutrition have on weight management?” or “How can someone use weight management to help control diabetes?” with a section of the essay devoted to what they used to believe about weight management but understand differently.

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE MY STUDENTS TO WRITE?

As Zemelman & Daniels (1988) point out, “If students are engaged with explaining something they care about to an audience they truly wish to reach, in a classroom where they know their ideas will be respected, they’re more likely to write without hesitation” (p. 165). With this same idea in mind, Dornan, Rosen, & Wilson (2003) encourage teachers to create a classroom atmosphere where students have some authority over topic choices, where teachers focus on what students *can* do to build on successes, where teachers share their own writing and writing processes with their students, and where teachers refuse to allow verbal or non-verbal put-downs of student writing.

One of the primary ways to encourage students to write is to provide a safe and supportive atmosphere for writing in the classroom. A classroom is safe and supportive for writing when writing is purposeful, students are encouraged to engage fully in the process, the teacher coaches students through the process when necessary, and expectations are reasonable, challenging, and clear.

MAKING WRITING PURPOSEFUL. Students generally respond more positively to assignments when they understand the value and purpose of the activity. One way to make the value and purpose apparent is to have students write for a real audience that will actually receive the writing. When students write letters to the editor, children’s books for elementary school students, interview questions for a veteran, program notes for a dance recital, or instructions for a bike repair to be used at a cycle shop, they may feel a greater motivation to write. However, even when the finished product won’t be shared beyond the classroom, teachers can help students see the goals of the assignment in order to understand what skills or concept knowledge the activity will help develop. And, if a writing assignment doesn’t have a clear purpose, the teacher may even reconsider why it is being assigned.

ENGAGING STUDENTS FULLY IN THE PROCESS. Rather than simply assigning a topic and collecting the final product, teachers can remind students that writing is a recursive process involving planning, acting, reflecting, and revising. Teachers can honor parts of the process by giving students the time and support necessary to engage in all parts of the process as appropriate. Students can be encouraged to take part in these parts of the process when the teacher allows class time, at least with early assignments, to model the writing process and help students understand how to engage in them. However, teachers also need to remind students that not all writing activities will need to go through all stages of the process.

COACHING STUDENTS. Teachers can provide support for students during the writing process by modeling writing, engaging students in writing conferences, responding to drafts in progress, coordinating the use of peer writing groups, or providing opportunities for individual reflection during the writing process. Students can be encouraged during coaching to grow as writers and thinkers through the use of targeted, specific praise and authentic, probing questions about their writing. Students receive little encouragement to write when the only feedback is primarily negative and only comes after the final composition has been submitted. Instead, teachers can be coaches who show interest in individual progress, individualize instruction appropriately, encourage development of specific skills in the context of the whole, and encourage the student to succeed by building on what he or she can already do.

MAKING EXPECTATIONS REASONABLE, CHALLENGING, AND CLEAR. One way to make expectations reasonable is to be aware of individual student needs, interests, and aptitudes. Writing assignments need to be developmentally appropriate for the particular students involved. However, students also need to be stretched beyond what they can do comfortably. Students can be challenged when teachers make each writing assignment take them a step further in their thinking, content knowledge, or writing skills. Assignments can also be made clear through class discussion about expectations and the use of a rubric which outlines the expectations and indicates how the final product will be evaluated. Involving students in the creation of grading criteria is a way to encourage class discussion about expectations as well as make sure the expectations are clear.

E X A M P L E

In Spanish II, students are given a clear purpose for writing when they collaborate with a classmate to write, illustrate, and bind an original children’s story written in Spanish on the topic of “perseverance” to be read to ESL students (for whom Spanish is their primary language) at a nearby elementary school as part of the character education curriculum.

E X A M P L E

In e-Commerce, students collaborate to review the websites of five online businesses (which all sell similar products). After reviewing these sample websites, they discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each. Using this information, students create a rubric to evaluate an original website that each group will create for an imaginary business.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I HAVE A STUDENT WHO IS REALLY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT WRITING?

Faigley, Daly, & Witte (1981) define writing apprehension as a tendency to be so anxious about writing that writing is avoided and the apprehension can be seen in behaviors, attitudes, and written products. They further state that these writers tend to share many of the following characteristics: they have difficulty thinking of what to write about, produce shorter pieces of writing than their peers, fail to develop their ideas adequately, use less variety in sentence patterns, and have difficulty with usage and mechanics.

Writing apprehension may cause students to fail to turn in assignments, produce inadequate products, or even lead to behavior problems in class when students become frustrated. Reeves (1997) identifies several strategies that teachers can use with students whose writing apprehension sabotages their writing efforts. She recommends that teachers talk about past experiences with writing in small groups early in the course as a way of helping students put past experiences in perspective. For example, students who are accustomed to receiving failing grades or primarily negative feedback may feel that they are unable to produce effective writing. By helping students explore these feelings and understand their source, teachers can encourage them to work through their apprehension.

Reeves also advocates for the inclusion of daily non-threatening writing activities in a practice-like atmosphere because many of these writers have either had little experience writing or have only received criticism about past writings. The goal is to help students develop fluency and confidence in small doses.

Another way that Reeves suggests teachers can help students overcome their apprehensions is to help them see patterns in their errors. This emphasis on systematic logic can help struggling writers increase their confidence and see that they can learn from past mistakes.

Most importantly, though, teachers can help students who are apprehensive by structuring writing activities in ways that promote success, balancing flexibility and structure, and help students “unblock” themselves. The following activities offer some suggestions.

SHORT, IN-CLASS WRITING ACTIVITIES. Students may feel less apprehensive about writing if a teacher gives out note cards (which provide only a small amount of writing space) and asks for a response to a prompt to be written in the student’s own words. Another technique that can be helpful (especially when students are suffering from “writer’s block” because they feel overwhelmed with information) is to tell them to imagine that they have 10 minutes to write the assigned paper. Set a timer and have them write for 10 minutes. This will often help them find a “way into” the writing or at least help them see some of the main points that they want to make in the writing. Some students work better when the teacher helps them “break down” a larger essay into pieces (for example, spend some class time working on the introduction or just one paragraph of support) initially.

STRUCTURED WRITING ACTIVITIES. Some students may need some structure initially to help them feel less threatened by writing. Structured poems such as biopoems or acrostics may work very well for this purpose. They allow students to explore content without the pressure of having to make decisions about the form of the content. Graphic organizers can also be helpful to students who feel inhibited by structure since the organizer can provide a visual pattern for the writing. As students develop more fluency as writers, teachers can help them move beyond these structured activities and show them how to write “from scratch” using their own planning techniques.

HELPING STUDENTS WORK THROUGH WRITING BLOCKS. Teachers can use several techniques to help students continue to write even when they are feeling blocked.

- One technique is to tell students to imagine a different audience for the piece (the student may be able to write a first draft of a letter to the editor by first imagining her best friend as the audience).
- Another is to remind students that they don't have to start writing at the "beginning." They can pick any part of the piece as a starting point to just begin getting something down on paper.
- With the use of technology, students can also do "invisible writing" (Worsley & Mayer, 2000). Invisible writing can be done by turning off the computer monitor. Because students can't see what they have been writing, the focus tends to move to the thinking inside the head and may even affect the way that the student conceptualizes what will be written. It also helps students who are so concerned about "correctness" refocus their attention since they can't check the correctness of what they've written while they continue to write.

E X A M P L E

In Woodworking, students use a graphic organizer while categorizing information to be part of a grant proposal they are co-writing with the teacher to secure funds to purchase materials to design and build ten pieces of furniture as part of a service learning project to donate to families building Habitat for Humanity homes.

E X A M P L E

A novice ESL student in social studies who feels apprehensive about writing an autobiographical paragraph at the beginning of the year during a "getting to know you activity" writes a structured "Geo Poem" (Bachman-Williams, 2001) about his or her country of origin to gain confidence and prewrite about his or her culture before moving to the paragraph assignment. The format is as follows:

Geo Poem
(Name of country)

(Four adjectives – words or statements that describe the country)

Home of... (something that distinguishes it from other countries)

Neighbor of... (name at least three neighboring countries)

Who exports... (three items)

Who imports... (three items)

Who is proud of... (people, places, or characteristics)

Who celebrates... (name three holidays)

Whose flag is... (name the colors in the flag)

Member of... (continent on which it is found)

(Local name of country and a phrase to describe the origin of the name) (p. 10)

WHAT IF I DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE AS A WRITER MYSELF?

Many teachers have found it helpful to explore their “writing autobiography” as a way of getting a handle on how their experiences as a writer have influenced their attitudes about writing. They consider the impact of early writing experiences, teachers who supported and/or destroyed their evolving “writing selves,” the impact of writing experiences both inside and outside of school, and what they currently believe about how writing should be taught and evaluated.

By examining their beliefs about how writing can best be taught, teachers can tap into their own beliefs about the writing process and reflect on how their own processes may help or hinder their confidence as writers. Milner and Milner (2003) offer the following survey for teachers to use when considering their assumptions about writing instruction:

WRITE D (DISAGREE) OR A (AGREE) BEFORE EACH STATEMENT IN THE SURVEY.

- _____ 1. In teaching writing, correctness and organization should be emphasized more than clarity or substance of thought.
- _____ 2. Grammatical conventions (including punctuation and spelling) should be emphasized only in the final edited version of a piece of writing.
- _____ 3. Usage problems such as noun-verb agreement should be corrected through workbook exercises to instill the rules of grammar.
- _____ 4. Students should be asked to write about their own experiences and to develop their own ideas about what they wish to write about.
- _____ 5. Writing is best generated by assigning topics on which students can write well.
- _____ 6. Most of a student’s writing time should be spent in the initial writing and proofreading of a paper.
- _____ 7. Students are of little help in responding to other students’ work.
- _____ 8. Teachers should grade everything that students write.
- _____ 9. Students should spend as much time in creative, expressive writing as in analytical, expository writing.
- _____ 10. Grammar instruction is essential to the writing progress of secondary students. (p. 288)

Another way to explore the whole notion of writing is to read what successful writers say about their own writing processes. Authors such as Stephen King, Natalie Goldberg, Ray Bradbury, and Eudora Welty have written autobiographically about their own struggles and triumphs in their writing lives. Teachers may find comfort in the fact that even successful writers get mental blocks, dread writing, or feel inadequate at times. In addition, though, they may pick up some techniques that they can apply to their own writing processes. For teachers who find that their writing processes are blocked by fears about “correctness,” O’Conner’s (1996). *Woe is I: The grammarphobe’s guide to better English in plain English* is an accessible, practical and humorous guide to using language.

Another way to develop confidence as a writer is to spend time writing in a low-pressure environment. Texts such as *The Intensive Journal Method* by Progroff (1992), *Writing the Natural Way* by Rico (1983), *The Artist’s Way* by Cameron (2002), and *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within* by Goldberg (1986) offer structured and non-structured ways of approaching writing, even for individuals who are very apprehensive about the process.

Becoming familiar with how other teachers in the discipline have incorporated writing into the content area can also be helpful. After finding journal articles or books describing specific writing assignments, teachers can actually “do” the assignments as if they were students. This allows them to not only see whether or not the assignment will benefit their students but also build confidence as writers since the writing is related to the content each teacher knows best.

Teachers can also use professional development opportunities to practice their writing and become more confident writers. By attending graduate school, being involved in a National Boards study group, or participating in a National Writing Project site, teachers will have an opportunity to write for a purpose, get feedback on their writing, and revise. Writing in a supportive environment can help teachers become more confident and capable writers.

E X A M P L E

As part of a professional development activity such as the National Writing Project, a Fashion Design teacher composes a “Writing Autobiography” to explore how writing experiences have shaped his or her attitudes about writing, confidence level as a writer, and teaching of writing.

E X A M P L E

*An English IV teacher who has never felt comfortable with expressive writing uses **The Intensive Journal Method** by Progoff (1992) to explore his or her own expressive writing as well as develop interesting prewriting activities to use with students.*

WHAT KINDS OF SUPPORT CAN I OFFER MY ESL STUDENTS WHEN THEY WRITE IN MY CLASS?

What We Need to Know About Writing and ESL Students

Tharp (1997) offers five suggestions for how teachers can support the academic achievement of language minority learners (which can easily be adapted to teaching in the content areas and the teaching of writing). They are the following:

1. Facilitate learning through joint productive activity among teachers and students. Learning is most effective when novices and experts work together for a common product or goal, and when they have opportunities to converse about what they are doing.
2. Develop competence in the language and literacy of instruction throughout all instructional activities. Language and literacy development should be fostered through use and through purposive conversation not through drills and decontextualized rules.
3. Contextualize teaching and curriculum in the experiences and skills of home and community. Schools need to provide experiences that show how rules are drawn from and apply to the everyday world. Patterns of participation and speech from family and community should be utilized in schools and used to bridge to school patterns of participation.
4. Challenge students with cognitively complex, intellectually engaging curricula.
5. Engage students through dialogue, especially the instructional conversation, which is a way of engaging students and teachers in a process of questioning and sharing ideas and knowledge. (p. 423)

In high schools ESL students are often isolated in ESL programs or put into classrooms with teachers who have received little if any training to accommodate them; as a result, they may be placed in courses below their ability levels, given instructions rather than asked questions, and actually have their opportunities for learning English reduced (Hudelson, Poyner, & Wolfe, 2003).

However, ESL students benefit from opportunities to write, talk about their writing, and reflect on their writing in all content area classes. In fact, Valdes (1999) found that what was most helpful for ESL students in the development of their writing was a process-oriented teacher who engaged students in academic writing activities while making explicit the features of well-written texts in English (Hudelson, Poyner, & Wolfe, 2003). These students also benefit from instruction which includes illustrations and graphic organizers.

Strategies That Can Be Helpful for ESL Students When They Write

Gabaldon (2001) advocates for the use of writing to learn activities with ESL students, which can help students develop confidence as they work with course content. He offers three specific writing-to-learn techniques which have been successful with his own students: Reflective Dictation, Listing/Focused Writing, and Metaphorical Questions.

For Reflective Dictation, Gabaldon selects short passages to read aloud to his students (these can be from any kind of primary source document). The students take dictation as accurately as they can, discuss common errors as a class, and then examine the original piece more closely. They then write a brief reflective response to the piece in terms of personal response to it, looking at the content and/or thinking about the structure of the piece. The students have language practice but also are able to make a personal connection of some sort to the ideas or text.

To use Listing/Focused Writing, Gabaldon asks his students to write 500 words on a given topic. At first the students are often intimidated by the task, but by having them list everything they know about the topic and begin thinking about subtopics, they usually find that the 500 word requirement is reasonable. He uses this to help his students develop confidence and fluency in their new language.

With *Metaphorical Questions* (Gere, 1985), Gabaldon helps his students who are reluctant to revise their essays (in fact, their second drafts look much like their first ones) by asking them to answer a series of questions that help the students think more deeply about their topic. Using the example of an essay about “sleep” he may ask a student to respond to questions such as the following: “What does sleep look, taste, feel, smell, and sound like?”, “What words are synonyms for sleep?”, or “What plant or creature would be a good symbol for sleep?” (p. 67). He then asks them to revise the essay using some of the new information they have generated.

In terms of language conventions, it is helpful for teachers to avoid correcting every single error and instead focus energy on errors that are most likely to cloud meaning. Also, rather than engaging students in “skill and drill” with decontextualized exercises, teachers can help students look at the errors in their writing in terms of patterns which can be learned and applied. ESL students will eventually self-correct if the teacher models appropriate vocabulary and grammar.

When teaching writing to ESL students, however, teachers need to go beyond just language conventions and help writers build confidence. One way to help them build confidence is to make them familiar with the conventions of the kinds of writing they will be doing in the class. Soven (1999) writes,

Issues of rhetoric are equally important, especially at the secondary level. For example, the rules of argument may be different. We ask such questions as “What are the typical guidelines for using logical, ethical, and pathetic appeals appropriately?” In Arabic repetition with variation is a common form of developing ideas. An argument is strongly based on repeating some truth that the writer or speaker shares with his or her audience. (pp. 217-218)

Teachers can help ESL students understand conventions of English not only by pointing them out and modeling them but by engaging students in discussion about writing in their native language. Likewise, ESL students benefit from many opportunities to use English through speaking and writing in a literacy rich environment.

The most valuable things that teachers can do to help their ESL students writing are engage them in writing-to-learn activities, help them find patterns in their errors to help them feel that they can learn language conventions, include illustrations/ graphics for novice ESL students, and give them opportunities to talk about their writing and course content.

E X A M P L E

In English I, students reflect on their own language processes in the content area. Raimes (2002) offers the following prompt for Multilingual/ESL writers in any content area as a way of thinking about their own writing: Write a paragraph in your native language about your experiences as a writer. What considerations occupied you as you wrote (for example, content, organization, grammar, punctuation)? How different are they from the considerations you have when you write in English? (p. 406) After responding to the prompt, the student then lists five linguistic features of English that seem to be causing trouble in his or her writing in this particular content area (for example, there may be problems with vocabulary in biology, unclear sentence structure when writing math word problems, or clear use of pronouns when writing a short story). After identifying the issues that seem to be most relevant in the particular content area, the student then works with the teacher to explore whether the mistakes tend to be influenced by the native language or false ideas about how English works.

E X A M P L E

In Theatre II, ESL students work with partners to write brief scripts incorporating elements of theatre currently being studied. The students are encouraged to talk as they compose and to experiment with dialogue.

MY STUDENTS DON'T THINK THAT THEY HAVE TO WRITE IN MY CONTENT AREA. HOW CAN I HELP THEM SEE THE RELEVANCE OF WRITING IN MY CLASS?

Bachman-Williams (2001), a science teacher, argues that teachers need to teach literacy in the content areas because “... literacy opens up avenues to teach the higher thinking necessary in our classes. Students need to read, write, and think to comprehend and learn in the content areas. If we have literate students, then we can teach our content” (p. 8). Although students may initially question why writing is being done outside of English classes, teachers can help them understand that, in many ways, writing is thinking, so they benefit from using it as a tool in other disciplines as well.

One way teachers can show the importance of writing in the content area is to expose students to documents in the field that have had a profound influence on the direction of the discipline. For example, in science teachers can provide excerpts from works by scientists such as Einstein, Oppenheimer, and Copernicus . Another way is for teachers to identify some of the kinds of thinking that students need to be able to do in the content area and explicitly instruct students in how to use a variety of kinds of writing to help develop different kinds of thinking. For example, in geometry students need to be able to use logic to solve a problem, and writing analytically can help develop that skill. Another way is to have professionals in the field discuss the kinds of writing that are part of their job. Finally, teachers can engage students in meaningful writing activities in class as a way for them to “believe” in the power of writing as they see its purpose and benefits.

E X A M P L E

In Technical Math I, students keep a learning log as they progress through a unit. They use the log for not only recording information about how to solve problems but also as a place to reflect on their learning. The teacher helps students see the value of this by encouraging them to reread the entry from the previous day as review at the beginning of each class and modeling how they can use the learning log to help them prepare for a test on a unit.

E X A M P L E

In Early Childhood Education II, students participate in a day of “shadowing” a professional in the field. The teacher creates a list of topics that students must ask the professional during their day together, with at least one question relating to the writing that is a necessary and everyday part of the job. Students then share what they learned about writing in that profession with the rest of the class.

HOW CAN I TAKE THE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS THAT I ALREADY USE IN MY DISCIPLINE AND MAKE THEM MORE CREATIVE AND EXCITING?

Students tend to see assignments as more creative and exciting when they have at least some of the following characteristics:

- student ownership and control over the topic and/or evaluation
- use of an authentic audience
- use of multigenre writing or a surprising genre for the piece (for example, using narrative writing in science)
- a sense of challenge
- a feeling that the writing can actually make a difference, cause a change, or be enjoyed by real people
- appropriate and interesting uses of technology
- opportunities for meaningful collaboration
- real world experiences
- use of multimedia and technology tools.

Strong (2001) uses the acronym **CRAFT** when creating writing activities or prompts. An explanation of the acronym follows:

C = CONTEXT	The situation in which writing occurs
R = ROLE	The persona the writer assumes
A = AUDIENCE	The person(s) who will read the text
F = FORMAT	The genre features that are important
T = TOPIC	The focus for the text in terms of theme. (p. 155)

He suggests that good writing assignments “... invoke a world that middle school and high school students can enter imaginatively” (p. 155). By challenging students and creating this world (real or imaginary), teachers can engage students in learning.

E X A M P L E

In Earth/Environmental Science, a teacher may typically require students to write a summary of how a volcano is formed. Instead, the teacher can ask the students to “recast the text” (Claggett, Reid & Vinz, 1986). “Recasting” means to take something currently written in one form and translate it into another form by lifting excerpts of the original and rearranging these excerpts into a new “mold.” In this instance the student examines a section of the textbook which describes how a volcano is formed. Rather than simply summarize the information, the student “recasts” this expository text into a poem using actual words and phrases from the textbook. In the process, students must reread the text multiple times to select just the right words and phrases and make the meaning clear in poem form.

