

Workshop 8

Writing Across the Curriculum

Video 15: Writing Across the Curriculum

Video 16: Writing in Science

Writing throughout the day gives students opportunities to practice the craft they learn during writing workshop and exposes them to the authentic writing of multiple disciplines. This workshop—focused on practices that integrate writing into all areas of the curriculum—illustrates that writing can take many forms and serve many purposes.

“Our goal shouldn’t be to expect young students to write at the level of expertise that a researcher might write in science, for example, but they can begin to write like that, and they should begin to write like that.”
—Dr. Charles Whitaker, retired professor of English at Eastern Kentucky University and a director of National Writing Project sites in Kentucky for the past 20 years

Learning Goals

In this workshop, you will explore how to:

- help students use writing to express what they know and to ask questions about what they don’t know
- introduce students to authentic writing from individual disciplines and provide them with opportunities to approximate that writing
- use students’ writing to assess how well they understand content

Materials Needed

- Examine the Literature Response Chart (included at the end of this chapter and available as a PDF on the *Inside Writing Communities* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting)
- Lesson descriptions and classroom handouts listed in Teachers and Lessons Featured in Workshop 8 (included in the Appendix and available as PDFs on the Web site)
- “What’s the Purpose? Students Talk About Writing in Science” and “Hugs, Humor, Hankies, and History: Writing To Bring Social Studies to Life,” articles available as PDFs on the Web site
- Key Practices To Observe (included in the section Analyze the Videos and available as a PDF on the Web site)
- Journal or notebook

Facilitators: You may want to have several copies of the two articles available for participants without Internet access, as well as copies of Key Practices To Observe, Examine the Literature Response Chart, and the lesson descriptions and classroom handouts.

Prepare for the Workshop

To prepare for this workshop, you will review the strategies you already use and read two articles about writing in content areas.

Facilitators: Have participants complete these activities before arriving for the workshop.

What Do You Do?



Consider the kinds of writing assignments your students do, and the opportunities they have to incorporate writing in a variety of subject areas. Then answer the following questions, jotting down your answers in your notebook:

- What have your students written outside of language arts and/or a writing workshop?
- What have some of the challenges been when asking students to write in content area classes other than language arts?
- What benefits have you noticed?
- What are your goals for having students' write in a variety of content areas?

Examine the Literature



To complete this activity, use the Examine the Literature Response Chart found at the end of this chapter.

Read each article listed below, recording your ideas on the chart during and after reading. When you have finished, save your chart to submit as an assignment.

You can download PDFs of these articles on the *Inside Writing Communities, Grades 3–5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting.

What's the Purpose? Students Talk About Writing in Science

This article includes suggestions for teaching science writing in the elementary grades and features interviews with fourth-grade students about their experiences writing in science.

Tower, Cathy. "What's the Purpose? Students Talk About Writing in Science." *Language Arts* (National Council of Teachers of English) 82, no. 6 (July 2005): 472–483.

Hugs, Humor, Hankies, and History: Writing To Bring Social Studies to Life

In this article, a fifth-grade teacher shares how she anchors social studies curriculum to the narrative form of writing with which students are already familiar and comfortable.

Beery, Ruth. "Hugs, Humor, Hankies, and History: Writing To Bring Social Studies to Life." *Primary Voices K–6* (National Council of Teachers of English) 11, no. 1 (August 2002): 18–23.

Analyze the Videos

Facilitators: When the workshop begins, you may want to spend a few minutes discussing the group's responses to What Do You Do? and the readings. You also may want to direct the participants' attention to the Key Practices listed below.

Key Practices To Observe

"Writing Across the Curriculum" and "Writing in Science" explore how to use writing effectively and authentically in a variety of subject areas. These videos feature commentary from experts on teaching writing at the elementary level as well as classroom illustrations highlighting the practices of several teachers.

As you watch, look for the following key practices:

- Teachers provide strategies that help students write authentically in all disciplines.
- Teachers provide students with ample time in content classes to record, think about, and extend their own observations and questions.
- Teachers encourage students to draw on their content knowledge for writing workshop topics.
- Teachers integrate literacy into content area classes through multigenre projects.
- Teachers allow students opportunities to choose their own focus when writing in content areas, guided by their own observations, questions, interests, and ideas.
- Teachers demonstrate how to use note taking and drawing to record observations.
- Teachers demonstrate how to organize observations and notes for writing.
- Teachers provide students with opportunities to choose authentic audiences and genres when writing for publication.

Teachers and Lessons Featured in Workshop 8

Descriptions of the featured lessons, along with related handouts, are included in the Appendix.

