A FACULTY ORIENTATION AND DESIGN
FOR WRITING ACROSS THE
CURRICULUM

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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May, 1988
Fulkerson, Tahita N., A Faculty Orientation and Design for Writing Across the Curriculum. Doctor of Philosophy (College Teaching), May, 1988, 364 pp., 8 tables, bibliography, 150 titles.

A Faculty Orientation and Design for Writing Across the Curriculum is a case study of the work done to introduce the concept of writing across the curriculum at an urban community college. Emphasizing the related processes of learning, thinking, and writing, the researcher describes private interviews and analyzes transcriptions of small group meetings designed to discuss ways to encourage increased quantity and improved quality of writing in vocational and university-parallel courses on the campus. The focus of the study is the transcription of the faculty meetings where teachers reveal their methodologies and educational philosophies as they discuss ways to provide increased writing opportunities to large classes of open-door students. The culmination of the orientation project is a faculty booklet of ways to increase writing.

The researcher concludes that although a writing "program" is not in place as a result of the year's work, essential groundwork for such a program is laid.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

When pronouncements such as "A Nation at Risk" give alarming public notice of the nation's literacy crisis, and when dismal SAT scores seem to verify the cynicism of articles called "Why Johnny Can't Think" and "The Great American Writing Crisis," educators can hardly deny the seriousness of the reports (Karp, 1985). Even college teachers shake their heads over the scope and gravity of the problem, for they see college students (products of twelve years of schooling) submit writing that is usually misspelled, often illegible, and too frequently illogical.

The immediate response to the problem is to assign blame: "What are they teaching in English these days?" But responsibility for the crisis in writing and thinking cannot be laid on English teachers alone. For one thing, the causes are surely in part societal; for another, the deficiencies are simply too widespread to become the remedial burden of one group of teachers. A partial solution to the crisis is to make writing important across the curriculum. In any course where thinking is important, college students must write, not just formal themes and essays but informal, written explorations, reactions, and organizations of new ideas. And obviously students may not
do this writing on their own. Their teachers will have to require this increase in writing. But first, teachers must be willing to add writing components to their courses. They may want "proof" that more student writing will in fact make a difference in the learning of their students, for even the most dedicated teachers are rightly skeptical of adding to their already heavy workloads.

The problem of poor writing skills of college students, then, is addressed in this study, a faculty orientation and design for writing across the curriculum.

Major Purpose

The major purpose of this study is to describe the development and initiation of a writing-across-the-curriculum program for an urban community college.

Specific Purposes of the Study

These specific purposes are proposed:

1. To attain a description of the number and the kinds of writing assignments made at Tarrant County Junior College, Northwest Campus;

2. To analyze the structure of specific writing assignments made across the curriculum;

3. To conduct group and individual interviews about writing problems at the campus;

4. To attain a description of a level of writing competence that faculty at the campus would agree on as "good"; and
5. To make available to faculty current research and practices of other teachers in their disciplines where writing-across-the-curriculum programs are established.

Research Questions

To achieve the purposes of this study, the following research questions were addressed.

1. What are the major writing assignments required of students at the campus?
2. How are these assignments structured and phrased?
3. What is the faculty's perception of writing problems at the campus?
4. What constitutes "good" writing at the campus?
5. What can Tarrant County Junior College teachers learn from practices of teachers at other colleges where writing-across-the-curriculum programs exist?

Delimitation

The scope of this descriptive study is delimited to the faculty at Tarrant County Junior College, Northwest Campus.

Background and Significance of the Study

In answer to the national concern over college graduates who cannot express themselves with precision, clarity, or grace, teachers at over four hundred college campuses have made writing competence an integral part of their courses. Gary Tate has remarked, in fact, that "nothing in education during the past few years has been
more dramatic than the nationwide interest in the teaching of writing" (Shuman, 1980, p. 67).

Known as writing across the curriculum or writing across the disciplines, the movement has become more than a catchword on college campuses. Complete with increasing attention at national teacher conferences, its own national conference and national newsletter, and its own "hierarchy of distinguished practitioners" (Miller, 1983, p. 38), writing across the curriculum has made converts of teachers of engineering, economics, language, history, philosophy, even mathematics and hard science courses. These "non-English" teachers see not only that writing enforces and tests meaning but that language fluency is essential to meaning. If students cannot synthesize the facts of their economics and their history courses, can they be said in any way to have meaning? Probably not. Proponents of writing across the curriculum go further: they pronounce that writing is itself "an act of cognition" (Fulwiler, 1982), "a thinking process" (Flower, 1981, p. 3), a critical instrument to "connect" the "past, present, and future ... tenses of our experience to make meaning" (Emig, 1977, p. 127).

The movement sprang more or less directly from an awareness as long ago as the 1960's that students in general were not writing well in their native language, whether that language was British English or American English. Critical
early research into possible causes came from England; critical studies in theory of rhetoric came from Americans. A comprehensive study of language development in England's school children was led by James Britton, beginning in 1966. Incorporating contemporary research in linguistics, psychology, philosophy, and sociology, Britton's work (1975) verified the complex relationship between language and thought and emphasized phases of language acquisition skills. But this vast research effort startled educators of all disciplines as it confirmed that students in the study wrote primarily transactional prose (that conveying facts or information) to an impersonal audience (a teacher or examiner), with little opportunity given them for expressive writing, that contemplative, speculative, exploratory mode most akin to thinking patterns and to discovery of ideas and relationships. Britton's conclusions explained, then, why much writing done in England's classrooms was stultifying, impersonal, mechanical, and disconnected--disconnected not only from students' varied academic courses and from their mental development but also from their lives. Thus enlightened, English educators began to urge incorporation of language skills across the curriculum (Britton, 1976).

Britton's English study came at a time when similar discouraging traits in the writing of American students had created almost a crisis in the professional teaching of composition. The pedagogical emphasis on the finished
product—the final theme—was clearly a failure for the masses of students, or so lamented teachers. Professional journals of the '60's were filled with articles of concern: comments of Sidney Moss (1969), Donald Murray (1970), and Robert Zoellner (1969) typify individual reactions of teachers to inadequacies in student compositions. As teachers were urging re-evaluation, re-thinking, and re-arranging of instructional components, rhetoricians were re-examining the classic texts of rhetoric, particularly the model argument developed in a five-stage process: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. The realization that no attention was given to invention or arrangement and that "memory and delivery [had] dwindled into elocution" (Gorrell, 1984, p. 4) made teachers begin to explore the importance of the total process of writing. Thus the prewriting activities of generation and discovery received new attention—and prestige, as the 1966 Dartmouth College conference on teaching English legitimized self-expression as an appropriate mode for some academic expression, this same mode Britton's research had found missing in secondary schools in England.

Two important theoretical voices, those of James Moffett and James Kinneavy, lent authority to the "new" view of the teaching of composition. In fact, the work of James Britton owed a debt to the extraordinary work of Moffett, parts of which were in print as early as 1966 (Bizzell,
1985). Recently reissued without revisions, Moffett's Teaching the Universe of Discourse suggests that English teachers have "deformed" their subject "to make it into a content like other subjects" (1968, p. 6). The resulting narrowness, flying in the face of what is known about the acquisition of language skills, explains why many students "know" the facts of the grammar of their native tongue but do not write well and are, as well, insensitive "to style, rhetoric, and logic" (1968, p. 7). Students are not being given opportunities to write the language as many ways as possible. Moffett urges a new view of language, as his title suggests, a view of the universe of discourse. His work still persuasively argues that discourse, "any piece of verbalization complete for its original purpose," be the focus of writing instruction (1968, pp. 10-11). He implores teachers of all disciplines to understand the enormous complexity of the acquisition of language skills: the "handling" of self and subject and audience based on the "abstracting for and abstracting from" processes which allow growth "toward internal complexity and external relationship" (1968, p. 33). Moffett regrets the false compartments of educational information which limit the students' chances to see connections in the bodies of knowledge--producing, for instance, their belief that correct spelling and sentence structure "do not count" in history or in science. Just as deplorable is the fact that
students of any discipline are not given opportunities to learn how to learn. As Moffett notes, "learning and learning how result in very different kinds of knowledge." In practical terms Moffett urges that students be given "not rules but awareness" (1968, p. 202), that they learn "to write by writing," and that teachers provide opportunities for "real world" writing for an audience other than the teacher. As Moffett has commented, the value of his book and of his proposed naturalistic method of teaching is simply to stimulate. Specifically, both Britton and Moffett have stimulated composition teachers to increase expressive writing "to help students feel comfortable with the full range of ways to use language to explore and communicate ideas" (1968, p. 3).

Like Moffett, James Kinneavy has urged the broadening of academic uses of language. Also like Moffett, Kinneavy prefers the term discourse, which he defines as "the full text, oral or written, delivered at a specific time and place or delivered at several instances" (1969, p. 297). But if Moffett emphasizes the kinds of discourse and their movement toward abstraction, Kinneavy stresses various aims as they change the balance of the communication triangle of sender, receiver, message. Still, both men show that standards may be flexible, depending on purpose and audience; that is, well-written persuasive essays will have different sentence lengths and different diction from well-
written referential explanations of a process or expressive reactions to an event. Equally important for writing across the curriculum, both these rhetoricians present the obvious connection between language choices, content, and audience of writings in all disciplines.

Other rhetoricians have followed Hairston's "paradigm shift" (1984), all broadening the purposes of "writing," most advocating an emphasis on the process of composition as a way for students to write, many seeing the process of writing as a concrete way to imitate the process of thinking. Vygotsky's Thought and Language (1962) has been seminal to advocates of the writing process. Both formal and informal composition textbooks have resulted. In Growth Through English (1967), for example, Dixon urges teachers to have students write about their own world in a variety of modes. In Rhetoric: Discovery and Change (1970) Young, Becker, and Pike provide the particle, wave, field of view of a subject; that is, every subject can be seen as a particle, isolated by itself; as a wave, moving in concert with other particles; and as a field, related to other subjects. Such a creative reappraisal of a subject should produce writing free of cliches in phrasing and in thinking. Less prohibitive are Telling Writing by Ken Macroirie (1970) and Writing Without a Teacher by Peter Elbow (1973). Both present a simpler, less structured method of exploration of ideas; they suggest freewriting as a way for students to
"find" their own "writing voices." If some of the results are chaotic and unfocused, some are potentially sound as a basis for writing "true" prose. The range of these selected approaches shows that teachers and theorists still agree on one important reason for poor writing: failing students "may simply not know how to write," a comment which seems ludicrous unless the emphasis is correctly on how; that is, on the process and not on the final finished product (Zoellner, 1969, p. 271).

The impressive research of Janet Emig offered partial explanation of why students do not know how to write: teachers do not know enough about how writing relates to thinking or even what the process of writing is, and thus they often do not know how to teach it. [See also Horner, Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap (1983).]

Emig's study, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders (1971), investigated the writing process of eight twelfth graders, whom she asked to compose aloud as they wrote three essays. In analyzing the oral compositions, Emig learned that her subjects composed in two modes, modes she labeled reflexive and extensive. Reflexive writing (Britton's expressive) is personal, informal, characterized by feelings, written for self; extensive writing (Britton's transactional) is less personal, written for a specific reader. Surprisingly, Emig learned that when students write in the extensive mode, they spend less time exploring,
planning, and drafting ideas. That is, the writing students do for teachers, their primary audience, is primarily extensive and is neither as creative nor as thoughtful as their reflexive writing, done to explore ideas. Emig's study, resulting in data which "strongly" implies that "changes need to be made in the way composition is taught in American secondary schools" (1971, p. 4), has applications for writing across the curriculum. The changes must begin with teacher training, as Emig explained: "many teachers of composition [and of other disciplines, one might add] . . . themselves do not write. . . . Partially because they have no direct experience of composing, teachers of English err in important ways. They underconceptualize and oversimplify the process of composing" (1971, p. 98). The result is that "school-sponsored writing experienced by older American secondary students is a limited, and limiting, experience" (1971, p. 97). Her study concludes that students must be given more opportunities to write for themselves so that they can test for themselves the connections between facts and ideas and theories before they can write effectively for a teacher-grader-examiner.

Research like that of Britton and Emig coincided with a revival in psychological research in creativity and the ways people learn. And teachers like Sister Janice Lauer have seen that even impressive research and valid theory in composition are insufficient to the task of improving
student writing if teachers do not know how people learn. Lauer has urged teachers to "investigate beyond the field of English," and her bibliography of 193 articles from psychological research focuses not only on heuristics but also on creativity and the thought processes involved in creating (1970, p. 396). Studies she gathered almost uniformly suggest that verbalizing ranges from subvocal rumblings to oral phrasing of ideas a number of ways to writing and discarding that writing, to re-reading and re-writing before finally finishing the piece. All these modes are essential, apparently, for us to know what we know, and the more ways we verbalize, the better organized, more effective our knowing and our communication become.

Composition teachers learned, then, in the early '70's that writing is not the word-for-word transcription of clearly-thought-out ideas. Instead, writing is a complex creative act, circular, exploratory, recursive. And as what they learned changed the focus of English teaching from product to process, the applications for learning how to learn other disciplines seemed compelling. Thus the melding of re-evaluations, movements, and theories all pointed toward change in instruction, all seeding the movement toward writing across the curriculum.

Ironically, though, an article in Newsweek magazine, which shocked Americans into awareness of declining verbal skills of students, gave immediate impetus to the national
movement toward writing across the curriculum. The journalistic pronouncement in December, 1975, that "willy-nilly, the United States' educational system is spawning a generation of semiliterates" (p. 58) produced a variety of explanations for "Why Johnny Can't Write." Happily, one response came at Beaver College when Elaine Maimon, summoned to the office of her dean, was given the "Why Johnny Can't Write" issue and asked to do something about solving the problem. Her reply was to develop at Beaver College a writing-across-the-curriculum program which has become the model for college and university programs around the nation. Because the Beaver program is one of six major writing projects assisted by the National Endowment for the Humanities in the past twelve years, its success is well-documented. And because of Maimon's prolific writing on the subject, college teachers who want to start such a program have access to theories which have produced positive results.

Specifically, Maimon has led a successful program because she and her colleagues have had extraordinary administrative and financial support. More, the setting for their program approaches the ideal: a small liberal arts college with a student-teacher ratio of 15 to 1; a curriculum which includes writing in all courses; and a graduate program in the teaching of writing. Still, schools as diverse as Michigan Tech and Houston Community College
have followed the philosophy of the Beaver program to establish productive programs in varied settings. Clearly the important element of the Beaver "model" is its philosophy.

The major philosophical assumptions of the Beaver program are based on what Maimon has called a "rediscovery of what is essential in education," a rediscovery of the connections in all disciplines (1983, p. 1). Moreover, it presupposes, as Maimon has said, "that writing is essential to learning, ... that learning is a collaborative process, ... that territoriality among departments in aberrant behavior in the academy" (1981, p. 40). The five principles which "shape" Beaver's writing program are comprehensive:

1. Writing, like learning, is not an entity but a process.
2. Writing is a way to learn, not merely a means of communicating to others what has already been mastered.
3. Because writing and learning are connected interactive processes, students need instruction and practice in cooperating to learn from one another.
4. Because the writing within a discipline defines and manifests fundamental processes within the discipline, the teaching of writing is the responsibility of every scholar in every field.
5. Writing in each discipline is a form of social behavior in that discipline. Students must learn the conventions of aim and audience in each discipline, and they must also learn to control the common conventional features of the written code: spelling, punctuation, conformity to standard English usage. (1981, p. 39)

These principles demonstrate most apparently the influence of Kinneavy, whose emphasis on aim of discourse and audience leads to "real world" writing. For Maimon, the real world for students is writing for each other multiple drafts to produce finished products about subjects in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Two other influences of Maimon's philosophy and design have been Mina Shaughnessy and Kenneth Bruffee. In her acclaimed study of basic writers (Errors and Expectations, 1977), Shaughnessy verifies that students' errors often derive as much from lack of experience and an unawareness of how to write as from obstacles their teachers innocently create by expecting them to know how writers work. Shaughnessy convinces that teachers' commentaries on students' papers--"eliminate awkwardness" for instance--mean little, for no student intentionally writes awkwardly. Shaughnessy argues that teachers should provide attainable models of clear, purposeful writing for students, perhaps the writing of other, more successful students. The contributions of
Kenneth Bruffee to writing across the curriculum are equally practical: his success with collaborative learning at Brooklyn College demonstrates the efficacy of peer-tutoring about content and logic in drafts (1978). His vision of college writing centers as more than remediation stations has inspired Maimon's insistence that drafts of work be shared with both teachers and other students (1981).

Obviously, as critical as sound philosophy to the success of writing programs whether at Beaver College or elsewhere is expeditious implementation. Maimon advises beginning with "scholarly exchange among faculty," exchange free from "administrative fiat" for improvement (1984, p. 13). Fulwiler and Young, other important voices for writing across the curriculum, also urge informal beginnings for a writing program (1982). Teachers of any discipline who gather to discuss student papers, for example, will find themselves discussing their expectations for student work, the way ideas should be expressed by college-trained writers, the requirements of the literature of their fields, the importance of correctness, and ways to evaluate student work. The thrust of such colloquia goes clearly beyond departmental or administrative concerns and directly to critical missions of teaching: to transmit an understanding of the important ideas of the culture and to show the interrelatedness of those ideas. These missions, which challenge all teachers, can be achieved in part by requiring
thoughtful writing in all disciplines. And, just as we now know that energetic, effective writing depends on message, audience, and purpose, we also know that energetic, effective writing programs can be designed to meet the needs of an individual school, its faculty, and its students. Achievement of the purposes of this study will create a cross-disciplinary interest in writing which should ultimately lead to increased writing across the curriculum.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized and presented as follows:
Chapter I introduces the study with a statement of the problem, the purpose, the research questions, the limitations of the study, and the background and significance of the study. Chapter II presents a review of literature on the subject of the establishment of writing-across-the-curriculum programs. Chapter III outlines the methodology of the paper, including the methods and procedures used to collect the data for this study. Chapter IV provides a description of the major activities generated by this study. Chapter V includes a summary and the implications of the study. Finally, four appendices contain major documents generated in the course of the study.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature on the subject of writing across the curriculum is both vast in number of publications and wide in scope. It ranges from presentations of the psychological validity of writing as a tool for learning content, to confessions of individual cross-disciplinary converts to the movement, to descriptions of specific programs. Within each of those divisions are further categories based on grade levels: writing across the curriculum in grade schools, middle schools, high schools; at community colleges, major universities, small liberal arts colleges. And finally, even the articles about collegiate programs divide into four different approaches, all termed writing across the curriculum. Thus any review of the literature must be selective if it is to be pertinent to the work at hand.