E X A M P L E

In United States History, students create an oral history anthology covering the decades between 1930 and 1950 (with a focus on culture, history, and social issues) by interviewing people they know who were teenagers or adults during that time period. As part of a community service project, they then take the anthology to a nearby assisted living facility in order to give residents a chance to read the anthology and add reflections or insights that they had when reading and remembering their own lives. The students incorporate these reflections into the document as “that makes me think of a time...” narratives, and place copies of the anthology in the assisted living facility and the public library.

HOW CAN I MODEL WRITING IN MY CLASSROOM?

Writing can be modeled in several ways. First, teachers can identify and share samples of writing taken from the content area. Students may be surprised to learn about writing done in the field of mathematics, agricultural education, or automotive repair. Students benefit from exposure to authentic content area documents; rather than reading about a daycare budget request, they can actually read one. Teachers can also provide overt instruction about the expectations for writing in the specific discipline and have students use those expectations as they model a piece of writing after the samples they have studied. For example, after reading three reviews of plays, students can discuss the expectations (in terms of form, tone, and content) of a newspaper review before writing their own review of a school play in a newspaper class. If the compositions won't be submitted to a publication, teachers can post writing samples produced by students in the classroom. Finally, teachers can model writing by writing with their own students. The writing process is made less mysterious for students when they can see someone demonstrate how to brainstorm ideas, select a topic, develop a draft, and revise it while producing a document appropriate to the particular content area. Finally, teachers can use selected student writing to model effective student compositions.

Modeling can be done using copies of writing produced by teachers, students, or professionals. Teachers can put writing on the overhead for analysis, post it on a technological platform such as Blackboard and elicit online discussion of it, or compose on the spot using a word processor connected to a projector. Students can examine writing individually or in pairs before large group discussion in order to give them time to collect their thoughts and analyze what they see. Prompts can be helpful as students analyze writing that they eventually want to model their own writing after. For example, students can be asked to create a graphic representation of the writing (using a specific graphic organizer or their own method) to figure out issues of form that may be typical to that type of writing. Or, they may be asked to notice what kind of content is typically included in all three examples of a particular kind of writing.

Another way to model writing is to have students analyze the characteristics of a particular genre of writing appropriate to the field. For example, students can analyze ten different word problems in algebra and make a list of all of the features that they have in common before having to create their own original word problems. They can also analyze samples of writing in a discipline and make a list of evaluative criteria that could be used to determine the quality of that kind of writing. For example, students could read several sets of instructions for various computer repair tasks and make a list of the criteria that distinguishes the strongest from the weakest before writing their own handbooks to be shared with students who join the class after the course has already begun.

E X A M P L E

In Marketing, students collect and evaluate brochures advertising local cleaning services. They analyze the brochures for effectiveness and use the strongest ones as models for brochures they will be creating for mock businesses.

E X A M P L E

In Horticulture II, students write speeches to be delivered to an audience unfamiliar with agricultural education. Each speech identifies a current agricultural problem in the state and proposes a logical solution.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS I CAN ASK MY STUDENTS TO SHARE THEIR WORK?

Students can share their writing in a variety of ways. Some suggestions include the following:

- Doing read-alouds (students read aloud their own writing to the class)
- Creating a writer’s bulletin board
- Posting documents on a class website
- Sending letters to the editor of the local newspaper
- Creating a class anthology
- Making a display in the school media center, trophy case, or public library
- Composing business letters to send
- Participating in listserves
- Sending letters to local or state representatives
- Sharing the writing with parents or other family members
- Writing for the school newspaper or PTSA newsletter
- Sharing writing with residents in assisted living facilities
- Creating texts to be used in elementary or middle school classrooms
- Submitting manuscripts to magazines for teen writers
- Creating a multimedia anthology
- Participating in email exchanges with students from near and far
- Submitting works to the school literary magazine
- Placing texts in waiting rooms (doctor’s office, vet, hospital)
- Reciting their original poetry in a “poetry slam”
- Contributing to the school yearbook
- Sending thank you notes
- Keeping a weblog
- Writing proposals to solve problems in the school community
- Creating surveys to use to gather data.

E X A M P L E

In English I, students collaborate to write a “How to Survive the Transition to High School” (specific to the high school the students attend with information about who’s who in the administration, how to get around, how to get involved, how homework might be different from what they are used to, what to expect in ninth grade classes and so forth) book to be shared with rising ninth graders from a feeder middle school.

E X A M P L E

In Healthful Living, students research, design, write, illustrate and edit newsletters to be distributed through the school nurse’s office which identify and discuss the effects of health problems related to teens on their overall or future health such as smoking, lack of physical activity, diabetes, body piercing, and sports injuries.

I HAVE A FULL CURRICULUM TO TEACH – HOW CAN I USE WRITING TO SUPPORT, RATHER THAN REPLACE, ELEMENTS OF MY CURRICULUM?

One way of using writing to support elements of the curriculum is to identify thinking processes that need to be developed in the content area and create writing activities that help to create conditions for that kind of thinking. Another is to closely examine elements of the curriculum to see where writing is a natural fit. Teachers often use writing as a way of having students show that they understand concepts. However, they can also use it to help students reflect on what they are learning and actually enhance their understanding by using writing-to-learn activities.

E X A M P L E

In Chemistry, students examine their assumptions as a way of exploring the idea of “scientific objectivity.” Because assumptions can interfere with evidence gathering and decision-making during lab work, students need to differentiate between what they actually see and what they assume. First, they take an “Uncritical Inference Test” (available on the web at <http://www.redracerstudio.com/funstuff/story.htm>). This test presents a brief story about what appears to be a store robbery followed by several statements. The reader has to decide whether the statement is true, false, or uncertain based on the details of the story. Students take the test and do a quickwrite about their answers and why they chose them before the teacher presents the correct answers and opens the floor for discussion. The test makes it clear how assumptions, rather than evidence, often influence interpretation. After the experience, students reread their quickwrites and underline everything that involved an “assumption” rather than an objective determination of the answer.

E X A M P L E

In Fashion Merchandising, students write a cover letter and create a resume to apply for a hypothetical job in the field.

IF INFORMATIONAL WRITING IS WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED ON THE GRADE 10 WRITING TEST, AM I ALLOWED TO USE OTHER KINDS OF WRITING IN MY CLASS?

Yes. Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of types of writing for many different purposes in several contexts to help students grow as writers. Improved student writing is a major goal of any writing across the curriculum program, so students should not be limited to informational writing in the classroom simply because it is the focus of the tenth grade writing test. Students need to be exposed to a variety of writing opportunities to develop confidence and competence that will extend beyond the state writing assessment as well as support student performance on it.

Although writing is often divided into genres (such as narrative, argumentative, informative and so forth), it is important to remember that these genres are not mutually exclusive and that conventions of effective writing can cross the arbitrary lines dividing them. To put it simply, students grow as writers when they have the opportunity to practice many types of writing in a supportive environment. *The North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was designed with the belief that all strands of the curriculum work together to support each other, and the same is true in writing instruction. Teachers help students learn about informational writing, and all other kinds of writing, by creating a variety of writing assignments that vary in purpose, audience, structure, and content.

Students need to be encouraged to make meaningful choices about form, voice and organization in their writing. This can only happen when they are given a variety of experiences writing for different purposes, audiences, and contexts. When teachers rely solely on one form for writing assignments, students may begin to feel that their choices do not matter. In a related example, Pirie (1997) comments on the potentially formulaic five-paragraph essay and writes,

What does the five-paragraph essay teach about writing? It teaches that there are rules, and that those rules take the shape of a preordained form, like a cookie-cutter into which we can pour ideas and expect them to come out well-shaped. In effect, the student is told, “You don’t have to worry about finding a form for your ideas; here’s one already made for you.” This kind of instruction sends a perversely mixed message. On the one hand, it makes structure all-important, because students will be judged on how well they have mastered the form. On the other hand, it implies that structure can’t be very important: it clearly doesn’t have any inherent relationship to ideas, since just about any idea can be stuffed into the same form. (p. 76)

General conventions of effective writing can be applied across writing assignments, even those that seem very different. For example, students can learn to make rhetorical decisions about “voice” whether they are composing a childhood memory essay, budget request from a day care, lab report, Civil Rights protest song, biography of Mozart, or explanation of how to repair a bike derailleur. Regardless of the nature of the assignment, the student is learning to make significant choices about how to achieve a particular effect through the use of an appropriate writing voice.

E X A M P L E

In Masonry I, students write a series of instructions for performing a masonry task. Through peer review and informal teacher conferencing, they learn how to add relevant details and elaboration to the instructions to make them clear and complete.

E X A M P L E

In Visual Arts III, students share the work they have done by creating a web page modeled after an online museum tour. They use digital photography to capture images of their creations, design a website to present the tour, and write a brief paragraph about each piece which captures the essence of the work and its connection to the exhibit’s focus.



SUPPORTING STUDENT WRITERS THROUGH CONFERENCING

WHAT ARE WRITING CONFERENCES?

Writing conferences, talking one-on-one with students about their writing, can help teachers encourage students to reflect about their writing as well as support them as they continue to grow as writers. Conferencing can be done during any stage of the writing process and may not be necessary for every student at the same time in the process. They may be formal or informal and may last as long as 20 minutes or as little as two minutes. Several different types of conferences are described below:

PROCESS CONFERENCES. Process conferences may be held any time during the writing that the student needs individual teacher input. These conferences may be teacher or student initiated and may involve things like refining the essay topic, working through a particularly troubling piece of the writing, or discussing how to eliminate unnecessary elaboration. The focus of these conferences is generally on content, organization and style rather than conventions, although that aspect certainly may be addressed if appropriate. The student should be given the “lead” as much as possible during these conferences so that it becomes a conversation about issues that matter to the student as a writer rather than a list of recommended changes given by the teacher with no real “thinking” on the part of the student. The teacher should ask probing questions or make comments that engage the student in talking about the writing.

GRADING CONFERENCES. A teacher may find it helpful to grade a student’s paper aloud with the student present by reading it aloud without making written comments on the paper until the end. In this way students have an opportunity to see areas of confusion and better understand the teacher’s expectations as revealed by the comments made during the reading of the paper.

POST-GRADING CONFERENCES. A teacher may meet with a student after grading a paper to discuss comments and suggestions made in writing on the paper. After being given a chance to review the paper, the student then has a chance to ask about things that still confuse them, summarize their overall concerns about the writing, and make plans for future assignments.

REVISION CONFERENCES. A student may meet with the teacher after receiving a graded essay to make plans for revision, ask questions about comments on the paper, and make a “contract” for the content of the revision. Students should be encouraged to go beyond mere editing and truly revise the essay.

PORTFOLIO CONFERENCES. At the end of a quarter or unit a teacher may wish to conference with a student by looking at the writings that have been collected over that period. This gives the teacher and student a chance to discuss patterns in the writing, areas of concern, or goals for future writing.

E X A M P L E

In Journalism I, students participate in portfolio conferences at the end of each semester as the teacher meets with them individually to discuss writing collected, with two pieces being fully polished, over the semester. Student and teacher discuss setting a goal for the next nine weeks or semester.

E X A M P L E

In Early Childhood Education II, students participate in process conferences as they work to develop a curriculum for a preschool founded on the Montessori philosophy of education.

WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE MY CONFERENCES EFFECTIVE?

Conference basics include the following:

- Be aware of body language during the conference (sit side by side when possible, let the writer control the paper by holding it and writing on it, make eye contact).
- Let the writer initiate and guide the conversation as much as possible so that the conference focuses on his or her concerns and questions.
- Ask open-ended questions that engage the writer in conversation about the piece.
- Be a good listener.
- Help students see what they are doing well so that they can build on their successes.
- Ask students to write down two or three questions or “trouble spots” that they would like to explore in the conference.
- Avoid the temptation to “fix” editing errors and instead keep the conversation focused on issues related to content, organization, and style.
- Help the students leave the conference with a new way of seeing their compositions and specific goals for revision.

E X A M P L E

In Interior Design and Housing, students bring in pictures of rooms in homes that are cluttered and uncomfortable. Their task is to produce an explanation of how the homeowner could redecorate the room using the furniture already there to make it more livable and attractive. Before having an individual conference, each student underlines two places in the writing where he or she is having difficulty making the explanation clear or isn't sure how to get an idea across.

E X A M P L E

In Theatre Arts I, the teacher invites two students to participate in a mock demonstration for the class of how teacher behaviors can affect the success of a conference. This will help students see that they are responsible for coming into the conference with questions and ideas and playing an active role in what goes on rather than sitting back and allowing their papers to be edited.

WHAT TYPES OF GUIDING QUESTIONS CAN I USE WHEN CONFERENCING WITH MY STUDENTS ABOUT THEIR WRITING?

The main goal of a writing conference is for the student to leave with new ideas, a fresh perspective on the writing, or a specific goal for revision. Therefore, the best questions are the ones that engage the student in thinking and talking about the writing with the support of the teacher. These questions tend to be open-ended, allow for student ownership of the writing, and prompt the student to see the writing with a fresh eye. Questions such as “How do you want the reader to feel at the end of your story?”, “If someone who was absent the day of our lab read your report, what would he or she find confusing in your report?” or “What uncertainties do you have about this piece?” can lead to productive discussion and revision. Most importantly, teachers should respond to the writing as human beings rather than as a “teacher-corrector” (Dornan, Rosen, & Wilson, 2003).

Explaining that questions play an important role in the conference process, Milner & Milner (2003) list some generic questions and prompts that teachers may find helpful as they conference with students.

- Tell me more about that.
- I don’t understand that.
- Read it to me again.
- What’s the most important thing you’re trying to say?
- What’s your favorite part? How can you build on it?
- How could you find out more about your topic?
- Is all this information important? What parts don’t you need?
- Why is this significant to you?
- Does this lead bring your reader right into the piece?
- What do you want your reader to know or feel at the end of your piece? (p. 300)

Christenbury (2000) identifies some typical questions that Donald Murray recommends using in conferences:

- What did you learn from this piece of writing?
- What do you intend to do in the next draft?
- What surprised you in the draft?
- Where is this piece of writing taking you?
- What do you like best in the piece of writing?
- What questions do you have of me? (p. 233)

Teachers can also generate questions to deal with specific concerns. For example, if the writing feels disorganized, the teacher may want to ask something like “Can you tell me why you put this paragraph after that one?” or “What part of the writing was the most difficult for you to organize?” in order to start that conversation.

E X A M P L E

In Allied Health Sciences II, students research degree programs in the field of allied health sciences in order to create a class handbook for students in Allied Health Sciences I to use as they begin an initial exploration of careers in the field. Each student selects one degree to research (such as a BA in the area of physician assistant studies, biomedical computing, or nuclear medicine technology). The student identifies regional and national programs, general requirements for the degree, and information about careers in the field. The teacher conferences with each student during drafting and asks questions such as “What is the most important thing you’re trying to say?”, “Where might the reader want more details or explanations of terminology?” and “Is there anything you learned that isn’t in the piece of writing? If so, should it be added for your reader?”

E X A M P L E

In English III, students write a sequel to Alice Walker’s short story “Everyday Use” focusing on the life of one of the characters as a way of exploring a particular theme in the story. The teacher conferences with each student and asks questions such as the following about each story: “Why is taking the story in this direction significant to you?” and “What do you intend to do in the next draft?”

HOW CAN I FIT WRITING CONFERENCES INTO MY SCHEDULE?

The following techniques can help teachers fit conferences into their schedules:

- Do “mini-conferences” by walking around the room as students work on their writing. Let students know one thing that you want to ask them or see as you come around. If a student is doing fine, tell him or her so. Offer individual support for students that need assistance.
- Don’t try to conference with every student on every paper.
- Space conferences throughout the writing process rather than just waiting until the end when students have complete drafts.
- Remember that it isn’t always necessary to read the entire essay.
- Encourage students to come to the conference with focused questions that will guide the discussion.

E X A M P L E

Students in Theatre Arts III collaborate in pairs to write a script for a scene depicting dinner conversation among four friends with varying perspectives on the issue of whether or not all students should be required to take at least one elective in the arts in order to graduate. The purpose of the assignment is for students to capture four unique voices and perspectives through conversation and stage movement while bringing to the surface the underlying philosophical orientations represented by each character. The teacher decides to hold conferences after students have completed some prewriting activities in order to engage students in a discussion of the philosophical orientations they hope to represent and how they might represent them through words and actions.

E X A M P L E

In Algebra I, students work individually in class to design a word problem to submit for a “class-generated” homework assignment to be given out the next night as review for an upcoming test. The teacher conducts 30-second conferences by stopping by each student’s desk as he/she works and allowing the student to ask one focused question about the evolving word problem.

WHAT IS PEER CONFERENCING AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Referred to as peer conferencing, peer review, peer response groups, or writing groups, the process of having students read and respond to the writing of their classmates can be a powerful tool during any stage of the writing process. Although some people assume that the goal of peer conferencing is to help students edit their papers (primarily for language conventions), students can benefit from sharing their work during all stages of writing as they select a topic, develop the essay, and revise a draft. Peer conferencing works best when it is an established routine in the class, students are given explicit instruction in how to respond to writing, students are held accountable for their performance as writers and reviewers, and students are able to see growth in their writing as a result of the effort.

Setting the Stage for Peer Conferencing

A teacher must make several decisions when setting up opportunities for peer conferencing. First, he or she must be clear about the purpose of the activity. Is the goal to provide support as students generate ideas, help the writer see the writing with “new eyes,” or to do a detailed review of a complete draft? Second, the teacher must decide how to structure the activity. What size groups will be used? What will be the make-up of the groups? Will students give feedback orally, in writing, or electronically? What kind of guidance will students get about the kind of feedback to give? How will the room be arranged? How long will students have to review each paper? Third, the teacher will need to decide how to ensure accountability for the process. Will students be given credit for reviewing each other’s papers? Will the teacher evaluate peer feedback for appropriateness? How will groups be monitored? The answer to these questions will depend on the purpose of the activity, the dynamics of the class, and the nature of the writing assignment.

Zemelman and Daniels (1988) caution that teachers may be frustrated if they simply put students into groups and tell them to read and respond to each other’s writing without taking the time and energy to prepare them for the experience. They recommend training students over time to be participants in groups by structuring a series of activities that ultimately lead to reviewing each other’s papers through peer conferencing. First, they recommend giving students opportunities to practice collaboration in other kinds of class activities and critique those experiences. Next, they suggest

allowing students to collaborate on prewriting activities (in pairs and then in small groups) to offer “support” before they move toward “evaluation.” The next stage involves using a training paper (written by the teacher or used by an unidentified student from outside the class with his or her permission) for practicing the skills of response using a guidesheet. After that students move into guided peer review of each other’s essays and finally end up becoming members of autonomous and flexible groups which can function during all stages of the process with limited teacher monitoring. Scarborough (2001) emphasizes that during this kind of community building it is particularly important for content area teachers to engage students in collaboration that is tied to the content of the class and not just “touchy-feely” activities in order to maximize their value.

Teaching Students to Give Good Feedback

Even with instruction in collaborative group work, however, some students have difficulty knowing how to give effective feedback on writing because they lack confidence, skills, or knowledge. It is important, therefore, that students receive instruction in this process. This can be done by modeling the process of reviewing a paper on an overhead transparency, creating guiding questions for review of an essay, discussing elements of an effective essay, and asking students to generate a list of things they feel that they should look for when reviewing each other’s papers. The goal is to “demystify” the process for students so that they can go beyond giving comments such as “This is great” or “Your paper stinks.”

Zemelman and Daniels (1988) offer specific suggestions to help encourage students to give helpful feedback to each other. First, they recommend giving students a critiquing guidesheet appropriate for the assignment and the stage of the writing in order to help students stay on task and give equal attention to each paper in the group. For example, for an opinion paper, they recommend including questions such as the following: “Is the opinion of the writer clear? What does the writer believe?”, “Does the writer clearly show how or why s/he has reached his/her opinion?”, and “Has the writer linked ideas where necessary? State where links might be inserted.”

Second, they recommend establishing a basic formula to use whenever students respond to each other’s papers. They suggest including items such as the following: identifying one good part of the writing and explaining what makes it good, asking at least one question about the writing, and identifying one place where they would like to hear more.

A third technique that they recommend is having peer readers mirror what is in the essay by simply telling the writer what they think the writing says as a way of seeing whether or not the writer communicated ideas effectively.

Finally, they recommend having the writer list issues or concerns he or she has with the writing to elicit specific feedback on areas of concern. Students benefit from this self-reflection and often know what kind of feedback would be most helpful for them.

Making Feedback More Visual and Concrete

Some student writers benefit from peer feedback that is more visual and concrete than a guidesheet will typically allow. For example, students can respond to each other’s paper using different color highlighters as way of identifying specific kinds of content. In a point of view essay, for example, where students are stating an opinion, identifying reasons for that opinion, and supporting the reasons with elaboration, students could switch papers and use three different color highlighters to verify that the writer has stated an opinion (highlighting with blue),

identified reasons (highlighting with pink), and supported those reasons with elaboration (highlighting with yellow). This technique can also be used to draw attention to a stylistic device such as use of vivid verbs, a language convention such as spelling errors, or an organizational issue such as use of transition. When students get their papers back they can easily see whether or not another reader was able to identify these elements in the essay.