Video 15: Writing Across the Curriculum

- Sheryl Block, Fourth Grade: "Integrating Other Subject Content Into Writing" (Handout: "Slicing the Pie" graphic organizer)
- Nicole Outsen, Fifth Grade: "Writing Newspaper Articles From Research Notes" (Handouts: Multigenre Research Project Requirements, Possible Pieces for a Multigenre Project, Elements of a Newspaper Article, Lewis and Clark Notes, Lewis and Clark Source Guide)
- Christine Sanchez, Third Grade: "Writing in Math"

Video 16: Writing in Science

- Lindsay Dibert, Fifth Grade: "Writing in Science"

Analyze the Videos, cont'd.

Guide to Video 15: Writing Across the Curriculum

Use this chart to help identify the pause points in Video 15. Zero your counter at the Annenberg logo at the very beginning of the tape. The entry points below are approximate.

Segment 1 (0:00-8:49)	Interview (beginning at 00:45) Writing in multiple content areas Katie Wood Ray
	Introduction (beginning at 01:58)
	In the Classroom (beginning at 02:36) Analyzing and summarizing statistical data Christine Sanchez
Segment 2 (8:49-end)	In the Classroom (beginning at 08:49) Applying content knowledge about nutrition in writing pieces Sheryl Block
	In the Classroom (beginning at 15:16) Writing a newspaper article based on social studies research notes Nicole Outsen

Analyze the Videos, cont'd.

Video 15: Writing Across the Curriculum

Watch the 30-minute video "Writing Across the Curriculum." If you prefer to watch the video in segments, you can stop at the times suggested below or use the detailed Video Guide outline on the previous page to help you determine other places to stop for discussion. The Video Guide is also available as a PDF at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting.

Answer the questions that accompany each segment below, jotting down your responses in a notebook or using them as discussion starters.



Writing Authentically in Content Areas (approximate times: 00:50-08:50)

In the first segment, Katie Wood Ray and Christine Sanchez point to the importance of teaching students to write in a variety of forms and for many purposes. (Stop at the end of Christine's lesson.)

- What do you imagine the writer's notebook of a mathematician might look like? A scientist? A historian?
- What kind of writing, learning, and questioning might you find in these notebooks?

Preserving Student Choice When Writing in Content Areas (08:50-end of video)

In the final segment, Sheryl allows her students to determine the specific topic, focus, form, and audience for an article on nutrition; and Nicole Outsen encourages her students to choose their own writing topics within the parameters of a social studies unit on the Lewis and Clark expedition and a writing unit on newspaper articles. (Play to the end of the video.)

- What are the possible benefits of allowing students freedom of choice when writing in various content areas?
- What are some possible genres that students might choose when writing about science? Social studies? Mathematics?

Analyze the Videos, cont'd.

Video 16: Writing in Science

Watch the 30-minute video "Writing in Science." Apply what you have learned in "Writing Across the Curriculum" as you observe this extended classroom example.

Answer the questions below, jotting down your responses in a notebook or using them as discussion starters.



Lindsay Dibert's Class (entire 30-minute video)

In science class, Lindsay Dibert is teaching her fifth graders about scientific observation. Lindsay wants her students to understand that reading and writing occur in every subject area.

- What are some of the ways in which Lindsay's students are writing like scientists during this lesson?
- What are some of the things you noticed Lindsay doing to support her students' written descriptions of the bones?
- How does this writing exercise help Lindsay's students in their exploration of science? How does it help them as writers?

Extend Your Learning

Examine Your Practice

Read “Slice the Pie’ To Help Writers and Learners” by Dr. Charles Whitaker, available as a PDF on the *Inside Writing Communities, Grades 3–5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting. In this article, Dr. Whitaker describes a pre-writing strategy in which the teacher and students use a graphic organizer—a pie chart—to help students define their own writing tasks. This strategy is especially useful in studying content in every subject, including English/language arts. After reading the piece, complete the following activity.

Slice the Pie Notebook:

Use the “Slice the Pie” activity described in the article as a pre-writing strategy for a piece to share with your colleagues. Begin by choosing one of the following questions as the broad subject matter for your “pie,” or use a different question or subject you feel is better suited to your needs.

- What idea or strategy for integrating writing into content areas would I like to share with my colleagues?
- What should be the focus of our faculty’s next professional development session?
- How can teachers and staff increase parental involvement at our school?
- What’s the most important challenge facing our school, and what are some ways we can address it?