What follows, then, is a three-part division of the literature relevant to the limitations of this study: first are brief reviews of the major psychological theorists whose works have guided program designers; second are reviews of the writings of the major practitioners, the leaders of the educational movement called writing across the curriculum; third are summaries of literature about comprehensive
writing-across-the-curriculum programs, including articles about faculty workshops.

The Connection between Psychology and Writing Across the Curriculum

It is appropriate that a cross-disciplinary connection forms the theoretical foundation of writing across the curriculum. Certainly much of the impetus for writing across the curriculum comes from the psychological and psycholinguistic theories which link thinking and the thought process to language and the learning process, and both to the process of writing. Repeatedly, authors of articles and books on writing across the curriculum credit the insights, even invoke the authority, of Bloom, Polanyi, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner as bases for their theses that writing is a tool of discovery, of learning, of thinking.

Although the work of Benjamin S. Bloom and his associates at the University of Chicago predates the nationwide interest in writing across the curriculum, his Problem-solving Processes of College Students (1950) relates directly to ways language skills relate to problem solving. Prompted by a need to remediate students who failed the university's comprehensive exams, Bloom studied students' reactions to problems for which they "would have clear-cut, although perhaps quite complex, goals to achieve and for which [they] could make a conscious plan of attack" (1950, p. 8). Using the "thinking-aloud" problem-solving records
of the students, Bloom discovered that successful problem-solvers could "bring the relevant knowledge they possessed to bear on the problem" (1950, p. 27). The unsuccessful problem-solvers, as one might expect, did not read instructions carefully, tried to solve problems without full instructions, could not find the key word, and (more significantly) could not relate their notes on the lecture and the reading to the problem (1950, pp. 26-28). More, the unsuccessful students believed that "one either knows the answer at once or not at all" (1950, p. 31). Bloom and his researchers concluded that although "investigation of thinking does not lend itself to . . . statistical refinement," educators can use these findings as a basis for designing educational tasks which allow students to arrive at the "same solution or product of thought" through "distinctly different processes of thought" (1950, pp. 97, 2). Writing-across-the-curriculum programs reveal their debt to Bloom's work through the emphasis on discovery through writing and other heuristics which arm students for attacking problems on their own.

From another perspective has come verification of the importance of heuristics to independent learning. Michael Polanyi, a philosopher frequently cited by writing specialists, explains that "particulars [i.e., memorized facts] become meaningless" unless students can retain "sight of the pattern which they jointly constitute," and he urges
informal practice with language to keep that pattern in sight (1958, p. 67). Specifically, he emphasizes the importance of heuristics for learning and seeing patterns, because "heuristic progress is irreversible" (1958, p. 123). That is, when students have had success attacking problems, they face later problems with more confidence. And Polanyi sees a vital role for writing and oral language not only in problem-solving but also in learning new ideas: "To modify our idiom," he says, "is to modify the frame of reference within which we shall henceforth interpret our experience" (1958, p. 105). Polanyi's philosophy undergirds the frequent cross-disciplinary writing assignments for students to paraphrase, summarize, argue from different perspectives the key issues of a discipline.

More widely known and quoted is the work of Jean Piaget. His observations and analyses of children's learning processes and his views of the growth of logical thought have been critical to viewing language development as a function of thinking. Moreover, his theory of the direction of growth, from physical interaction to abstract hypothesizing, and of the processes of such growth as overlapping and integrative, suggests that acquisition of skills and of language proficiency is not orderly, not linear (1969). "The process of knowledge is," according to Piaget, "a perpetual reformulation of previous points of view by a process which moves backward as well as forward"
Piaget proposes more or less sequential stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor (0–2 years), preoperational (2–7 years), concrete operational (7–11), and formal operational (11–adolescence). Critical to Piaget’s theory of development is the child’s ability to symbolize experience through "imitation, symbolic play, and the image," with language as the "most articulate form" of this ability (1969, p. 84). Moreover, once language use begins, learning increases because the child gains the ability to assimilate experience in more complex ways, culminating in the fourth stage, when the child develops the capacity to reason, to deduce, to solve problems, to make abstract meaning. Piaget’s sequence, even with its flexible, "perpetual reformulation," is especially significant for teachers and curriculum planners, of course, because of his insistence that children cannot be expected to accomplish tasks that are appropriate for the formal operational stage, for instance, when they are still in the concrete operational stage (1967, pp. 86–89). Even this abbreviated account of Piaget’s work reveals his influence on writing across the curriculum: the insistence on the recursive process of learning, the importance of physical interaction as preparation for abstract hypothesizing, and the critical understanding of the stages of cognitive development.
In fact, a concrete example of Piaget's impact on writing-across-the-curriculum programs has been documented by Randall Freisinger of Michigan Technological University. Freisinger has discovered from his own experience as a college writing teacher that fully 50% of his students have weak to non-existent skills in critical thinking, synthesizing, creating logical arguments. To combat this grim statistic, Freisinger has not discounted his students as illiterate; rather, he has considered that they might not yet have reached what Piaget has called the fourth stage of their intellectual development. Freisinger reasons that the "schools' neglect of the learning function of language may be largely responsible for the cognitive impairment of a significant number of [the] students" (1980, p. 162). He has thus increased the use of expressive language, "both oral and written," in his classrooms because as he says, "Expressive language . . . promotes open-ended explorations of new experiences, and those explorations promote growth (1980, p. 164). Freisinger and other participants in the successful writing-across-the-curriculum program at Michigan Tech credit Piaget directly for the philosophy of the program.

They also acknowledge a debt to Lev S. Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist and contemporary of Piaget, as another key contributor. Vygotsky extends Piaget's view of the connection between thought and language, for he agrees on
the process of acquiring language skills. Indeed, he almost seems to be paraphrasing Piaget's language when he says that the relation "of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought" (1962, p. 125). Vygotsky emphasizes that intellectual development is dependent on continuous interaction with society, that children are organizers of meaning as soon as they use words, and that each word "is already a generalization [that] reflects reality in quite another way [from the way] sensation and perception reflect it" (1962, p. 5). As Vygotsky insists that thought "comes into existence" through words, he becomes an influence on designers of many writing-to-learn activities in content areas as well as the prewriting, generating techniques for formal writing assignments in writing across the curriculum.

Jerome Bruner, another commonly cited psychologist, agrees with Piaget and Vygotsky about the importance of language in intellectual development. Language, as he says, is "the tool for organizing thought about things" (1966, p. 105). In the organizing of facts (which is part of the learning process), Bruner believes that learners move through three related phases or steps: the enactive, which is based on motor skills and requires neither words nor images; the iconic, where a set of images stands for a concept, this phase depending on both visual and sensory
modes and governed by perceptual organization; and the symbolic, which is based on the thinking process and includes manipulation of language and abstractions. Like Piaget and Vygotsky, Bruner emphasizes process, especially the parallels between the process of learning and the process of thinking, and image manipulation, or language skill, to achieve both processes. Bruner's view of language as "the instrument that the learner can use himself in bringing order into the environment" (1956, p. 6) translates in writing-across-the-curriculum programs in efforts to make students active participants in their own learning processes, active through writing.

The Major Voices of Writing Across the Curriculum

If there must be a "founder" of the writing-across-the-curriculum movement, most educators would name James Britton, the leader of a famous three-year-long language development project in England (1966-1968), a study followed by an additional four-year study of 100 school children. Britton's analysis of the writing produced in the schools shocked most educators as he reported that approximately 95% of the prose he and his research team read had been written for a teacher/examiner and characteristically was devoid of purpose and sense of audience; that this "transactional" prose had invariably been written with the student writers in the "frightening . . . position of telling the reader
what the latter already [knew] more fully and more deeply"; that the "expressive" mode which is most akin to thinking and exploration of ideas diminished as students progressed through the grades; and that the writing assignments most students completed neither required any investment of self nor resulted in long-term personal value (1975, pp. 64, 1-37).

The implications of Britton's findings have gone beyond England and beyond the writing classroom, because of his writing and the program he recommended. As Britton has argued, language allows us to organize "a representation of the world . . . and the representation so created constitutes the world we operate in, the basis of all the predictions by which we set the course of our lives" (1970, p. 7). Simply put, Britton says that unless learners explore meanings and connections of ideas for themselves, they can make no use of their schooling. Memorized facts are quickly forgotten, even more quickly when the facts are unrelated to life's needs. Britton's theory is that "an essential part of the writing process is explaining the matter to oneself" and that the act of communicating an experience (whether with life or with the ideas of a discipline) "shapes experience, makes it available, incorporates it" into the "corpus" of already assimilated knowledge (1975, pp. 28, 19). Thus did Britton fight what he called the "naive global view of writing: that an
English teacher has only to teach pupils 'to write' and the skill they learn will be effective in any lesson and in any kind of writing" (1975, p. 3). That "insidious" view does not take into account the stages of language development of students, stages explained by Piaget, Vygotsky, and other educational psychologists who clarify that "the last kinds [of writing skills] to be acquired . . . are . . . scientific and social uses of language" (1975, p. 53). Thus Britton urged instruction in "language across the curriculum" in England's schools.

The impact of Britton's work on writing across the curriculum—indeed on writing instruction globally—can hardly be overestimated. Charles Bergman has praised Britton's *The Development of Writing Abilities* as "fundamental to the theory of writing and writing across the curriculum" (1984, p. 33), and Stephen Tchudi has noted that much of the research on writing instruction of the last dozen years has "grown up as a reflection of that same book" (1986, p. 15). Moreover, teachers of writing now use Britton's categorization of modes of discourse (expressive, transactional, poetic) as common currency, and well over twenty textbooks reveal Britton's philosophical influence. James Howard's highly-praised *Writing To Learn*, for instance, has as its premise what might be a paraphrase of Britton: the "best reason for writing in school is to learn" (1983, p. 6). Almost any journal about college
writing also reflects Britton's influence, for example
Steven Zemelman: "Writing in the right setting is not just
communication of what one already knows, but is central to
the act of learning" (1977, p. 229); and William Strong:
"It is only through existing knowledge that we make new
connections" (1977, p. 22). And of course America's nation-
wide network of colleges and universities with cross-
disciplinary programs owes a clear debt to Britton's
establishment of such a program to improve student writing
in England and also to his writing about it.

One of the most influential followers of Britton, the
name quoted most surely with his, is that of American Janet
Emig. Amazingly enough, her reputation rests on two
relatively short works, despite at least eleven essays on
writing in the last twenty years (collected in 1983 as The
Web of Meaning) and a successful collaboration with Janice
Lauer and others in writing a cross-disciplinary textbook,
Four Worlds of Writing (1981). Her study of the writing
processes of eight twelfth graders (The Composing Processes
of Twelfth Graders) has been lauded by Bruce Petersen as
"the first major study of writers' processes as opposed to
compositions (recall Bloom's analysis of oral problem-
solving), Emig has learned that because students are more
creative when they write to explore ideas, they need more
opportunities to write for themselves before they write for
teachers. Yet if that summary sounds like Britton, Emig's advocacy of expressive writing is a bit different. Whereas Britton emphasizes the continuity between speech and writing, Emig emphasizes "the unique cognitive advantages conferred by writing" (1971, p. 97). Writing, she says, facilitates learning because it involves hand, eye, and brain. Emig's "Writing as a Mode of Learning," which appeared in May 1977, has been called "central to the concept of writing across the curriculum" (Petersen, 1982, p. 182) and "one of the most influential articles in the formulation of the new paradigm in composition studies" (Bergman, 1984, p. 39). Such praise stems from her clear, logical blending of ideas of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner to show how writing has heuristic potential; how writing uniquely allows the "re-organization or confirmation of a cognitive scheme in light of an experience"; (or plainly) how writing "connects . . . experience to make meaning" (1977, pp. 122, 127).

Emig has directly influenced Linda Flower, whose work also ties to the psychology of learning, especially the ideas of Piaget and Vygotsky. Flower categorizes writing into "writer-based," characterized by "verbal expression written by a writer to himself, . . . the working of his own verbal thought," and "reader-based," that written expressly to communicate to a reader (1981, pp. 22-25). These categories appeal to many non-English teachers who can help
students more easily to identify their writing goals and ways to revise a writer-based draft to a reader-based final copy than to discuss errors or incoherence in terms of traditional grammar. Flower's interest in cognitive theories has led her to collaborate with John R. Hayes, a cognitive psychologist and colleague at Carnegie-Mellon University, in writing Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing, a process textbook which applies research on general problem-solving skills and the "thinking skills that underlie writing" (1981, p. v.). Their research into how experienced writers attack the problems of writing has resulted in a practical collection of heuristic procedures and thinking strategies, all aimed at helping students "guide their own creative process" because, according to Flower, that process is one students "can understand and change" (1981, p. 37). Indeed, the entire book is written with the aim of making students active participants in their decisions about their writing, from diction to format. The contribution of Flower typifies the goal of student-involvement that makes writing-across-the-curriculum programs exciting: once students learn to consider the needs of a reader and write to meet those needs, they mature as writers, yes, but also as learners and thinkers.

Flower's most recent collaboration, with colleagues Kathleen McCormick and Gary Waller, has produced Reading Texts: Reading, Responding, Writing (1987), another process-
oriented textbook which broadens the writing-to-learn rationale to include "reading-to-recreate." The book's thesis extends the theories of writing across the curriculum to reading, since reading, too, "is an interactive process" with both "cognitive and cultural dimensions" (1987, pp. 8-9). In the book Flower adapts her own categories as she discusses "text-based" or "reader-based" interpretations of literature; and she even moves from reading the printed page to "Reading Media Texts," suggesting that reading can in fact be defined as "decoding the sign systems of our common culture" (1987, pp. 60-90, 243). Even if the scope of the book seems beyond the reach of many college freshmen, its very publication testifies to a reborn sense of the interrelatedness of the disciplines, an idea at the heart of writing across the curriculum.

Elaine Maimon's reputation has been built in part on that selfsame idea, "that territoriality among departments in aberrant behavior in the academy" (1983, p. 721). Almost single-handedly (and with a three-year grant from NEH) she has developed the writing-across-the-curriculum program at Beaver College, a program James Kinneavy has extolled as "the type of program [that] may very well be theoretically and practically the best kind of writing program," and as "a collegium, a unified body of academics, speaking the same language about the problems of the various disciplines."
Maimon’s exemplary program is based on her belief that "writing can be taught in every course and can be used to learn every course, if instructors understand that good teaching involves more than 'covering' material in lectures" (1981, p. 12). Clearly, a major thrust of Maimon’s design is to teach students how writers work. Because students generally enter colleges having trouble with conventions of public prose and have special trouble seeing the differences in conventions of the disciplines, she insists that students learn to think of themselves as practitioners in the discipline (1970). Recognizing that they must perforce have content, they write to learn (logs, journals, reactions) as well as to convey learning. A typical sequence for Beaver students in history, British literature, and biology, for example, has the classes reading Darwin’s On the Origin of Species at the same time, examining the work from different perspectives, the teachers not only coordinating their schedules but also attending each other’s classes and consulting on writing assignments (1980). Yet instructors do not work alone to achieve the aims of the program: students then become involved by reading each other’s work, providing critiques, defending their own work, and writing multiple drafts of the limited number of papers they are required. Maimon believes that such exchanges teach students the content, of course, but also teach "how scholars behave within the conventions of the academic
genres" (1983, p. 727). And the end result is that students respond as learners, interested and knowledgeable enough in the subject to make the effort required for composing good writing.

Like Maimon, Toby Fulwiler (currently the most dominant figure in writing across the curriculum) has to his credit both important publications and active programs. Also like Maimon, and like Emig, Flower, and Britton, Fulwiler emphasizes the necessity for the informal, exploratory phases of the writing process for successful writing and learning. In summarizing Britton's contributions, Fulwiler has remarked that "the absence of expressive writing from school curricula suggests a limited understanding of the way in which language works" (1982, p. 20). Thus expressive writing (that normally private writing produced in diaries, journals, freewrites, and drafts) has become what might be termed Fulwiler's mission. He has written chapters for textbooks, presented papers, and preached in person about the merits of journal writing. He has said of journal writing that "the act of writing helps people understand things better," that "any assignment can be made richer by reflecting about it ... in [a] journal," that "journals are ... the best place in the academic world ... to articulate problems in order to experience authentic growth," and that in any discipline a response journal "focuses attention, makes learning active, makes analysis
possible, makes learning individual" (1982). Fulwiler speaks from experience. He has been a key member of the faculty group which established in 1977 "a pioneer cross-disciplinary writing program" at Michigan Technological University (Leahy, 1983, p. 42), a program described by Fulwiler as having evolved into a "comprehensive, literate environment which encourages good writing and reading habits" (1981, p. ix). A collection of essays written by the school's instructors across the disciplines validates the approach: poetry is written in philosophy classes, physics teachers design assignments based on Piagetian theory, civil engineering juniors keep project journals, biology teachers require narrative essays (1982). For both teachers and students, enthusiasm for writing as a tool of learning has produced more than better writing.

Definition and Descriptions of Selected Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs

Dunn notes that Harvey Wiener, president of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, has estimated that there are over 400 college-level writing-across-the-curriculum programs in America (1982, p. 7). Because each program reflects the training and philosophy of its faculty, the ability and size of its student body, its funding and administrative support, and both atmosphere and tradition of the school, and is thus unique, one must clarify terms. At least four different approaches are known as "writing across
the curriculum." In fact, the programs seem to have in common only their use of writing to improve learning and writing proficiency of students.

Some schools (Sinclair Community College in Michigan, Loyola College in Maryland, Lee College in Texas, and the University of Texas at El Paso, for example) label clusters of courses or tandem courses as writing across the curriculum. Often such clusters are anomalies at their institutions, reflecting only the philosophy of the teachers involved rather than a formal writing program. These cross-disciplinary efforts feature two or three teachers team-teaching a course or courses (literature and history, for instance) with the writing component focused on discipline-specific topics. These courses differ significantly from the models at Beaver College and Michigan Tech. Similarly, a few colleges, like the University of Tampa, label their English composition sequence "writing across the curriculum" by virtue of having revised content to include interdisciplinary readings and assigning writing topics related to those readings. Obviously this model places the entire burden for improvement and enrichment on the English faculty. Some colleges and universities (the University of Houston Downtown, Western Carolina University in North Carolina, and the University of Michigan, to name just three) consider required junior-level writing-intensive content courses to constitute writing across the curriculum.
Typically the content teachers are responsible for assigning more writing in such classes and for grading the papers for both content and form. Professor Thomas Dunn, who teaches a junior-level chemistry course designated as writing intensive at Michigan, explains his faculty’s support of this concept: “transmission and broad communication of . . . scientific concepts and ideas [depend] upon precise verbal expression” (Lowthian, 1982, p. 3).

