



Building Academic Literacy Through Writing

Presented by Janice Imundi

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Who's in the room?

- Administrators
- Teachers
- Support staff, such as coaches



Objectives

Participants will review general writing expectations and the challenges faced by today's secondary students

Participants will reflect on instructional recommendations for improving student writing

Participants will apply their knowledge about writing instruction to an interactive activity

Activity 1: Reflective writing

If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose? Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save.

Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations.

Discussion

What do you need to know about the topic to think about this task?

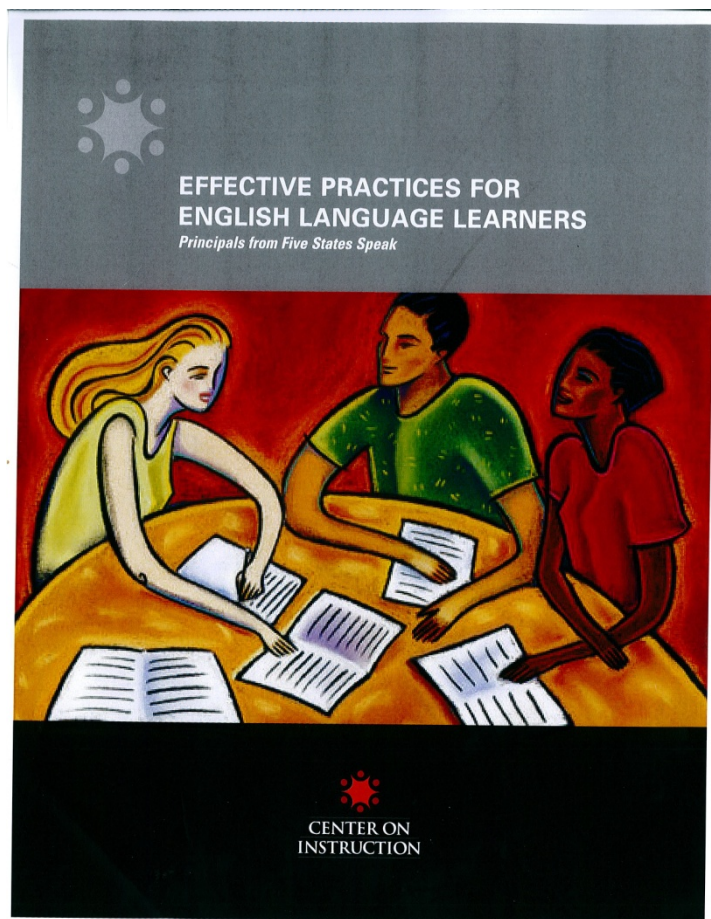
What do you need to know about writing to accomplish this task?

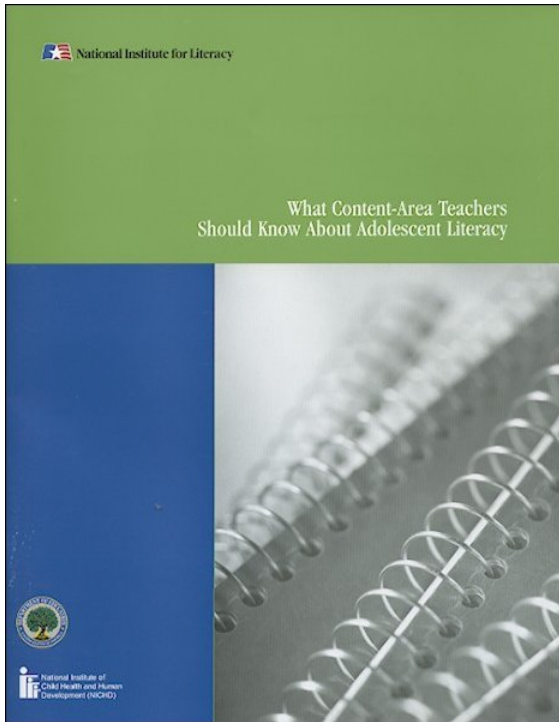
Writing to Read

In the executive summary of this report, Steve Graham and Michael Hebert (Vanderbilt University) state that the majority of students still do not read or write well enough to meet grade level demands.. Among those who do graduate, many will not be ready for college or a career where reading and writing are required. (p.3)

Source: Graham, S., and Hebert, M. A. (2010). *Writing to read: Evidence for how writing can improve reading*. A Carnegie Corporation *Time to Act Report*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Supporting documents





Writing: a general definition

Writing:

- the ability to compose text effectively for various purposes and audiences
- a tool for communication and learning that allows us to document, collect, and widely circulate detailed information
- a means of expressing oneself and persuading others

Improving one's writing skills improves one's capacity to learn.