Peer Conferencing When Time is Limited

Strong’s (2001) list of “shorthand symbols” can be helpful for giving quick feedback when time for peer conferencing is limited. He instructs students to read each other’s papers and use the following four symbols to give feedback:

- + means “I like this”
- * means “Say more here”
- ? means “This puzzled me”
- √ means “Check for an error.”

Peer reviewers can use the symbols for individual words and sentences or put brackets around paragraphs or more extensive text with the symbol in the margin.

Another marking system that Strong recommends is the following:

- use underlining to indicate especially strong uses of language (for example, vivid details, memorable phrases)
- use wavy lines under words that are empty, repetitious, or ineffective
- put brackets [] around sentences that could be combined
- use parenthesis () to indicate sentences which feel too full or are unclear.

The specific symbols used are not as important as establishing a system. Schools may even consider discussing and establishing a consistent marking system.

PEER CONFERENCING ELECTRONICALLY

Peer feedback can also be given using the computer. Soven (1999) discusses an “electronic read-around” which can be done in a computer lab. In this process, each student brings his or her writing up on the screen of a computer. Students then move two or three chairs away to a classmate’s paper. After reading the entire text, the peer reviewer adds comments to the paper using the Caps Lock key to make the comments stand out. After several seat shifts (approximately 10 minutes each), students have received several reviewers’ comments and can print these out for revision ideas. Another way to use computers during revision is to have students read the essays of two or three members of the class and send an email message discussing responses to the essay or engage in an instant message conversation about the writing.

E X A M P L E

Physical Science teachers have found the Rube Goldberg’s drawings of home-made inventions that go through many steps to achieve simple goals to be a good inspiration for writing (Worsley and Mayer, 2000; Topping and McManus, 2002). This activity requires students to use their knowledge about simple machines to satirize technology. Students explore the drawings at <http://www.rubegoldberg.com>, draw a cartoon in the style of Rube Goldberg, write a long caption describing the device they created, and turn the product into a poster to be hung in the classroom or school hallway. Peer response groups can be used at the beginning of the process when students are coming up with ideas for their machines, during the process when they are checking out the “logic” of their steps, or near the end of the process when they need feedback on the clarity and satirical effect of their written explanations.

E X A M P L E

In Civics & Economics, students are asked to write a cause and effect essay to be delivered as a speech to a group of stock holders on how the media can affect a stock’s worth. In peer response groups students use three different color highlighters to give feedback to each other. Blue indicates information that is considered a “cause,” pink indicates “effects,” and yellow indicates “details.” The writer then reviews his or her speech to see that he or she has dealt with both causes and effects and has developed the discussion with details.



DEVELOPING FOCUS AND PURPOSE IN WRITING

WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES MY STUDENTS CAN USE TO GENERATE IDEAS WHEN THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY WANT TO WRITE?

FREEWRTING. This can easily be done in or out of class. Students are simply told to write whatever comes to mind for ten minutes (can be about a particular topic or can be totally open). They are instructed to keep the pen or pencil moving the entire time and not to pause to “think” during the writing. If they draw a blank, they can write about how they can’t think of anything to write about. Students then reread the freewriting for possible topic ideas that could be developed. It should be noted, however, that if this causes anxiety for the writer, it can be adapted. For example, students can be instructed to have a ten-minute “freethinking” time before being asked to do the freewriting.

DISCUSSING. Students often benefit from simply having conversations about possible topics. For example, students can be put into groups of three and instructed to brainstorm ten words that they feel are significant to the content being covered in class. After making the list, they can discuss possible topics related to each word. They can also ask questions of each other in pairs to help elicit thinking about possible topics. Another way to use discussion is to engage students in seminar style discussions which can help them identify and articulate main ideas from a text that may become topics for writing.

READING. Students can be instructed to reread their notes from a particular unit with an eye toward “unanswered questions” that they could pursue to deepen their understanding of what they have been studying. Students can also be instructed to reread significant texts and mark them while reading to identify the ideas that seem most significant or intriguing to them.

LISTING. The teacher can give students an arbitrary number (such as 10 or 15) of items to come up with that are related to the general topic being studied in the class as a way of thinking up possible directions to take a writing assignment. By telling students to go beyond the first five or six things that come to mind, teachers help students think of the less obvious, but possibly very rich, ideas.

USING SOFTWARE. A software program designed especially to help develop ideas and organize thinking, *Inspiration* can help students capture their ideas using an intuitive interface which focuses attention on thinking rather than technical issues.

WRITING INSTANT MESSAGES OR EMAILS TO FRIENDS. In pairs or small groups students “think through” writing ideas by using instant messaging or emails to discuss where they want to go with their writing. Students may even be able to use some of this writing to “jump start” their brainstorming about the topic.

CLUSTERING. Students may have an idea of a large topic but need help focusing the topic. In that case, clustering can be very helpful. The student writes the larger topic in a circle on the middle of a page in the form of a “nucleus word” (Rico, p. 35). Then, in circles outside of the original circle, the student rapidly writes down connections that come to mind so that they radiate outward in whatever direction seems natural.

BRAIN DUMPING. Students are told to “dump” what they know about a topic in a ten-minute write. They then reread what they wrote and list three possible writing topics that could emerge from the dump.

E X A M P L E

In Sociology, students list 10 social problems that they feel may affect students at their school. They then use that list as a starting point for coming up with possible topics for a proposal to be presented to the school administration offering a way that the school community can help offer support to these students and, in some small way, help with solving that problem.

E X A M P L E

In Keyboarding, students use Inspiration to help them brainstorm ideas for a paragraph assignment on how learning keyboarding skills can make a person more attractive to potential employers.

MY STUDENTS OFTEN CHOOSE HUGE TOPICS – HOW CAN I HELP THEM LIMIT THEIR TOPICS TO SOMETHING MORE MANAGEABLE?

Many students struggle to narrow their topics. Perhaps they feel that only big topics are important, they fail to recognize the importance of depth, or they have only a limited understanding of the concept they are supposed to explore. However, the following activities can help them narrow their topics down to something more manageable.

LOOPING. Clouse (2001) recommends looping because it allows for multiple freewrites that eventually may help students see possible topics that emerge and could be explored with more depth. Students “loop” by freewriting on a topic for 10 minutes, rereading the freewriting, and then freewriting on one idea that emerged in the original freewriting. This process can continue until the student has a topic that is specific enough for the assignment.

CONFERENCES. Through conversation and careful probing, teachers can help students think through their topics and possibly narrow them down. For example, a teacher may ask questions such as the following to help the student think through the topic: What is the most important thing about this topic? If you could only write one page about this topic, what would you focus on? What are three things that are smaller parts of this topic?

GAME PLAN. Dornan, Rosen, and Wilson (2003) suggest that some students may feel more comfortable when writing if they can come up with a “game plan” of what they hope to include in the writing. Students can lay out what they hope to cover in the writing and then go through the plan with a teacher or peer to determine whether or not the plan is realistic. If not, with guidance they can determine which smaller part could be developed into the topic for an entire essay.

10 QUESTIONS. Students write down 10 questions they would like to answer about their topic, each on a separate note card or sticky note. Then, they group together questions that are related in some way. Finally, they select one question or group of questions to use as a more specific topic.

SUB-QUESTIONS. Students state the topic they want to write about in the form of a question (for example, the topic of “global warming” may become “What causes global warming?”). Underneath this question, the student writes several “sub-questions” about different aspects of the topic (such as “What is global warming?”, “What effect do automobiles have on global warming?” or “How can we solve global warming?”). They then select one of these questions and write sub-questions for it until the topic becomes manageable.

E X A M P L E

In World History, students prepare to explore the causes of a major historical event in an essay by starting with a large question such as “How does genocide become acceptable to some members of a society?” or “What role has technology played in the spread of terrorism?” and then generating subquestions as a way of making the topic more manageable.

E X A M P L E

In Theatre Arts IV, students use looping as a way of narrowing down a topic for an essay analyzing some aspect of American theatre in the fifties.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PURPOSES MY STUDENTS CAN HAVE FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS?

Although this list is certainly not complete, the following are some possible reasons that students might write:

- To think
- To inform
- To persuade
- To criticize
- To reflect
- To communicate
- To research
- To entertain
- To forge a connection with someone
- To understand
- To remember
- To solve a problem
- To grieve
- To control
- To show concern
- To experience personal enjoyment
- To cause social action
- To wonder
- To thank
- To express an emotion
- To feel
- To know
- To discover
- To show understanding
- To collaborate
- To question.

E X A M P L E

In Earth/Environmental Science, students write in order to reflect and to inform by writing a midterm letter to their parents discussing their participation and progress in the class, the most important things that they have learned so far, and what grade they feel they have earned at this point in the grading period. Parents are requested to write a response to the student which will then be turned back in to the teacher.

E X A M P L E

In Foreign Language IV, students write in order to show understanding of a current problem in the target culture by conducting library research and composing a speech in the target language which identifies, discusses, and proposes a solution to that problem.



ORGANIZING WRITING

IS IT NECESSARY FOR MY STUDENTS TO OUTLINE WHAT THEY ARE GOING TO WRITE ABOUT?

Although it isn't necessary for students to write formal outlines to prepare for writing assignments, most students do benefit from spending some time organizing their thinking in the early stages of the writing process. This can easily be done using graphic organizers, software programs, or a variety of other methods of organizing.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS. In *Tools for Thought: Graphic Organizers for Your Classroom*, Burke (2002) describes the graphic organizers that he uses with his students as “a vocabulary of shapes” which can help him think about teaching, learning, reading, and writing (p. xix). In this text he offers sample graphic organizers, copy-ready versions of the same graphic organizers, and instructions for using them that can help students generate ideas, identify what is important and why, compare ideas, assess their understanding of concepts, synthesize information, and prepare to write. Sample graphic organizers are widely available in many different writing texts and on the web.

SOFTWARE PROGRAMS. Software programs such as *Inspiration* and *Powerpoint* can help students organize their writing because they have to make decisions about how to order information, what information to include, and how to create “sub-topics” for some larger topics.

WEBBING. Students can use webs to easily identify main topics and details that relate to those topics. They can even web off of the details to continue their elaboration. To do a web, a student can put a word, thought, or idea in a circle in the middle of the page. Then, using lines that extend out of this circle, he or she brainstorms associations, details, questions, and ideas. Some of these may then be circled so that additional webbing can be done out of them. Webbing goes beyond listing because it involves organizing information as well.

NOTE CARDS. Students may find that by putting subheadings on note cards or printing out and pasting paragraphs on note cards they can manually sort them to think through different organizational patterns.

OUTLINES. Some students may find that they have their own way of outlining information. They should be encouraged to use what works for them whether it means using a formal outline with parallel structure, an informal list of subheadings, or an outline format available to them using technology.

E X A M P L E

In Teen Living, students use a graphic organizer called a “Decision Tree” when writing an essay about decisions teenagers must make relating to school, home, or the community. The Decision Tree diagram allows the writer to pose a question across the top of the paper and then have several lines coming down from that question with possible decisions that could be made in response to that question with the possible consequences of each decision (Burke, 2002).

E X A M P L E

*In Psychology, students use **Inspiration** as an intuitive technological tool to organize their thinking as they compose a definition essay on “the self.”*

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS WITH STRUCTURE AT THE BEGINNING AND ENDING OF A COMPOSITION?

Students often struggle with knowing how to begin an essay. They are told to “engage the reader,” but that advice can be vague if students don’t have ideas about how to do that. They also may try to write the introduction before it is ready to be written (before they truly know what it is they wish to say in the piece). The following suggestions may be helpful as students struggle to bring the reader into the writing.

START SOMEWHERE OTHER THAN THE BEGINNING.

Students can put so much pressure on themselves to start the writing “just right” that they block good ideas. They can find their way “into” the writing by starting with whatever feels like the easiest part to write and then come back to the beginning later when their ideas may be fresher.

START WITH AN INTENTIONALLY BORING BEGINNING.

Sometimes the beginning of a piece of writing literally can’t be written well until the writer knows what else he or she is going to say. When this kind of discovery writing is going on, students can be encouraged to write an intentionally dry, boring beginning just to have a way of getting the essay started. They can then write the rest of the essay and come back to figure out what is the best way to bring the reader into the essay.

EXPLAIN WHY YOUR TOPIC IS IMPORTANT. Clouse (2001) suggests that students answer the question “Just why should your readers take time to read your essay?” to help them think of the reason that the topic might matter to them.

USE A QUOTATION. Writers commonly begin pieces with a relevant quotation to add focus and interest to the beginning of a piece. Often the quotation is introduced within the context of the first sentence.

BEGIN WITH THE THESIS AND THE POINTS TO BE DISCUSSED. Clouse (2001) suggests that when the direct approach is best, students may wish to start by stating the main thesis of the piece and the points that will be discussed.

START WITH NARRATIVE. Either through actual anecdotes or a hypothetical situation, a student can generate interest by telling a brief, relevant story to get the piece started. He or she needs to then focus attention on how to make the transition from the narrative to the topic at hand so that the movement doesn’t feel inappropriately abrupt.

USE SENSORY DETAIL. Depending on the topic, students may find that the use of a strong descriptive passage at the beginning of the piece serves as an interesting and powerful introduction to the topic.

USE A COMPUTER. Clouse (2001) suggests that computers can be helpful when writing introductions in two ways: (1) students can use the command that divides the screen in half to compare two possible introductions or (2) use the cut and paste feature to move the conclusion to the space for the introduction and see if it can be tweaked to be an effective opening.

WRITE MORE THAN ONE INTRODUCTION USING DIFFERENT METHODS. Students can try consciously using two or three different techniques for writing an introduction (such as use of a quotation, use of narrative, or use of sensory detail) and then compare them to select the most effective.

E X A M P L E

In Biology, students experiment with using sensory details in describing plants at the beginning of an opinion piece to be submitted to the school newspaper. The piece urges students to join an effort to preserve plants near the school that are about to be destroyed by new construction.

E X A M P L E

In Parenting and Child Development, students use personal anecdotes to begin short essays on effective parenting techniques which will be used to show their understanding of course content and may be shared outside the class with an appropriate audience.

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS WRITE EFFECTIVE CONCLUSIONS?

Students often complain that they don't know what to say in the conclusion because the composition "said it all" or they feel that the conclusion will just end up being a restatement of the introduction. Ultimately, though, the writing needs to have a feeling of "completeness" when it ends. The following suggestions may help as they compose their conclusions.

RESTATE THE THESIS. A thesis is generally considered a statement of the main point of the composition. Although there is a danger of sounding repetitive, students may wish to restate the thesis (using new language) to reinforce the main point of the essay.

ASK A RHETORICAL QUESTION. Students may wish to bring the essay to a close with a paragraph that leads up to a rhetorical question that will be memorable and thought-provoking for the reader.

SUGGEST A COURSE OF ACTION. If the essay identifies and discusses a problem, the student may want to suggest a course of action for the reader to consider (Clouse, 2001).

SUMMARIZE. Depending on the length and content of the essay, a summary paragraph may be an appropriate way to bring the piece to a close and help the reader digest what was written.

LOOK TO THE FUTURE. Clouse (2001) suggests that students may want to consider looking to the future beyond the essay to bring it to a close by thinking of potential consequences of ignoring or following advice in the essay, for example.

E X A M P L E

In Environmental and Natural Resources I, student groups experiment with two different endings for their multimedia presentations on some aspect of conservation. For peer response sessions, they first try looking to the future in their concluding slides, then they try using rhetorical questions. The peers give feedback on the most effective conclusions.

E X A M P L E

In Culinary Arts and Hospitality II, students conclude essays about food safety by describing a course of action that individuals can take when they suspect that a restaurant fails to meet state and federal food safety standards even though they have received a passing inspection grade.

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS WRITE MORE COHERENTLY?

Students may not initially know what it means to make their writing “coherent.” However, teachers can talk to them about coherence on several different levels. At the most basic level, coherence may simply refer to the writing being clear and understandable through the use of appropriate words in context and sentences that make sense. Moving beyond that, though, students need to understand the coherence of ideas and the coherence of the piece of writing as a whole. Several strategies can help students check for coherence and revise to achieve it.

USE GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS. Although graphic organizers are generally thought of as a tool to organize ideas at the beginning of the writing process, they can also be used after the piece has been written. The student can try to create a visual representation of the ideas in the writing to check for coherence.

CHECK FOR TRANSITIONS. Students may benefit from a mini-lesson on transitions to help them become aware of the kinds of words that help connect words, sentences, and ideas. They may even find it helpful to create a list of possible transition devices that they can refer to as they are learning to incorporate them into their writing.

READ THE WRITING ALOUD. Whether they read the writing aloud to themselves or someone else, students will often “hear” lack of coherence that they may not have been able to “see” on the page as they were composing.

USE PARALLEL STRUCTURE. Parallel structure can lend coherence at many different levels. At the word and sentence levels, students can be sure that they are using grammatically parallel structure for items in a series. Likewise, students can use parallel structure when structuring the paragraphs in expository writing by making sure that the reader will not be bored with repetition but will be able to anticipate how the text is laid out as he or she reads.

BE CONSISTENT. One simple way to be consistent is to mention things in the order with which they will be dealt. For example, if the major points of the essay are mentioned in the introduction, they can be mentioned in the order in which they will be dealt with in the essay. Another way to be consistent is to make sure that all parts of the essay are developed appropriately. Sometimes a writer will become tired and it will be obvious that one part of the essay was developed much more fully than another part, which may affect the coherence of the argument.

USE A FRAMEWORK. Students can add coherence to the piece as a whole by using a framework through the creation of an introduction and conclusion that reemphasize the same point. Or, the introduction may introduce a narrative that is either interrupted and then finished in the conclusion or referred to again. The writer may have even set up a scenario in the introduction that is then “solved” or made worse in the conclusion based on the content of the essay.

E X A M P L E

In English II, students develop a framework device to use when writing an essay examining the causes of a character’s downfall. The framework may involve setting up the essay with a hypothetical scenario related to the causes of the character’s downfall which is introduced in the introduction and referred to again in the conclusion as the essay is brought to a close and connections are made between the hypothetical scenario and the character’s situation.

E X A M P L E

In Physics, students examine the effects of various laws of physics in everyday situations. In order to achieve cohesiveness in the writing, peer response groups focus on use of transition devices. Students identify those that are being used and recommend places where the writer can provide more of a “bridge” for the reader between ideas.



USING SUPPORT AND ELABORATION EFFECTIVELY

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS EXPAND ON THEIR IDEAS?

ASK FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS. Students can help each other think of details to add to their writing by swapping papers and asking each other a series of questions about the piece. For example, a reader can find three places in the composition where additional details would be helpful. Instead of simply asking for more details, the reader can ask a specific question such as “How did the Town Council make that decision?”, “What kinds of fabric work best for that project?”, or “What specific complaints did the war protesters have?”.

EXPLODE A MOMENT. Lane (1993) recommends a technique that he calls “Explode a Moment,” which lends itself especially well to narrative writing. He tells students to find a moment in time (for example, when someone spilled milk on the table) and develop the moment through descriptive detail that stretches time and makes it last longer than expected. Students may find the “Explode a Moment” technique helpful as they compose introductions to more expository writing as well when they use narrative to engage the reader.

USE QUESTIONS TO SCAFFOLD. Strong (2001) advocates “using questions to scaffold” (p. 20). This involves asking questions that become increasingly specific about one piece of the composition. He gives the following sample starter sentence: “With fingers clicking, the dude is tuned in to the beat of music and to the verbal hysteria that comes from his radio” (p. 20). He then proposes the following questions for the writer: “What does the dude look like? What kind of music does he hear? What is the verbal hysteria?” (p. 20). The student writes another sentence and the scaffolding continues.

MODEL ELABORATION. Students may need to see effective use of elaboration in order to use it in their own writing. By selecting a piece of writing in the same genre of the assignment, the teacher can create an “unelaborated” version to help students see the difference that the elaboration makes. Or, students can collaborate to “elaborate” the weak version as a way of learning how to take the bare bones of a paper and add flesh to it.

USE FREEWRITING AND LISTING. Although freewriting and listing are often thought of as useful prewriting activities, they can also be used while students are drafting if they begin to have difficulty thinking of details and elaboration to flesh out the text. Students can be instructed to brainstorm a list of 10 things that they know about the topic but haven’t included. They can also be asked to select one paragraph from the draft and write as much as they can think of about what they’ve written so far as a way of seeing if there are other details that may be helpful.

CLUSTER IDEAS. Clustering is another technique commonly thought of in light of prewriting that can be helpful for students when they need to “check out” the elaboration they have used. Students can cluster the ideas from each paragraph to see if they actually get to the point where they are supporting the examples with details and elaboration that make it real for the reader.