All three variations differ from the so-called comprehensive writing-across-the-curriculum program in which writing activities intended primarily to enable learning are increased in a large percentage of the classes across the curriculum. For most college teachers, and for this study, the phrase “writing across the curriculum” (hereafter occasionally abbreviated WAC for convenience) refers to these comprehensive programs. Yet, an even finer distinction can be drawn, for one can broadly categorize the comprehensive writing programs on the basis of their beginnings, through either administrative fiat or faculty initiation.

Discussion of writing-across-the-discipline programs created as a result of an administrative directive is not really relevant to the limitations of this study, which is a description of a faculty initiated program. Still, because faculty-initiated programs are invariably patterned after
the major model at Beaver College, that program deserves summary here.

Elaine Maimon names Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, as her inspiration in designing the Beaver College WAC program. Maimon was aware of Carleton's rhetoric workshop in the summer of 1974 when faculty of biology, economics, English, history, philosophy, and political science were summoned by the president of the college to discuss writing and literacy at the school. According to Maimon's account, their discussions led to the realization that writing instruction must be part of each discipline, and thus Carleton instituted change in its curriculum (1982, p. 67).

The concept of similar faculty workshops became the center of Maimon's design. Such faculty exchanges allow for systematic reexamination of programs and enable development of new programs "based on a coherent and consistent pedagogical theory" (Smith, 1983, p. 12). The clarification of that theory comes as faculty gather to discuss the qualities in form and content they expect in student writing. Ironically, the first faculty group in need of persuasion at Beaver College was the English staff. With the dean's directive to effect whatever changes seemed appropriate, Maimon concentrated almost her entire energy in the early stages of her program on orienting the English faculty. She realized that her "most important step" in
creating an atmosphere for WAC was "to work with the composition staff to formulate a consistent philosophy for teaching composition" (1981, p. 9). She realized, too, that English instructors often have never "studied or even thought systematically about teaching composition" and thus teach English composition as an introduction to literature or as a review of mechanics along with a bit of analysis of rhetorical patterns.

To foster the necessary change—a view of writing as process—she set about deliberately, beginning first with textbooks. She persuaded the English Department to choose an anthology of cross-disciplinary readings, and then sent copies of the table of contents to all department heads soliciting suggestions for ways to teach the selections. Copies of the English handbook were offered free to colleagues in other departments. On every occasion she offered herself as a speaker to faculty groups, she asked the library to order important books and journals, but primarily she spoke to English teachers about writing as process. She surveyed writing practices at the school and made the results known. Then she applied for faculty development funds to bring in an outside specialist, someone whose views reflected her philosophy of writing as a tool of learning, a process, a means of discovery; and she asked her dean to set up a cross-disciplinary composition committee
and to "include powerful people from other departments" (1981, p. 11).

This interdisciplinary faculty group met to discuss formalizing WAC at Beaver. The first step was an institution-sponsored two-week seminar in January 1977. Fifty-seven percent of the faculty participated. As part of this activity, the teachers were surveyed to establish baseline statistics for an institution-wide writing project, for which NEH funds had just been granted. After the three-year NEH sponsorship, the same survey was administered at another faculty seminar, this one four weeks long and attended by 100% of the faculty. The changes in statistics are revealing: for example, in 1977 43% of the faculty had agreed on the importance of drafts; in 1980 63% agreed. In 1977 8% always required drafts; by 1980 33% always did. The early survey had shown that 51% required essay exams; the later revealed 73% did. Even objective tests were affected by the intense concentration on writing: whereas 25% had reported in 1977 that they required full-sentence answers to identification questions, 72% required them in 1980 (NEH, p. 33).

To understand how such dramatic changes in faculty practice and attitudes occurred, one must remember first of all that the school is small, its students are selected, its faculty-student ratio is not above 15 to 1, and its graduate program in rhetoric and composition qualifies many students
for service as graders. Given this setting, English teachers can indeed help students realize their potential as writers, can "require at least 1000 words per week but grade only four finished papers." Moreover, at least one of these four papers is "coordinated with an assignment in another freshman course," and some courses are clustered. Still across the discipline teachers not in English clusters report using writing as a learning tool (66% according to the 1980 survey). All teachers can recommend that students needing help in writing attend the Writing Center, staffed by specially-trained undergraduate consultants on an almost around-the-clock schedule. Such campus-wide coordination and cooperation reflect a philosophical coherence, explained at least in part by the intensity of Maimon's leadership and the school's support. An example of that intensity is the agenda of that 1980 four-week seminar. Participants read Bruffee's *A Short Course in Writing*, Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations*, Fadiman and Howard's *Empty Pages*, and selected articles on writing as process. They all were given writing assignments; they spent mornings in workshops, afternoons in small groups planning course clusters, and evenings doing individual and group work on syllabi. Finally, the faculty had the advantage throughout the years of implementation of specialists brought in for one-day training sessions, expenses paid by the grant (NEH, pp. 25-29).
Maimon has summarized for other interested schools her suggestions for implementation of a writing-across-the-curriculum program. First, she says, teachers must "expand the definition of writing to include the full spectrum of private and public discourse." Because most school writing today is done for the sake of a grade, student writers are denied "mobility and freedom." Maimon urges that students write more and teachers grade less, and she says this change can occur by assigning writing as part of the learning process. She advocates letter-writing and summarizing classnotes as two non-threatening ways for students to practice writing without teachers having to grade. Her third suggestion is to "assign formal papers in draft stages," a practice built on the assumption that drafts will in fact be read (either by teacher or peers) and critiqued primarily for content. Unless teachers are willing to insist on drafts, Maimon argues that the work they grade will rarely be finished, will in fact be drafts. Finally, because Maimon believes in peer editors, she suggests that students be taught how to read as editors, to create an atmosphere of educated readers within the classroom (1983, p. 728).

The Beaver College model has been the inspiration for change at all schools within the Pacific Northwest Writing Consortium, at the University of Pennsylvania, Wellesley, West Chester State College, Michigan Tech, Kean College,
Bucknell University, Stockton College, Triton College, and George Mason University, to name just a few. The mechanisms for change in all these instances have been basically the same: money and released time have been provided, either from the institution's faculty development budget or from special grants. In addition, faculty loads are reasonable, usually three or four classes per term, and workshops at off-campus sites include "celebrity" speakers, free meals, and stipends for participants. The philosophical rationale for change is also similar: students write to learn, to explore, and to communicate according to the conventions of the disciplines (Lowthian, 1982).

The comprehensive WAC programs of the other general type, those initiated and sustained by faculty enthusiasm, owe an obvious debt to the Beaver exemplar, as this general sequence of events reveals: first, they are conceived by English faculty, usually an individual but sometimes a group. Next, a more or less formal survey elicits faculty attitudes and perceptions about the state of writing at the institution. The cross-disciplinary colleagues join the core of English teachers to form a writing committee, with meetings held whenever they can be squeezed into crowded schedules. (Rarely do these volunteers have released time from their normal teaching load.) Invariably committee meetings feature informal discussions of writing strengths and weaknesses of students, exchanges about characteristics
teachers expect of good college-level writing, presentations of ways to help students study and to incorporate writing-to-learn activities in the courses, suggestions about ways to handle the grading load, support for the professional writing efforts of the committee members themselves, and general proposals for improving the literacy if not the scholarly atmosphere of the school.

Often an unstated goal of this group is to generate enough enthusiasm to gain significant financial underwriting, either from the school itself or from a grant. In CEA Forum Erika Lindemann has recently speculated on the possibilities of achieving this goal. Her musings on what might be accomplished if writing programs could be given just $3.00 per student enrolled in composition courses could just as easily reflect fantasies of community college WAC coordinators as well: more sections of smaller classes, or tutors for Writing Centers, or word processors, or summer writing workshops complete with faculty stipends (1986).

This sequence of events, not always including the financial underwriting, is descriptive of beginnings of WAC programs at schools as far afield as Hawaii and Canada, Texas and Ohio, Arizona and Florida. The following summaries of such programs are in fact striking in their similarity.

In 1980 a member of the faculty at Kapiolani Community College, one of seven community colleges in the University
of Hawaii system, initiated WAC. Ruth Lucas, a language arts teacher, petitioned the administration for funding to attend a writing conference, and the petition was granted with the expectation that she would return and serve as catalyst for a writing project at the school. After her return, she was indeed instrumental in executing a poll of faculty, 98% of whom noted in the survey that "success in their courses was dependent to some degree on writing effectiveness" (Fearrien, 1984, p. 1). At about the same time the faculty was polled, students at the school (approximately 5000 in total enrollment) were surveyed. Although fully 52% responded that they believed their writing skills were "average," 16% assessed their skills as poor; only 34% indicated that they perceived themselves to be good writers. But a promising statistic was that 41% of the students felt "strongly" that the ability to write effectively "would affect their success in their future careers," an especially interesting statistic because 55% of the students at KCC enroll in occupational programs. Such a survey of students is not always a component of the initiation of WAC programs, but the information seems helpful, primarily because it shows whether the students themselves are ready for writing across the curriculum, whether they are "primed," as Robert Fearrien has said, "for the additional demands [to be] made of them" (1984, p. 2).
At KCC the new demands became part of the school experience almost immediately. The very next year, "good writing" was officially included as an area of selected emphasis at the college, and Paul Diehl of the University of Iowa was invited for a three-day workshop on writing across the curriculum for members of the Humanities Department. Diehl's strategy was to explain the theoretical background and to incorporate assignments of the teachers into one of his workshops, to discuss paper grading at another, to analyze student papers at a third. Apparently those efforts were successful, for the very next year a Writing Across the Curriculum Committee was formed from the core of humanities faculty and the addition of faculty from the other three liberal arts departments. At this time college administration agreed to give support both in terms of released time to a faculty coordinator and to faculty members who wanted to work on writing projects and funds for creating two writing labs staffed by paraprofessionals. As for the committee, its goals have been to draw vocational/occupational faculty into the project.

The program seems to be working, although no statistics validate that claim. Fearrien calls it successful because the participating faculty "have seen a steady improvement in writing . . . , with related improvements in abilities to reflect on and make application of ideas and information." More, as Fearrien concludes, "students' confidence in their
ability to write has grown" (1984, p. 7). Sheldon Hershinow, also of KCC, concurs. He has praised the "grass roots beginning" of that program, with its "informal, diffuse" method of operation and concludes that the small size of KCC has afforded "opportunity for collegial exchange across disciplines" which has been an important advantage in the growth of its "contagion-based" program (1984, p. 5).

Not all grassroots programs are informal and diffuse, of course. At Dawson College, Quebec, Linda Shohet has provided the personal energy and commitment to start an orderly, directed program, "Literacy Across the Curriculum," by spending three years researching other programs, apparently as a personal mission. Then in 1984 the Faculty Senate of Dawson issued a mandate for Literacy Across the Curriculum, naming Shohet as coordinator. The program she has led has had immediate official acceptance by the faculty leadership and administrative support as well. In addition to released time for her, departmental funds have been made available for the project. Early in the project the library ordered 135 titles, both articles and books, to establish a Teacher Resource Center there. The schools' graphics department helped Shohet design the format for a regular faculty newsletter to clarify the program's objectives and to inform teachers about resources. Using the college facilities for typesetting, with cost absorbed by the printing department, the school now publishes a quarterly
eight-page bulletin ($500 per issue). Extra copies of the first issue were sent to every high school English teacher in Quebec, demonstrating a concern for community articulation that the writing program is addressing (1984).

Yet all Shohet's efforts have not been as successful as the foregoing might suggest. Her initial survey of faculty for example, was largely unreturned, either because department heads did not distribute them or teachers "found the questions irrelevant." A second wave of surveys elicited sufficient response for Shohet to discover a "general absence of language policy" at the school. To address that lack, she has conducted small group meetings "to sensitize teachers to the need for re-evaluation." Shohet says most meetings initially began "as gripe sessions" but eventually evolved that first year into discussions of practical problems and how to address them.

To help teachers from non-writing disciplines, twenty-five English teachers volunteered immediately to act as mentors to other colleagues, but "only six teachers requested such help." More acceptable to discipline teachers have been summer workshops on ways to integrate study skills, and Dawson College has made these popular workshops available to high school teachers as well (1985).

The most promising element of Dawson's first year with writing across the curriculum was a one-semester pilot project in writing and learning in the vocational/technical
division. The chairman of electrotechnology developed a questionnaire to identify student needs in technical communication, and then an English mentor helped him examine reports prepared by students in the courses of the division. Two important results of their efforts were (first) a decision to team-teach technical writing the next term and (second) a mini-conference on technical communication the next spring, with participants from Dawson, two other Quebec colleges, and representatives from local businesses. As promising as that result is, one is struck again by its impetus in one teacher’s belief in the importance of writing in the discipline. But still, even though Shohet has praised her school’s belief that “the individual teacher is the key to change,” some praise must go to the administration’s support in all ways, from providing students with a series of style sheets for each discipline to giving teachers released time to serve as consultants in Quebec’s schools (1984).

In 1984, the same year that Dawson started its program, Houston Community College also established a WAC program. Unofficially, the spark for the program came from the English Department, whose members, wanting to select a writing-across-the-curriculum textbook for composition classes, found themselves inspired to seek ways to make writing important throughout the district. As a start toward that goal, Gerald Belcher from Beaver College was
invited to speak at a Humanities Division inservice meeting. Belcher was charged with defining and introducing the concept and generating enthusiasm. After that inservice meeting, the English subcommittee mailed out about 350 surveys to full time faculty, asking for responses about the "difficulty and diversity of writing tasks at HCC" and the perceived effectiveness of the "contents and methods of the English courses" (Carson, 1985, p. 2).

Although only 50% of the surveys were returned, the results were enlightening. First, the committee learned of a diversity in skills and a wide range of writing assignments made at the institution. Other information suggested that a proposed research paper course would indeed be well-received. Especially helpful to English teachers was the discovery that most instructors at HCC did not at that time deduct points for spelling and punctuation errors, but that these teachers did favor the adoption of an "official" grammar handbook. (Within a year of the survey HCC adopted the Prentice-Hall Handbook.) Also as a result of the survey, many teachers realized the need to teach test-taking and study skills to freshmen, and some teachers made immediate changes in their courses. In health careers, a teacher began requiring students to keep journals to record responses to experiences in clinic; in history, teachers reported adding narrative assignments and in-class writing to check reading comprehension; in economics, one
teacher started allowing students to justify answer selections on multiple choice test questions. Members of the English Department offered their services as "writing consultants" to conduct mini-sessions for individuals or groups of cross-disciplinary colleagues. Fifteen different teachers took advantage of this service within the first nine months. A $750 grant from Faculty Development was the source for payment of these consultants, at a rate of $14.50 an hour for both preparation and presentation time.

According to Cheryl Peters, Coordinator of the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee, interest in the writing consultants' service suddenly waned, with just five requests for help made during the succeeding fall term (1986).

Later that term (fall 1985), though, HCC secured Toby Fulwiler to conduct a workshop which was so impressive that Peters reports the program direction at HCC changed to an emphasis on writing to learn, particularly using the journal across disciplines. The enthusiasm Fulwiler generated took tangible form in the production of a 49-page writing manual with writing ideas and resources for teachers in all disciplines. To sustain such enthusiasm has been difficult, however, simply because of teacher workload--all work on writing projects is done, according to Carson, "outside of full time teaching duties"--and because of the logistics of coordinating efforts between 33 campuses (1985).
Such size has not been a factor in the faculty-initiated, faculty development-sponsored WAC program at Lorain County Community College in Ohio. From the beginning in 1981 the faculty attending committee meetings has never exceeded 25. Still, the key figures in the initiation, teachers Sue Luck and Lou Suarez from the language and humanities division, have been enthusiastic about their program, especially since teachers at the institution formerly emphasized "developing skills for employment" and gave objective tests almost exclusively. The two-woman writing team, then, took as its first task "to raise faculty consciousness" at a faculty workshop where writing was discussed as a "social behavior" and a tool for learning. The 20 faculty members at that first meeting became representatives on a writing steering committee, a group which charged Luck with two fact-finding activities: a survey of attitudes of faculty and private interviews with representatives from all nine divisions of the college. Additionally, in the course of this initiation stage Luck took a year's sabbatical leave to study writing across the curriculum programs (1986).

Armed with all that information, Luck designed the second stage of the project, two volunteer workshops. The first, held on a Saturday morning in February 1985, was led by guest speakers (from Oberlin College and Dyke College) who discussed journal writing and setting up assignments.
Twenty-five faculty attended. At the second workshop, held one afternoon in October 1985, the same speakers presented ideas on how to teach writing. Twenty attended. The faculty group continues to hold meetings to discuss common interests, but questions about funding continue to plague this program, and Suarez notes that the matter of released time may become a problem if the responsibility for the project is given to the English Department (1986).

The role of the English Department is a bit different in the WAC program at the east campus of Pima Community College in Arizona. There, too, faculty members have followed the now-familiar sequence of events except that "participating faculty in all disciplines" work with English faculty "to design special writing assignments . . . which must meet criteria prescribed" by the English Department. Then the papers that these assignments elicit are evaluated for mechanics by an English faculty member (termed a "Collateral Grader"); the discipline specialist grades for content. Participating faculty at Pima (who, incidentally, receive a one-time-only fee of $100 for their effort) are reportedly satisfied with this version of writing across the curriculum, and apparently the separation between form and content satisfies them. Even if an important component of most comprehensive writing across the curriculum programs, writing to learn, is conspicuously missing, the faculty see
improved proficiency in student writing (Hershinow, 1984, p. 4).

Even if additional WAC programs could be summarized, the pertinent information seems clear; that is, most programs share important elements of philosophy and fundamental similarities in implementation. Still to be explored is the specific format of faculty workshops, the key to implementing writing across the curriculum. Unfortunately, much of the literature on faculty seminars or workshops is too general to be helpful.

Elaine Maimon, prolific and generous and articulate though she is, offers in writing only these three essential topics for the first workshop: “the design of clear and productive writing assignments, ways to respond helpfully and fairly to student papers at various stages of the writing process, and the use of short, ungraded writing activities that make writing an expected and inevitable part of the teaching and learning process” (1980, p. 9). These philosophically sound remarks, however, do not really present another teacher with specific guidelines. In fact, Maimon’s primary advice is “invite an outsider” to conduct the first meeting, obviously good counsel when money is available.

Still, many WAC programs have been implemented following Maimon’s first essential topic: the design of clear and productive writing assignments. For example,
writing workshops at Skidmore College have concentrated on assignment giving. Early in the term workshop participants bring a short writing assignment, one appropriate for entry level students in the course. If possible, they also bring objects unique to their discipline: "a geologist brings some rock samples and a question about classification; an art historian brings a chapter from a textbook, a painting or a statue, and a question about the period to which it might likely belong." Then the teachers assume the role of students and try to write responses to the assignments of teachers outside their discipline. Joan Graham reports that the experiment is valuable (first) for building "a sense of community" among the teachers and (second) for recreating for them the "uncertainty and anxiety of student writers when they address new kinds of tasks" (Smith, 1983, p. 18).

