



Best Practices in Content Area Writing Instruction

Writing to Learn	Examples
<p>Writing to learn can help students understand, process, and think critically about course material. Therefore, it is an important tool for helping students learn content-specific material, to evaluate their own understanding of that topic, and/or to develop expertise about it. Teachers who create writing assignments that begin by engaging students in informal writing-to-learn activities set the stage for students to demonstrate - in final, polished writing - a fuller understanding of the topic at hand.</p>	<p>Science: Write a journal entry describing photosynthesis in your own words. Math: Write a step-by-step description of how you solved for $3x + 2y = 3$ and $x = 3y - 10$. Social Studies: Create a T-Chart comparing the goals of the Bread and Roses strike of 1912 to those of a contemporary labor movement? Language Arts: Write a paragraph predicting what you think will happen next in <i>Invisible Man</i>. Physical Education: Create a diagram – with descriptive captions - identifying the muscle group involved in throwing a Frisbee, kicking a soccer ball, and jumping rope.</p>
Writing in Multiple, Academic & Real-World Genres	Examples
<p>The twenty-first century demands that effective writers possess a wide range of writing skills and varying approaches to writing tasks. Writers need to understand and respond to many different rhetorical situations, addressing multiple audiences for a variety of purposes. Therefore, encourage departments to be creative when assigning writing tasks. Providing students with access to the conventions of privileged genres and opportunities to write in them will not only expose students to the requirements of various content-specific genres, but will enhance student engagement with course content.</p>	<p>Science: Write an op-ed outlining steps young people can take to combat global warming. Math: Prepare a presentation in which you present your analyses of polling data from the presidential primaries. Social Studies: Write a book review of the non-fiction book you selected about the Women’s Rights Movement. Language Arts: Write a poem – in the spirit of Anzaldúa – that describes the borderlands you’ve experienced. Business: Write a proposal and budget plan for a new school store.</p>



The Reading-Writing Connection	Examples
<p>Reading and writing skills are closely connected. In order for students to become competent readers in multiple genres, it is essential that they are familiar with the ways writing is typically done in these genres. Teachers can help students unpack difficult passages from a science textbook or social studies article by asking them to consider the author’s rhetorical, generic, and grammatical choices. Students can then emulate these choices and strategies to write in content-specific genres. In this way, teachers can use writing activities to help students understand difficult reading assignments, and use reading assignments as a springboard for writing activities.</p>	<p>Science: Write up your findings from the density experiment imitating the sentence structure of the professional lab report we studied in class.</p> <p>Math: Pick out the verb phrases in the following word problem. Now, put these phrases into your own words to identify which mathematical actions the problem is asking you to perform.</p> <p>Social Studies: Underline all the proper nouns and personal pronouns in your textbook’s account of the colonial encounter. Who does the text suggest are the major players in this encounter? Do you agree?</p> <p>Language Arts: Identify the appeals to audiences in four recent campaign advertisements. Make a list of the most common appeals in these ads.</p> <p>Music: Find a review of musical performance. Underline all of the evaluative or judgment terms. Now write a paragraph characterizing the writing strategies this author uses to communicate his/her opinion of a musical performance.</p>
Writing as Process	Examples
<p>Many teachers say they use a “process” approach to writing instruction. Too often, however, the writing process is presented as a rigid step-by-step course of action. Teaching writing as a recursive process means providing students with opportunities to prewrite, draft, participate in peer-review, revise, edit, and publish; however, it also means teaching students to be reflective, aware, and versatile writers. When students learn to monitor and modify their own writing processes, they will develop writing tools that they can apply to multiple writing situations, genres, and audiences. In order to become versatile and aware writers, students must encounter the writing process across the content areas; if students only practice the writing process in English class, they will not learn to apply those skills to other genres and content area knowledges.</p>	<p>Science: Create a graphic organizer to represent the relationships between the key conclusions from your states of matter experiment.</p> <p>Math: Read over the word problems written by your writing workshop group. Write a peer-response letter to each group member, noting their use of mathematical vocabulary, clarity of ideas, and real-world applicability.</p> <p>Social Studies: Compose a one-page letter to accompany the final draft of your research essay. Describe the process you used to write this essay and note which aspects of the process went well and which were challenging. Place this reflection in your portfolio.</p> <p>Language Arts: Select a descriptive passage from the second draft of your literacy memoir. Working with your writing partner, revise the paragraph, making sure to include vivid verbs and figurative language.</p> <p>World Languages: Annotate your translation of chapter 3 of <i>Don Quixote</i>. Why did your writing group choose a particular definition of a word? How did you handle figurative language or complex grammar structures?</p>

Gere, Anne Ruggles, Hannah Dickinson, Melinda McBee Orzulak and Stephanie Moody. *Taking Initiative on Writing: A Guide for Instructional Leaders*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2010.