TAKE TIME OFF. Sometimes students simply need distance from the composition in order to see the lack of detail that may have been in their heads as they wrote but somehow didn’t make it onto paper. After a few days away from the piece, they may be better able to judge where they need to tell the reader more to make the writing come alive, be convincing, or be complete.

E X A M P L E

In Horticulture I, students examine a problem currently facing the farmers of North Carolina and propose a solution to that problem. In order to make sure that they have effectively explained the problem, students cluster the ideas in the piece as a way of finding places to add relevant details.

E X A M P L E

In Foreign Language I, students compose a sentence in the target language describing the classroom. The teacher asks a prompting question to help students use vocabulary they know and flesh out the description with more detail.

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS INCORPORATE QUOTED MATERIAL EFFECTIVELY INTO THEIR WRITING?

Students often struggle with how to most effectively use quoted material in their writing. However, it is worth the time to help them see the value of making connections to the work of others. Quotations should be used when the words in their original form are preferable to a paraphrased version, when using a direct quotation will add authority to the piece, or as a way of adding interest to the writing.

A common mistake made by students is simply to insert quoted material between two of their own sentences without any introduction or explanation. Although there may be a situation in which this is appropriate, students should generally be encouraged to introduce the quotation in the context of one of their own sentences (for example, *Abernathy reiterates this point when he states, “The law is unjust and must be undone”* or *Abernathy states that “The law is unjust and must be undone”*).

Students also may need instructions about how to accurately give credit for the quotation. The exact format will vary depending on the style manual being used for the assignment. In general, however, they will usually need to document the author’s name and page number on which the quotation was found unless it is from an online source with no stable page numbers.

Finally, students need to be reminded that although a quotation may sometimes “speak for itself,” it may also be necessary to explain how the quotation connects to the ideas in the composition or offer additional details. Novice writers sometimes include a quotation with no explanation and require the writer to make assumptions about its relevance.

E X A M P L E

In Visual Arts IV, students write an analysis of a work of art related to the theme of war. They incorporate quoted material from sources such as historical texts, the artist’s own comments about his or her work, and the writings of art critics and historians. The teacher models how to introduce quotations, document them, and explain their relevance as necessary.

E X A M P L E

In Foods and Nutrition, students examine the cancer-fighting effects of certain foods and create a newsletter appropriate for an audience of teenagers and young adults who are interested in taking preventative steps through nutrition. One way that students support their claim is through the use of quoted material from authoritative, trustworthy sources.

HOW DO I DEAL WITH ISSUES OF PLAGIARISM?

It is important to help students understand what is meant by “plagiarism,” how they can avoid it, and why it matters. In brief, “plagiarism” refers to presenting someone else’s work as one’s own. It may involve failure to cite sources, intentional misrepresentation of work, or careless paraphrasing. Dornan, Rosen, and Wilson (2003) indicate that “Students often resort to plagiarism when they are forced to read and write about material they cannot fully understand, when they are short of time, and when they feel that most of the paper’s points are awarded for following instructions than for content” (pp. 145-146). They suggest that teachers can help discourage plagiarism by doing the following:

- helping students understand the concept of intellectual property rights
- making sure that students are given resources to help them dig deep into understanding their topics
- requiring students occasionally to talk about or submit drafts of the works in progress
- giving students practice paraphrasing and summarizing
- requiring students to photocopy all sources.

Several internet resources can assist teachers as they deal with issues of plagiarism. Helpful information about plagiarizing and paraphrasing can be found at the Purdue Online Writing Lab at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html. Also, resources such as Turnitin.com allow teachers to submit excerpts from papers to check for evidence of plagiarism by running the excerpt against information available on the web.

To help students further understand the concept of intellectual property, teachers should also make students aware that even when they give credit to a source, they need to be aware of copyright issues if they plan to publish a manuscript. Requirements vary among copyright owners. Some, for example, require that permission be obtained to publish more than 500 words of a copyrighted source. If permission is granted, a footnote will be added to the manuscript following the style manual being used.

In general, teachers are most likely to be able to spot plagiarism when they are very familiar with their students’ writing. Some of the following may indicate the possibility of plagiarism: syntax that is too sophisticated for the writer, individual reference citations which use different formats, vocabulary students usually don’t use, and essays which are missing some of the specific criteria given in the assignment.

E X A M P L E

In Civics and Economics, Legal and Political Systems students go to the Purdue Online Writing Lab at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html. After reading the information about plagiarism, they complete the online activity designed to make sure they understand and can apply what they have read. They then apply this understanding as they research and write about the need for election campaign reform.

E X A M P L E

In Physics, a teacher becomes suspicious a research paper on the hydrogen atom may contain plagiarism because the writing seems more sophisticated than the student’s usual style and contains citations from obscure sources. She submits the composition to Turnitin.com and finds that much of the compositions was, in fact, lifted directly from internet sources.

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS EVALUATE INFORMATION AND SOURCES FOR CREDIBILITY AND USEFULNESS?

For all types of publications, students should be advised to ask the following questions:

- Is this resource current? Are there other sources, published since this one, that might give more up-to-date information?
- Has this resource been published by a reputable source?
- What is the underlying philosophical orientation or political agenda of the author?
- Has the author clearly documented his or her own sources of information?

Students are sometimes willing to accept information as accurate simply because it is in print. This tendency becomes even more problematic with the wealth of information that is available on the web. Raimes (2002) offers the following recommendations which can help students evaluate information on websites:

- Look at the domain of the URL. In general, web pages ending in .gov or .edu tend to provide more informational material whereas web pages ending in .com may be an advertisement or self-promotion.
- Check out information about the author or sponsor on the home page. Find out whether or not the author has been cited elsewhere and what kinds of credentials he or she has.
- Find out the purpose for the website to determine if its goal is to provide objective information or to persuade. It is important to know the convictions behind the information being presented.
- Evaluate the quality of the writing (for example, are there spelling or obvious editing errors?). Lack of careful editing may indicate a similar lack of care regarding accuracy of information.
- Follow the links to see whether or not they are current (links that no longer work may indicate that the site isn't being updated regularly).
- Check to make sure that the site is well managed by looking at how easy it is to navigate, if there is information about the author, and effective contact information.

E X A M P L E

In Chemistry, students will be researching information about a local nuclear power plant for a composition examining the impact of the plant on the environment. Before they go to the media center and computer lab for research, the teacher discusses evaluating sources with them, and the class develops a checklist for determining the quality of print and non-print sources.

E X A M P L E

In World Civilizations, students are analyzing current events related to a world religion. They examine articles in several newsmagazines to evaluate each one's particular perspective on the current events to determine the philosophical background of each author.

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS RECOGNIZE AND GET RID OF SUPPORT AND/OR ELABORATION THAT DOES NOT MOVE THE WRITING TOWARD THE DESIRED END?

For some writers, getting rid of unnecessary details can be as difficult as facing the blank page. However, the following suggestions may help them weed out the unimportant to make room for the important.

TAKING THE EXPRESS AND RETURNING ON THE SCENIC ROUTE. Lane (1993) tells his students that this is one of several ways of learning to revise. Students are instructed to write for ten minutes like roller coaster (fast and furious) to get down as many details as possible about a prompt or during a freewrite. He then instructs students to “take the local train” back through by rereading what they wrote and adding details, word pictures, or developing a moment in the writing. Finally, he instructs them to cross out ten unnecessary words, paragraphs, or pages. This can be used as a way of helping students begin to make judgments about what kinds of words or information is less important than others. After the activity students can find five unnecessary details or elaboration in a draft of an essay they are writing.

JUDGING IMPORTANCE OF DETAILS/ELABORATION. Students swap drafts in pairs (or they can do this to their own papers). Using three different color highlighters, partners read each others’ papers and mark details/elaboration that is most significant in yellow, details/elaboration that helps move the writing along but is less significant in green, and details/elaboration that could possibly be changed or deleted in blue. Students swap papers back and discuss where to go from there with the writing.

MODELING. The teacher hands out copies of a sample paragraph with unnecessary details and instructs students to make three columns on a piece of paper: details that help the writing move to the desired end, details that are just there, and details that take away from the writing. After students compile their lists individually, they meet in small groups to come to consensus on one list to share with the class for whole group discussion. The teacher encourages them to articulate their reasons for selecting some details over others and allows groups to discuss the different choices they may have made.

E X A M P L E

In Physical Education, students write an essay on the topic “What are the consequences of parental violence at little league games?” as a way of exploring the notion of “sportsmanship.” On the day they bring in a draft of the essay, they are instructed to “take the express and return on the scenic route.” To do this, the teacher has them read through the essay and do the following: (1) add other details that have occurred to them and (2) read it again and put question marks by five details that may be appropriate to omit. The students then meet with a partner to discuss the five they chose and get feedback on which seem the most/least helpful to the progression of the essay.

E X A M P L E

In Dance I, students are given a sample paragraph from a dance review which contains too many details. They are instructed to work in pairs to identify which details help move the piece toward its desired end and which just muddle the paragraph or take away from the main point being made. The students then discuss their responses with the whole group by explaining the changes they made and the reasons behind those changes.



DEALING WITH ISSUES OF STYLE AND AUDIENCE

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS BECOME MORE AWARE OF AUDIENCE WHEN WRITING?

Students who are used to writing only with the teacher in mind may initially have difficulty visualizing an authentic audience for their writing. In fact, Dornan, Rosen, and Wilson (2003) write, “Shifting secondary students from a writer-centered mode of thinking to an awareness of their audience and the role of the reader is very difficult. One reason is that young writers care more about expressing themselves than being understood” (p. 133). However, by helping students become more aware of audience, teachers can encourage them to make intentional choices in their writing related to content, tone, and purpose.

One way of helping students become aware of the effect of audience upon a piece of writing is to have them compose a short piece of writing for multiple audiences. For example, a student can write an explanation of why he or she was speeding with the following audiences in mind: the traffic cop who makes the stop, the parents who loaned the car, and a friend who wasn’t there. The teacher can help students see how they naturally chose formal language to address the traffic cop and informal language to address the friend. Likewise, the writer probably changed the main focus of the explanation depending on who would be hearing it. Finally, the purpose of each explanation differs. The writer may want to attempt to persuade the cop not to write a ticket, beg the parents for mercy, and gain sympathy from the friend.

Students can also be encouraged to analyze the needs of the audience as a way of becoming more aware of the audience while writing. Students can think about what information the audience already knows, what kind of tone is appropriate for this group of people, and what the audience is going to want to understand by the end of the piece. Likewise, they can consider the degree to which they can use specialized language or may need to define terms based on the audience’s needs.

E X A M P L E

In Vocal Music IV (A Capella Choir), students work in small groups to create a multimedia presentation for the class on a capella singing in a variety of cultures. First, students in each group identify an a capella singing group representative of a culture other than that of the United States. They then examine patterns and trends of a capella music found in that culture and examine how this particular group draws upon historical traditions and challenges or extends those traditions through their music. Students work in their groups to generate audience awareness by discussing what the students in the choir already know about the topic based on previous course content, what they need to know about the historical and cultural context in order to understand the presentation, and what kind of technical terminology they need to define for the audience.

E X A M P L E

In Biology, students are instructed to describe a biological process in a way that someone who was unfamiliar with the process would understand how it works. They “check out” the effectiveness of the piece by having three different people (parents, younger siblings, teachers in other content areas) read it and tell them whether or not they understand the process clearly.

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS MAKE EFFECTIVE WORD CHOICES IN THEIR WRITING?

When used effectively, word choice, or diction, can help make writing clear, concise, and compelling. When they learn to pay attention to diction, students see words as tools that can help ensure the reader truly understands the writer’s intent.

Making the Most of a Few Words

One way to help students focus special attention on word choice is to engage them in writing assignments that are concise by their very nature. This allows students to see the effect of each individual word on the whole text. Examples of such products include greeting cards, poems, epitaphs, brief definitions, comic strips, want ads, brochures, bumper stickers, and graffiti. Students can be encouraged to write three different versions (with alternating word choices) of these brief writing assignments as they work on finding just the right combination of words to cause a particular effect on the reader. Teachers can introduce students to the concept of a word’s connotations (the associations people have with a word that go beyond its literal meaning) to help them as they play with words.

Focusing on Word Choice in Longer Assignments

Students can also be encouraged to focus attention on word choice in longer pieces of writing. Sometimes students will struggle to find just the right word. They may decide to consult a dictionary or thesaurus, which can be helpful as long as they remember that they need to understand the connotations of the words they consider using. Computer programs make it easy for students to highlight a word and check the thesaurus for options.

To encourage students to think about the words they are choosing as they write, the teacher can instruct them to reread a draft of an essay and circle “lazy words” that take up space without adding meaning. Words such as “nice,” “very,” “really,” “a lot,” “pretty,” “sort of,” and “I think” fill space. The teacher can also help students see that some words have been so overused in so many contexts that they no longer have a specific meaning. Words such as “beautiful,” “wonderful,” “love,” and “sad” can be vague and trite, so students can be prompted to

think about word choice when a teacher asks him or her to describe what makes something “beautiful” rather than calling it “beautiful.”

E X A M P L E

In Sociology, students use the Ladder of Abstraction, described by Alfred Korzybski (1941), to look at the clarity of the words they have chosen for an essay written for an extended definition of the term “culture.” Noden (1999) explains that the “relationship between words and the physical world follows hierarchy,” so some words are more likely to evoke a visual image than others (p. 190). He gives the example of a description of Sniffer the pig. The word “Sniffer,” at the bottom of the ladder, evokes an image of a pig with a wet nose that snorts, while “economic commodity,” at the top of the ladder, is more abstract but evokes little if any sensory response. Students review their definition essays for key words and place them on the Ladder of Abstraction. If the ladder is too “top heavy,” more specific details may be needed to support these words or students may need to revise if the abstract terms make the writing feel vague.

E X A M P L E

*In Automotive Service Tech I, students respond to the following cause-effect prompt: **Create a how-to manual for teen drivers who want to know how they can make the engine of a new car maintain peak performance.** Students are told that their language must be clear and concise in order to be effective, so they go on a “lazy word” hunt. Each time they find one of these vague or overused words they replace it with a more precise word.*

WHAT ARE THE BASIC KINDS OF SENTENCES I CAN ENCOURAGE MY STUDENTS TO USE IN THEIR WRITING?

Encouraging sentence variety is one of the easiest ways to help students see a dramatic difference in the style and sophistication of their writing. Marius (1999) identifies three kinds of statements that a sentence may make: (1) it may tell us the subject does, will do, or has done something, (2) it may describe a condition, or (3) it may describe an action done to the subject.

Although this sounds simple, many students feel intimidated when asked to think about the sentences they are using. However, by modeling the principal types of sentences, teachers can give students a starting point for talking about more sophisticated sentence structure.

The principal types of sentences are the following: simple sentence (one subject and one predicate), compound sentence (two or more independent, or main, clauses), complex sentence (one independent clause and at least one dependent, or subordinate, clause), and compound-complex sentence (at least two independent clauses and one dependent clause) (Schiffhorst & Pharr, 1997).

Examples of each type:

- SIMPLE SENTENCE:** I have always loved to read.
(one subject and one predicate)
- COMPOUND SENTENCE:** I have always loved to read, but I have never liked mysteries.
(two independent clauses joined by coordinating conjunction)
- COMPLEX SENTENCE:** Although I have always loved to read, I have never liked mysteries.
(dependent clause + independent clause)
- COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCE:** Although I have always loved to read, I have never liked mysteries; I prefer science fiction.
(dependent clause + two independent clauses)

Students can learn about sentence structure by doing sentence combining activities, modeling their sentences after sentences they want to emulate, and simply experimenting in their writing. As Weaver (1996) points out, this kind of experimentation may initially cause students to make new errors in their sentences. However, students should be supported as they continue their growth as writers.

E X A M P L E

In Computerized Accounting, the teacher has noticed that most of the students tend to rely on simple sentences in a paragraph they have written summarizing a recent accounting scandal. He or she asks the students to set a goal of using at least one of each of the other types of sentences in the paragraphs and lets students work with a partner to revise the paragraph accordingly.

E X A M P L E

In Environmental and Natural Resources II, students compose a letter to the editor of the local paper stating a position on an environmental concern. To help students be concise yet interesting, the teacher copies some sentences from their drafts on the board and has students try to combine them. Students compare combined sentences and discuss strengths of different approaches.

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS WITH THEIR SENTENCE STRUCTURE?

Often student writers alternate between repeating familiar sentence patterns in an effort to be safe and creating awkward sentences as they struggle to clarify their ideas and make their writing flow. Teachers can help students avoid repetition and make informed choices about sentence structure by engaging them in conversation about their own sentences and demystifying the process of creating complex sentences.

Modeling

Teachers can model a variety of ways to modify sentence structure. Clouse (2001) advises students to experiment with different sentence openers such as a descriptive word, a descriptive phrase, a subordinate clause (such as, “Before you contribute to a charity...”), the word “to” and infinitive verb (such as “To protect...”), or the subject of the sentence. She also recommends that students vary the placement of transitions so that some come at the beginning of the sentence, some in the middle, and some at the end. Finally, she suggests that students maintain flow by using parallel construction. This means that series items are written in the same grammatical form (for example, “The offensive television commercial insults women, glamorizes drinking, and diminishes the importance of the family”).

Sentence Combining

Research supports the use of sentence combining activities as an effective way of helping students make thoughtful choices about the sentences they construct, both as individual sentences and as part of paragraphs and compositions. In sentence combining activities, students are given short pieces of text (words and phrases or choppy sentences) with instructions to combine the pieces of text to make effective sentences. As Strong (2001) suggests, the point of sentence combining is “... to make *good* sentences, not long ones” (p. 16). The process helps students see that they have the power to manipulate sentences for specific purposes. For example, students may be given the following short sentences (Strong, 2001, p. 42):

Overdoses of growth hormone can cause acromegaly.
Acromegaly is called Frankenstein’s syndrome.
This condition distorts the face.
This condition distorts hands and feet.
This condition eventually leads to death.

Students may come up with a sentence such as the following: *Overdoses of growth hormone can cause acromegaly, also called Frankenstein’s syndrome, which is a condition that distorts the face, hands, and feet and eventually leads to death.*

Strong suggests that one way of doing this is for the teacher to give students sentences from a professional piece of writing which has been “decombined” into simple sentences. Students can then compare their sentences with the original text as well as sentences created by other students and discuss the effectiveness of each. He also advocates the use of sentence combining cues (for example, students can be instructed to try to use the word “what” to begin the first cluster, they may be given specific instructions to separate two main clauses with the word “but,” or the teacher may provide blank lines to suggest a particular pattern for the sentence). Finally, Strong suggests that the teacher can take a well-written text produced by a student, and (with the student’s permission) break it into kernel sentences for an in-class sentence combining exercise. This has the added benefit of reviewing course content.

Encouraging Students to Use Active Voice

Although English teachers have made it seem that sentences should *never* be written in passive voice, that is not the case. However, the use of active voice often strengthens the voice of the writer, increases the intensity of the action, and promotes the addition of details. Raimes (2002) explains that “In the active voice, the grammatical subject is the doer of the action, and the sentence tells ‘who’s doing what.’ The passive voice tells what is *done* to the subject of the sentence” (p. 323). Atwell (2002) gives the following example of a passive sentence: “Play scripts were passed out and roles assigned.” She reworks this timid sentence to make it stronger as

well as provide further detail when she writes, “Pam, the drama teacher, passed out scripts to her class and assigned each student a role.”

But how can teachers help students recognize passive voice and rework their sentences? Lane (1993) says that when students overuse the “to be” verb in their writing they, are probably writing in passive voice or generally weakening their writing. He suggests that teachers teach students to rewrite these sentences by “killing” the “to be” verbs and flip-flopping the sentence. He gives the following example: “*Original*: The blueberry pie was eaten by Kurt. *Rewrite*: Kurt ate the blueberry pie.” Students can be instructed to go through a draft of their writing, circle all “to be” verbs (such as “be,” “am,” “is,” “are,” “being,” “was,” “were,” and “been”) and replace them with a more active, visible verb. The process of doing this will generally make the sentences more vivid and powerful.

Variety in Sentence Length and Punctuation

Another way of looking at sentence structure is to consider sentence length and punctuation. Although structure involves more than simply the number of words in the sentence, students may benefit from looking at the length of their sentences and seeing if they all tend to be the same length. In his book talks, author Terry Kay recommends having a student writer place a piece of tracing paper over a typed page of an essay. Next, the student underlines each sentence and writes in the punctuation used. The student can then look at a page of his or her text, without being distracted by words and meaning, to see whether or not the sentences vary in length and what types of punctuation are being overused or not used at all.

E X A M P L E

In Culinary Arts and Hospitality II, students are asked to write a problem-solution essay using the following prompt: You are the food editor of the local newspaper and write a weekly advice column on food related issues. You must write a response to a reader who is planning a dinner for six friends and wants to provide a salad, main course, and dessert that everyone can share. However, two of the reader’s friends have diabetes, one is allergic to dairy products, and one is a vegetarian. In your column, identify the issues that the reader faces as he plans this meal and suggest a solution. After creating a typed draft of the essay, students are instructed to place tracing paper over one page of the essay, underline all sentences and write in punctuation that was used. Students then find three places where the sentence length and/or punctuation seems repetitious and rework those three sections.