John Dick and Robert Esch, who have led faculty workshops at the University of Texas at El Paso, practice a more systematic approach to the topic of writing assignments across the disciplines. They begin by investigating essential writings suggested by their cross-discipline colleagues, "both popular and scholarly articles," as well as "grant proposals, reports, and informative writing" the teachers have done themselves. Dick and Esch's purpose, to discover "normative professional behavior in alien fields," is accomplished by their scrutiny of nomenclature, purpose, audience, style, and context in all the samples they receive.
Then the two privately analyze sample assignments, and at a later workshop they "play the role of students" and "ask detailed, sometimes naive, questions . . . and take notes much as students would" in efforts to complete the assignments. This clarification of assignment-giving and of disciplinary expectations in writing is the impetus for important cross-disciplinary communication (1985, p. 180).

James Howard, a frequent workshop leader for high school and college teachers, also emphasizes assignment-giving. His workshop strategy is for each participant to develop a plan for writing in one class, a plan shaped by these guidelines: making every assignment "worthwhile . . . in the sense of helping students learn content" and making assignments "unmistakably clear and realistic." To test these standards, Howard advocates that teachers do assignments themselves, after which they can "determine the criteria for marking the papers and can make those criteria available" when the assignment is given. The writing of the assignments is important also, says Howard, because most teachers have had little writing experience and "do little writing now." Also, another justification of workshops on assignment giving is that most teachers too often depend on "recording, tracing, and illustrating" (as Howard says, just "learning history") rather than analyzing, imagining, and synthesizing ("learning from history") (1983, pp. 6-29).
Anne J. Herrington from Johnson State College, Johnson, Vermont, has directed a WAC program which combines the assignment-giving emphasis and the writing-to-learn emphasis. Sponsored by an external grant, "each year a group of twelve faculty participants [receive] release time from one course to participate in a one-week summer seminar and monthly meetings each semester and to redesign one course each semester experimenting with the ways writing could be used in that course". (1981, p. 380). The group starts their summer work with their course objectives and then discusses ways to achieve the objectives through writing assignments which include a "full rhetorical context (topic, purpose, and audience)." Once the semester starts, participants use the monthly meetings to analyze the ways students have responded to the assignments and to refine or to create new assignments. In evaluating the students' papers, the group discusses "specific strategies for evaluating." Herrington emphasizes the importance of establishing criteria in advance, including telling how the assignment addresses an objective; treating all steps of writing as critical to the process; and sharing student writing with the class to increase the attention to content. Herrington's workshop format is admittedly heavily dependent on Janet Emig, particularly as writing provides connections and is "active, engaged, and self-rhythmed" (1981, p. 382).
Hunter College, a branch of City University of New York, has implemented WAC with a workshop plan similar to Herrington's except, according to Ann Raimes, Hunter's faculty deliberately has chosen not to use intensive summer or weekend workshops. Raimes reports that the teachers prefer having workshops when they have access to their "real students" as they are in the process of doing "real writing" (1980, p. 796). The seventeen faculty members in the initial program received "one course each of grant-funded released time to participate in a weekly seminar throughout a whole semester" and spent their time together designing assignments, criticizing each other's assignments, and arguing over ways to improve student writing (1980, p. 797). Positive results of their regular exchanges were that the discipline teachers all agreed that they would add writing-to-learn assignments to each major unit of instruction, the English teachers agreed to make assignments that involved "a skillful interweaving of readings" form other disciplines, and the entire group petitioned their administration for "clearer course prerequisites, departmental curricular changes, . . . and publicly-stated, college-wide policies on the amount of writing normally expected in different types of courses" (1980, p. 799).

The workshops led by Toby Fulwiler include discussion of improving writing assignments but also concentrate on Maimon's third suggested topic—short ungraded writing that
facilitates learning. Moreover, Fulwiler has written so specifically about his work that a clear picture of the workshops is available. His method reflects his philosophy: "that all teachers are language teachers, that language and thought are intimately related, that writing serves many roles in the learning process, that reading and writing are the center of the curriculum, and that there are no quick fixes" (1980).

He brings the philosophy to life in his workshops. He is realistic enough to know that most teachers come to WAC activities to learn "how to banish forever bad spelling and comma splices" and that they likely have never articulated specifically their concerns about student writing or their uncertainties about how to address them. So Fulwiler spends time in Workshop I exploring. He has teachers list problems in their students' writing, and he puts all the problems on a blackboard as they read aloud. Then he asks that those problems be categorized and encourages discussion of how different teachers deal with the problems. As they talk, Fulwiler invariably sees that "a genuine dialogue ... begins, with participants addressing writing problems with concrete, practical suggestions, ... talking to each other about an issue of mutual concern" (1981, p. 57). Cheryl Peters of Houston Community College says that Fulwiler's use of that approach "caused fireworks" among the HCC faculty, because some felt threatened with other teachers' ideas;
others were so inspired that they began to push for immediate "across-the-board" change (1986). Fulwiler does not aim for confrontation, of course, but confesses that sometimes the "particular solutions . . . offered" are "not too important" in this first session. What matters is the exchange, even the disagreement, if it shows that writing is a complex and complicated subject: that spelling drills will not solve lack of coherence, that "the 'solution' to a 'motivation' problem is far different from that of an 'editing' problem," that problems such as "poor assignment giving" may be "teacher-centered," that other problems such as "class loads" may be "institution-centered" (1981, p. 57).

When discussions lead participants to acknowledge the ideas just described, Fulwiler insists that they do some informal writing in their journals. Recording their discoveries about the complexities of the writing problems they face forces them to commit to paper important new ideas. Other writings in Workshop I enforce other points. Fulwiler often divides the teachers into small groups of five and has each group do this assignment:

Your task is to explain why you attended this writing workshop to a variety of audiences. Please divide the task so that each of you writes to one of the following audiences:

1. Yourself, in a journal or diary entry
2. A close or trusted friend

3. A colleague who is not here (who is not a close friend)

4. A journal or magazine in your discipline

5. The head of your institution

Fulwiler asks each person in the group to write "one or two substantial paragraphs" and then to read the paragraphs aloud to the rest of the group, explaining how choices were made to accomplish the task, choices such as where to start, what to say, which words to include. Fulwiler leaves the groups to discover on their own "the specific language features (tone, style, emphasis) which identify each particular audience." As the teachers discuss the subject and articulate their own writing problems, they come to realize how their writing has made possible discussion with relative strangers of new or at least heretofore unexpressed ideas (1981, p. 59). The first workshop ends with participants summarizing in their journals the ideas they have found valuable.

Workshop II builds directly on the uses of journals in Workshop I. Fulwiler asks participants to look back at their writings, to summarize, to define, to reflect on ways journals can be used in teaching. He asks participants to freewrite and to brainstorm, and with practice and discussion coming together, teachers begin to ask about ways to explain journals to students, about frequency of
requiring them, about how to grade them. Once the discussion reaches this point," says Fulwiler, "the workshop has turned a corner" (1981, p. 60). Teachers who have already practiced ways to use journals accept more readily his suggestions that they think of ways to accomplish one of their teaching objectives by using journals.

Workshop III focuses of Britton's theory about the importance of expressive writing. Most teachers have no trouble understanding the concept of expressive writing—that it is "close to speech, informal, personal, speculative"—but they may have never "considered expressive writing important." Fulwiler believes that it is critical for workshop participants to see that expressive writing is almost like the thinking process itself, that it is invaluable for overcoming writer's block, and that it can be a "powerful, dependable" tool for invention and thus for thinking independently. Fulwiler argues, in fact, that expressive writing may be the most critical component of writing across the curriculum for its uses in stimulating thought, whether or not any other writing occurs in the course. And an especially "attractive feature" is that this writing "should not be critically judged nor graded." Once workshop participants look back over their journals and think about how they themselves use expressive writing, they often see that there are some concrete possibilities for
expressive writing in their classrooms. The theory in Workshop III is the foundation for all the work that follows in implementing WAC (1981, p. 59).

After the theory, Workshop IV emphasizes action again as participants are asked to "read and respond to a piece of student writing." Fulwiler often asks teachers to send in advance two samples of what they consider good and bad student writing. He selects two and duplicates copies for the group. Each participant jots down in journal format a personal observation about the paper's strengths and weaknesses and some suggestions for improvement. Then participants form groups of three and "agree on a consensus response which would help the student most in rewriting." Next the large group reassembles and shares responses and actually looks at each other's suggestions. Fulwiler is careful at this point to emphasize that participants strive for helpful suggestions, and the workshop ends when the agreed-upon recommendations are written on the board. A group of biology teachers offered Fulwiler this list:

1. Point out strengths, as well as weaknesses, in each paper handed back.

2. Focus on one or two problems at a time rather than insisting that students learn and correct everything in one draft.
3. Be specific when commenting about what is wrong on a paper; what, exactly, can a student do to make it better?

4. Ask for revision prior to grading if you want the student to keep on learning.

5. Be aware when you make a writing assignment whether you want to a) find out what the student already knows, or b) enhance his or her learning experience.

6. Hold conferences with students who have the most difficulty writing your assignments (1981, p. 62).

As instructive as those guidelines are, Fulwiler says the real value of the workshop is the confidence that teachers across the curriculum gain in their ability to help students with writing problems.

Finally, Workshop V calls for participants themselves to write something, preferably "a piece of writing based on personal experience," to "share that writing with other participants, . . . and to listen to critical commentary." Fulwiler uses Peter Elbow's suggestion about a "ten-minute freewrite" on "one experience you had with writing . . . or a learning experience you remember well." Then participants have twenty minutes to get the piece ready to read to an audience of two other participants. These groups of three hear each paper twice. After each reading the listeners "respond orally only in these two ways: what struck you as
interesting [and] where did you want more information" (1981, p. 62). The role reversal of this session helps teachers re-experience the stress of writing on demand and having that writing evaluated. Once the small groups have completed their tasks, the entire group reassembles to react in journals to this role reversal. Once these views are on paper, Fulwiler opens discussions on how the experience might affect their future writing assignments.

Specifically, he leads the group to see the value of idea generation in freewriting, the "importance of shaping toward an audience," the benefits of peer responses, the difficulty of pressured writing, the "stimulation ... from having one's writing well received." Finally, Fulwiler leads the participants back to a consideration of the original problems from Workshop I to see if the workshops have suggested any further solutions. His last writing assignment is a freewrite on how any of the tasks they have done can be used in their own classrooms (1981, p. 63).

Even though the logic of Fulwiler's dynamic learn-by-doing strategies explains his success in faculty workshops, one cannot overlook his concern that individual teachers not be intimidated or alienated by the presence of a writing specialist. Fulwiler says his introduction of the composing process "experientially" allows him "to draw consistently on knowledge and ideas already present among the participants" (CEA, 1981, p. 28). Moreover, he insists that discipline
teachers in fact have the best chance to motivate students because of their built-in topics. Another important but often overlooked factor in his success is that he invariably conducts meetings away from the institution. As a guest specialist for WAC activities, Fulwiler requests an "off-campus, over-night, retreat-like" setting, a "neutral ground, removed from mailboxes, telephones, students, classes, secretaries, and families" (1981, p. 56).

Obviously, then, funding becomes crucial to successful implementation. [With the external funding of grants, twelve such two-day retreats have been held for the Michigan Tech faculty in the "pine-scented wilderness that surrounds Alberta" (1984, p. 119).] But even when the funds are gone, Fulwiler says that Michigan Tech strives to retain its faculty's enthusiasm with "guest speakers, winter workshops, discipline-specific seminars, departmental mailings" and adds that writing across the curriculum programs require "thought and care" to survive, with or without external funds (1984, p. 121).

Moreover, Fulwiler is experienced enough to caution that "writing workshops cannot inspire or transform unmotivated, inflexible, or highly-suspicious faculty members" (1984, p. 115). That reality has been admirably addressed by Randall Freisinger of Michigan Tech. He reports that WAC has "stirred up considerable controversy, most of it surrounding the concept of expressive writing"
because rumors spread that English teachers are "advocating undisciplined, mawkish self-expression as a substitute for rigorous referential essays and reports." To counter these grumblings, invariably repeated and believed by non-participants, the WAC committee at Michigan Tech (without Fulwiler, now at the University of Vermont) has "undertaken a series of departmental workshops" at which expressive writing is explained and its connection to serious, formal writing verified (1980, p. 160). Freisinger has seen first hand at these meetings how deeply engrained is the "concept of language . . . [as] communicative or transactional," a concept which ignores not only "a significant part of the composing process" but also the "contribution of the expressive function to learning and the final written product" (1980, p. 161). Freisinger warns that his widely-held view of writing makes WAC seem "subversive," a "threat to a fairly closed system to a whole way of behaving, and . . . will probably be resented by some . . . of the participants" (1980, p. 165).

To be prepared, workshop leaders should be thoroughly aware of the philosophy of Moffett, Piaget, Emig, Vygotsky, and Shaughnessy as well as composition research, should be (in fact) "well-trained composition specialists" who are also diplomats, ready to face hostility. The atmosphere for workshops must be conducive to process, "ideally spanning several days of fairly intensive work." Freisinger follows
Fulwiler's methods, specifically writing activities and discussions to "broaden the participants' concept of the functions of language and the composing process" (1980, p. 165).

Conclusion

Literature about writing across the curriculum reflects a hearty belief that writing can indeed affect positively the growth of students, teachers, and institutions. Students required to write regularly in all courses, both to learn facts and to communicate them, gain fluency with language and control of content of the disciplines. They also acquire skills and confidence to work independently. Teachers of those students gain renewed professional enthusiasm as they scrutinize goals and design assignments to achieve those goals. They also establish rapport with colleagues in other departments, thus opening doors for intellectual exchange and stimulation; and of course, institutions where these activities occur are revitalized by the awareness that stated purposes are indeed being accomplished.

The most promising theme of the literature is that this process of invigoration, like the writing process itself, is recursive rather than linear, with stages of growth and stages of incubation, and these stages are both natural and necessary. What follows in Chapter IV is a description of early stages of a writing across the curriculum program.
Notes

1 What follows is a selected list of these textbooks:


2 In a letter sent to Maimon 20 September 1979 and reproduced by Maimon for writer of this study.
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Writing Across the Curriculum: Manual for Teachers.  

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This chapter presents the methods and procedures used to obtain and analyze the data of this study, the major purpose of which was to describe the work of developing a faculty orientation for a writing-across-the-curriculum program at Tarrant County Junior College, Northwest Campus, Fort Worth, Texas.

Population

Volunteer members of the faculty at Tarrant County Junior College Northwest participated in this study. The number of members of the so-called "Writing Committee" (of which the researcher was chairperson) fluctuated from meeting to meeting because all but four of the total 24 were full-time faculty with responsibilities for five classes each as well as other committee responsibilities at the campus.

The group included teachers from all four divisions of the campus: Life, Physical, and Social Sciences Division; Humanities Division; Business Division; and Aeronautical and Industrial Technology Division. In addition, the Dean of Instruction and Student Development Services, two
librarians, and a counselor were regular participants. Part
time faculty, various administrators, and visitors from
another campus and another college joined the group on
occasion.

Methodology

The purposes of this study were realized through the
methods of qualitative research. Specifically, methods of
the case study—with its emphasis on what Bogdan and Biklen
phrase as "how things happen rather than whether a
particular outcome [is] reached" (1980, p. 196)—provided
the flexible design needed to pursue the aims of this study
where events, reactions, and responses were uncontrolled and
participants were volunteers. The components of qualitative
research—questionnaires, unstructured interviews, and,
collections of documents—were the basic tools of research.

Procedures

To achieve specific purpose one—a description of the
number and kinds of writing assignments made at Tarrant
County Junior College, Northwest Campus—a survey was
administered and the responses analyzed. Respondents
received survey results.

To achieve specific purpose two—an analysis of the
structure of specific writing assignments made across the
curriculum—individuals and groups identified in the survey
were asked to submit copies of their writing assignments.
Those assignments were studied, and suggestions were made at
informal meetings with individuals and at one meeting of a cross-disciplinary group.

To achieve specific purpose three--group and individual interviews about writing problems at the campus--eleven different meetings of the group were held, six of which were successfully recorded for transcription and analysis. In addition, there were unrecorded conferences with individual teachers about course and discipline-specific problems.

To achieve specific purpose four--a description of a level of writing competence that faculty at the campus would agree on as "good"--the committee discussed students' papers collected from faculty members.

Specific purpose five--making available to faculty current research and practices of other teachers in their disciplines where writing-across-the-curriculum programs are established--was achieved during the committee meetings when the chairperson provided summaries of her research as possible solutions to writing problems being discussed.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER IV
MAJOR ACTIVITIES

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the events that occurred in the introduction of the concept of writing across the curriculum to faculty at Tarrant County Junior College, Northwest Campus. This sequence of events closely follows similar events at other campuses, summarized in Chapter II; first, a survey to gather information about writing assignments on the campus and then a series of individual and group interviews to discuss writing with interested faculty volunteers. All these activities proceeded with the permission and support of Judith Carrier, Dean of Instruction and Student Development Services.

Data Collection

As a by-product of the national writing crisis, the writing-across-the-curriculum movement on college and university campuses claims a number of positive results, including the cross-discipline communication and cooperation it can elicit. On many campuses the first step of this communication process is to gather information about the writing assignments made by faculty members in all disciplines. Only then can a coordinator of a writing program know where to begin in initiating a campus-wide effort to effect change. A survey of faculty can provide
some of this information as well as a picture of faculty attitudes about writing.

Procedure

Such a survey (copy in Appendix A) was sent in April 1986 to the faculty of Tarrant County Junior College, Northwest Campus. The survey was designed to explore faculty attitudes about writing and learning, to discover what kind of assignments the faculty routinely make, to see if the faculty use standardized formats for writing assignments, to learn if they penalize students for writing errors, and to discover the major problems faculty members perceive in students' writing. The two-page questionnaire was sent to 80 full-time and 41 part-time teachers. The resulting data provide a valuable description of writing requirements at the campus and of attitudes of the faculty.

Results

Of the 121 surveys sent, 60 were returned, 55 by full-time and 5 by part-time faculty. By academic divisions, the number of returns was as follows:

9 Aeronautical and Industrial Technology (AIT)
12 Business (BS)
14 Humanities (HUM)
21 Life, Physical, and Social Sciences (LPSS)
4 Staff (Counselors who teach; a librarian who receives samples of students' writing)
After the first question—"What courses do you teach?"—teachers were asked to write responses to two questions about writing and the relationship between writing and mastery of course content. Table 1 summarizes those responses.

