

The “Writing Across the Curriculum” Organizer

★ REAL WORLD WRITING – Help students discover and experience the kinds of writing produced by real professionals in the real world.

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|--|---|---|
| SUBJECT: Social Studies | SUBJECT: Science | SUBJECT: Math |
| PROFESSION: Historian | PROFESSION: Biologist | PROFESSION: Computer Scientist |
| FORMS: Original research; Annotations for the publication of authentic historical documents; Catalogs of documents; Biographies; Interviews; Documentaries; Letters; Journals; Research grant proposals; Textbooks, Analyses of current events for policy consultations; etc... | FORMS: Lab reports; Descriptions of processes; Observations; Experiments; Letters; Journals; Environmental impact studies; Environmental policy “White Papers”; Research grant proposals; Original research; Magazine articles; Materials requests; Business presentations; etc... | FORMS: Descriptions of mathematical theories; Technical documentation; Descriptions of computer languages; Letters; E-mail; Statistical analyses; Descriptions of algorithms; Project plans; Budget proposals; Business plans; Magazine articles; FAQs; New product ideas; Product specifications; Tutorials, etc... |

★ TOPIC EQUATIONS – Help students explore the connections between their interests and your curriculum.

| INTERESTS | + | UNIT OF STUDY | = | POSSIBLE TOPICS |
|---------------|---|---------------|---|---|
| Baseball | + | World War II | = | Shutdown of major league baseball; Famous ballplayers who were drafted; Women’s professional leagues; etc... |
| Movies | + | World War II | = | Propaganda films; Military instructional films; Popular entertainment at home and abroad; Movie stars who served in the war; etc... |
| Rap Music | + | World War II | = | Popular music of the time; Political music; Urban values and culture; Artists making political statements; etc... |
| Skateboarding | + | World War II | = | Kids’ recreation during wartime; Home-made toys; Soapbox derby races; etc... |
| Beanie Babies | + | World War II | = | Kids’ toys; Effects of shortages; Collectibles of the era; etc... |

★ ROLE YOUR OWN WRITING – Help students understand and employ the essential components of any piece of writing.

| ROLE | FORMAT | AUDIENCE | PURPOSE | APPROACH |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Choose one or possibly two. Most assignments will have one. | Choose one only. In rare cases, combining formats might make sense. | Choose one or more. If more than one, pick a main audience. | Choose one or more. If more than one, pick a main purpose. | Choose several. Some pieces may require varied approaches. |
| The student takes on a role and writes from this perspective: | The final version must be published in this format: | This is the student’s intended audience: | This is why the student is writing this piece: | This is how the writer will achieve his or her purpose: |
| Artist; Biographer; Biologist; Curator; Detective; Elected official; Historian; Expert in ...; Newscaster; Panelist; Parent; Political candidate; Product designer; Reporter; Self; Teacher; Tour guide; etc... | Biography; Booklet; Brochure; Diary; Editorial; Fairy tale; Interview; Journal; Letter; Magazine article; Manual; Myth; Newspaper article; Novel; Play; Poem; Report; Short story; Textbook chapter; etc... | Friends; General public; Judge; Jury member; Parent; People from other cultures or time periods; Professionals in same discipline; Public figures; School board members; Supervisor; Young children; etc... | Change action; Change thinking; Describe; Encourage; Entertain; Explain; Inform; Initiate action; Initiate thinking; Instruct; Persuade; Prevent; Tell a story; etc... | Analyze; Challenge; Classify; Compare; Conclude; Contrast; Defend; Define; Demonstrate; Evaluate; Interpret; Justify; Predict; Propose; Question; Reflect; etc... |

★ ROLE YOUR OWN WRITING – Sample assignments generated with this approach.

| CONTENT AREA | ASSIGNMENT |
|-----------------------|--|
| Social Studies | You are a newspaper reporter from the Atlanta Constitution covering the battle of Gettysburg. You have followed the battle and have now just listened to Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Write a newspaper article for the people of Atlanta that will inform them of the results of the battle and its impact on the Confederate war effort. Describe the battle and its aftermath. Analyze the balance of power between the two sides as a result of the battle. Reflect on the sentiments of Unionists and Confederates before and after Lincoln’s speech. |
| Science | You are a biologist hired as a consultant to The Nature Conservancy. Create a brochure for the general public that explains the Greenhouse Effect and its impact on worldwide climatic conditions. Analyze current data on the effects of greenhouse gases and predict the consequences of widespread global warming. Propose alternatives to improve the situation that are consistent with current positions held by your client. |
| Math | You are an expert in fractions . Create a chapter for a textbook to be used by 4th grade students that will instruct them in adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing fractions. Include an introduction that justifies the instructional method you choose. |

★ MASTERING THE MODES – Help students unlock the power of the traditional modes of argument.

| | NARRATIVE | EXPOSITORY | PERSUASIVE | DESCRIPTIVE |
|----------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------------|
| KEY TRAIT | Organization | Ideas | Voice | Ideas/Word Choice |
| KEY QUESTION | Why tell a story? | Why does this need explaining? | Why should the reader trust you? | Why is this worth describing? |
| BEST AUDIENCE | Supporters; Promoters | Controllers; Analyzers | Promoters; Analyzers | Supporters; Analyzers |
| BEST STRATEGY | Transition-Action-Details | What-Why-How | What-Why-How | Idea-Details; Tell-Show |
| ADVANTAGES | Entertaining; Subtle | Direct; Respectful; Most efficient mode | Most powerful mode; Most important mode | Captivating; Emotional |
| DISADVANTAGES | Slow; Inefficient; Reader has to “get it” | Can be dry; Audience-dependent | Most likely to offend; Writer is very exposed | Least direct; Easily overdone |

★ RESEARCH PLANNING – Help students determine key questions, clarify focused intent, and select appropriate research strategies.

| WHAT do you want to know? | WHY do you want to know it?* | HOW are you going to find it? |
|--|---|---|
| What kinds of spiders are poisonous? | So I can tell people which kinds of spiders to watch out for. | Insect reference book; CD-ROM encyclopedia |
| What’s the average temperature in my town this time of year? | I want to know when to plant my vegetables. | Almanac; Internet; Interview a local gardener; Call the newspaper |
| How do you put a computer together? | I want to make my own computer. | Computer repair book; Interview a repair person |

*Students want to know about some things merely because they’re curious. In these cases, I ask them what they’re curious about. This usually generates another small set of more specific questions.