E X A M P L E

In Foreign Language III, students are given “decombined” sentences (written in the target language) from a travel narrative describing an experience in a foreign country. Students use these nuggets to reconstruct a paragraph about the experience to be used in a brochure advertising that destination. After completing the sentence combining activity, students compare their version to the original as well as the versions created by their classmates. They then discuss as a class the choices that were made in terms of sentence structure, punctuation, and flow of the writing.

DO I HAVE TO USE THE GUIDE USED IN THE FIELD OF ENGLISH (MLA HANDBOOK) FOR CITATIONS OR CAN I TEACH STUDENTS TO USE THE GUIDE FOR MY DISCIPLINE?

At times, the decision about which style manual to use can be answered by knowing the intended audience of the writing. If the writing is to be submitted for potential publication, for example, the writer needs to use the style manual preferred by the publisher. Likewise, if the writing is to be modeled after authentic writing in the particular discipline, it would seem appropriate for the teacher to introduce students to the style manual used in that discipline and require that they follow the guidelines appropriately. Some companies even have their own style manuals.

In some schools, however, teachers may agree to use only one manual, for example, the MLA Handbook, for all student writing in order to help students learn it well. Whether students use one manual in all disciplines or use different guidelines for different classes, teachers should make them aware that each discipline has its own preferences. Ultimately, students need to learn how to use a style manual rather than memorize the particular features of any one format.

The recent increase in the amount of material available online has raised difficulties for students wishing to cite online sources. Although the specifics may differ according to the style manual being consulted, in general an online source citation will require the following, if available (Raimes, 2002):

- author(s)
- title of work
- print publication information
- title of online site/project/journal/database
- online publication information such as date of latest update and sponsor of site
- date when site was accessed
- electronic address (URL).

E X A M P L E

*In Psychology, students use the **Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association** when writing a comparison of their own views of adolescence with definitions from various psychological sources.*

E X A M P L E

*In English IV, students use the **MLA Handbook** when writing a literary criticism essay which examines **The Canterbury Tales** from a feminist perspective.*



FOCUSING ON LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

HOW CAN I HELP MY STUDENTS EDIT THEIR WRITING BEFORE THEY TURN IT IN?

For many students, editing consists of running spellcheck on their word processing program. However, teachers can help make editing more explicit for students by giving them a toolbox of editing strategies that will help them see how they can make editing choices that will improve the overall effect of their writing.

Students often feel overwhelmed by the thought of editing for every single grammatical, mechanical, or punctuation rule that exists in a grammar text. Teachers can help by engaging students in a “hunt” for patterns in errors they make in their writing. Once several patterns are identified, students can choose one or two to focus on at a time. Or, if the teacher notices a pattern that seems to be plaguing most of the students in the class, he or she can focus student attention on that particular convention.

Some students read so quickly that they literally read over editing errors that they would correct if they had noticed them. One way to help students avoid doing this is to have them read the writing aloud, preferably to another person, with a pen in hand. As they read, they will almost always find places where they unintentionally left out a word, misplaced a comma, or made a usage error (for example, “effect” instead of “affect”). Another way to slow down the writer is to have him or her begin at the end of the text and read it backwards word by word to look for typing or spelling errors.

For ESL students, editing can be particularly frustrating if they are unaware of why they are making particular errors. To help with this, teachers can engage students in problem-solving why they are making a particular error (for example, is it because there is no similar construction in the native language, they are making a guess about how English works, or they simply learned it incorrectly to begin with).

Teachers can also create a revision checklist for conventions. Noden (1999) cautions that teachers need to be careful not to overload the checklist with so many items that it becomes overwhelming. Teachers may find the list created by Connors and Lunsford (1988), which lists most common errors in order of frequency, to be helpful when deciding what to put on a checklist. The list includes the following:

1. No comma after introductory element
2. Vague pronoun reference
3. No comma in compound sentence
4. Wrong word
5. No comma in nonrestrictive element
6. Wrong/missing inflected endings
7. Wrong or missing prepositions
8. Comma splice
9. Possessive apostrophe error
10. Tense shift
11. Unnecessary shift in person
12. Sentence fragment
13. Wrong tense or verb form
14. Subject-verb agreement
15. Lack of comma in series
16. Pronoun agreement error
17. Unnecessary comma with restrictive element
18. Run-on or fused sentence
19. Dangling or misplaced modifier
20. Its versus It's error (58-59)
(Noden, 1999, pp. 186-187)

E X A M P L E

In World History, students meet in pairs to read aloud a draft of an essay about the effects of modern day civil war on the quality of life in a country of their choice. While reading, the student is free to make changes as he or she notices editing or typing errors.

E X A M P L E

In Business Law, students use a list of five common editing errors when they read a partner's draft of an essay about the procedures for borrowing money as an individual or as the owner of a small business. The editing error list includes sentence fragments, run-on sentences, comma splices, no comma in a compound sentence, and no comma after an introductory element.

DO I NEED TO GRADE GRAMMAR IN ALL STUDENT WRITING?

No, teachers do not need to grade grammar in all student writing. Many kinds of writing such as journals, writing to learn activities, and prewriting may be done with the student as the only audience or for the purpose of thinking rather than communicating. Focusing on grammar in these types of writings may make students apprehensive and less fluid in their thinking.

Even in more conventional compositions teachers can make choices about the extent to which they will evaluate grammar. For example, a teacher may decide to highlight only two or three grammatical features (such as sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and use of semi-colons) to evaluate in a particular composition.

E X A M P L E

In Technical Math, students keep a learning log which serves as a place for them to keep a record of their understanding of new concepts. These learning logs are considered part of the process of learning and not graded for correctness.

E X A M P L E

In American History, students complete some prewriting activities which help them make a personal connection to the essay topic of "personal freedoms." When the teacher reviews their work, she evaluates their thinking and talks with them about ideas for elaboration and/or clarification.

HOW DO I DEAL WITH ISSUES OF SPELLING IN STUDENT WRITING?

At the most basic level, teachers can encourage students to use a dictionary or a word processor with a spell check program to assist them with spelling. However, the use of a spell check program does not replace proofreading. Many words (such as she for he) will not be caught by a spell check program.

Students sometimes believe that by the time they've reached high school they are either good spellers or they aren't. However, they can sometimes improve their spelling abilities with some direct instruction.

- Although many words in the English language seem to break the rules for logical spelling, teachers can instruct students in some of the common rules that can be applied in most situations. For example, students can be shown that nouns which end in “o” preceded by a consonant (such as hero or tomato) generally add “es” to form the plural (heroes, tomatoes).
- Teachers can instruct students in Greek and Latin roots which can help them make more informed guesses when trying to spell words. For example, if students learn the roots “pre” (which means “before”) and “cede” (which means “go”), they can learn the correct spelling of “precede” which is often misspelled “preceed.”
- Students can learn to self-assess their own spelling errors by taking a diagnostic test to see what they already know so that they focus attention on learning specific words. For example, Weinstein (2001) refers readers to a diagnostic spelling test at <http://www.ncte.org/books/59133/resources> which helps students check their ability to appropriately select frequently confused words (such as effect/affect).
- Sometimes students need help focusing on individual words in their writing. For example, students who read quickly often miss proofreading errors in their own papers. To slow down their reading, they can read the paper starting from the end and read backwards one word at a time. Or, using a notecard with a word-size hole in it they can read the composition focusing on one word at a time.
- Teachers can introduce students to content-specific vocabulary and help them internalize the spellings by using the terms often, engaging students in using the terms in their own writing, and posting the terms in the classroom.

E X A M P L E

In Biology, students learn Greek and Latin roots such as “anthropo,” “logy,” “derm,” and “ortho” which they apply to course content and use as they learn to spell new course vocabulary.

E X A M P L E

In Instrumental Music, students check the spelling of letters they are writing to the local newspaper to criticize proposed cuts in the arts budget of the local school system by using a word processor with a spelling check program and then reread the composition again to proofread for errors that the program might not catch.



ASSESSMENT

HOW CAN I SERVE IN THE ROLES OF BOTH COACH AND JUDGE
OF MY STUDENTS' WRITING AT THE SAME TIME?

– QUESTION RAISED BY A TEACHER (*Scarborough, 2001*)



UNDERSTANDING THE TERMINOLOGY OF ASSESSMENT

Teachers often struggle with knowing how to support student writers yet hold them accountable to standards when evaluating their compositions. Perhaps this stems from the commonly accepted practice of assigning writing and then not seeing it until the finished product is turned in for a grade. Under such circumstances, it seems that it is too late to do much more than write comments and assign a numerical grade. In a process-oriented classroom, however, the teacher has many more options. He or she can actually engage in multiple forms of assessment throughout the writing process.

In a broad sense, assessment refers to “collecting performance data and assigning quantitative meaning to it” (Milner & Milner, 2003). We are expected to assign grades, so we somehow figure out how to look at a student’s performance in writing and put a number grade on it. However, that is really only one small part of assessment. In addition to figuring out how we are going to create a numerical value for a piece of writing we have to think about how we are going to set up evaluation criteria, at what points we will check for progress, what kind of feedback we will give, and what we can do to make that feedback helpful to the writer.

Many terms are used when discussing assessment of writing, and each refers to something different. Tchudi (1997), for example, differentiates among the terms “response,” “assessment,” “evaluation,” and “grading” as they relate to student writing. Suggesting that the four terms can be seen on a continuum by applying the notion of “degrees of freedom,” he argues that *response* offers teachers and students the greatest amount of freedom or flexibility while *grading* offers the least. And although institutional pressures may place more focus on grading, research in composition and teacher impulse is more often focused on providing meaningful response. The teacher’s task, then, becomes to reconcile the need for a “grade” with the need to support the continued growth of student writers in a supportive and challenging environment.



- **RESPONSE**, according to Tchudi (1997), tends to be audience-centered, richly descriptive, multidimensional and individualized. Rather than grading papers, teachers at this point on the continuum give credit for completion and act as coaches who give authentic feedback to the writer from the perspective of an individual reader.
- **ASSESSMENT**, he continues, is still multidimensional and descriptive, but it takes on more of an analytic tone as the teacher helps the student problem-solve and offers suggestions in the here-and-now to help the writer improve this particular piece of writing with no look to future assignments. At this point on the continuum the teacher may accept a piece or request a revision, involve students in self-evaluation, and even negotiate grades.
- Moving down the continuum, Tchudi points out that **EVALUATION** becomes semidimensional, more judgmental, standardized and future directed. At this point on the continuum the teacher may use contracts, point systems, outcomes-based evaluation, or portfolio grading.
- Finally, at the **GRADING** end of the continuum the teacher uses rubrics, trait scoring, and assigns final grades to the writing.

It is helpful to students when teachers incorporate informal methods of assessment such as individualized response, writing conferences, and troubleshooting opportunities before students have to submit a composition for formal assessment and a final grade.



GRADING STUDENT WRITING

Writing That Does Not Need to Be Graded

Not all writing assignments or activities need to be graded. As Tchudi (1997) points out, grading falls at one end of a continuum. Some assignments, particularly writing to learn activities, are being used to *encourage* learning rather than *show* learning. Their value is in the process of completing the activity. Although the teacher may use these writings as a prompt for class discussion or may even want to respond to them or give credit for completion, they are often not graded.

Mondschein-Leist (1997) suggests that writing assignments like these can be used to do the following:

- stimulate discussion (by having students write about a topic prior to discussion)
- sample understanding (the teacher can skim through a collection of responses to a prompt to determine the level of comprehension in the class)
- provide review and reinforcement (the teacher can collect questions students create about a topic and distribute them to other students in the class for review)

Likewise, journals and learning logs are usually graded only for completion. Some teachers read and respond to all entries, but a more realistic goal would be to respond to selected entries and try to connect the thinking done in the activities to class instruction. Ultimately, students should be able to see how the journal or learning log helps them engage more meaningfully with course content.

Teachers may also decide to use a \checkmark , $\checkmark+$, $\checkmark-$ system for responding to short, informal essays. The teacher articulates the criteria for each and often gives students an opportunity to rewrite if they wish to improve the score. Also, teachers can use a point system to de-emphasize grading and put the focus on writing by giving students points when they satisfactorily complete a series of writing assignments (Dornan, Rosen, & Wilson, 2003).

When Writing Needs to Be Graded

What happens, however, when a writing assignment will be assigned a specific grade? Mondschein-Leist (1997) recommends that teachers ask themselves the following questions about their grading practices as a way of making decisions about grading:

1. What is your primary emphasis in grading?
Is the student aware of that?
2. Do you have a “published” grading scale? Does it emphasize surface or mechanical features?
3. Do you respond to ideas as you grade?
4. Do you plan any type of follow-up after the papers are returned so that the assignment becomes a total learning experience?

By reflecting on these questions, teachers can think about their goals for response at particular stages in the process, how they can support their students throughout the process, and what their ultimate goals are in grading the assignment. For example, teachers often feel that they must give extensive written feedback in order to “justify” a grade. However, students often feel overwhelmed by extensive written feedback and seldom improve their writing simply reading it. Written feedback is most helpful during the drafting stages when students can incorporate suggestions and improve the paper as a result of the feedback. By taking this into consideration, teachers can make decisions that will help improve the learning experience.

Many teachers find that rubrics help speed up the grading process because they lay out the requirements of the assignment, keep the feedback focused, and can even allow the teacher to simply “check off” items as students meet the requirements instead of write comments on the essay itself. The main goal of evaluating student writing should be to help the student grow as a learner; therefore, teachers should find the most efficient and effective ways to accomplish that goal. Spending hours marking on papers will seldom achieve that goal.

DECIDING WHERE TO FOCUS ATTENTION WHEN RESPONDING TO AND GRADING STUDENT WRITING

Dornan, Rosen, and Wilson (2003) recommend that teachers think in terms of “Higher Order Concerns” and “Lower Order Concerns” when responding to or grading student writing. They list the following as “Higher Order Concerns”:

- ideas
- information
- focus
- organization
- transition
- coherence
- logic
- examples
- details, leads
- conclusions
- purpose
- audience
- the answer to the question “So what?” (p. 187).

They list the following as “Lower Order Concerns”:

- punctuation
- spelling
- grammatical and mechanical correctness
- word usage
- sentence construction
- style (p. 187).

They recommend that teachers focus their feedback on different areas of concern as appropriate throughout the writing process and help students see the progress that they have made by the time they reach the final draft stage.

Teachers must also make decisions about how much emphasis to place on errors when responding to or grading student writing. Because language conventions are often easier to evaluate than issues of content and style, teachers sometimes lose sight of the purpose of the writing assignment and comment only on surface errors. This can be discouraging for student writers and seldom leads to meaningful growth.

In order to avoid doing this, Mondschein-Leist (1997) suggests that teachers set priorities for dealing with errors. One way to do this is to establish a limited set of editing conventions for students to follow when proofreading. The teacher can determine which conventions are most important for the assignment. Another way of dealing with students’ errors is to help students find patterns in their errors. Rather than randomly correcting twenty errors in an essay, the teacher and student can work together to find patterns and prioritize

the errors so that the student can focus attention on two or three errors which may simply require learning a simple rule. Mondschein-Leist also recommends that teachers instruct students to take responsibility for their own errors by encouraging them to revise before accepting a paper that has been carelessly done.

Teachers should also remember that “Developmental errors and inappropriate language for the context, voice, or purpose of writing evolve from attempts of writers to try out new forms, to move beyond familiar ground, to write within new contexts and with a variety of purposes” (Dornan, Rosen, & Wilson, 2003). As students experiment with the vocabulary of the content area, demands of new forms of writing, or more complex sentences they may seem like they are regressing when in reality they are stretching and making progress toward becoming more sophisticated in their writing.

When feedback on errors is focused and limited, it leaves more time and energy for the teacher to think about and respond to the content and style of the writing. Again, however, the key is to focus the feedback so that the student does not get lost in the middle of pages of seemingly random comments. Teachers who have trouble controlling the urge to write comments all over a paper may find it helpful to write comments on a separate page, such as a rubric, instead. This serves the purpose of limiting the space available for comments and allows the teacher to group the comments according to some issue (such as elaboration or word choice). Teachers may find it helpful periodically to step back and reread the comments they have written in response to a writing assignment from a student’s perspective and ask themselves how these comments can be used to help the student grow as a writer. They also may wish to think about the “tone” of the response. For example, some teachers argue that using a red pen for grading student writing feeds into negative stereotypes about teachers “bleeding” all over student writing or that using terms such as “awkward” makes a judgment without offering helpful information for the writer.



STRATEGIES FOR ASSESSMENT

In order to create effective assessments of any kind, teachers first determine where their students are and what they need to know and be able to do. Next, they determine what instruction will help students develop as learners in these areas. Finally, they link assessment with instruction along the way to give students formative feedback as well as summative feedback on their progress. An understanding of rubrics and portfolios can be helpful when considering how to assess writing.

USING RUBRICS AS A STRATEGY FOR ASSESSMENT

Olson (2003) writes, “Often called rubrics or scoring guides, scales, if they are well designed and well articulated, not only help teachers assess or evaluate student work but clearly delineate for students what they need to be able to do in order to achieve success and/or meet a performance standard” (p. 331). Rubrics usually consist of a list of criteria relevant for the specific assignment, although rubrics can also be generic enough to be used with a variety of kinds of writing. Olson (2003) identifies four common kinds of scoring which use rubrics: **HOLISTIC SCORING, ANALYTICAL SCORING, WEIGHTED TRAIT SCORING, AND PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING.**

When using **HOLISTIC SCORING**, a teacher gives students a list of criteria indicating what is necessary to receive a particular score and then assigns a single score for a general impression of the paper as a whole. The list includes content features as well as features of style and form. The benefits of holistic scoring are that it may make grading more efficient and it encourages the reader to evaluate the effect of the essay as a whole. Students will usually need feedback in addition to the single score in order to understand how they can improve their writing.

ANALYTICAL SCORING focuses attention on separate important traits of effective writing in that genre. The student receives a separate score for each trait, which combine to create a final score. For example, the list may include five traits, each worth 20% of the final grade. Traits may include but are not limited to items such as ideas, voice, elaboration, organization and language conventions.

Related to analytical scoring is **WEIGHTED TRAIT SCORING**; it differs, however, because some traits receive more weight than others in the scoring. Content, for example, may have twice the weight of a stylistic feature.

When using **PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING**, teachers focus on a particular component of the writing but may include a secondary trait which may receive less weight. For example, students may be asked to demonstrate the ability to use a variety of words to describe, they may be asked to show mastery of subject-verb agreement, or they may be rated on their ability to organize their thoughts. With this kind of scoring, only the identified features are assessed. The other errors are ignored. The main advantage of primary trait scoring is that it focuses the students on one particular aspect of the oral or written task. However, this advantage can also be a disadvantage in that it ignores the other elements of speaking and writing that are important to the speaking and composing processes. Primary trait rubrics may be especially useful for early drafts or writing-to-learn activities.

Andrade (2000) points out that, when they are used appropriately, rubrics cannot only help teachers evaluate student work, they can actually help teachers teach. She points out that “Rubrics make assessing student work quick and efficient, and they help teachers justify to parents and others the grades that they assign to students. At their very best, rubrics are also teaching tools that support student learning and the development of sophisticated thinking skills”.

How to Develop a Rubric

Prior to developing the rubric, the teacher needs to put some thought into the assignment itself. As Mondschein-Leist (1997) points out, assignments that are simply given as a topic with a due date, “...invite frustration and poorly presented material. What is the purpose of the assignment? What is the student supposed to accomplish? What does the instructor expect?” (p. 21). She offers five suggestions for devising effective assignments:

1. Set content objectives for learning.
2. Think about the form the writing will take.
3. Consider the intellectual demands of the assignment.

4. When making an assignment, select an objective, match it with a writing form and create a focused activity.
5. Specify the evaluation criteria for the assignment. (pp. 21-22)

The rubric should help the student know what the teacher expects from the finished product, allow the teacher to give feedback that is informative for the student, and help both the teacher and the student judge the extent to which the objectives of the assignment were met.