Table 1

Summary of Responses:

The Relationship Between Writing and Mastery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>DIVISIONS</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you believe writing should be an important part of most college courses?</td>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>Yes 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>No 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HUM</td>
<td>Response 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LPSS</td>
<td>Other 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Comment 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you see a significant connection between the quality of student writing and student mastery of course content?</td>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>Yes 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>No 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HUM</td>
<td>Response 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LPSS</td>
<td>Other 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Comment 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 54 positive responses to question number 2 represented 91% of the total responses. In addition, three respondents counted in "Other Comments" qualified positive answers with "yes, but not in accounting" (1) and "yes, except in math" (2).

To the related question (number 3) about the connection between quality of writing and student mastery of content, replies were less consistent. Although 43 respondents (73%)
said "yes," four said "no." Eight made other comments: 
"not consistently," "not in math" (3), "not necessarily in biology" (2), "in most courses," and "before writing, reading is the key"—and that last comment was made not by a reading teacher but by a teacher of horticulture. More predictably, the non-positive responses cluster in math and business courses, where students are required to manipulate numbers and keyboards more often than words.

Descriptions of Assignments

A second series of questions addressed assignments.

The following tables summarize those answers:

One wonders if the format of the survey accounts for the "no responses" (13%) to these questions. Perhaps the questions needed more white space around them to preclude the chance of their being overlooked.

TABLE 2

Summary of Responses:

Frequency of Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>DIVISIONS</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you make writing assignments in your courses?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(If no, disregard the following questions except for #11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUM</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPSS</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 60
The 48 positive responses represent 81% of the total answers. Of interest is the fact that two science teachers (biology, anatomy, physiology) indicated that they make no writing assignments. Either they wanted to short-cut their response time, as suggested in the parenthetic instruction in the question, or they do not consider science laboratories to be examples of writing. Similarly, one of the "no" responses came from the accounting and business law teacher, who nonetheless checked that she gave short-answer tests and later mentioned spelling as a problem her students exhibit. The survey instrument did not define "writing," so these three negative replies could represent a misunderstanding of the term "writing." Other negative replies come from teachers of math (3), business keyboards (3), and engineering graphics (1). The two "other comment" responses came from a reading teacher, who "only occasionally" gives vocabulary tests, and a mathematics teacher, who makes writing assignments "not routinely."
Table 3

Summary of Responses:

Kinds of Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>RESPONSES BY DIVISIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Which of the following assignments do you routinely make during a semester?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please check.</td>
<td>Tot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review or report</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal essay</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary or paraphrase</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab report</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay exam</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-answer test</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business instruments</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 51 reporting assignments

*Explanations of Other
AIT - workbooks, logbooks
BS - resumes, letters; computer program and system design (2); proforma for bank loans in small business management
HUM - newspaper writing, feature stories; comparison of two art works, critical analyses of art works; critiques of literary essays; translations (Spanish to English)
LPSS - detailed outline of semester project in psychology; article reviews; math students asked to explain in writing their mathematical steps

The information reported in Table 3 is not surprising: short-answer tests are given by 30 of the respondents; essay exams by 26; research papers by 24; book reviews or reports by 22; summaries or paraphrases by 15; journals, personal essays, and lab reports by 11 each. Thus, the most frequent kinds of writing are primarily transactional; that is,
writing designed to communicate course content to the examiner. In contrast, the personal essay and journal, assignments which typically encourage expressive or personal writing, are required by only 15 (29.4%) of the 51 teachers who require writing. (Seven faculty members require both essays and journals.) And when one excludes from that 15 the respondents from psychology/counselling (5) and English (3)—those who traditionally assign expressive topics—the percentage of teachers who assign topics which allow the exploration of ideas is lowered significantly (13.3%).

Table 4

Summary of Responses:

Formats for Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>RESPONSES BY DIVISIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you use a standardized format for these assignments?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES__ NO__</td>
<td>AIT 2  BS 5  HUM 5  LPSS 9  Staff 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(If YES, would you be willing to provide samples of these formats to me?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES__ NO__</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(If NO, would you be interested in having me help create standardized formats for these assignments?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES__ NO__</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4, continued

7. If you require a Yes  2  1  6  4  1 research paper, do No  2  5  4  7 you require a specific form of documentation? YES  NO
(If YES, what form?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AIT</th>
<th>BS</th>
<th>HUM</th>
<th>LPSS</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turabian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of questions 6 and 7 was really twofold: first of course to enhance the picture of assignments across the curriculum, particularly to discern any commonality in format or requirements. Second, the questions deliberately invite further communication about cross-disciplinary assignments already in practice. Thus the data supplied by the replies are limited for statistical purposes, and are in fact of questionable validity: there were more replies to question 7 than there were teachers who reported assigning research papers.

Description of Writing Errors and Faculty Responses

The next three questions on the survey concerned errors in the writing assignments and teacher responses to those errors. The following tables summarize those replies.
Table 5

Summary of Responses:
Reactions to Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>RESPONSES BY DIVISIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. When you grade writing assignments, do you deduct points for</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>punctuation errors, including fragments and run-on sentences?</strong></td>
<td>AIT 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Usage errors?</strong></td>
<td>Yes 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paragraphing problems such as lack of development,</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lack of coherence,</strong></td>
<td>Yes 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>lack of unity?</strong></td>
<td>No 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faculty members added more comments to this question than to any other on the survey; in fact, teachers from every division except business amplified their yes/no responses. From horticulture was this note: "I would like to [deduct points], but do not feel it would be fair to the diverse, open-door population I teach." Two teachers from the humanities division remarked that they do not deduct points but that they "bring errors to students' attention," and a psychology teacher also said "no" to the questions, adding "I correct errors." A counselor also volunteered, "I correct every error." In social science, teachers qualified their answers with "usually" (3) and "sometimes" (3). A history teacher explained his view that "correctness is the
responsibility of the students. I tell them they must write without errors." Another history teacher said, "I do not deduct points for individual errors, but the overall grade is lower."

Table 6

Summary of Responses:

Marking Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>RESPONSES BY DIVISIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Would you like to see all teachers on this campus mark writing assignments using the same code, regardless of discipline?</td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opinions about this question were almost equally divided, and written reactions revealed teachers' ambivalence: question marks (3), checks of both answer options (5), "maybe" (2), "possibly," "no opinion," and "mixed feelings." Two teachers articulated concerns. One said such a code would be "unfair" to students; another expressed in all capital letters his disagreement with any effort to restrict his academic freedom.

The final question about assignments was an open-ended request for teachers to describe the writing problems their students exhibit. The diversity of responses included 39 distinct errors ranging from "split infinitives" to
"penmanship" to "no logical progression of ideas" and "no content." Although the "total gamut" of errors listed almost defies organization, teachers did consistently note certain errors in mechanics and in content which are summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7**

**Summary of Responses:**

**Kinds of Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>DIVISIONS</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Describe briefly the writing problems your students exhibit in their writing.</td>
<td>AIT 4 1 2 1 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BS 7 6 1 4 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HUM 8 3 2 1 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LPSS 10 2 5 4 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff 3 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Express</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Org</th>
<th>Coh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUM</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPSS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sp = spelling; Punc = punctuation; Frag = fragment; SS = sentence structure
Express. = expressing themselves; P = paragraphing; Idea = no content/support; Org = organization; Coh = coherence

In trying to find consensus in the welter of responses to this question and to find meaning in the subjective use of terms (i.e., "broken sentence," "fragment," "incomplete ideas," "sentence punctuation," and "sentence structure"), one almost wishes for a question format with specific errors listed for checking—a short-answer test! On the other
hand, the open-ended question may have elicited more honesty and more effort at describing the problems. After listing errors, teachers often added complaints about students who "cannot write technically correct papers." The expressions of concern not only provided information about the writing at the campus but also led to the final question.

Table 8

Summary of Responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESPONSES BY DIVISIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Would you be interested in participating in an interdisciplinary group to study the writing needs of the college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although 5 faculty members made no response and 28 responded "no," 24 indicated an interest in joining a committee to study the needs as reflected in this survey. In addition, 3 answered "possibly." A chemistry teacher added this comment: "Who has time? But we need this so desperately, count on me."

Discussion

Given the limitations imposed by the small numbers in this survey, the problems of self-reporting, and the diversity of courses taught at the school, the results of
the survey may (to use Eblen's terms) "raise more questions than they answer" (1983, p. 347). For example, one wonders how different the result would have been with the data of the twenty full-time faculty who did not reply, because ten of that number are in the Humanities and the Life, Physical, and Social Sciences divisions, where more writing typically occurs than in the other two divisions. Also, one wonders how to initiate a volunteer campus-wide writing/learning program when many classes (at least forty in an average semester) are taught by part-time faculty, only five of whom responded. If that lack of response conveys either lack of interest or a feeling of being outside the mainstream of campus concerns, then large numbers of students will be unaffected by a writing program. Clearly part-time faculty must be included in any effort improve to writing on the campus.

Granting those question, one still finds helpful information in the results of this survey, including facts about the amounts and kinds of writing being required and about the teachers requiring it. For instance, the number of research assignments impresses, particularly given the community college setting with its open door and its non-traditional emphasis on aeronautics, technical skills, and business courses. Equally impressive is the number of book reports, book reviews, and essay exams. And even if that writing is primarily transactional, it is no more so than
has been found in studies of larger, more selective school systems [See Britton, Emig, Eblen (1984), and Pearce (1984), for instance]. Moreover, the faculty of the English Department will benefit from information about the writing assignments of colleagues in other areas and about their expressed willingness to cooperate, a willingness evidenced not only in the high percentage of return but also in their providing more information than the survey asked for. More important, over one-third of the respondents (teachers with responsibilities for five classes each semester) indicated interest in joining an interdisciplinary writing committee.

The responses also suggest the direction one may take to initiate a writing-across-the-curriculum program on the campus. First must be learned what constitutes "good writing." Only one respondent mentioned that "some students write very well." If good writing is both mechanically correct and convincingly expressed, the writing committee can pursue two courses. One, faculty members can be encouraged to do more than "bring errors to students' attention," if indeed surface errors such as split infinitives and misplaced capital letters are as troubling as the survey results suggest. The faculty may need to penalize students' grades for repeated misspellings of terms relevant to content, for example; the teachers may need specific, even hands-on instruction in tutorial aids available for students at the campus; teachers may want
workshops on ways to mark and evaluate writing. At the same
time, the committee can concentrate on quality of content in
student writing and on ways to achieve that quality.

Teachers may have to discover ways to help students learn
how to read texts and study their disciplines before those
students can write correct, well-developed prose about it.

Collecting Documents

Once the information was gathered, results were sent in
a letter (Appendix A) to all respondents and to campus
administrators. Additionally, specific groups of teachers
identified in the survey were sent letters (copies in
Appendix A). Teachers who had indicated that they regularly
assigned book reviews and term papers were asked to send
copies of those assignments to see if any teachers were
requiring the same titles or the same documentation format.
Such information could encourage some cross-disciplinary
discussion and might also lead to the development of one
campus-wide style sheet.

The requests produced an array of documents: two long,
hand-written letters to the researcher explaining the kind
of papers required in psychology and in chemistry; a three-
page list of titles for required book reports in a sophomore
psychology course, with a note that format instruction are
"given orally"; a four-page handout with specific
instruction and criteria for a public-speaking assignment in
speech; copies of "mid-management book reporting procedures"
and a project report outline; copies of written and oral theme assignments in Horticulture I and II; instructions for the writing of abstracts and two different group research reports in interpreting for the deaf; instructions for research projects in history and government; and two "guides" for preparing book reviews in government. (In addition, an economics teacher from another campus who had heard about this request sent his "guidelines" for an in-class, one-page research project—a very detailed, inventive approach to control plagiarism and still accomplish some of the goals of formal research.)

Perusal of the documents revealed almost no uniformity in requirements across the curriculum. Neither in documentation format, nor in length or kind of instructions, nor in clarity of criteria for grading were the documents comparable. No common titles were listed. The preponderance of information in these documents was phrased as emphatic admonition: "you must establish the thesis"; "you must not quote excessively"; "you must not write a research paper--this is a report"; "your papers will not be accepted after the due date." In fairness, of course, one cannot judge the assignment-giving solely by these few responses, for most teachers give extended oral instructions.

Because of the diversity of the documents, the researcher did not respond officially to these two groups;
but to each individual she urged the use of student samples from past semesters—perhaps making these available in the library—so that assignment-giving could focus more on content and research techniques and less on cosmetic concerns such as width of margins or wording of title pages. In addition, the researcher made assignment-giving techniques a topic of at least brief discussion at almost every subsequent committee meeting.

The Initial WAC Meeting

Another group of teachers identified by responses to the survey became the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee (also the Writing Committee). This group received a letter (Appendix A), notifying them of a formal organizational meeting. Administrators were invited as guests, refreshments were served, and there was a promised dismissal time. (One quickly senses the advantage of serving food and limiting meeting time.) Thirteen people gathered in N401, an informal meeting room furnished with relaxing sofas and chairs, and the meeting began promptly. Three tape recorders were set up in corners of the room. The transcript of that meeting follows:

Tahita Fulkerson: I appreciate very much your being here today. As I have commented, we are very lucky on our campus to have a dean who’s interested in serious academic matters. And I think writing is a serious academic matter. I have two things that I want us to do today as a group. The first is to see if we can discuss the kinds of problems that are troubling us and our students—whether they are writing or thinking or learning—whatever the problems are that you perceive. And then we will see if we can come to some agreement on what it is that we want our students to be
able to do as writers, as thinkers, as learners. And then from that I hope that I can set us up an agenda for a later meeting. And we can then make some progress this year. I think there are some easy things that we can do that will help our students improve in ways that will be helpful to them and inspiring to us.

E. R., let me start with you. Share with the group the problems that are most concerning to you and your students—either with their writing or their learning in your class, or their thinking.

E. R. Milner: The main thing I am interested in is that I require in all my classes a research project—1500 words, 6 pages typewritten. And in government classes it’s about anything in Texas politics and in history it’s about anything in Tarrant County history. And in the majority of the classes, I would say more than 50%, are spelling problems, bad sentence construction, bad verb use, very weak sentence construction all the way through. So to me, I don’t know if it’s because we have encouraged the high schools to socially promote people and just get them out so you make room for another warm body, or if it’s just this generation and this particular group of young people are having trouble with language. That’s been my perception. And it’s most apparent. I can understand there being a problem when they write an essay under test pressure, because you don’t worry about sentence construction in an essay. But when you write a research project that you have to re-do and type and turn in for a fifth of your final grade, they’re either careless, or they just aren’t capable. So I’m hoping you English folks will get them all squared away.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I thinks that’s a big job for us English folks. So you’re not finding any problems, then, with their mastery of your material?

E. R. Milner: No, but then I’m a simple person; I keep it on a simple level.

Tahita Fulkerson: Okay. Dave, what would you add?

Dave Clinkscale: Well, I would echo what he says with regard to sentence structure, spelling; grammar in general is just abysmal. And this is in spite of repeated promises that I will grade for mechanics as well as content on all of the work that they turn in. I also require written work in each course primarily in Texas government—what I call a project report—when they have to do theirs, go out and involve themselves directly with government in some way, shape, or form, attend a meeting, go to court, ride with a
police officer, work on a campaign, what have you. I have
then asked them to write up an essay which can be a brief
description of what they did, but the major focus of that
essay is for them to react to what they did and what they
saw and heard, and to analyze it and to write their own
feelings and thoughts about that. And I have found that
that is probably the one thing that students across the
board cannot do, is to express their own thoughts. They, I
don't know whether it's because they have always been
conditioned in many of their English classes to give a
citation, to always rely on some other authority, or what,
but I have repeatedly told them, "Only a small portion of
your essay may be an actual description of what happened.
The vast majority of the essay has got to be your own
delving into the reasons behind what happened, in your
opinion." I said, "This is your opinion. This is an essay;
it is a subjective analysis of what you have seen and
experienced. You can't get a citation for this you know.
You can't go and put a footnote on this. You have to
do something different, strange, and unique; you have to
think." And there is almost a fear of that. That fear
comes across in the writing, where they'll maybe begin a
thought and drop it, you know, and not develop it and not
carry through.

Lynne Hardin: I think that's typical of their speech
pattern.

Dave Clinkscale: Yeah, that's true. That is a problem
that I see, and I deliberately tell them I don't want a
research paper. "I want you to think about this experience
and draw some conclusions that are your own." With rare
exceptions, they really are virtually unable to do that.

Tahita Fulkerson: So they can learn the content of
your course, but they can't provide personal reactions and
unique thought.

Dave Clinkscale: I'm concerned with more than just
content; the content is there to give them the framework.
Okay, I want them to apply the content to their own lives,
and they're not doing it.

Tahita Fulkerson: Okay, that's a big task. Lynne?
Elaborate on what you were saying about speech patterns and
anything else you want to say.

Lynne Hardin: Well, I just feel that my students write
haltingly which is exactly the way most of them speak. They
have these interrupted speech patterns, and we're seeing
that more and more. Where I realize that I used to say when
I was a kid "Holy cow!" and things like that in the middle
of a sentence, and my mother backhanded me for it about
twice and that was the end of that noise. But this is
ingrained into the current speech patterns, and I feel to me
it's showing up. They might write those same hesitation
words, but their thought ends right there. And they go on
to something else, and it is an incomplete sentence.
They're speaking in incomplete sentences as well. Now I
have several different kinds of writing required in my
courses, but for example, for majors chemistry students on
every exam there are a certain number of "Find and
Illustrate"s and there is usually one question that will be
at least a page or page and a half of written discussion.
And some of the students can hold their attention span long
enough to do fairly well on the find's because they will
memorize two or three sentences that go with it. I would
say at least 40% of them can't even write those canned out
of their brain in complete sentences. An so I'm concerned
about sentence structure as a whole. And then the very idea
of knowing that there's more than one kind of paragraph,
sometimes when I mention such nasty terms as inverted
paragraph structure, they look at you like you've slapped
them. Now that doesn't mean that it isn't being covered in
English; it just never did appear to carry over to any other
subject area.

Dave Clinkscale: That's a real problem; there is a
general perception, I think, that English is what you do
from 9:05 to 10:00, Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

Lynne Hardin: And history and government and chemistry
are not related.

Dave Clinkscale: Yeah. And a couple of years ago, I
had a student, when I was going through an explanation of
all this on the first day, stand up and say, "Hell, this is
not an English class!" and go down to drop. You know,
because I had told them that I was going to count off for
construction as well as content on papers, and I was glad to
see him go.