Source: *What Content-Area Teachers Should Know About Adolescent Literacy*, p. 31

Writing in content classrooms

Writing products serve as:

- measures of comprehension – students use writing to reflect about their use of strategies
- tools for learning across content areas – assignments require high levels of reasoning and engagement

Source: *Time to Act*, p. 78

Importance of literacy instruction

Those who enrich themselves by learning to read with understanding and write with skill and clarity do so not only for themselves and their families, but for our nation as well. They learn in order to preserve and enhance the record of humanity, to be productive members of a larger community, and to be good citizens and good ancestors to those who will follow after them.

Source: Vartan Gregorian, Foreword, *Writing Next*

Writing: academic expectations

Students should be able to...

- meet the demands of each academic discipline
- write in a variety of genres
- employ a variety of writing strategies
- learn to be self-directed and goal-oriented
- plan, organize, compose, revise, and edit
- accept and act on feedback from teachers and peers

Source: *What Content-Area Teachers Should Know About Adolescent Literacy*, p. 31

Content area writing

Using writing tasks to learn content offers opportunities to:

- expand student knowledge of vocabulary
- strengthen the writing process
- practice writing conventions
- rehearse modes of argumentation
- develop technical writing skills

Source: *Writing Next*, p. 23

NAEP expectations for writing

NAEP writing assessments include the following objectives:

- Students should write for a variety of purposes: narrative, informative, and persuasive.
- Students should write on a variety of tasks and for many different audiences.
- Students should write from a variety of stimulus materials
- Student should generate, draft, revise, and edit ideas and forms of expression in their writing.

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/writing/whatmeasure.asp>

Challenges of writing

- Formulating one's own thoughts
- Organizing one's thoughts
- Recording one's thoughts using the conventions of academic writing

Source: *Writing Next*, p. 8

Consequences of unaddressed challenges

Problems with writing can lead to:

- Barriers to effective communication and learning
- Limited access to opportunities
- Misleading performance on academic assessments

Source: *What Content-Area Teachers Should Know About Adolescent Literacy*, p. 32

National consequences

. . . estimates indicate that private industry now spends up to \$3.1 billion (National Commission on Writing, 2004) per year to bolster the writing skills of entry level workers.

Source: *Time to Act*, p. 2

Recommendations for improving writing instruction

- Use direct, explicit, and systematic instruction to teach writing
- Teach students the importance of prewriting
- Provide a supportive instructional environment
- Use rubrics to assess writing
- Address the diverse needs of individual learners

Source: *What Content Area Teachers Should Know about Adolescent Literacy*

Activity 2: How can instruction help adolescent students with writing?

For your section, summarize the key point or points and give an example from math, ELA, science and/or social science.

- Direct, explicit, systematic instruction - p. 32
- Importance of prewriting - p. 33
- Supportive instructional environment - p. 33
- Rubrics for assessment - p. 34
- Address the needs of diverse learners - p. 34

Debriefing

- Share your discussion's major points



Activity 3: Writing strategies

Before writing students . . .

- determine purpose and audience, as well as the criteria on which the writing will be evaluated
- brainstorm ideas
- think about what they know and what they need to know
- research
- organize ideas, possibly with a graphic organizer

Sources: *What Content Area Teachers Should Know about Adolescent Literacy*
Writing Next

Writing strategies

During writing students...

- list main and supporting ideas
- develop a thesis
- discuss ideas orally with peers
- re-organize ideas
- craft statements
- connect ideas with transitional words or phrases
- use a variety of sentence types
- employ strong vocabulary

Sources: *What Content Area Teachers Should Know about Adolescent Literacy*
Writing Next

Academic Literacy Instruction for Adolescents

Writing strategies

After writing a first draft students...

- revise for consistency of topic, clarity, appropriate length and detail
- accept feedback from peers and teacher
- edit for correctness

Sources: *What Content Area Teachers Should Know about Adolescent Literacy*
Writing Next
Academic Literacy Instruction for Adolescents

Looking at student writing

NAEP Writing Released Item

Identical prompt for Grades 12 and 8

On your own, reflect on the questions on the next slide and complete the graphic organizer. Then share your reflection with someone at your table.

Looking at student writing

1. What does this student show she/he knows: about the content of the task, about the selected book, and about writing?
2. How would you rate the student's writing? Consult the scoring guide and give evidence for your rating.
3. How would you begin to improve this student's writing through direct, explicit, systematic instruction?

Debriefing

For the whole group:
key ideas, insights, or challenges
from your reflection and
discussion

What can we take back to our schools?

Given our topic today...

- The challenges of content area writing
- The importance of direct, explicit strategy instruction for writing
- Instructional strategies that support content area writing...

Questions to consider

- How can you apply this knowledge in your school setting?
- What resources or supports will you need to do this? How can you get the support you need?
- What one action step will you take to bring this information to others in your school?
- Are you willing to document and share the results with us at the next session?

References

- Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy. (2010). *Time to act: An agenda for advancing adolescent literacy for college and career success*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York. Retrieved January 11, 2010 from http://www.carnegie.org/literacy/tta/pdf/tta_Main.pdf
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