

# Short Writing for Critical Thinking: boosting student achievement in every course

a presentation for the

*Building Bridges 2007 – Focusing on Student Achievement*  
Tan-Tar-A, Missouri

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*Writing to Win* management system

## Research base for the presentation

### Four key factors for learning

- **Teachers use their own writing to model their expectations**  
*National Writing Project*, [www.writingproject.org](http://www.writingproject.org)
- **Non-fiction writing based on curriculum**  
*The Journal Book*, Toby Fulweiler; *The Learning Leader*, Doug Reeves  
[The schools] included consistent nonfiction writing assessments in every subject.  
...when students engage in more non-fiction writing that includes editing, collaborative scoring, constructive teacher feedback, and rewriting, such achievement is manifested not only in language arts but also in math, science, and social studies. Nonfiction writing is also effective in improving performance on writing tests and extended response items, as well as on multiple-choice tests (Reeves).
- **Student self-assessment, Rick Stiggins, Assessment Training Institute,**  
*Assessment Training Institute*, Rick Stiggins
- **Brain based studies of learning**  
*Prime 1, 2 and 3*, David Sousa

***Writing to Win* is the lone writing initiative that includes factors 2-4.**

### Action research focus studies on *Writing to Win* sites [www.writingtowin.com](http://www.writingtowin.com)

- **Student self-assessment improves written expression significantly**
- **Daily journaling increases scores on test of knowledge by 49%**
- **Pass rate on high-stakes writing test spikes from 67% to 94%**
- **WIDA assessment (ESOL) moves from 0 to 40% in nine weeks**
- **8<sup>th</sup>-grade writing scores grow 22 points in a year**

In writing across the curriculum, the game is not

## *What Does Teacher Want?*

but rather

\_\_\_\_\_?

The first game forfeits learning; the second insures it.

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To make certain that your students stay inside their heads and write down what they understand about what they learned, ask these three questions:

***Voices***—*Are there voices when you write?*

***Pictures***—*Are there pictures when you write?*

→  →

***Flow***—*Is there flow when you write?*

Guarantee: Before I ask you to write in this class, I will always give you time to plan ahead.

# *Why writing?*

Isn't teaching writing the job of English/Language Arts teachers?

## **Nine Benefits to writing as a way to learn**

Since writing is physical, it ...

1. Requires \_\_\_\_\_
2. Adjusts to the \_\_\_\_\_
3. Adjusts to the \_\_\_\_\_.

Since writing is visible, it ...

4. Provides the \_\_\_\_\_  
("I never know what I know until I read what I wrote."—Flannery O'Connor)
5. Imposes a clear \_\_\_\_\_
6. Promotes a \_\_\_\_\_.

Since writing is personal, it ...

7. Provides \_\_\_\_\_
8. Details the extent \_\_\_\_\_
9. Details \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Teacher Expectations and Student Self-Check*

**Teacher expectations** appear daily on the *Log of Entries for Teacher Expectations* wall chart.

Entry	*Expectations	Description of Topic	Strategy
1.	6-7 sent	I am _____, the writer.	D
2.	6-7 facts	F-R-A-C-T-I-O-N-S	B
3.	4-6 sent	cat, catfish, whale, women	E
4.	7 sent	Further, Baghdad or colonial America	C
5.	7-8 sent	My very energetic mother just served us...	F
6.	5-7 items	...about journal writing	A
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			
16.			

***Student Self-Check*** appears daily on the *Log of Entries for Student Self-Check* in the front of their course journals. Students record whether they missed, met or exceeded their teacher's expectations with a  $\equiv$  (bar),  $\odot$  (target) and + (plus) respectively.

<i>Teacher Expectations</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Grade Value</i>	
			<i>Letter</i>	<i>Number</i>
<i>Exceeds</i>	+	<i>Plus</i>	A	100
<i>Meets</i>	$\odot$	<i>Target</i>	B	85
<i>Misses</i>	$\equiv$	<i>Bar</i>	C	70

At anytime they choose, students may estimate their journal-writing grade.

<b>Entry</b>	<b>*Self-Check</b>	<b>Description of Topic</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
1.	+	I am frustrated, the writer.	D
2.	$\odot$	F-R-A-C-T-I-O-N-S	B
3.	$\odot$	Cat, catfish, whale, women	E
4.	+	Further, Baghdad or colonial America	C
5.	$\equiv$	My very energetic mother just served us...	F
6.	$\odot$	...about journal writing	A
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			

### ***Guide for Writing in Your Journal***

#### Strategy A — What I Thought You Taught About \_\_\_\_\_

1. Write the prompt at the top of your journal page.
2. List words you will need to write an accurate and complete entry of what you were taught.
3. As you write a paragraph, explain each word you use from the list.
4. Let a peer read your entry. He/she will circle the words that you have used from the list.

#### Strategy B — Acrostic Vocabulary

1. Write the assigned word down the page, one letter per line.
2. Write a fact on each line (four words or more) about your word, making sure the first word of the fact begins with the letter on that line.
3. Use only facts that are accurate and different from each other.
4. You may not use the word you are defining in the facts.

#### Strategy C — Either...Or

1. Copy the question provided (it can be answered two different ways).
2. Answer the question one way or the other in a complete sentence.
3. Write at least six more sentences in a paragraph that explains your answer.

#### Strategy D — Focused Free Writing

1. Write the prompt at the top of your journal page.
2. Write whatever comes to your mind about the prompt.
3. Keep your pencil moving, writing your thoughts about the topic until your teacher calls time.

#### Strategy E — Quad Cluster

1. List the four words in the cluster at the top of your journal page.
2. Circle the one that is different from the other three.
3. Write two to three sentences explaining how the circled word is different.
4. Write two to three more sentences explaining how the other three words are alike.

#### Strategy F — Memory Sentence

1. Write the memory sentence at the top of your journal page.
2. Explain the overall concept that the sentence helps you remember.
3. Then explain fully the part of the concept that each word helps you remember.

#### Strategy G — Copy & Continue

1. Copy the written passage provided by your teacher for this entry.
2. Continue writing about the passage, explaining the ideas that are introduced in it.

#### Strategy H — Change the \_\_\_\_\_ (tense/number/point of view)

1. Read the written passage provided by your teacher for this entry.
2. Rewrite the passage making the assigned changes. You may make additional changes.

#### Strategy I — Admit Slip

1. Write the name of the concept you are studying at the top of the page.
2. List words you need to use in writing an accurate and complete description of the concept.
3. Select two new ideas you learned about the concept in class this year.
4. Admit in writing exactly what you learned about each idea (three or more sentences each).

#### Strategy J — Sentence Expansion

1. Read the base sentence provided.
2. With peers, list possible words/phrases that can fit between each of the words in the sentence.
3. Create three or more sentences using a variety of words from the lists.

#### Strategy K — Free Writing

1. Circle a topic from your *Inventory of Free Writing Topics*.
2. Write whatever comes to your mind about the topic.
3. Keep writing until your teacher calls time.