Lynne Hardin: The other area where I have a great deal
of trouble: because chemistry is highly mathematical, I
encourage counselling to place our English-as-a-second-
language students who are mathematical and science genii
right on into something like chemistry, and those poor
babies have a great deal of difficulty in writing my exams.
You know when it comes to math calculations, it's the most
beautiful thing I ever saw in my life, you know, they're
incredible. But it really does hurt them a lot to painfully
memorize what they need for my discussion questions which
they set about doing. They will fix their little study
cards, and they will bring them in and have me edit them,
and they will get it down just, and they will try to
memorize it letter by letter and get it on a test right and,
of course, they left out two letters, and I'm going "Ho, Ho,
Ho, Ho, Ho!" But it's very difficult for them. But I've
accepted that as a way of life because they have to have
something to take when they enroll. And they can handle
most of my course easily; it's just that writing is so hard
on them. But they just need practice.

Tahita Fulkerson: That may be the key word for all of
this.

Lynne Hardin: I think it is. I think that's one of
the very desperate keys is do they actually do enough
writing.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, it's clear they don't do
enough writing if the only time they're asked to write is
from 9:05 to 10:00. The writing has to be in all the
courses, and it has to be, I think, more than on an exam. I
think they have to have informal opportunities to write in
every class period. If it's just write a sentence
definition, if those ESL students or those who are native
speakers who find definitions foreign, could have practice
writing those, where you wouldn't have to grade them, maybe,
where they could just practice writing, practice getting in
touch with their own understandings of the definitions.

Lynne Hardin: Well, that's a point well taken. I do a
lot of practice work in class; I just never considered
practice writing.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yeah.

Lynne Hardin: As such.

Tahita Fulkerson: I think that's one of the problems.
Everything that you all are saying suggests that they
understand the content, but maybe do not have enough
experience for the kind of writing you are asking them to
do. And it may be that we'll have to find ways to put more
informal writing into the daily routine of all our courses,
and I don't think we have to grade it all either. Bob, what
do you think?

Bob Bajackson: Well, first of all, I have found that's
all we do in our courses is write. And the first item I
have on my agenda is that I have never found that any of my
students having a problem with the recognition of SVO.
Every one of my students knows the subject, verb, and
object. The problem I have is organization and planning
with those students. And when it gets down to it, all my
students usually tell me, well, of course, they've been in English courses, and they say, "Well, you guys do everything (talking to me), you guys in journalism do everything backwards." We say, "No, no, no. They do it backwards, you know, we do it right." But we start all over, we start with basics, we concentrate on simple, simple sentence structure. One of the problems I have found: I refuse to use the words "write." All of a sudden when I use the word "write" in class, it's writer's block. They tense up, the get nervous, they can't do it, etc. So we use the word communicate. And then that's what we're trying to do. I try and tell my students that what they are doing is communicating a message from one person to many people--mass communications. So, they communicate, and usually my students can communicate, in one shape, matter, or form. I always try and get them in a related area, for instance, if you have a brother or sister, a wife, a girlfriend, etc., and you ever get made at those people, aren't you able to get the message across--exactly what you mean? What words do you use? Only the words that are necessary. And we start with basics, and we work our way up.

I have had a problem with jargon and colloquialism and cliches. And every time I have somebody write a story, they want to put in some kind of cliche, whatever it is. And we scratch it all up, and circle it, and I'm out of red ink, and throw it back at them, and tell them to take it out. Also we have a problem in our writing of people using lazy words. I've found a lot of people that we tell them to study the dictionary, use words in the dictionary, and take out the "goods," the "verys," and the "manys," and all this other kind of stuff that they put in there. Because we don't know how good it is, tell me know many, and this, that, and the other, and the "verys," the "verys" don't tell me anything. So really what we try and do is get them to use colorful verbs, verbs that have a direct meaning, and to identify the subject up front. I hate introductory paragraphs, you know. I want the subject up front. I want names up front, I want the verb, and I want the object. And, of course, we concentrate on very, very short paragraphs as our structure. And we'll tell them why, and we want sentences around 14 words or so. And when I'm finally able to communicate with them, I tell them like in the English classes they're leading up to a climax, we're starting with the climax and working our way back down. And explain why.

And the other part that we have had to work on is transition. In other words, not losing the reader from one paragraph to another. We have to pull them through. You know, I tell all of our students that you can't assume anything. Just look at the first three letters of the word
"assume" and that's exactly what you're going to get. And you have to break it down, you have to drag them by the hand and take the reader right through our style of writing. And, you know, my biggest problem is students getting lost in sentence structure. I have a student that just loves the commas and the semicolons and just gets lost. It's all the way around here, and, honest to goodness, I counted the words, and it was 75 words in one sentence, with a whole bunch of commas and whole bunch of semicolons and I'm saying "Where's the period?!" So we take all that down and break it into different paragraphs, and I'm out of breath, you know, by the time I'm finished reading, and we finally are able to communicate why it is so necessary to make it short and simple and use the action verbs. It takes a while, but they want to impress me. And I tell them, "If you want to impress me, make a simple sentence that is grammatically correct, and let's start there." And that's really our style, and that's what we build from, and that's what we try to build on in our foundation. If I can get the jargon out, then I have a great day; I have a successful day. As again, planning and organization by that student, all my students, they have a problem with that--a tremendous problem of organizing their thoughts, and planning their thoughts. Now I realize in our situation, it is sometimes they might cover a story over at the administration building, and our deadline is that day, but that's training, you know, and we work with that, and we try to get them to organize and think about it. And with the tape recorders that you said you wanted to tape all of this. That's one of the things we really don't want our students to do because they get lazy, and the batteries might go dead, and we want them to think. I have a problem with them and their thinking processes. A lot of people are lazy. They would rather watch TV; I see them watching TV instead of reading a book. That bothers me. And I even tell them "Don't watch TV; listen to the radio, think!" And that's really where I stand on the writing aspect, but we only have, in Reporting I, one examination, that's the final. The rest is their new stories. And the news stories they turn in, circle'em, send'em back to them, and the write them, and go through this process over and over and over.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do they write in every class period?

Bob Bajackson: They write in every one. In the mass communications class we have three exams, but they are required to turn in a weekly summary on a journalism publication. It could be the editorial page of a newspaper. It could be an editors' and publishers' trade magazine. But they have to turn in a weekly summary. And the first class period, "Write! Oh my god! You know, I've got writer's block!" I said, "You haven't even tried yet!" Since I've
taken the word "write" out of my class, my sentence structure, I mean my class planning, then I have found that they have relaxed a little bit more. And we start very slowly. We're on leads. Leads is the most important part of a journalism sentence. And if they've got that, I tell them you can get 50% of the battle. So we take it slow. We also throw them into the fire early so they can learn this under fire, and help work with them.

Tahita Fulkerson: And you see improvement by the end of the semester?

Bob Bajackson: Yes. And we grade, I grade very heavily on improvement, you know, because most of the people that walk into my classroom really have not had much journalism experience. They might have worked on their high school newspaper, but, no offense, if you've seen some of those, you know, it's whew!

Lynne Hardin: They don't have a typewriter.

Bob Bajackson: No, no. None at all.

E. R. Milner: And the typewriter can't spell.

Bob Bajackson: Spell-checker, where it is? But, anyway, that's what we're really after.

Tahita Fulkerson: Okay, good. Well, we're going to go around the room, and we'll all talk. If you want to interrupt any of us, well be sure to do that. Jan?

Jan Mercer: In biology, Tahita, mainly we do a lot of objective testing and when we talk about the makeup tests, they are all written tests. And when we want to scare the students into always making it to the objective tests each week, we say the makeup test is written, it's a discussion test, it's subjective. I see that students do not like to have it; they don't like to write. And so you might call that some motivation. As long as I remember teaching, I always have graded misspelled words with either purple ink or red or green or something. That's just my way of doing any grammatical errors. And I couldn't pass a paper back without marking those things. It's just the way that I do. But as far as talking about writing across disciplines, this is a new thing. And so I just came more as a listener and learner.

Tahita Fulkerson: I'm glad.
Mollie Newcom: You do require, having had some of your students, you do require papers to be written. I'm thinking of the animal paper and the zoo thing.

Tahita Fulkerson: What are animal papers?

Jan Mercer: Most of the time these are off-campus or extra credit type things, and they do have to express themselves. A question will be asked and they will write a paragraph back about that. The animal paper is just really like a term paper, a project where they do an in-depth study of some particular animal before the end of the semester.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you have a format that you require?

Jan Mercer: Yes.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you take off points when you mark their grammar errors?

Jan Mercer: No. I don't. It's a ten point thing if they do what they're told to do on the outline, but I give it back to them with the errors marked, but I don't take off points.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you find that they eliminate those errors, or do they repeat them?

Jan Mercer: I don't usually have the students that long. This is toward the end of the semester. So I don't know the answer to that.

Lynne Hardin: Mine are very consistent. They continue to make the same kind of mistakes.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you take points off?

Lynne Hardin: Yes, in some cases I do, Tahita. Even in spelling because I tell them chemistry itself is a foreign language and the object is to learn those words and terms and you are to be learning how to spell the terms. And when the terms are spelled correctly on the other part of the paper and they simply won't even turn over and look and copy it down right, I really get hacked and start taking off points.

Dave Clinkscale: A lot of the problems I think the students have, it goes back to one thing Bob was saying, they're lazy, okay? Proofreading—I have to tell my students that proofreading is a two-stage process. First you read through and identify any errors and grammar and
spelling and what have you. The second stage, which is really the most important, is that you correct those that you identify. Because I will hand back a paper that will be replete with mistakes, and will have suggested on there gently that maybe they ought to go look up the word "proofread" in the dictionary. And, inevitably, I’ll have someone come up, "But, I proofread it!" And I have to again reiterate that you go through and you see where the mistakes are, and you don't say, "Oh, there's a mistake," and keep going. They object of proofreading is to change what is wrong.

Bob Bajackson: But, see, a lot of people don't have a conception of proofreading. Proofreading is the end of your paper, and this is just a final stage and I'm just going to look at it, and I've proofread, which you haven't. It's just coming out of the paper. You're finished. In essence you feel like because you've written it, and this is the easy part, and what it is is it's really the hardest part, and what we do is that we purposely publish mistakes in our newspaper.

Dave Clinkscale: I wondered.

Bob Bajackson: . . . because, we purposely publish mistakes in our newspaper because it's under the student's name, and they're responsible for proofreading it; and when they see it, and they say, "Oh my god! This went out all over!" and they don't make the mistake anymore. We have a slash session when we take the newspaper and we tear it apart. And then, of course, we do have times when other people do call us and they tear us apart. But at the same time, what we try to do is that we'll, if it's a misspelled word, and we catch it, and the student didn't catch it, then we'll let it go, if it's nothing, you know, horrible. And we'll point it out in the slashes. "Well, no, I really did correct it." "No, you didn't." You know, we found it, and we found when it's their name and it's their by-line, and that mistake is there, we have found that they do change, they do work harder at proofreading.

Tahita Fulkerson: From peer pressure?

Bob Bajackson: Yeah. Of course, everybody makes a comment about everybody's stories and articles; we throw them open to the wolves, and they throw it at me too. But sometimes it's a yelling session, sometimes it's very calm. It's tremendous feedback, and we point out the mistakes and we don't know how people are going to take it. But, it's always worked so far.
Tahita Fulkerson: Well, many people think that teachers have a standard of perfection that's beyond the reach of most students. And when they find their peers complaining about the misspelling of words, sometimes that's more effective. Peer editing is one thing that we might consider as a way to encourage improvement. Make those students exchange each other's history papers, and mark errors. Don't correct them, but mark those errors that are bothersome. Some of the students aren't ready for that, but it might be a way that they could see that others find errors, rather than just the teachers. Anna, in your domain?

Anna Holzer: I have a different perspective, of course. I don't have the advantage of being able to evaluate a student after a whole semester's observation or several observations. I usually get them on a one-to-one, one-time basis. But some things I might mention to you, that might be interesting to you, when they have to make some kind of analytical something on their own, they are afraid, very afraid, and they'll come to me: "Where is the book that tells me what I'm supposed to think, and so I can write it down and I'll make a big impression or maybe it will make an A." Many, many times I have that kind of student to work with, and I help them to the extent I can. They often suggest they have trouble writing their papers, their English papers. And I'll say it's better to write something the very best you can, get it down, and work with your teacher in correcting it and then you're making progress. You don't want to find it in a book then copy it out. That's not the way to do it. But that's the common thing I have to work with. Spelling is just a problem all them time. Just before I came up here, I was helping this little girl find a word in her dictionary. She had been writing over there and a long time flipping through her little dictionary. Finally she came to me: "How do you spell Petrucele?" Petrucele! So we got her straightened out on that. They want to be perfect for you, so they'll make a good grade. The grade is more important...

(Sound of something writing on the chalkboard.)

Dave Clinkscale: Go ahead.

[As Anna Holzer talks, Dave Clinkscale is writing "there, their" and "affect, effect" on the chalkboard.]

Anna Holzer: The grade is more important than learning something. So they want it to be perfect the first time. They come to me and say, "I haven't been in school in a long time, and I don't know how to put words together in a sentence. Give me a book."
Tahita Fulkerson: I had one tell me that this morning.

Anna Holzer: Well, I’ve had about ... I had two yesterday. I’ve had a whole bunch of those, and I try to send them to your English lab or back to their teacher. And if all else fails, I’ll give them some kind of a book. It’s better than nothing I guess. Some of them are really concerned. They want to do well; they don’t want to be embarrassed or to let you know that they don’t know how to get their critical thoughts on paper or to put their words together in a sentence. Some of them are lazy, very lazy. Many are very lazy, and want the perfect answer, the term paper that they can copy. Well that’s everything I can think of right off hand. I don’t know, maybe Barbara mentioned that it will probably be more valuable to us than to you or the student or anyone else, but when we do freshman orientation, our part is very brief, we get them for a very short time. And this year it will only be one session, own hour. But we have little exercises to help them learn to use the library. We’re going to have them write a little one page or one paragraph essay.

Tahita Fulkerson: Good.

Anna Holzer: It’s useful to me; I realize I haven’t made clear to them. They come back to me and tell me things that I didn’t tell them.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well that’s an important reason for people to write—is to understand what they know and what they don’t know.

Anna Holzer: Last year (it seems to be better this year) last year we would give the student instructions, "You need to find this book, it’s here, in alphabetical, name’s Jan, Jan, Jan, Jan. They look bewildered and finally go back and say "Well what comes (you know)." "Are you still having trouble?” Newsweek we take "N”, you know, "N”, Newsweek, and here they are in front of the "N"s, just looking and looking. So far this year we haven’t had a whole lot of that, but it seems real troubling.

Jan Mercer: Well, it’s early.

Anna Holzer: But I just get little bits and pieces of what you all have all the time, and I don’t really know how I can help the student to any degree, but perhaps we’ll learn something.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, that’s a big help.
Sue Milner: Are you going to mention what Barbara said?

Tahita Fulkerson: No, you tell about it.

Sue Milner: Barbara mentioned yesterday what she would like to see is a common handbook for all the faculty.

Dave Clinkscale: Style manual?

Tahita Fulkerson: Like the Harbrace handbook.

Sue Milner: That all of you would, say, use whatever style is required in English which would be so helpful. And even maybe an abbreviated two or three page handout out of the Harbrace.

Dave Clinkscale: I think that would be more realistic.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yeah. Well, we had thought that if we went ahead with it, we would ask for the history teachers to give us models of history papers, chemistry, chemistry, and journalism, journalism, and we would compile two or three pages of the common errors that are occurring in all these papers, and have the error and the correction couched in the language of the discipline. So that when they saw a fragment in Dave's presence, it would be on a history paper. When they saw a fragment in Bajackson's, it would be in a lead some way. Maybe if we made the style sheet have common errors, but the examples coming from the disciplines, that that might be more helpful to us as teachers. It might be something we'd more readily use. I can give you papers that have English errors in them, but they're not going to be pertinent to all the kinds of errors that they make in psychology. Whereas if the language is psychology, you feel more comfortable talking about that error that occurs there. What would be you feeling about that?

Dave Clinkscale: Great idea.

Mollie Newcom: There are six most common errors that writers that I've kept up with through the years, just on papers.

Tahita Fulkerson: What are those? Tell me what you find them to be.

Mollie Newcom: The subject and verb agreement, the pronoun reference, you know, back to he, she, or whatever, misuse of homonyms. Of course, fragments, the sentence structure, fragment, comma splice, the run-on, I group
those. The less predictable is the misuse of the apostrophe. I supposed it's one of the most misused of all.

Dave Clinkscale: It's like there's this early vestigial remnant from the primordial ooze that has a apostrophe in it somewhere, you know.

Tahita Fulkerson: There's no reason to explain it, it just occurs.

Dave Clinkscale: It's in there wrong, like "are'nt."

Mollie Newcom: I tried to narrow those down so that grammar would be more meaningful. I just tried to keep up every year, what happened, and just keep pushing them up to the ones that happened most often.

Tahita Fulkerson: So we might work on a draft of something like that. That would be helpful, I think. Mollie, what else would you add in terms of problems that you're finding? Have we covered them, or are there some other things you want to say?

Mollie Newcom: Well, these journalism students are just pushy, you know, they come to English and say, "You ain't sposed to write like this!" No, but I do emphasize as you do there is a difference.

Bob Bajackson: Yes, very much so.

Mollie Newcom: And the two kinds of writing, you have to recognize that other kind.

Lynne Hardin: I will be glad to accept quality in either style.

Dave Clinkscale: And I don't think, of course, I'm not in the situation of being either an English or a journalism teacher, but that's part of a college education is learning to differentiate that there are different places for different things, I mean . . .

Mollie Newcom: Just like different audiences, that's right.

Dave Clinkscale: I think that that's certainly within the realm of possibility that they can learn to distinguish and differentiate those two styles.

Tahita Fulkerson: Oh, they must, or they will continue to use this "you know," fragmented language, regardless of what the course does.
Mollie Newcom: What I do hear all of you saying so far is something that Sue and I are so tuned into right now, the lack of the ability to do critical thinking. And this is what we are laboring over so at UTA, and we'll hope that the conclusion of this is to be able to offer some kind of workshop to share some of the ways, perhaps, to get students to think critically. And while we don't have the answer, I don't think, completely, it's certainly beginning. The project we've been involved with is to focus on the fact that students do not think critically, and that we must do something about it.

Anna Holzer: They don't even know what it means . . .

Mollie Newcom: You ask primarily for an insight, and they do not know how to arrive at an insight, and so one of the things that we've been trying to do in this program is come up with some ways to help the students do more critical thinking.

Tahita Fulkerson: I think insights probably come in seeing connections. It's not that we'll have an "insight" in history. It's something we will see that history connects to chemistry connects to journalism. I think that we can't teach insight; we can only teach them ways to find connections. But maybe I'm missing . . .

Dave Clinkscale: From which points they can draw inferences . . .

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes.