The example below follows one teacher through the development process:

E X A M P L E	
<p><i>Ms. Smith had used journals and learning logs with her students for several years. While she knew that they were helpful for student learning, she wondered if more direction or guidance about her expectations would encourage students to take their learning even further. She talked with another colleague in a different discipline who had a similar assignment for students to explore texts (newspapers, magazines, books, films, etc.) outside of class and reflect on their connections with the class content. The teachers decided to work together on a rubric. They agreed that the most important aspect of these response journals was the thinking and connecting that students did with the content. However they also wanted students to be reading and responding to a variety of other texts as part of their independent reading and content enrichment. Because they wanted students to write quickly and explore ideas without worrying about correctness, they agreed that they would not assess language conventions, style, or even organization on these assignments. With these concerns in mind, they developed the primary trait rubric below:</i></p>	<p>PRIMARY TRAIT: Reflections on class discussions, experiences, and readings (including self-selected texts)</p> <p>EXCELLENT (70): Thorough and thoughtful responses show connections between and among concepts and experiences</p> <p>STRONG (64): Responses show explorations and extensions of ideas; more details and/or examples would help illustrate and support thinking</p> <p>ADEQUATE (58): Responses indicate limited exploration of ideas; more connections with readings, discussions and/or experiences would reflect greater understanding</p> <p>NEEDS WORK (52): Responses may be sparse or unconnected to content; ideas are unclear or undeveloped</p> <p>SECONDARY TRAIT: Variety of texts included in responses</p> <p>EXCELLENT (30): Responses incorporate references to wide variety of text types from different sources (newspapers, magazines, television, film, books, etc.) and demonstrate student exploration of differing viewpoints of concepts</p> <p>STRONG (26): Responses incorporate references to variety of text types</p> <p>ADEQUATE (22): Responses include references to some variety of texts and/or diversity in type within a text (i.e. editorials, news articles, columns in newspaper)</p> <p>NEEDS WORK (18): Responses include few or no text references; references included may be all from same type of text</p>

Rubrics and Grades

When it comes time to create the rubric, Dornan, Rosen, and Wilson (2003) recommend that the teacher write out the assignment for students, attach point values to aspects of the writing that will be evaluated (awarding the most points to the most important learning objectives), and continually remind students what is most important about this paper throughout the process. The rubric should use terminology that students understand and should accurately reflect what is most important about the assignment. For example, the rubric will typically devote no more than 10-15% of the grade to issues of language and mechanics.

Andrade (2000) argues that teachers should include students in the process of creating rubrics by showing them models of the kind of writing they will do, telling them to develop a list of criteria that should be evaluated for that type of writing, discussing these issues with them, and making decisions about level of quality. Students can then give input on a draft of the rubric before it is finalized.

Invariably, students, parents, and others want to know how the rubric converts to a grade in the course. Teachers have great flexibility in this, but it is important that students and teachers discuss and determine the conversion clearly. Components can be awarded on a point system within each performance level or on an overall performance across a holistic or analytic rubric. Since most grading systems focus on point ranges from 70 - 100 as proficient, teachers should be sure that their rubric conversion reflects a similar range. In other words, scoring a 2 out of 4 on a holistic scale should not be equivalent to a numerical grade of 50%.

The samples that follow illustrate diverse approaches to rubric development. Each rubric is the result of teachers discussing the focus and main learning objectives of the task. While the tasks themselves vary, notice how many of them relate to at least one or more of the features of writing (focus, organization, conventions, support and elaboration, style).

HOLISTIC RUBRIC <i>(example from Health Education: Core Concepts)</i>	
4 (A+)	The response is complex, accurate and comprehensive, showing breadth and depth of information; relationships are described and conclusions drawn. Concepts are developed and presented in a logical manner and there are not misspellings or grammatical mistakes.
3 (B)	The response identifies relationships between two or more health concepts; there is some breadth of information, although there may be minor inaccuracies. Concepts are understandable and presented clearly, there are few misspellings or grammatical mistakes.
2 (C)	The response presents some accurate information about the relationships between health concepts, but the response is incomplete and there are some inaccuracies. The concepts are not developed or presented clearly, and there are several misspellings and grammatical errors.
1 (D)	The response addresses the assigned task but provides little or no accurate information about the relationships between health concepts. Concepts are difficult to find and unclear and there are multiple misspellings and grammatical mistakes.

HOLISTIC RUBRIC *(example from Music: Researching Music Selections in Relation to Performance)*

EXEMPLARY (IV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information reflects complete accuracy with respect to the composer and historical facts.• Information gives evidence from three or more sources to describe the composer and historical facts.• Information includes three or more examples about the composer or historical facts that are uncommon and show an original point of view.• Information gives three or more examples that correlate the composer and historical facts with the composition to be performed in the concert.
ACCOMPLISHED (III)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information reflects nearly complete accuracy with respect to the composer and historical facts.• Information gives evidence from at most two sources to describe the composer and historical facts.• Information includes at most two examples about the composer or historical facts that are uncommon and show an original point of view.• Information gives at most two examples that correlate the composer and historical facts with the composition to be performed in the concert.
DEVELOPED (II)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information reflects some accuracy with respect to the composer and historical facts.• Information gives evidence from only one source to describe the composer and historical facts.• Information includes only one example about the composer or historical facts that are uncommon and show an original point of view.• Information gives only one example that correlates the composer and historical facts with the composition to be performed in the concert.
BEGINNING (I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information reflects little or no accuracy with respect to the composer and historical facts.• Information does not give evidence of any source to describe the composer and historical facts.• Information includes no examples about the composer or historical facts that are uncommon and show an original point of view.• Information gives no examples that correlate the composer and historical facts with the composition to be performed in the concert.

ANALYTIC RUBRIC *(example from Social Studies: History Script)*

	4- COMMENDABLE	3- SATISFACTORY	2- FAIR	1- NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
ORGANIZATION	Story is organized well with a clear beginning, middle and end; clearly communicates character, setting, objective and problem	Some ideas are not clear such as a character, setting or objective	Most information is unclear; or scenes jump around with no explanation	No organization of beginning, middle or ending; story outline is unclear
CONTENT	All historical information is included and correct such as names, settings, dates, etc.	Most historical information is included; one or two facts left out	Many historical facts left out of the script	No historical facts included in the script
SCRIPT FORMAT	Correct script format with no quotation marks; action in parentheses, setting included, character list	A few mistakes in script format; used quotation marks; no parentheses around action	Many mistakes in script format	No use of script format
WORKLOAD	All group members have an equal amount of dialogue	All group members have at least one line	One or two individuals have all the dialogue; others have just one line	Some group members have no dialogue

COMMENTS:

GRADE:

ANALYTIC RUBRIC *(example from Math: Comprehensive Evaluation)*

	COMMUNICATE REASONING	CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING	PROCESS AND STRATEGIES	INTERPRET REASONABLENESS
	Clearly explains what was done from beginning to end of the problem using pictures and words to communicate to others	Shows understanding of what the problem is asking	The strategy is chosen, carried out, and the work is checked	Work is accurate and shows why it makes sense
6				
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses math terms correctly • Explains his/her thinking clearly • Presents work in a logical and coherent manner • Explains the “solution” to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes the problem into useful mathematical ideas • Chooses and uses necessary information and/or data from the problem • Uses pictures, models, diagrams, and/or symbols to show understanding of the problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses graphs, pictures, or models to solve the problem • Chooses math skills/strategies that fit the problem • Uses a plan or strategy to solve the problem • Checks the work to make sure it is right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately calculates and/or uses diagrams • Reviews the work to see whether it makes sense • Shows the solution makes sense • Connects, extends, or generalizes the solution or the problem, if possible
4				
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses satisfactory math terms • Explains only part of his/her thinking • Shows work in partially clear manner • Explains the “solution” so that some can understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows understanding of only part of the problem • Assumes information that is not correct • Uses pictures, models, diagrams, and/or symbols that only partly fit the problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses only somewhat helpful graphs, pictures, or models • Chooses math skills/strategies that partially fit the problem • Completes a partial plan or strategy • Completes only part of checking the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes partially accurate calculations and/or diagrams • Reviews the work the same way the second time • Gives partial backing for the solution • Makes connections that may lack meaning
2				
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses math terms incorrectly • Explains thinking process in an unclear manner • Shows work that has little or no logical focus • Explains only the solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes the problem into incorrect math ideas • Uses only part of the information given in the problem • Uses pictures, models, diagrams, and/or symbols that conflict with the problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses graphs, pictures, or models that are not useful in solving the problem • Chooses skills/strategies that don’t fit the problem • Uses skills/strategies that do not work or are not recorded • Shows no attempt to check the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes calculations and/or diagrams inaccurately • Shows no review of the work • Provides no evidence the solution makes sense • Makes connections that may conflict with the solution or the problem

WEIGHTED TRAIT RUBRIC *(example from Dance: Integrated Study and Performance Evaluation)*

MY SCORES	TEACHER'S SCORES	SCORES	PROJECT CRITERIA
		15 total points 8pts 7pts	Knowledge of Dance and Other Content Area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate adequate knowledge of dance • Demonstrate adequate knowledge of other content area
		15 total points 6pts 9pts (3) (3) (3)	Analysis of Dance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate knowledge of dance elements • Apply knowledge of dance elements to this assignment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. space b. time c. energy
		15 total points 7pts 8pts	Analysis of Content Area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulate other content area through dance • Use critical thinking to analyze the other content area and its connection to dance
		30 total points 10pts 10pts 10pts	Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a choreographic study using the content area as the theme • Communicate the other content area through dance (No literal movement) • Maintain the other content area as the theme
		25 total points 5pts 5pts 5pts 5pts 5pts	Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship between dance and your subject area • Justification of your subject area as a valid choreographic resource (Was it successful?) • Apply rules of standard English to written text • Describe your choreographic process • Describe the contributions made by each group member (Collaborative process)

COMMENTS:

WEIGHTED TRAIT RUBRIC *(example from Second Languages: Composition or Paragraph Evaluation)*

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4
VOCABULARY	Little or none (11 pts.)	Very limited (14 pts.)	Adequate (17 pts.)	Varied and precise (20 pts.)
CLARITY OF IDEAS	Meaning not clear (16 pts.)	At times unclear (19 pts.)	Meaning conveyed (22 pts.)	Meaning conveyed effectively (25 pts.)
GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY	Very limited control of grammar (11 pts.)	Limited control of grammar (14 pts.)	Few errors in basic structures (17 pts.)	Good control of grammar (20 pts.)
COMPREHENSIBILITY	Very difficult to understand and follow (26 pts.)	Can be understood with some effort from the reader or listener (29 pts.)	Comprehensible but not always clearly stated (32 pts.)	Clearly stated and comprehensible (35 pts.)

PRIMARY TRAIT RUBRIC *(example from English Language Development: Informing an Audience)*

0	Fails to inform the audience about the topic.
1	Attempts but does not provide sufficient information.
2	Presents some information but without consistent development and support.
3	Develops information that is well- supported and developed with facts, examples, and/or anecdotes.

USING PORTFOLIOS AS A STRATEGY FOR ASSESSMENT

Portfolios allow teachers to collect student writing and see the student's progress over time. Dornan, Rosen, and Wilson (2003) identify the following purposes and uses for portfolios:

- showcasing work
- building ownership over writing
- demonstrating the range of writing over a variety of genres
- providing opportunities for revision
- documenting growth in writing over time
- developing metacognitive awareness of writing processes
- developing writers' ability to evaluate their own work
- adjusting the role of teacher from authority to guide (pp. 201-202).

Typically students select a set number of pieces from the collection of writings to polish, make sure that their portfolio represents a wide variety of writing for different audiences and purposes, write a letter or introduction reflecting on their writing, and then turn the portfolio in for evaluation.

STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

The ultimate goal of effective writing instruction is to help students become more able, independent writers. To encourage that, teachers can engage students in self-assessment activities. When students learn to articulate what they are doing, what they know and don't know, or questions that they have, they take more ownership and control over their own writing.

Self-assessment activities can occur during any stage of the writing process. For example, prior to peer group work or individual conferences, teachers may ask students to complete a brief writing self-evaluation form such as the following:

1. My purpose in writing about this subject is to
 2. I want my reader to
 3. I feel this way about my paper now
- This is what I like about it:*
This is what I think still needs more work:
These are the questions I want to ask a reader about my paper:
(Dornan, Rosen, & Wilson, 2003, p. 184)

Teachers can also engage students in more specific self-assessment by having students read through their own draft in progress and respond to it with a series of yes/no questions based on the rubric for the assignment. Questions may include items like the following: Is there a beginning, middle, and end to my composition? Have I given examples to help illustrate each of my points? Do I have a title that grabs the reader's interest?

Students can continue to self-assess even when they turn in the final draft of an essay for grading. The nature of this self-assessment may be more reflective as they answer questions such as the following: What were my biggest struggles while writing this essay? What did I learn about my own writing processes while writing this assignment? What do I like best about this essay? What would I like to receive specific feedback on when this essay is graded?

ASSESSMENTS IN A VARIETY OF CONTEXTS

Teaching and Assessing with the Writing Test in Mind

Throughout the school year a student's writing is assessed in many different ways. For tenth graders, one of those assessments is the Grade 10 Writing Test. Teachers should understand, however, that this is only one method of assessment and that it should not be used to limit or undermine opportunities for other kinds of assessment in the classroom. Students should not, for example, be assessed only on timed informational writing samples produced outside the context of regular classroom instruction.

Irvin, Buehl, and Klemp (2003) write that "Research and common sense support the assumption that attempting to teach the test in isolation does not improve student test scores" (p. 208). They cite the work of Langer (2000) who has identified six features of classroom instruction that do, however, correlate with improved student test performance. Irvin, Buehl, and Klemp (2003) identify them as follows:

- teaching skills with a variety of approaches;
- integrating test preparation into all instruction;
- making connections across instruction, curriculum, and life;
- teaching learning and test-taking strategies explicitly;
- encouraging creative thinking;
- fostering collaboration. (p. 208)

Bearing this in mind, teachers should strive to use what they know about effective instruction and assessment to integrate writing into the content areas in ways that are meaningful, linked to the Standard Course of Study, and challenge students to learn.

Classroom Assessment

The goal of classroom assessment is simple: to enable students to grow as learners. Although students are also "rewarded" for their efforts when they receive grades for the writing, the teacher's ultimate responsibility is to help students use writing as a tool for thinking and improve their abilities as writers. For this reason, opportunities for peer and teacher response, not just evaluation or grading of writing, is important. Students need to be able to see the evolution of their writing and understand how they are progressing throughout the course.

Some teachers have found authentic assessment to be an appropriate tool to use with their students. In short, authentic assessment requires that "... the activity must be meaningful, carefully tied to instruction, and involve multiple checkpoints and evaluators" (Irvin, Buehl, and Klemp, 2003, p. 213). When teachers design complex, holistic writing activities which actively engage students, involve real-world activities, and offer evaluation from someone other than just the teacher, they are engaging in authentic assessment. As Irvin, Buehl, and Klemp (2003) write, "The use of authentic assessment represents an effort to change assessment from a negative event, in which knowledge and people are measured, to a positive process, by which knowledge is applied and people are valued. With authentic assessment, the focus is on learning" (p. 210).

Dornan, Rosen, and Wilson (2003) describe classroom assessment of writing as "low stakes/high yield" (p. 204). It is low stakes because individual assignments tend to carry little weight, and evaluation tends to be more formative than summative. It is high yield because students can learn from the teacher's evaluation, they often have opportunities for revision, and they can directly apply what they are learning to other writing assignments immediately.

State or National Assessment Programs

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) conducts national writing assessment surveys every four years of fourth, eighth, and twelfth-grade students and reports the results for the nation and for the participating states. Student performance on the assessment is reported in terms of an average writing score as well as the percentage of students achieving each of the following three levels: Basic, Proficient, or Advanced. These achievement levels are collective judgments made by representative panels of teachers, education specialists, and members of the public of what students should know and be able to do for each grade tested. While caution is advised when interpreting and using these achievement levels since they are developmental, they have been widely used by national and state officials as a common measurement of academic performance in writing.

State writing assessments are usually conducted to fulfill one of two purposes (1) using student performance as a measurement of the effectiveness of curriculum delivery, or (2) as part of a statewide accountability plan. Statewide accountability plans may use the measurement of student performance for a variety of purposes including but not limited to: student accountability, school accountability, and/or school district accountability. The rewards and/or sanctions associated with these plans vary from state to state.



WRITING SCENARIOS

GOOD WRITING IS CLEAR THINKING MADE VISIBLE.

– BILL WHEELER

These scenarios have been designed to illustrate writing across the curriculum in action. Each scenario offers a snapshot of a teacher using writing within the context of his or her discipline. While neither prescriptive nor comprehensive, these examples provide a good starting point for discussion and exploration of ways to incorporate writing in all content areas.

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ARTS EDUCATION: DANCE

Dance IV Objectives:

1.05, 2.03, 2.04, 2.05, 3.01, 4.01, 4.03, 8.01, 8.02, 8.05

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL DANCE

Students in Mrs. Movement’s Dance IV class are choreographing original dances based on students’ writing about themselves. Students began by writing an autobiographical paper about themselves – who they are, where they came from, what their values and interests are, what their goals are for the future, etc. Their papers are used as a springboard for choreography. Initially, students work independently to express themselves through their writing. Then, they are asked to “pair and share” with a partner. While sharing, students are encouraged to ask questions of the writer that would help with the content or organization of their writing to make it more clear to the listener. Students then work individually on the creation of a dance, which should communicate their personal ideas and feelings through movement with individual style and clarity. Students must decide whether the text of their writing will be used with the dance (i.e. with someone reading the writing as the dance is performed) or if the dance alone will communicate their ideas from the writing. Students are asked to integrate and justify the use of various elements of dance to communicate the meaning in their dance. When all choreography is complete, students present their individual works to the class. After each performance, students are asked to write a critique using rules of standard written English. In their critiques, they must explain what was lost or gained by the artistic decisions made by the choreographer. After making revisions based on evaluation and feedback from the class, each dance is videotaped. Students may add their written work as well as the videotape of their choreography to their individual portfolios, which helps them to document their work and progress made over time. As a concluding activity, students examine the commonalities and differences between written communication and communication through dance (i.e. organization, main ideas and supporting details, elaboration, etc).

Connections

This scenario involves students with various aspects of dance study as well as opportunities for writing in different contexts and for different purposes. The teacher, along with the students, may determine specific guidelines for the autobiographical writing and/or the critique writing experiences. This scenario allows students to explore and express themselves personally through writing and dance, to explore connections between dance and writing, and to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of communicating meaning through dance. Finally, students experience authentic writing experiences with creating, performing, responding to, and understanding dance.

ARTS EDUCATION: MUSIC

Vocal Music III Objectives:

1.03, 4.01, 4.02, 4.03, 6.01, 6.02, 6.03, 6.04, 6.05, 7.01, 7.04, 7.05, 8.03, 9.02, 9.03

SPRING CONCERT – NOT JUST SINGING

Students in Mrs. Melody’s Vocal Music III class are preparing for their spring concert, which will include music representing a variety of genres, styles, cultures and historical periods. Students are learning about the music within a historical and cultural context as they learn their vocal parts. For example, one of the pieces students are working on is a 16th century English madrigal. Students listen to and analyze various settings of Italian and English madrigals as they learn about the evolution of the madrigal. Students are asked to provide written explanations of the musical devices used to evoke feelings and emotions such as word painting and voicing in their analysis of the music. As an extension of their studies, students work in small groups to compose lyrics that could be used as the text for an Elizabethan-style English madrigal. Their texts may involve love, humor, satire, or politics as part of the theme. The groups then brainstorm and experiment with word painting techniques and textures that could be used to illustrate the text. Each individual student takes his/her group’s text and provides a detailed written explanation of how this text could be set to music in the style of an Elizabethan madrigal, including the musical devices that would be used to illustrate the text. As an extension, students could actually compose an original madrigal and have the class perform it, or orchestrate it for voices and instruments. If notation software is available, the text and music could be published and kept in a class library. When students have explored and learned all of the music for the spring concert, they will perform it for the school community and parents. Throughout their studies, they will have opportunities to record and listen to their work, and respond through written evaluations using standard English and specific criteria for evaluating their performances. An expected outcome of the study of the repertoire is that students will be able to recognize and identify ways that music reflects and records history, as well as identify patterns relationships, and trends in music of various cultures and historical periods.

Connections

This scenario involves students with various aspects of music study as well as multiple opportunities for writing in different contexts and for different purposes. It demonstrates the importance of performance as a part of music study. The in-depth study of repertoire in relationship to history and culture will help students gain insight and connections with the music and the world in which we live – past and present. A more thorough understanding and analysis of the music will allow the students to express themselves more authentically, based on the style of music being performed. Finally, students experience authentic writing experiences with creating, performing, responding to, and understanding music.