Try an Activity

Planning Weekly Writing Activities Interactive:

Go to the *Inside Writing Communities, Grades 3–5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting

This activity is designed to help you integrate writing in a meaningful way throughout the school day. As you do the activity, consider the many forms and purposes of writing: writing to learn, writing that approximates the writing of professionals in different content areas, and writing informed by content knowledge.

Put It Into Practice

The videos, activities, and readings in this workshop illustrate effective practices—including using a writer’s notebook—that help students learn to write authentically in different content areas. Now apply what you have learned to incorporate the writer’s notebook into a subject area outside the writing workshop.

Using a Writer’s Notebook in Content Areas Assignment:

Choose a writing topic based on a subject you and your students are studying or will study in a content area other than language arts. For a week or so, record your notes and your questions about this topic in your writer’s notebook. Save your entries to submit as an assignment. You may also use the entries to demonstrate to your students how to use the writer’s notebook to help develop authentic writing pieces in a content area.

Reflect on Your Learning

What Did You Learn? Assignment:

Summarize what you have learned about writing across the curriculum from the experts’ statements, classroom examples, and readings and activities in this workshop. Use the questions below to guide your thinking. When you have finished, save your written summary to submit as an assignment.

- Which classroom practices from the videos reflect what you currently do?
- Which practices or ideas are new to you?
- What changes, if any, do you plan to make?
- What support and/or resources will you need to implement these new ideas?

Assignments

If you are taking this workshop for graduate credit, submit the following assignments for Workshop 8: Writing Across the Curriculum:

1. Examine the Literature

Read two articles about writing in different content areas and complete the Examine the Literature Response Chart.

2. Using a Writer's Notebook in Content Areas

Record ideas about how to incorporate writing into different content areas.

3. What Did You Learn?

Write a summary of the ideas and strategies you explored in this workshop.

Related Resources

Web Resources

First Hand Learning Mini Journals

<http://www.firsthandlearning.org/minijournal.html>

First Hand Learning encourages elementary and middle school students to observe, read, and write about natural phenomena on their own.

KidSpace at the Internet Public Library

<http://www.ipl.org/div/kidspace/>

The KidSpace link at the Internet Public Library sends users to books, magazines, and newspapers from around the world that are available free via the Internet.

Multimedia Math Glossary

http://www.harcourtschool.com/glossary/math2/index_temp.html

This site provides definitions for many common mathematical terms used in Grades K-6.

NASAexplores

<http://www.nasaexplores.com/>

NASAexplores includes free weekly educational articles and lesson plans on numerous subjects, adapted for three reading levels.

The National Archives on Google Video

<http://video.google.com/nara.html>

The National Archives on Google Video site provides access to more than 100 historic films.

Rainforest Action Network

<http://action.ran.org/action/>

This site explores information about rainforests and ways that students can act to help protect their natural habitat. The site could provide inspiration for letter writing, poetry, and other kinds of writing, as well as content reading.

Treasures@Sea: Exploring the Ocean Through Literature

<http://www.fi.edu/fellows/fellow8/dec98/main.html>

This site features ocean-themed activities for students and mini-lessons on art, writing, and reading for teachers.

Related Resources, cont'd.

Print Resources

Allen, Camille. *The Multigenre Research Paper: Voice, Passion, and Discovery in Grades 4-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001. ISBN: 0-325-00319-X

This is a step-by-step guide to multigenre research in the upper elementary grades.

Buss, Kathleen, and Lee Karnowski. *Reading and Writing: Nonfiction Genres*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2002. ISBN: 0872073467

This book illustrates how to use the concept of author's purpose to teach elementary students about different types of nonfiction writing.

Chatton, Barbara, and N. Lynne Decker Collins. *Blurring the Edges: Integrated Curriculum Through Writing and Children's Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991. ISBN: 0325001448

The focus of this book is on thematic units emphasizing reading and writing for authentic reasons throughout the curriculum.

McMackin, Mary C., and Barbara S. Siegel. *Knowing How: Researching and Writing Nonfiction 3-8*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2002. ISBN: 1571103406

Based on their experiences working with a class of fifth graders, the authors outline a practical, workable plan for teaching young writers research writing.

Rester-Zodrow, Gina, and Joni Chancer. *Moon Journals: Writing, Art, and Inquiry Through Focused Nature Study*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997. ISBN: 0435072218

This book recounts how the authors' students kept a 28-day moon journal and how it evolved into a rich source of poetry, prose, art, and observation.

Workshop 8: Writing Across the Curriculum

Examine the Literature Response Chart

Title	Big Ideas	Notes and Questions
1. What's the Purpose? Students Talk About Writing in Science		
2. Hugs, Humor, Hankies, and History: Writing To Bring Social Studies to Life		

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