Mollie Newcom: No, you can't, they have them, but they have to have clues to have them.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yeah, that's what I hope we can find, what we can address pretty soon with this committee is: how can we help these students? I don't think that they're all mentally deficient, but they are certainly deficient in experiences which lead them to . . . and you're laughing, you think some of them are mentally deficient.

Dave Clinkscale: Bill Cosby says all children are brain dead. I think he's right.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, he might be, too. Mike, what do you think?

Mike Cinatl: I don't know where to begin. We have a very unique problem, the fact that each one of our class periods is filled with dealing with the English language.
Now they don’t necessarily have to write, so there are two different aspects. The one aspect is what everybody has already mentioned. I ask the students to read something—articles or books or whatever—that is very much related to what we happen to be talking about. I ask them to give me a paragraph summary, and then I ask them to react, but I want them to react, not on opinion, but based on fact. And I want them to tell me the fact as it relates to what we’re talking about. So sometimes I will plan the article, all the information is totally opposite of what we’ve learned in class, to see if they can draw from it. Later on in the semester, I will ask them to read an article that makes them draw from stuff we’ve already covered. I never get the back stuff; I get immediately just the things that we were dealing with presently. They do not know where to start because as we’ve already said they don’t know that they have the right to an opinion. And then from that, they don’t know that I don’t just want their opinion, I want them to be able to say: "The reason I formulated this opinion is because I know this and this and this and this." So they can’t do that.

Dave Clinkscale: That’s right. I asked them, "Tell me how you felt when X said so and so. Now if you felt this guy is a bozo, fine, but don’t leave it at that. Go on and explain why you have that feeling about that person."

Bob Bajackson: In our area, they don’t have, we don’t give them a right to an opinion. They’re supposed to report, and it’s based on fact.

Dave Clinkscale: Even your editorial writers?

Bob Bajackson: Well, our editorial writers aren’t in our class, and just the students in the reporting class, third person writing, only. So, we might be the cause of some of this.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, no, because in English classes, universally, we said, well, they’re told, "Don’t use ‘I’" and so that makes everything they write sound sterile and sound disconnected. In some English classes they are told not to use "I."

Dave Clinkscale: Is that common practice here?

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, we start with a personal essay in Comp. 1; we let the students use "I" in those.

Dave Clinkscale: Because I encourage my students. They say, "Can I use ‘I’?" I say, "That’s fine." I think that, in general, the simpler the writing style, the better.
Mollie Newcom: There is a big movement back to the "I."

Dave Clinkscale: And I would rather see that because you're, it seems to me if you're going to require that they say: "The author of this essay thinks blah, blah, blah . . ." you're adding an intolerable burden to an already intolerable burden.

Tahita Fulkerson: Right. No, I was saying, though, that in some schools the students are not allowed to use the "I." And their high school teachers sometimes, as senior preparation for the university-level work, say, "You can use no pronouns except the third person." And students don't know how to handle that. "It's the opinion of this writer"--they'll write that rather than "I think." Or even if they write it, it should represent what they think. They shouldn't even have to say "I think." But, there's a problem with communication there.

Bob Bajackson: That's the way we are. No "I" and no "you." No first person or second person.

Dave Clinkscale: That's because of the specific nature of the writing.

Bob Bajackson: Right.

Dave Clinkscale: Exactly. I don't have any problem with that. I guess I would not want to think in my encouraging students to go ahead and write, you know, from that perspective, from first-person.

Tahita Fulkerson: No, I think you should do that.

Dave Clinkscale: I didn't want to be transgressing on someone else's approach.

Tahita Fulkerson: No. But some of the surveys that were returned from the faculty complained that the students didn't know how to write formally, that all they could write were first-person essays. And, so I wanted . . .

Bob Bajackson: If I can get a good first-person essay I . . .

Tahita Fulkerson: Right. yeah. Mike, what else did you have to add?

Mike Cinatl: They do not know how to start when it comes to writing a research paper. Obviously there are people who are fresh out of high school to sixty-five year
old people in our program. Okay, they do not know. The people that have jobs probably are very good at the form that they fill out at work, but they do not know how to start from scratch. They don't know how to ask themselves a question as to how to do research. So, starting last year, I have asked them at their very first intro class to take four people in a group and to write a combined research paper which saves me a heck of a lot of time of having to get with each individual trying to figure out, well this is how you start, okay, but they don't know that. The second thing is a lot of the research papers that I get back are direct copies. Now they may have, and by direct copy I guess that's not right, they don't just take the page, lift it off, and stick it on their paper; they change words. But I know by the way they speak, that that's not them. You know and so that means you write all over it, "Plagiarism," "You need to re-do this," or whatever because I will way® write, "Does not sound like you; that sounds like Dr. So and so," so that's one problem.

Now I'll tell you the saddest thing that I think we have. On the average, percentage-wise, let's say 80 people start in our program; 15 people graduate. The reason that most of those people do not make it through isn't because they can't go through the theory class and do all these English writing things as much as it is they cannot analyze written or spoken English. They have to get up and interpret what they hear. We talk about them using jargon, but they don't know what the jargon means. You know if someone says, "Oh go fly a kite!" some of them don't even know how to put that into an interpretation because they don't know what it means. They also don't know the proper, they don't know how to figure who "he" refers to. And their vocabulary level is atrocious. Because from that I can tell they do not know multiple meanings for words. They don't know how to, I would call it, trace it back to the simplest entity. They don't know that "similarity" might be the same as "like." And so, consequently, they're standing up there for five minutes wasting my time because the tape keeps rolling, and they don't know how to interpret it because they can't understand the English. And that's not just people fresh out of high school; those are the people, 65 years old, that have encountered that English on a daily, well you would think, basis. So vocabulary, I really think that before I can say, "They can't write," I have to look back at the fact that most of them have pitiful vocabularies. And we talk about they write like they talk. Well, their papers are written very elementary. You know, when I was in high school, I would have papers that were better than what some of these people can write. Most of the people can't even handle our textbooks, and the basic book we have is probably the 13th grade reading level, and
from there it's going to go up. But one of the activities I
will do with the very first class, half-way through the
semester is I will say, "Okay, let's go back and open, back
to the first chapter, and now let's try to interpret this."
And then I see right off the bat, well she'll be gone, he'll
be gone, because they can't. They don't know what we've
already gone over and what it means. So I see both things.
They can't write it on paper, nor can they deal with it. So

Lynne Hardin: Maybe I have an advantage in that my
language indeed is a foreign language, and they're learning
it from ground zero, so I don't have quite that problem.
And I thought I had a problem.

Mike Cinatl: See, ours is a foreign language, but you
cannot interpret from one language to the other if you don't
know your language, and, unfortunately, they just do not . .

Lynne Hardin: Cause mine are having to build
vocabulary as they go; therefore, I don't encounter the same
problems to that extent.

Kay Walker: You know, this is what Mike said about
plagiarism. I think we all find that to be the case. It
seems interesting to me that our students, maybe all of us
have gotten the message somewhere along the line that it's
not good enough for this paper to sound like me; it must
sound like Dr. So and so. And I would rather get a very
simplistic rendition of something; I can work with that.
And that is that student, and I can tell that. But when it
is somebody else, if we could get across to them, "Hey,
start where you are, and let's deal with what you've got."
But they don't feel comfortable doing it.

Mike Cinatl: And something else very interesting goes
with that. I ask them to turn in their research paper two
weeks before I make them give an oral report. When they
give the oral report, ten to one it is totally different
from what was written on that paper which tells me that they
either could not handle what they read or obviously it was
copied. And then they got a nice synopsis from some place
and that's what they looked at. And then I will say to
them, "Well you just lost 50% of your grade because what you
wrote in the paper is not what you told the class." That's
a whole other ball game: writing a research paper and then
having to get up and say what you researched.

Mollie Newcom: That's right. It's summary writing.
The thing that I have found the most amazing to me is, and I
think it's a place to start, and that is that students
cannot summarize what they’ve written. And that would be such a big help to every subject, to every discipline, I think.

Sue Milner: They cannot summarize what they read or what they write.

Mike Cinatl: What I’ve been starting to do is ask the students to bring something in, a paragraph, two paragraphs, from a newspaper, magazine, I don’t care where they get it, with what we call a gloss, planned to be signed. And they read it to somebody else and then watch how this person interprets it and tell them that they’re right or wrong. And ten to one both are wrong. You know, the one who planned it, I don’t know if lazy is the term, but they don’t take the time to stop and think and analyze the language. They don’t do that. You know, let’s get this done. We have to get this done. And so I see right off the bat from that exercise, but I’m hoping that they’ll begin and I think I see it now starting in my second year people: "Oh yes, I have to read for meaning so that I can listen for meaning and that . . ." 

Dave Clinkscale: I had a student one time who chastised me unmercifully because the test question I gave required him to think while taking the test, and they don’t have time to think while they’re taking a test. I suspect that that is a much more widespread problem.

Group: Yeah, sure. I think you’re right.

Mike Cinatl: The only other last thing that I have is that I take off for all grammatical errors and all spelling errors. Because if they can’t write it, obviously they’re not going to interpret it correctly if it’s all misspelled.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I think that’s probably good training. That’s the reason your people have such a high employment rating within the program because you have had such a rigorous program for them.

Mike Cinatl: I guess. A lot of the people already have a college degree which is very sad too when you start to think about it. Because they don’t have to take, you know, English and all these things. They just walk by and think, "Oh boy, this is going to be real easy!" And it’s kind of hard to go up to some of them and say, "Well, you really need to go up to the English lab because I don’t know how to tell you this, but as bluntly as I can, you have very poor English skills." "You know, I work at JPS." "Well I’m sorry, you just can’t handle yourself."
Anna Holzer: It's very demanding and they come up and they have to know what they want from that mass of stuff he's left up there for them to read. I'm not going to know, and he's not going to take them by the hand and say, "Now this is the one." They have to know and they don't.

Mike Cinatl: They come to class telling me, "Well, the lady couldn't find it." And I say, "Well, that's nonsense, you didn't ask. You didn't know what you wanted."

Anna Holzer: Good!

Tahita Fulkerson: Connie, what would you add?

Connie Alexander: Oh, where do I start? Well, I tried a variety of things. I've spent since the beginning of school this year trying to get the kinds of term papers across to my Intro. Psych. class. And any day now it's going to click. I decided to get tough this time, and maybe it would scare them bad enough that they would take me real seriously, and I've been very strict in what I'm asking for, but the concept is not getting there. Basically, I find some things that they have found; they can't write. The word fragment printed on a paper, "I don't understand; the paper's in one piece." You know? So they don't understand the proofreading marks.

On some students I will start at the first page and it is so bad that after 30 minutes I'm still on the first page. And I have in my human relations class, every student must write every day, one page. And you can imagine, if you're 30 minutes on the first page. Finally after that, during the semester, I just randomly pick one I just can't stand any longer and will circle it. But those who have a moderate number of errors I circle and explain everything. Others I just give up on. Talking about brain damage, I don't know whether I have a very high number of dyslexic students or what, but I have invariably two or three per small class, every word is misspelled, every word. The letters are backwards somehow; they must be dyslexic, but I can't believe that I get that many.

Tahita Fulkerson: There is a high percentage of dyslexic students.

Connie Alexander: And when I've asked them if they've ever been tested or if they've ever been in special classes of any kind with special problems, they will deny it. They don't see that there's a problem, but they cannot spell. At times I really can't, even when I mess around with the letters, I can't figure out what they really wanted to say--trying to reconstruct every word. I have them do journals,
and their only requirement is to write. I don't care what. Preferably something dealing with their personal life. Because it's frightening, I say, "I don't care what, just so you write something coherent." It is so frightening that I had one do menus, another one wrote out of the T.V. guide, and I said, "How can you plagiarize a journal?" All you have to do is say "I got up this morning and I went to school" and write it up and down the page. And they couldn't do it; they plagiarized. "You can make it up if you want; it doesn't have to be true, but write something." That doesn't work. Beginning of school I explained to them in Human Relations, I have them do a book report. Because I discovered asking for content didn't work. I said "Okay, to insure that you've read it, and to insure that you understand that it's in there, I want "x" number of pages based on how it can be used by you--how can you apply to your life or to your neighbor if it's something you don't want to own up to." And they don't understand this. It comes back plagiarized right out of the book. I said, "This is not applied. How did it apply to you when you were a child. How can you use these methods?" I explain to them that I will catch them, I always catch them, I have always caught them, and they don't believe me. I go to the library, and they are so dumb. The underline the words that they stole, paragraph after paragraph. I said, at least let me hunt harder. I can flip over their book; it will lay there perfectly flat and there's the entire paper. At the end of the sentence, they will have a added a word, "and" or an "a" and they will go on and it makes no sense, but they have no understanding of what's in it and it looks great but makes no sense. And I'll say, "Do you understand this?" "Perfectly." I had one student who was totally illiterate. He could not write a journal. He couldn't make three or four sentences of the first page of the journal. So all he could do was send me a paper quoting Milton.

Dave Clinkscale: Milton who? (Everybody laughs.)

Connie Alexander: We're talking graduate-level papers, I would love to know where he got that paper; it was great. And I sent it back . . .

Dave Clinkscale: You'd like to use it.

Connie Alexander: It was an excellent paper; I would have loved to use it, but you're failing the course anyway. No relationship. And I had explained about language and how I want it to be you and simple and all that. It doesn't compute. Invariably it's a paper like, like now, right now, I've got an Intro. class and I thought, "Okay, we're going to make this harder." A ten-page paper on . . . I gave them very detailed instruction and this seems to be working. I
think they’re sufficiently scared. I also said, "I want to see how many of you have had or are in English Comp." Two people raised their hands or two people did not raise their hands, and I said, "Okay, you people who have not had English on the college level, you’re not enrolled right." I said, "The door is this way; you go downstairs and you enroll, right now. And if you cannot do this, I will see your bodies in the English lab every day until the paper is in. Go over there and ask them how you write a term paper because you can’t take the course right now. I want to know that you’re doing it." It’s very difficult to get a good paper. And when I ask for topics, they’re coming in with the titles of books that they’ve seen in the library. And I say, "This is not a topic; this is a book title." Or one wrote that Pavlov is going to be their paper. I said, "Pavlov what?" I mean this is a person. How do you write ten pages on Pavlov and his dogs. I said, "Give me a hint as to what we’re writing about." She really couldn’t. I keep sending them back, and they keep sending them back, and I keep writing back, I said, "Narrow topic, narrow topic." It’s going to be interesting. And I gave them my speech about how I want it to be you and simple and all this. We shall see.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, we’ll have our next meeting after they come in so that you can come and regale us.

Connie Alexander: I’ll bring the papers and drop them right here, and say, "Look!" But I’ve also forced them to write faster. I used to wait until the very last minute, and, of course, I was down in the library file all week or down in the bookstore getting out my pencil and checking the page number where they stole it from. But now I’ve gotten to the point where I ask the major papers to be done early. And it’s great! But I think that they are more likely to spend time on it because you don’t have as many other assignments. And in the book report, they have to write on how it applies to them, and them I make them get up orally and tell us what was in it. It’s interesting how few of them can do both.

Tahita Fulkerson: That’s the syndrome that Mike was describing too.

Connie Alexander: They don’t know how, and I say then, "Well, did you read the book?"

Tahita Fulkerson: We seem to be all of us finding the same things, and I believe there are ways that we can help these students get over some of these hurdles. Terry, what have you found, anything more?
Terry Collet: Not much more except that I think it's a combination of maybe the fact that in high school all these people have had to just regurgitate.

Mollie Newcom: That's right.

Terry Collet: Everything they heard. And they have not been taught to do critical thinking. They don't want critical thinking in high school. And I think they think their opinion is not worth anything. I have mine in, I teach Human Relations, and I have them to write reaction papers on certain issues as they come up and I will say, "You did not give me your opinion. How can I give you an F if it's your opinion." "Well my opinion isn't worth anything." So I really think that it's a culmination of the things that they've not been taught to do. And if they think their opinion is not worth anything . . .

Anna Holzer: It's not the opinion that you want. The opinion that you have as a teacher, this perfect, wonderful person has some opinion, and they have to give you that opinion. That's what I see with your students, over and over.

Terry Collet: The only thing that bothers me is first off, they say, "Now if we write this journal on this reaction paper, you're not going to grade off on grammar, are you?" And why not. This is the tool we use in everyday life—not just in English class. But they don't understand that.

Lynne Hardin: Well it would truly pack a great punch if we are telling them the same thing—"Yes, and just like your English teachers do."

Tahita Fulkerson: It really would make their lives easier and ours.

Lynne Hardin: If you can tell them that, if you can tell them that, if you tell the same thing—affirmative message—that it does matter to us. We can, by example, make it matter to them.

Tahita Fulkerson: I think they should never ask a college teacher, "Does it matter how I spell the word?" But they do. They don't ask the English teachers that because they know we're ogres, and we mark it. But and I don't mean we're perfect in that, I mean we're slaves to that because it's easy to mark that. It's very hard to tell a student how to think critically. It's very easy to mark a misspelled word, and say, "Go look that up in the
dictionary." You know, that's an easy thing for us to do, and so we have some lessons to learn here too.

Mollie Newcom: Yeah, because if they're not thinking, it really doesn't matter if they misspell.

Tahita Fulkerson: That's exactly right. You know what occurs to me, and I'm going to let you speak too and also Sue, but it occurs to me that we might serve our students if we could give them models that other students have managed to produce that satisfy us. If we could give them a model of a journal that incorporates the "I" quality, that there was a real human voice. And they wouldn't have to be perfect, but if we could provide them student models to emulate, I think this perfection that they think we expect is an explanation for some of this.

Anna Holzer: I think they'd appreciate that more often than I can tell you. They want to do a book report, "Give me one to look at," "Let's just see what it looks like," "Do you have an example?" or they might want a whole book of examples.

Kay Walker: I think another reason that's so helpful is that I think many of us, I particularly, am a visual learner, much more than auditory. And if you want to show me how to do something, don't, not so much tell me but show me an example and I learn by example, easily. You show me what you want, and example of what you want; I can do my own style, but I can do it like that. I think for that reason too, it would be most helpful.

E. R. Milner: The Chinese say, "One picture is worth a thousand words." The interesting thing about what Terry was talking about: This group is a contrast to the group that came before the, remember the Sixties? first words out of their mouths was "I think." "I'm this," "This is what I think." They were in the street telling you what they thought every minute. And this group is like we were in the Fifties: "I'm waiting to be told."

Terry Collet: Yeah and "I'll do it exactly the way you want it."

E. R. Milner: It's like the difference between the active voice and the passive voice.

Mollie Newcom: They really want that. They want you to tell them exactly as you say; they come up through that. And I think more lately, (Terry, I think your point's well taken) more lately than I can remember that they very much want to sit there and be told and tell you back.
Terry Collet: "Show me."