ARTS EDUCATION: THEATRE ARTS

Theatre Arts III Objectives:

1.01, 1.02, 1.03, 1.04, 3.02, 3.04, 4.01, 5.02, 7.03

SELECTING AND PUBLICIZING A THEATRE PRODUCTION

Mr. Emotive, the theatre arts teacher at Dynamic High School, wants his theatre arts students, as part of their study in Theatre Arts III, to be involved in the upcoming school-wide production and to learn how the script impacts the concept, design, production and performance of any given play. To help students read and become familiar with the play, to encourage ownership of the project, and to give them a sense of what the show will entail, he plans to initially involve them in the selection of the script and in preparing some promotional materials for the show. In addition, helping make the selection will give them insight and prepare them to be involved in the performance, design and construction processes. Everyone in the school interested in working on the production came together at the beginning of school and decided they wanted to do a play about Dracula near the end of October to coincide with the school's Fall Festival. The class has briefly looked at numerous reading scripts based on the Dracula story and has narrowed it down to two that seem appropriate for their school performance. They have selected the Ted Tiller version entitled "Count Dracula" and the Deane and Balderston version entitled "Dracula" as the final two options. To begin the process of making a final decision, "Mr. Emotive" requests that each student reads both plays and writes a short paper. The paper will compare and contrast the scripts, production requirements, potential costs, and any perceived difficulties in doing the plays in the school theatre and with available resources. By sharing these in class, everyone can begin to see the pros and cons of each version and this will help them determine which show they will select to produce. After they have made the final selection, he plans to divide them up into working groups. One group will develop a thorough publicity announcement to send to local news media. Another group will develop an eye catching publicity poster that provides a compelling, brief synopsis of the play and other pertinent advertising information. A third group will develop a letter to be sent to local businesses about the show which request donations in return for advertising in the play program. The last group will develop and write a series of clever and imaginative public announcements promoting the play to be used as part of the school's afternoon announcements. The class will then come together to critique each other's work, make any final changes and put the entire publicity package together before moving on with the casting, rehearsal and production processes.

Connections

This scenario causes students to be involved in many of the SCS Theatre Arts strands to include perceiving, thinking, comprehending, applying, communicating, creating, analyzing and critiquing. Students have to work and think independently and also participate in group decision-making. By analyzing, comparing and contrasting scripts, students have to evaluate many different aspects of theatre and make an important informed decision as to which play each student selects and the class eventually decides to do. Inter- and intra-personal communication abilities and strategies are learned and practiced. While developing publicity materials, students have to be inventive and develop material based on what they have learned from the script and during planning discussions. They are not only being asked to develop the items but to do it in such a way that the items are usable, inspirational and make individuals want to be involved in promoting and/or seeing the show. Indeed, they begin to see all these decisions and materials as interrelated and as integral parts of theatre production. The need and importance to establish a production concept upon which the performance, designs and entire production will be based upon will begin to be perceived and understood.

ARTS EDUCATION: VISUAL ARTS

Visual Art II Objectives:

1.01, 1.02, 1.04, 1.06, 1.07, 3.01-3.06, 4.03, 4.04, 5.01-5.06, 6.01, 6.02, 6.06

ART AS A REFLECTION OF CULTURE AND LIFE EXPERIENCES

Mrs. Artisan, the visual arts teacher at Dynamic High School, wants her visual arts students, as part of Visual Arts II, to assess the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others. She wants them to ponder the work of a specific artist and answer the questions: “who, why, when, where, and how” of an artist’s work. In addition, the project will encourage students to see works of art as the result of an artist’s personal imagination, perceptions, skills, culture, beliefs, life experiences, resources, etc. She has designed a project that is aimed at having students objectively critique the work of a particular artist from an identified culture and period. Students then will develop a personal work of art, on a subject of their choice, from their perspective that might also reflect the same culture and period for the purposes of analyzing, comparing and contrasting their work with that of the artist. First, Mrs. Artisan requests that each student select an artist from a particular culture, research the artist’s work in light of the questions above, and then write a research paper which discusses the attributes of the artist and their work. They are to pay close attention to and relate how the individual’s work reflects their culture, education, environment, life experiences, etc. Next, the students are to create a work of art that reflects that of the artist’s work and culture, and which uses, as much as possible, some of the same techniques, processes and/or medium that the artist used to create his or her work. Each student will then show their own work and samples of the artist they are studying and discuss their conclusions and how their work of art reflects that of the artist with the entire class. After the class sharing, each student will write a short paper that explains what they have learned from their and other students’ work about how all artists’ work reflects their life experiences, the culture they live in and the time period in which they live. The students are to point out things that seem to be universal or are recurring themes or subjects as opposed to things that are particular to a specific artist, culture or period. As a follow-up lesson, Mrs. Artisan plans to do a similar project where students create a work of art that reflects their own contemporary existence. They will then write and share a short paper that explains how their work reflects themselves in contemporary times. Finally, the entire class can look for and list universal and/or recurring themes, subjects or symbols that are prevalent in their combined work.

Connections

This scenario causes students to be involved in all of the SCS Visual Arts strands to include perceiving, producing, knowing, communicating, evaluating, and connecting. The project will also help students to develop critical and creative thinking skills along with perceptual awareness. In addition, the project will broaden students’ understanding of how and why art happens, of why art takes on various nuances, and why art occurs in different styles and forms. Individual students not only have to study and analyze as well as write about their findings but, also, have to create art based on what they have learned and observed about a particular artist’s work. They must draw conclusions and express their ideas regarding how art and artists differ within and outside of various cultures, environments, life experiences, etc. Using writing as a pre- and post-activity and as a part of the making and viewing of art, makes it a part of the learning process in a way that is authentic. Having to write their thoughts down in a clear and understandable manner will involve them in practicing good writing skills, as well as, promoting the acquisition and use of terminology which is relevant and particular to visual arts.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: ENGLISH II

English II Objectives:

1.02, 2.02, 3.03, 5.01, 5.02, 6.01, 6.02

English I, II, III, IV Objectives:

5.01, 6.01, 6.02

EXTENDING METAMORPHOSIS

After reading and discussing Kafka's *Metamorphosis* as a class, Ms. English has her students consider the reasons that Gregor changed into a monstrous creature. Working together, Ms. English listens to student responses, encourages them to include support from the text, and then uses those responses in a graphic organizer illustrating the causes of Gregor's change. Then Ms. English has students break into groups to discuss how characters in their literature circle books have changed through the course of those works. For homework, each student has to select one character from the book and create a graphic organizer showing the reasons for that character's change.

In class the next day, students write an on-demand response to the following prompt: "Imagine that your chosen character awakens one morning and has changed into another creature. What would that creature be? Why would that creature be an appropriate new form for that character? Be sure to use details from the text to support your points."

After the writing period (either later in the class or the next day), students bring their responses to their literature circle groups. Students do a read around of each paper in the group, with each listener giving the writer suggestions on what works and what needs improvement. Before the groups begin the peer response, Ms. English reminds the group members to listen for several aspects of the responses, including content (Does the change make sense for the character? Are the causes of the change clear and well-supported?) and style and conventions (Are there sentences that don't sound "right"? Do the sentences flow together well?).

As students read and discuss their first drafts, they discover that they have taken different approaches -- some writing essays, some writing short stories modeled after Kafka's work, etc. They ask Ms. English which format is correct. She emphasizes to them that the format is for them to choose, as long as the questions are answered. At the end of the period, she asks each group to select a good example to read aloud. Students then discuss how effectively different approaches answer the questions. For homework, the students revise their first drafts before submitting their responses. After they are evaluated, Ms. English posts several compositions on the "Best of the Best" bulletin board in her room.

Connections

In this scenario, students are asked to synthesize two works analytically by analyzing the character's change in a new way, following the model of Gregor's change. This way, the teacher integrates the whole class intensive study of *The Metamorphosis* with the small group literature circle study of works of student choice.

Additionally, this scenario illustrates the teacher's process approach to writing. Students are given opportunities to discuss and reflect on their ideas before drafting; then students respond to each other's writing in the read around. With this strategy, students have several opinions to inform their revision and editing before submitting the final responses. Through their discussions and their compositions, students are considering the effects of society and other influences on characters, which is a causal relationship. Although students select their own formats for their responses, they will need to support their ideas with specific evidence from the text, illustrating their knowledge of the works they read and their ability to prove their points. Finally, with such a high-interest assignment, the students will enjoy reading each others' responses as they are published on the bulletin board, and perhaps they will even be so intrigued by the characters that they will want to learn more about books from the other literature circles.

HEALTH EDUCATION

Objectives:

5.05, 5.06, 5.07

EXAMINING FAD DIETS AND HEALTHFUL WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Ms. Simmons' class has been evaluating fad diets they found in popular magazines and books. The students began to discuss how many of their peers have strange eating habits and how some young people go to extreme measures to lose weight for the prom. Ms. Simmons addresses the fact that some young people periodically go on crash diets to lose weight rapidly. She asks the class to write an article for the school newspaper to educate young people on a healthful way to manage their weight. The students are to include in the article: 1) a definition of a fad diet; 2) a description of THREE factors that can influence a young person to go on a fad diet; 3) an explanation of why fad diets are harmful to the body and are rarely effective; 4) a description of the components of a healthful weight management plan. The students are given a rubric that will be used for grading the articles. Once the articles are completed Ms. Simmons will give the best submissions to the editor of the school newspaper to select which one will appear in the next edition.

Connections

This scenario allows students to use the information they have on healthful weight management to educate others on the effective components of weight management. The activity in this scenario will also allow the teacher to examine how well the students have mastered the ability to differentiate between healthful and harmful dietary habits. The students must not only demonstrate their knowledge of the effects of fad dieting but must also examine the reasons why young people participate in fad dieting, and offer effective solutions. This scenario accomplishes not only health education skill building but also gives students the opportunity to organize their thoughts and knowledge in a format that will educate others. In writing the articles, students are using critical thinking skills, analyzing their peers' logic and reasoning, using advocacy skills and publishing their work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Healthful Living Objectives:

7.1, 7.2, 7.4, 7.5, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 9.2, 12.04

UNDERSTANDING AND CLARIFYING VARIABLES IN A PHYSICALLY ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Ms. Henderson wants to be sure that her students understand and can apply fitness concepts to a workout program for healthy living. After several days of activity distinguishing between anaerobic, anaerobic, strength building, and the FIT concept, the students researched the environment in which they lived for resources, facilities, and equipment.

The students then were asked to survey five peers and five adults about their weekly physical activities and then determine how well each person's activity met his or her fitness goal(s).

- The kind of physical activities the person interviewed liked and disliked
- The day(s) of the week they do physical activities:
- The kind(s) of physical activity they do (i.e., weight lifting, tennis, yoga, aerobic dance, surfing, skating).
- How long they perform their activities
- Their fitness goal(s) such as to gain strength, to perform better at a sport, to recover from an injury.

Once the information was gathered, students determined whether each person's activities met his or her fitness goal(s). For example, if someone wanted to prepare for the basketball team, was he or she developing the strength and endurance based on the concepts learned earlier in class?

Then for one person, whose activities were not meeting his or her goal(s), students developed a plan to help meet the goal(s). Students considered the following: the data information collected, diversity of activity, location, equipment, facilities, support, and safety. The plan also included specific activities and an observable goal.

Students then wrote a report of the findings, including:

- an introduction to the project
- a summary of the data collected
- review of literature to defend recommendations
- analysis of the information
- the plan developed for the individual chosen.

Connections

This scenario allows students to gather and analyze information in a context that is beneficial to both the investigator and others. The opportunities for integration with Health Education, Anatomy and Physiology, Medical Science, and Sports Medicine are obvious. The content of the paper illustrates the knowledge and depth of information the student has gained as well as the analysis and application of material.

MATHEMATICS EDUCATION

Algebra I Objectives:

4.03

Algebra II Objectives:

4.02

Technical Mathematics 1:

4.01

Technical Mathematics 2:

4.02

Advanced Mathematics:

4.02

AP Statistics:

3.01

EXAMINING THE VARIABLES THAT AFFECT ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

With the approach of the 2004 Athens Olympics, Ms. Kepler provided her class a list of the swimming and track and field events that would take place. Each student selects an event and is expected to research the event's history. Oral and written presentations are to be prepared with emphasis on breakthrough performances, international politics, drug testing, famous athletes, and trends (illustrated with graphs and charts) in the gold medal performances since the event first started.

The trend data investigation will have two parts. In the first part, students should describe the trend (year, performance), if appropriate, in terms of a best-fit curve and generate the corresponding function. Using the best-fit function, students will predict the gold medal performance in their event for the 2004 Olympics.

In the second part, students will identify and explain variables that affect athletic performance. These may include, but not be limited to, diet, training, technological innovation, and changes in the population participating in the sport. If there is quantitative, historical data available for any of the variables, students should describe the data (variable, performance), if appropriate, in terms of a best-fit curve and generate the corresponding function. Using the best-fit function, students will predict the gold medal performance in their event for the 2004 Olympics.

As the Olympics unfold, students will compare their predictions to the actual performances and analyze any differences that exist. Video replays in the classroom will add a celebratory atmosphere to the final class discussions.

Connections

This scenario allows students to gather and analyze information in a context that is both interesting and entertaining. Not only are algebraic and statistical relationships examined, but students gain a richer insight into the physiological and technological nature of athletics. Analysis has no point to it unless it can be disseminated. Oral and written presentations allow students the opportunity to report and defend their conclusions. The opportunities for integration with World Studies, Healthful Living, Anatomy and Physiology, Medical Sciences, Sports Medicine, and Foods and Nutrition are obvious.

SCIENCE EDUCATION

Biology

1.02, 1.03, 1.04, 1.05, 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 2.04, 2.05, 2.06, 3.01, 3.02, 3.03, 3.04, 3.05, 4.01, 4.02, 4.03, 4.04, 4.05, 5.01, 5.02, 5.03, 5.04, 5.05,

Chemistry

3.01, 3.05, 4.02

E/E Science

1.01, 1.03, 4.02

Physics

6.05, 8.03

Physical Science

2.03, 4.03

FILM SCIENCE

Mr. Turner wants his physics students to visualize important science concepts. This skill is particularly valuable for mathematically challenged students. He chooses to use visual images provided in motion picture clips to make the visualization easier for all students. Present-day students are skilled at visually processing and analyzing information, and constantly hone these skills as they watch television and play electronic games.

Mr. Turner decides to use recent movies to take advantage of the high interest these videos provide. The students are introduced to the process of dealing with “bad science” that frequently appears in films. As an introduction to the project, the class views a 5-minute clip from Kevin Costner’s *Waterworld*. The film is based on the concept that polar icecaps have melted and water deeply submerges all landmasses. Mr. Turner leads a class discussion of the question: Is there sufficient ice in the polar ice caps to cover the earth’s land masses with water to a depth of several hundred meters? When the students have reached the conclusion that the film is promoting “bad science,” they are arranged in small groups to discuss modifications to the basic premise of the video and suggestions to correct the science. Each group writes a suggested plan to correct the science concept. During the semester the small groups analyze various films that are based on science concepts related to the current topic.

As the Christmas holidays approach, the class analyzes the physics of the poem “‘Twas the Night Before Christmas or Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas” by Major Henry Livingston Jr. (1748-1828) (previously believed to be by Clement Clarke Moore). The students may view a video version or read the poem.

Connections

This scenario involves students at several different levels. It encourages students to collaborate to estimate dimensions, rates, strengths, etc. It encourages them to practice their observation skills and express their views while honing their written and oral communication skills. Groups present their analysis and corrections to other class members.

The post viewing analysis and subsequent presentations allows students to practice their physics, communication, and interpersonal skills in a relevant setting.

REFERENCES: Science Content Standards: 9-12, Science as Inquiry; “Start Using ‘Hollywood Physics’ In Your Classroom!” Phys. Teach. 40 420-424, October 2002

SECOND LANGUAGES EDUCATION

Level III

1.01, 2.05, 2.06, 3.01, 3.02, 4.02, 5.02, 5.03, 6.02, 6.04, 7.01, 7.06

CHILDREN'S BOOK PROJECT

Ms. Smith wants her French/German/or Spanish III students to consider how writing may vary according to the audience. She also wants students to have the opportunity to practice their foreign language skills at the same time. For this reason, she has asked students to work in pairs to author children's big books in French/German/or Spanish. Students begin the project by examining and reading children's books from the target language, viewing several model books from past year's classes, and discussing the rubric and the criteria to be used for assessment. During a series of mini workshops, students are introduced to typical beginning and ending expressions found in children's books and to other structural patterns based on student needs. In pairs, students plan, write, and illustrate their stories. Students engage in self- and peer-editing prior to submitting their final drafts for teacher feedback. Students complete their illustrated books and read them aloud to the class. Following the reading, listeners answer comprehension questions accompanying each new story. They then make an audio tape of their stories. Over the next few weeks, students visit local elementary schools with foreign language programs, preferably in the selected language, and read their stories to the elementary school students. After the presentation, the book (or a copy) along with the audio tape are presented to the elementary school class to be placed in the reading center or in the library. Upon completion of the project, students enter their insights about the project in a journal.

Connections

This scenario involves students on a variety of levels. It encourages them to practice their oral and interpersonal communication skills as they work with their partner. It involves them in accessing and reading authentic materials and allows them to compare and contrast the genres and structural patterns in the target language and their own. In addition, this scenario involves students in creative writing while having them plan, organize, and revise their ideas to create a children's story. As students are engaged in writing, they apply processes and strategies from other disciplines as well. For example, as they begin writing, they may insert a few isolated words in English and, upon revising, they may ask their peers or resort to the dictionary for the proper term in the target language. Furthermore, they may try several endings to see which one fits best, or they may achieve coherence by including cohesive elements, inserting transition words, or varying sentence structure. In addition, they may use desktop publishing to type, illustrate, and publish their stories.

As students present their stories to their peers and to an audience of elementary students, they gain a sense of success and at the same time they have the opportunity to use their language outside of their own school setting. Finally they can reflect in their own journals focusing on their thoughts and experiences rather than on the form.

SECOND LANGUAGES EDUCATION

Level I

3.01, 7.02

WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL!

A student in Mr. Jones' class has observed that many newly-arrived Spanish speaking students seem to be lost during their first days at school. Mr. Jones asked his Spanish I class to address this issue. With audience (the newly-arrived Spanish speaking students) and purpose (what they could do to make the students feel less lost) already identified, students in the Spanish I class were able to focus on the means to help new students become acclimated to their new surroundings. They have concluded that they could create (1) a series of signs to be posted around the school, and (2) brochures given to the school counselor for dissemination upon the new students' enrollment in school. Both the signs and brochures would be inviting gestures toward the new students.

Students in pairs have brainstormed possible topics needing to be included and have made a directory of the school. In addition, each pair prepared a written list of words and useful expressions newly arrived students would need to understand or say. Pairs shared their individual lists and suggestions with the entire class. At the conclusion of the presentations, students made a master list of topics, places, useful vocabulary, and expressions. The students then made a series of signs which were posted around the school. When they were finished, students turned their attention to creating brochures which included useful expressions and their meaning, a schedule of classes, a map of the school, and any other relevant topics identified during one of the previous activities. Brochures were produced using a desktop publishing application and were shared with school counselors and the new students. Additional copies were made to share with parents as needed.

Connections

This activity is an example of how students at the beginning level of language learning can be involved in a meaningful writing activity even though they have very limited vocabulary. By identifying their audience and purpose, students were able to focus on the language they would need to complete this activity. In addition, because their products were published, accuracy in spelling was important. Students were able to take the language outside of the classroom and share it with others. Ultimately, students enrolled in other languages decided that they could do a similar activity for some of the other students in their school.

SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

World History

1.01

Civics and Economics

10.01, 10.02, 10.03, 10.04, 10.05, 10.06

United States History

11.06, 12.02, 12.04, 12.05

SOCIAL STUDIES CIVICS AND ECONOMICS, UNITED STATES HISTORY

Students are studying the Civil Rights Movement. They will read selected excerpts of “From Snarling Dogs to Bloody Sunday,” have a seminar on the selection, and continue the unit of study with one of the following writing assignments.

- Research and write a biography of one of the youth that made a difference in the Civil Rights Movement. Selections can include Emmett Till, Little Rock Nine, Ruby Bridges, Sheyon Webb, the Children’s Crusade, or Ezell Blair Jr., Joseph McNeil, Francis McCain and David Richmond. Upon completion compare their actions to youth involvement in social and political challenges of today.
- Trace student involvement in the Civil Rights Movement in North Carolina. Create a souvenir newspaper that includes articles, editorial, want ads, advertisements, political cartoons and photographs that reflect the time period, the movement and student involvement.
- Interview grandparents, parents or other family members on their involvement, feelings, thoughts, and reactions to the Civil Right Movement. Compile this oral history into a written narrative about their encounters.
- Research how the Civil Rights Movement is reflected through the lives of our national leaders and write an essay of this impact. Suggested individuals include: Lyndon Johnson, F. D. Roosevelt, Sam Erwin, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Jesse Helms, Shirley Chisholm, Strom Thurmond, Thurgood Marshall, and Trent Lott.
- Create a documentary to be aired on cable television on the Civil Right Movement in Durham, North Carolina that involves Ann Atwater, an outspoken African American activist and Claiborne Paul “C.P.” Ellis, a ranking member of the Klu Klux Klan and explains how the two became friends.
- Research the Trent Lott controversy. Write a letter to your congressional representative in favor of censuring the Speaker of the House or a letter supporting the senator’s right to free speech. Write a letter that challenges the position of your congressional representative supporting your position with historical facts.

Connections

This scenario involves students on a variety of levels and interests. They practice the tools of a historian as they develop their written communication skills and higher order thinking skills (HOTS). Connections are made to the World History, Civics and Economics, and United States History.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (CAREER AND TECHNICAL) EDUCATION

Career Management

12.01, 12.02

CAREER PLANNING PROCESS

Ms. Eagle wants to be sure that her students understand the career planning process. They have spent several days discussing careers and the students have taken interest, aptitude, and values inventories through an on-line web site. They have compared their results with possible occupations and identified additional education and training that would be needed. They have looked at the long-range forecast for their chosen career, and they have researched the difference in anticipated salary based on additional education and training. Ms. Eagle has asked each student to write a letter to his or her parent explaining the career planning process. The students are to include: 1) an explanation of the career planning process, 2) what they have done in each step of the process, and 3) any conclusions the student has reached about a chosen career. In pairs, students will proofread the letters. Volunteers will read their letters to the class.

Students will make a final copy of the letter and deliver it to their parents. Students will be encouraged to obtain a written response to their letters from a parent or other adult.

Connections

After participating in the steps of the career planning process, students confirm their understanding by sharing information with their parents. Since research shows that students rely heavily on their parents as they make career decisions, it is another way to keep parents involved and informed. Since letter writing continues to be an effective and necessary part of the job seeking process, this activity also reinforces written communication skills.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (CAREER AND TECHNICAL) EDUCATION

Family and Consumer Sciences, Early Childhood Education II

1.02, 2.02, 3.02, 4.01, 4.02

EXAMINING THE LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE FACILITIES.

Ms. Wendell would like to determine if her Early Childhood Education II students have a concise understanding of Child Care Center Licensure ratings. She would also like to determine their understanding of employment ethics. The students are to develop a parent handbook describing the Child Care Center they would like to open in the community. The students are to give their center a hypothetical voluntary star rating and outline the criteria that allows them to hold this rating. The roles and responsibilities of each staff member are to be outlined so the parents will know each person's duties. The students will share their brochure with classmates and defend the rating. The classmates will ask questions concerning the rating, how it was obtained and what the owner does to ensure quality related to the voluntary rating. Each individual student will have to prepare a written statement in defense of their rating. A rubric will be developed for the students and teacher to evaluate the brochures.

Connections

The scenario will encourage the students to research qualities needed by Child Care Centers to acquire star licensure. The teacher will gain insight into student mastery of licensure requirements. The students will have to analyze the hypothetical roles and responsibilities of each staff member to maintain quality child care for the facility. The students will have to utilize analytical, conceptual, and organizational thinking skills to develop the brochures. They will use critical thinking skills to test the knowledge of their classmates in defending their rating of the Child Care Center. The student will use organizational writing skills to prepare their defense statement.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (CAREER AND TECHNICAL) EDUCATION

Health Occupations

08.01, 08.02

INVESTIGATING DISEASES/DISORDERS RELATED TO SPECIFIC LIFE STAGES

Mrs. Rabon's class has been exploring normal human growth and development. They have discussed seven stages of development, including normal physical, mental, emotional and social growth. Mrs. Rabon wants her students to examine some diseases and disorders associated with each life stage. Her students work in small groups to collect statistics from the Center for Disease Control to identify the two most prevalent health problems facing each age group. Each group shares their findings with the class and asks questions about the care of clients with the identified health problems. Mrs. Rabon instructs the class to choose one of the identified health problems and associated life stage. She asks them to continue their research and write a paper about their findings. Students may use the internet, books, magazines and interviews. She instructs them to include their thoughts about how it might feel to be stricken with the disease during the specified life stage. Students should include the following information: 1) a brief description of the disease; 2) major signs and symptoms of the disease as they affect each aspect of the life stage (mental, physical, emotional and social); 3) usual treatment and patient care. She gives them a rubric that will be used for grading the papers. Once the assignment is completed, students share their findings with the entire class. Mrs. Rabon asks thought-provoking questions during the class discussions.

Connections

This scenario allows students to use their knowledge of normal growth and development to investigate the effects of the disease process. Students will demonstrate their knowledge about life stages and how disease may influence all aspects of a client's life. Students will learn that the effects of disease are more than a physical process. Using interviews or certain books for their research will allow students to begin to formulate a realistic "picture" of their topic. The class discussions will allow them to use new vocabulary. The students will use critical thinking skills while they organize their thoughts and knowledge on paper. They will also gain new knowledge of various diseases. In class discussions, the teacher has the opportunity to continue to influence their learning by soliciting their responses to questions and patient-care scenarios. Students are also given the opportunity to reflect on their own feelings by including their thoughts in the paper. This assignment helps prepare students for work-based learning in a variety of health care agencies.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (CAREER AND TECHNICAL) EDUCATION

Marketing (6621)

6.01, 6.02, 6.03, & 6.04

Fashion Merchandising (6631)

6.02

Sports & Entertainment Marketing I (6670)

4.01

FEATURE/BENEFIT SELLING COOPERATIVE LEARNING PRESENTATION

Ms. Hosaflook would like to assess her students' level of understanding regarding feature/benefit selling. She will divide her class into groups of 3 to 4 students. Each group will generate a list of products by writing down one product that begins with each letter of the alphabet. For example, A – automobile. The group will write two features for each product on the list then write a benefit for each of the features. Each group will choose a product from their list and develop a sales presentation role-play to be demonstrated in class. The presentation should include the product, a brief description of the situation, and qualifying statements or questions on which the feature/benefit presentation was based. A rubric will be used to assess the presentation.

Connections

This scenario will allow students to develop feature/benefit selling techniques necessary to become a successful salesperson. The students will have to use critical thinking skills to analyze and conceptualize product features and benefits. They will enhance team-building skills while working in small groups. The sales presentation role-play will help the students improve their oral presentation abilities.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (CAREER AND TECHNICAL) EDUCATION

Fundamentals Of Technology Education (8110) Objectives

1.01,1.02, 1.03, 1.05, 3.01, 3.02, 3.03,3.04, 3.05, 2.06, 6.02, 6.03

EXAMINING SOLUTIONS TO ALTERNATIVE FUELS

Mr. Clark's class has been evaluating problem solving and trends in technology affecting the war on terrorism. Mr. Clark asks the students to discuss their idea on the war and how it will affect the United States' economy. After the class discussion the student will complete the following assignment.

The United States is in the midst of a war on terrorism that threatens our relationship with important oil producing nations like Saudi Arabia. Your class has been asked to develop a plan to reduce the nation dependence on oil. What technological solutions could we pursue to help our nation reduce its dependence on oil? Develop a plan using the DEAL problem solving method and the Universal System Model that will utilize our technological resources to decrease our dependence on oil. Students will present their plan to the class.

The Universal System model typically includes a look at system inputs, processes, and outputs for open loop systems and a fourth component, feedback, is included in systems that are perceived to be closed loops.

Connections

This scenario allows students to use the research method to find information on alternative fuels and their impacts on society. Students will use the problem solving and Universal System Model to explain how their solution can be implemented in society. This scenario involves students in creative writing while having them plan, organize, and revise their ideas to create a report and oral presentation. The activity in this scenario will also allow the teacher to examine how well the students have mastered the problem solving method, Universal System Model and oral communication skills.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (CAREER AND TECHNICAL) EDUCATION

Trade and Industrial Objective

1.01

CONDUCTING A BUSINESS MEETING

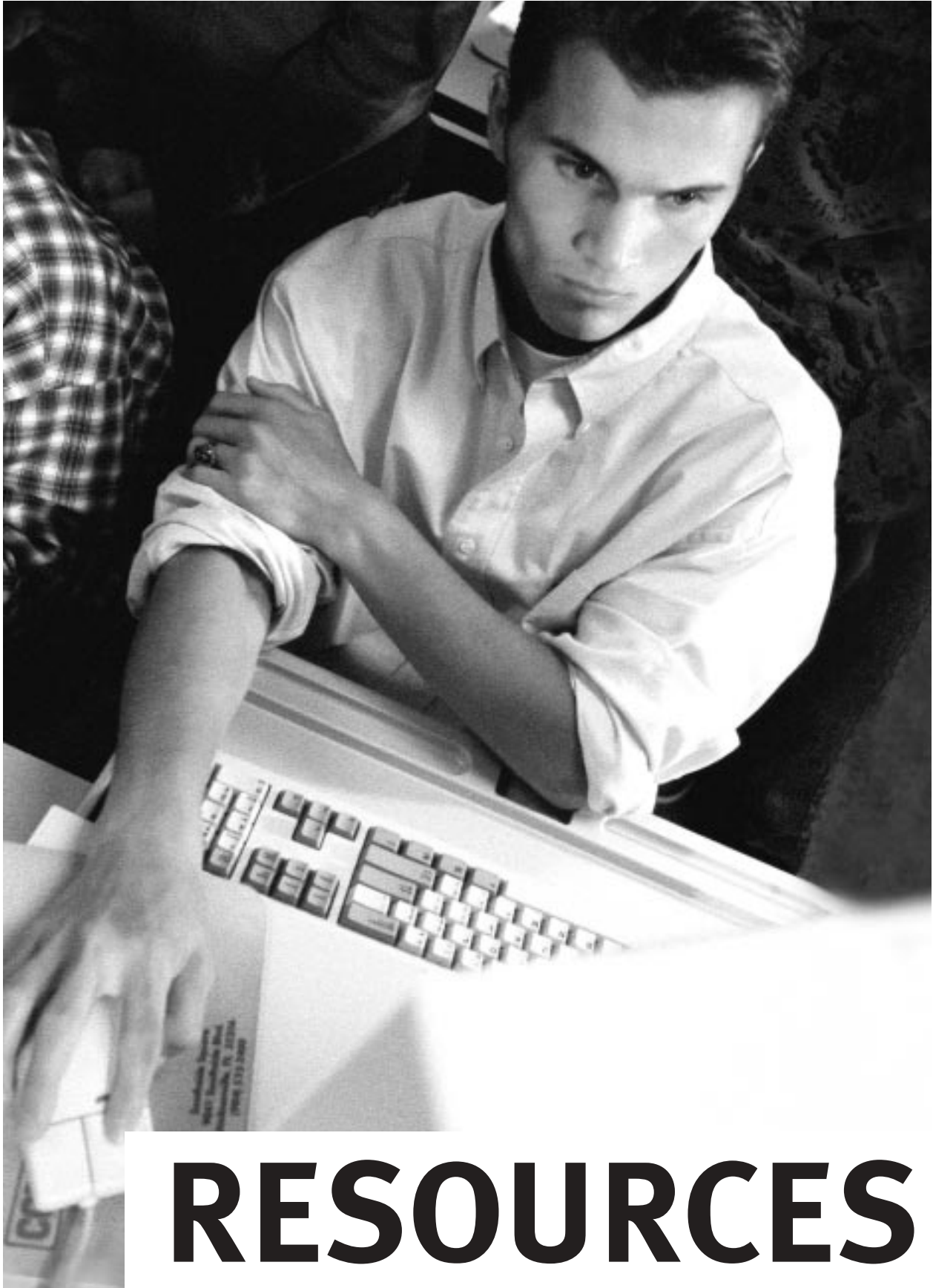
The class studies how to conduct a business meeting. As part of the study the students discuss the types of organizations and the use of parliamentary procedure to conduct orderly business meetings. They also read about and study basic parliamentary procedures. The class visits the legislature in session and each student has to visit one organization's business meeting. To increase students' understanding of parliamentary procedure each student is asked to write a script for a group of ten students to conduct a mock business meeting. Each student is given a sample script. Four of the ten student parts will be officers (president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer) and the other six students will be members of the organization. The scripted business meeting will include the following items.

1. Opening of meeting
2. Presentation of the secretary's report – minutes of last meeting
3. Processing an amendment to the minutes
4. Presentation of treasurers financial report
5. Processing an amendment to the financial report
6. Old business
7. Processing a main motion
8. Debating a motion
9. Amending a motion
10. New business
11. Tabling a motion
12. Setup up a committee
13. Three other actions of the student's choice

After writing the scripts, groups of students will conduct a business meeting using the scripts. After conducting each meeting they will discuss positive and negative points of the script and correct any errors.

Connections

The scenario allows the student to use the parliamentary procedures they have studied and involves them on several levels. It gives the student the experience of planning, organizing, and participating in a business meeting. Each student develops writing and speaking communication skills. The student will get a sense of accomplishment and develop confidence in his/her ability to participate in public meetings.



RESOURCES

GENERAL RESOURCES ON WRITING AND TEACHING WRITING

BURKE, J. (2002). *Tools for thought: Graphic organizers for your classroom*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

This book contains two sections: a description of tools which can be used to engage students in thinking about the content and form of their writing and a collection of reproducible graphic organizers which can be adapted across content areas. The ideas presented in the book were designed when the author was working with many students who were achieving below grade level and/or were second language learners, but they can be adapted across developmental levels. Examples of actual student work are included. The tools presented in the text are consistent with the goals of a constructivist classroom and usually have something intuitive or familiar about them so that students can use them to gain understanding when they are confused.

CLOUSE, B. F. (2001). *Working it out: A troubleshooting guide for writers*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

This guide is presented in a question/answer format as a way of helping students deal with common problems they may encounter in their writing. Divided into five parts, the text offers suggestions on prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and writing practice. The issues addressed include questions such as the following: How do I back up what I say? How can I get my writing to flow? What do I do if I want to quote somebody? Why can't I place a comma wherever I pause? The text contains over 240 specific strategies written in concise, clear language. Also, the questions and strategies are listed in the table of contents to make it easy for teachers or students to access appropriate information.

DORNAN, R. W., ROSEN, L. M., & WILSON, M. (2003). *Within and beyond the writing process in the secondary English classroom*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

This text is geared toward English teachers but contains excellent information on teaching writing which can easily be adapted by teachers in any content area. The authors describe their basic assumptions about literacy and have chapters devoted to issues such as the following: the writing process, grammar, writing-to-learn, responding to literature and nonprint media, and responding to student writing.

KIRBY, D., & LINER, T. (1988). *Inside Out: Developmental strategies for teaching writing*, (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This text provides a classic introduction to teaching writing in a way that engages students, supports their efforts, and uses writing to encourage learning. The authors address issues such as using journals, teaching students to write in a variety of forms, helping students revise, and evaluating writing.

LANE, B. (1993). *After the end: Teaching and learning creative revision*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This text is full of creative, specific activities teachers can use to encourage students to think about their writing. The activities support writers as they attempt to use details effectively, work on the form of their writing, and nurture voice. Most of the activities are designed more as mini-lessons rather than as activities that students can use with already existing pieces of writing.

LANGER, J. (2000). *Guidelines for teaching middle and high school students to read and Write well: Six features of effective instruction*. Albany, NY: Center on English Learning and Achievement.

This booklet draws on a five-year research study in middle and high school English classrooms across the country. Langer presents, identifies, describes, and offers examples of six features of instruction that help students learn to read and write well.

LE GUIN, U. K. (1998). *Steering the craft: Exercises and discussions on story writing for the long navigator or the mutinous crew*. Portland, OR: The Eighth Mountain Press.

Le Guin offers exercises that engage writers in creative activities removed from their own writing as well as activities that use their writing as a starting point. The focus of the text is on helping writers improve story writing. Through the use of guided practice, sample essays, and coaching, Le Guin provides an individual tutorial to the reader based on a workshop she presented.

OLSON, C. B. (2003). *The reading /writing connection: Strategies for teaching and learning in the secondary classroom*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Recognizing that reading and writing are complementary processes, the authors of this text discuss specific strategies that teachers can use in secondary classrooms to help students develop confidence as well as competence in dealing with text. Chapters deal with topics such as the following: scaffolding a reading/writing lesson, teaching writing, writing to learn, grammar instruction, and writing workshops. Although the authors ground the text in theory, the strategies are practical, concrete and engaging.

PROGOFF, I. (1992). *At a journal workshop: Writing to access the power of the unconscious and evoke creative ability*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc.

Progoff's text is a guide for intensive journal writing which goes beyond just writing about thoughts and feelings. In it he provides a structured way of creating a journal that helps the writer dig below the surface, write creatively, and experiment with writing. Teachers may find the text helpful for themselves as they explore their own writing or may find that they can adapt pieces of the program to use with their own students.

RICO, G. L. (1983). *Writing the natural way: Using right-brain techniques to release your expressive powers*. Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, Inc.

The goal of this text is to help writers enhance their creative powers. It contains exercises writers can use to bring to the surface ideas, playful language, and metaphorical thinking. Teachers may find it to be a helpful resource particularly when generating prewriting activities.

SOVEN, M. I. (1999). *Teaching writing in middle and secondary schools: Theory, research, and practice*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Soven provides a detailed look at teaching writing and provides helpful instructions for how to create effective writing instruction based on research in the field. The text is designed for language arts teachers, but can be helpful for anyone who wants to know more about things like how to use prewriting, how to design effective writing assignments, how to evaluate writing and how to respond to student writing. Specific examples are included throughout.

STRONG, W. (2001). *Coaching writing: The power of guided practice*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Although this text is designed for language arts teachers, it provides an excellent toolbox of strategies for any teacher to support student writers during the writing process. Using the metaphor of "teacher as coach," the author discusses how teachers can coach students in areas such as creating paragraphs, using effective syntax, revising for language awareness, and strengthening the writing voice.

ZEMELMAN, S. & DANIELS, H. (1988). *A community of writers: Teaching writing in the junior and senior high school*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

This text provides an excellent overview of teaching writing using the writing process. The authors give detailed instructions on how to design and conduct writing activities, how to evaluate writing, and how to use writing to learn strategies effectively.

GENERAL RESOURCES ON WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

BENJAMIN, A. (1999). *Writing in the content areas*. Gardner, NY: Eye on Education.

This text includes discussion of designing assignments and strategies for supporting the writing process and skill such as vocabulary building and sentence crafting. Teachers will appreciate the practical approach to content area writing.

FARRELL-CHILDERS, P., GERE, A. R., & YOUNG, A. (1994). *Programs and practices: Writing across the secondary curriculum*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

This text is a collection of nineteen chapters written by teachers and administrators who work with writing across the curriculum programs in a variety of high school settings. The book is divided into three sections: promises and pitfalls of writing across the curriculum, collaboration in writing across the curriculum programs, and how various writing across the curriculum programs were created and are being sustained.

GERE, A. (1985). *Roots in the sawdust*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

This text is considered a classic on the topics of writing across the curriculum and writing to learn. It is practical and provides a good overview.

SCARABOROUGH, H. A. (Ed.). (2001). *Writing across the curriculum: Teaching from a diverse perspective*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice-Hall.

This book was inspired by a study group made up of high school teachers from various disciplines who had worked with writing across the curriculum and were interested in helping their students sharpen their literacy skills. The text is divided into sections dealing with the following topics: writing across the curriculum in math and science, writing to learn, using writing across the curriculum to promote genre study, and professional perspectives on writing across the curriculum. The individual contributors explain how they made literacy development part of their curriculum and offer specific teaching suggestions.

TOPPING, D. & MCMANUS, R. (2002). *Real reading, real writing: Content-area strategies*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Responding to the need to help all students learn, these authors collaborated to create a book describing specific teaching ideas that can be used to help students read and write in the content areas. The suggestions are practical and can be applied across content areas. The underlying philosophy of the text is the vision of teacher as a “coach” who involves students in the process, models appropriately, and presents strategies to help students stretch and grow as learners.

WORSLEY, D. & MAYER, B. (2000). *The art of science writing*. New York: Teachers and Writers Collaborative.

Although this text is geared primarily towards science teachers in secondary schools, it can be a helpful resource for any content area. The authors have also included a chapter specifically about writing in the math class. Their goals are to bring creative writing ideas into the science classroom as well as bring science into creative writing such as poems, fictions, and essays. The text includes a section explaining how to do an essay development workshop, descriptions of specific writing to learn activities called “writing experiments,” a question/answer section (focusing on questions commonly raised about writing in the science classroom), and a section with samples from the literature of science and mathematics which can be used to show students interesting points about writing in the discipline.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET

<http://www.virtualsalt.com/antiplag.htm>

This site provides excellent information on preventing and recognizing plagiarism in student research papers.

<http://www.h2000.utoledo.edu/docs/links.html>

This site provides links to humanities websites which may be helpful to content area teachers as they create writing assignments which use documents from the humanities.

<http://www.teachersplanet.com/orgs.shtml>

This site provides a directory of links to professional organizations for teachers (many of these sites contain links to lesson plans, some of which involve writing in the content areas).

<http://www3.eou.edu/writelab/designing.htm>

This site offers instructions for designing, assigning, and assessing writing in the content areas.

<http://www.unf.edu/~tcavanau/presentations/webnet2001/paperless.htm>

This site offers instruction on how to respond to student writing in a paperless environment.

<http://www.bridgewater.edu/WritingCenter/Resources/sumform.htm>

This site offers explanation of the differences between summative and formative evaluation and offers tips on doing both.

<http://www.witseslj.org/Articles/Holmes-ComputerMarking/>

This site offers suggestions on how to use computer marking when responding to student writing.



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