Mike Cinatl: One thing interesting, I did that. For one of the reaction papers, I made them an overhead, and I said, "I want you to read through this together because I want you to understand." And notice what this student did. I'm quoting him. Do you know that all the people, not 50%, not 80%, all of the immediately opened their notebooks and performed, they knew it was going to, they were copying this thing. I said, "Oh, wait a second, I'll read this to you." Because they totally missed what, you know, so we're really looking at two things: They don't know format, but before they don't know the format, they don't know how to do thinking and put it into writing and do it correctly. I see that.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you think there's any way that we can help them? Any easy things that we can do? We're all over-burdened in terms of numbers. There's no way that we can revamp our whole curriculum, but surely there are some little things that we could do that would make them practice with the English language. I think all your journals are good, but if they are atrocious every single time, then I hate to think about your having to wade through those repeatedly.

Connie Alexander: There's a value in the person's development. Those who understand the assignments do gain from them. I was going to say two things that I have forgotten. One is the older student, the one who dropped out in ninth grade, and is now forty-some years old and he's back. Their writing skills are usually perfect. It's the one who's come right out of high school and senior English who can't write and can't spell. But the older students who barely made it through high school because of one reason or just got that far come back at 30 or 40 and they are doing great. I hardly ever have a problem with them. They can explain themselves well. The other thing that I have started doing was because of my liberal arts background, I had to take a lot of philosophy. And I was amazed when I took my first course to discover my thoughts counted. All you had to do was defend them. And so one of my speeches for the last week, "Please take a philosophy course." Someone said that's going to be hard. I said, "No, no you just have to defend what you think." It sounded like such a novel idea to them. Maybe we need to push this idea across that there are courses in which one thinks. Cause they said, "What's it about." I said, "You think." And this look of fear passes their face and I said, "No, no what you think is okay there. You just have to be able to prove it."
Anna Holzer: I just always thought college was a place you could think what ever you wanted to. I don't know if students believe that anymore.

Lynne Hardin: It's not a case that they don't believe it. Have we told them—that it's their privilege? I want Kay to speak to something because I need some information, and it's an area on which I am very fuzzy and have only a little bit of background. How much of this program we are batting around is created by the difference between left- and right-brained individuals and how they learn? I think that part of the problem we bat up into is the fact they're right-brained. The left-brained individual, it seems to me, can do more incisive, logical thinking than a right-brained individual can, period.

Kay Walker: But the research shows that handedness of side, the vast majority of us, are dominantly left-brained, so I think in terms of that accounting for what we're seeing in difficulties is probably a negligible amount.

Lynne Hardin: Okay, I just wanted to know.

Kay Walker: I think there are some students that definitely, either we're talking mixed dominance or opposite, and that could really be a problem, but I think that it's small.

Lynne Hardin: But that's very few of whom we're speaking.

Kay Walker: I think it's more the kind of thing we're talking about, they haven't been taught to do this or they don't feel comfortable doing it.

Jan Mercer: This isn't writing per se, but . . .

Tahita Fulkerson: I think all of this is writing per se; I think writing is the manifestation of the problem.

Jan Mercer: But this is just something that crossed my mind. Do you see more and more students who want to print everything to you rather than doing cursive writing? Do you have some students that don't even do cursive writing, that everything is just printed?

E. R. Milner: And there are some that I'm thrilled to get. I would be glad if they did print because they have not been taught cursive writing. They've been taught "sanuscript." Self-taught.
Jan Mercer: They're filling in the lab manuals in biology this week. As I've been grading them, more of them are printing things than are doing cursive writing. Many are just printing and they don't even print well. They don't use all lower-case letters or all caps; it'll be a capital "H" and a little "a" and a little "t". It's just a mixture of printing styles rather than anything where it's just a continuity of style, where there's anything that I can get it all together and keep it in the same . . .

Mollie Newcom: That's kind of how they think.

Jan Mercer: Well, yes it has this fragmentedness to it.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I have read, I'm sure you all are familiar with when students are writing and the flow of ideas is coming, their letters will all point the "normal" way. When they're stammering or filling up space, they'll either have the letters standing up or going backwards. And you can almost look at the physical appearance of the pages and find the breaks in coherence. And that printing works the same way. And if you've read many, you can just almost look at one and the way the handwriting slants, whether it's all back or all forward, if it's a mix, that person is having trouble and I hadn't thought about it being brain-dominance, but that might be what it is. Kay, do you and Sue have something to add before we start trying to solve some of these dilemmas?

Kay Walker: I just have one quick thing, and that is everything everybody said I agree with. I find that students, books that they read, outside books, like I have a group that they pick from. And it might have a story line like a schizophrenic's line, and they are to read the book, but they are to analyze it in terms of what is the author trying to get across by telling me the story of this person who has schizophrenia. And invariably, what they want to do is tell me the story. I know the story. And I tell them, "I don't want a description, I want a critical analysis of the book." And still, some of them, it is almost impossible for them to put the book down and say, "Okay, if I had to write down six things that this author was trying to do by relating this story, what are those?" That's what I want and I want them to expand on those. And I use the analogy with them, I do ceramics at home for fun. And when I put something into the kiln, you put this stuff in, and the glaze, I mean it doesn't even look like it's going to look when it comes out. The glaze could be white; when you take it out, it may be bright blue. And I tell them, "When you take this information, we're supposed to do something with it up here." You know, cognition and stuff. And it
shouldn't come out exactly. 'I want you in it when it comes out.' And that is so difficult for them.

Mollie Newcom: Taking it from what it says to what it means.

Kay Walker: And of course the grammar, of course, is always a problem; spelling is always a problem. And that concerns me and I look at that but it doesn't concern me as much as the fact that they don't feel comfortable with thinking.

E. R. Milner: We're fighting the result of the greatest communication evolution of time. This passivity of sitting in front of the tube.

Kay Walker: Well, their receptive skills are probably pretty good, but their expressive skills, you know, getting it back out is just...

E. R. Milner: I don't know, our generation talks back to the television. I cuss at them... because I disagree with them.

Connie Alexander: And they're going, "This is right" and I'm going, "No, it's not."

Mike Cinatl: I'll tell you, by going to those high schools because our students are placed there, and I do see the kind of education that goes on. All they're asked is fill-in-the-blank. I see that, and it's usually a 50-minute class period. There's five minutes of the teacher talking, five minutes of paperwork, and then they visit the rest of the period. There's very little teaching going on. So, consequently, when they come they don't know how to write an essay, and I don't know that it's so much that they don't know that "my opinion counts" as they don't even know that they have an opinion because they're never asked, "What do you think about this" in terms of classroom. Well, if you ask them their opinion of the latest Chevy or whatever it is, they'll give you their opinion. But see they, not only do they not carry English to journalism and biology, they don't carry everyday life activities to school. They don't see that that's...

E. R. Milner: Have you not seen any difference at all since H.R. 72 went through, just this new education bill passed, can't see any difference?

Mike Cinatl: Except that the doors are closed. Yes I have noticed that. I'm out there three days a week, and
more of the schoolroom doors are closed. I don't see much
difference. Fill-in-the-blank is the kind of . . .

Anna Holzer: Do students read? If you'll read, I mean
even if you are not required to regurgitate, reading is an
action, activity. And after a while it gets to be a habit
and you begin, to think perhaps, just from reading and
reading and reading and reading. It's easier to watch T.V.
and that is passive.

Mike Cinatl: That's a phenomenon because some of the
people will say, "Is there a video tape in the library?"

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, and I have heard of cassettes
of Cliff notes. Not only are the books summarized, but now
they are on cassette, so that one does not even have to read
the Cliff notes. But there's nothing we can do about that.
They're available and probably advertised on our bulletin
boards.

Sue Milner: Tahita, let me offer one thing. Back to
the television. I don't think that we can use that as an
excuse now. I think it's our responsibility to meet this
challenge, and what Mollie and I found in this CACTIP
program at UTA is that one, true, these students have been
watching the television, but we in the classroom haven't
been challenging them. In this program when we first
encountered it two years ago, and we were asked to get our
students reading Plato and many of these classical readings
that we had difficulty with, we thought, "No, we'll lose
them all." We haven't lost them. They have not been
challenged theretofore, and they may be watching the
television. But if we require our students to read these
texts, to mark the text, to summarize, get that out of the
system, and then ask them to critically think about writing
an analysis, they're doing it.

Bob Bajackson: Let me give you an example in our
class. I was taking a little survey and I asked them, "How
many of you have cable television?" And about 90% raise
their hands. And they've got 45 channels or 100 channels
and they can't watch all of them at the same time. But they
switch them back and forth, this, that and the other, and
they can't wait to get home to Showtime and HBO and HTN and
MUSIC USA and God knows what else. And when all these
things are going on, I have found that they can't wait to
get home. I can honestly tell you they know exactly what
time that movie starts, exactly to the millisecond, and
they're there. It's a lot easier for them to do that, but
also, I think, at least in my classes, I'm finding more
students coming from "broken homes." When they come in,
they are not as confident in themselves. This is an easy
access, an easy outlet. It's right there. The screen throws all this stuff at them and gives them a chance to get away. And it's less threatening. They have more security, a little, you know, safer environment, etc. And I'm not a psychologist or psychiatrist, or anything, but these students have come and told me. They've said, "I need this. I want to do it, but I don't have confidence in myself." The first thing I try and do is give confidence to them. And if they admit, saying, "Yes, I want to learn" then, oh boy, we're going to get this done. But a lot of this is the cable. I think Sammons has 44 channels that they offer, and they've got everything possible on there, including TCJC. They'll tell you the time the football game is going to start, they'll give you the point spread of the football game, etc. But they, you can't get a man to read a novel. Because that's work, that's work. And they don't, a lot of them come from these broken homes, and they just don't have the confidence in themselves and the patience to sit down and do it. And that's what I'm getting a lot of times in the classroom.

Tahita Fulkerson: Let's see if we can think of one or two positive things that we can do to reverse this. I think we all agree that there's a problem and that we need to do something. Can you think of anything that we might try regardless of our discipline that would give the students more confidence in the content of the material and, therefore, maybe more confidence in themselves as learners? And with that confidence, perhaps we could find some increased facility with thinking, with writing. Can you think of anything that you could do in your class which would make it easier for them? Not diluted, but easier to teach them how to learn the material. I'm afraid we say, "Read Chapter 6," and we don't tell them how to read the chapter. We don't tell them how to think as history students or how to think as biology students. I wonder if there's something special to reading biology.

Lynne Hardin: Yes, there is, as opposed to chemistry.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do we tell our students that?

Lynne Hardin: I've been trying.

Tahita Fulkerson: But I remember when I was in school, our teacher said, "Read Chapter 4." And I had to read Chapter 4, and I was not told what to do. I assumed I had to memorize many of those things. I underlined endlessly. Everything that was unfamiliar, I underlined. And I looked back and I had underlined the entire chapter. I had not been told how to read that chapter, how to make notes in the margins, to ask questions. The teacher would come in and
say, "Do you have any questions over Chapter 4?" And I'd sit there, and I didn't understand a word of it, but I hadn't phrased a question anywhere. And I think we can tell our students, "When you find something in the book you don't understand, write that question right there in the margin. When the teacher says, 'Do you have a question?' ask it." They've written; they've engaged their hand, their mind, their brain, and they've worked, they've had to grapple with the contents. I don't know if that's too simple.

Lynne Hardin: Tahita, is what you're saying that you truly feel that there's a need for the students to be trained to do this?

Tahita Fulkerson: I really do.

Lynne Hardin: Well, so do I. And you see that I'm one of the faculty that's been doing it, and it's called "study skills." And I have done it this semester. Part of my faculty has. Peggy Ford has come into my classroom or I have taken my little warm bodies down to her and have done exactly what you're talking about, and yes, it works. It improves their grades immeasurably. They're eager for that information. But I have a comment, and that is I lay just as much of the blame off on me and the rest of the faculty. Not just here, but anywhere. I see my colleagues demanding chemistry textbooks. They won't have one if it doesn't have an outline in the front of the chapter, if it doesn't have the answers to all of the questions. Part of us are just as lazy as the students are. And we have to put out a lot of effort to do the improvement in this area, and I have been, what for two years now, tooting that very horn, that we do have the facility to do that. If the students are not going to take Study Skills, put it in the orientation program, where every one of them can be exposed to how do I study, and how do I pick up a textbook and figure out what it is I have to do in that textbook to gain what the author wanted me to gain and to gain what the teacher wanted me to gain. And we've got specialists on this campus who can do that, and we're not using them.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I think you're right. Another thing that we can do is teach our students how to take notes in our classes. We can do the double-entry notebook. That's one thing that has been very successful. It's used in a lot of liberal arts schools. Make students write only on the right-hand side of the page, and they leave the left-hand side for summarizing and writing possible test questions. Then when they're ready to study for their test, they have possible questions on this side and answers on this side. They don't have to read through all those notes back and forth, up and down. And there are places there for
them to coordinate the notes from the textbook. And the double-entry notebook, you see, causes the student to look back at that material and try to see what does this material mean before time for the test. The questions will be familiar to him and he can...

Lynne Hardin: To me, the second aspect, the program helps our students in reading. Because out of everything we've said, one of the things we're saying is they don't read well. Well now is the time they should learn to read. Most entry-level chemistry textbooks are written at at least grade 16, sometimes grade 17. And it is difficult for me to find a textbook that's written, not down to the student, but well written, and not written in paragraph-long sentences. They have enough trouble with chemistry without being held up by an author who writes only to other authors. And so we have an obligation to adopt good books. You know, one of the most valuable tools that this school has given me is when they told me how easy it was to do an evaluation of a textbook and what I must read... because I loved it. Even working with the textbook reps, we have to get our point across, "Would you please quite bringing us trash?" You know, I spend more time with textbook reps mostly trying to educate them so they'll go back to their editors understanding that "Quit writing from the author-to-author level." I could care less about graduate-level freshman chemistry books.

Tahita Fulkerson: Chris, you came in late. What ideas would you have for improving writing. You have them speaking all the time. Do they do any writing?

Chris Sawyer: Well, they do. What I try to get my students to do is understand that learning to express yourself, those skills, relate to (we used to call them) canons of rhetoric, at one point in speech and English, but we don't still teach that. Or that those things correlate well from public speech to writing. I'll even say sometimes, "Now this particular technique and organization that I'm showing you works very well or adapts very well to English composition." So if you've had like a problem solution format or some kind of topical or case format, and I try to teach them many of the same things that are in the English composition courses. And a lot of times I'll hear this, and I'll say, "I have this, I want you to put this partition statement in the introductory speech, "Oh that's a thesis." And the English department calls it a thesis and I call it a partition statement. But it's the same thing. And they will say, "We covered this in English. This is very similar to English." Well, okay, now you do this and you outline in a given way, I think, you'll find yourself being a more adequate communicator. Another thing I will
often do is have them do an outline. So that they are actually doing some writing, and this particular semester I think I told you that we're going to do some manuscript. And we'll work on oral style, oral language style characteristics as well. Try to get them to understand how those two work a little bit. And we're going to do some flash analysis type token ratio and I have some things for them to do in that. So, it's in there, and I can probably make a case for them in Public Speaking unit that I have, I teach an awful lot of things that are correlated with writing. Inasmuch as any rhetorical act, as much as they are all correlated, writing and speaking.

Tahita Fulkerson: Okay, it's good to know that we're all having the same concerns. I'm not certain that we've come away today from this discussion with anything that will really help us solve these problems. I don't know that there's a way that we can come up with what we all agree we want our students to do when they leave here.

Mike Cinatl: Let me just share something with you because, what we were talking about here triggered something, and the reason I want to make the point is because we also have to be careful that we use the expertise on the campus rather than taking up too much time in our classes because then we won't get the material across. You know, you all face that probably much more than I do, the fact that I have a captive audience for two and a half years, so if I don't manage to get it this semester I'll throw it in with those people later. But in our introduction course, the very first one, I do a lot of "spoon-feeding." As a matter of fact, oftentimes, the students come up with this thing it says, "Father Duck now taking us through this." But like when I give them the first test, the first unit test after we've gone through, now I have transparencies, and I will lecture to them, and then I will say, "Now you should open your notebook, (or hopefully it's open) and see if you have this in your notebook." And I pull this thing out and there in summary form are the things that I've just said. And then when it comes time for the test, I say, "Now you're to go home and you write five questions that you think I'm going to ask." And then, of course, we get together and meet in little groups, and they have to find the answers to these questions. Then I give them study questions for the test, okay. And they come out with all this information, right, and then, of course, I find out very early who are the people that really have the problems with the printed language. Because I say, "Now for the first test you may come up and ask me questions." So if they don't understand the question, they will come up and say, "Is this what you're looking for?" And then I need to make a note that
"So and so" is definitely not, they don't know the material, and that's whatever. When I given them a written test on reading material, I give them study guide questions, and I say, "You must bring the answers with you to class," and I collect them. And I just kind of look through them; I don't grade them. But if I didn't collect them, half of them wouldn't do it. And I figure that by now, that has taken me almost five weeks to get through one unit. Now when we get to Unit 2, I expect them to carry that through. And, of course, it's from that point on that I begin to see this doesn't follow through. Because I walk them through it, I was the one who did the work in essence, not necessarily they, but then I see that study skills is a whole other thing. I don't think that people have study skills, but I do think that that's a big problem that we have. Now how we're all going to do that in our classes is a whole other ball game because like I said it took me five weeks. If you did that in a Lit class, to get through one book, one story to read, you'd never cover all the material. It shouldn't be so, but they don't know how to do it. You cannot say, "Alright, study for the test." They don't know how to study because what if the notebook doesn't have any of the notes in it. And in my area we don't have gobs of textbooks, so a lot of that information has to come from my mouth to their brain. You know I'd like to make it much further than the ear but, you know.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you have certain kinds of notebooks, do you give them a format for writing down this information that you give them.

Mike Cinatl: Yeah, I make them keep a blank page before and after the unit. The first night I say, "Okay, tonight now for instance let's say we're going to study the middle ear tonight. I would like you to write six questions that you have right now about the middle ear, even if it's as stupid as 'Where's the middle ear?' Okay, you write six questions, and then I want you to write a paragraph of what you think we're going to talk about." And I give them about ten minutes because they'll go on and on of not doing anything, sit there, and then we start the unit. And the last page at the end, they have to rip the first page out, and then they have to answer those questions that they asked to see in effect. And then I say, "Now if you have any questions" because I figure they didn't get the answers, then they have to ask those, answer those questions, and it works, but I only do that in my first intro course, cause I just don't have the time, you know, to do that. But in that first semester I make them, like I said, I try to spoon-feed them through as much as I can.
Tahita Fulkerson: So you know that they’re learning how to learn.

Mike Cinatl: It’s the carry-over, there’s a whole other, that I think has been a perennial problem of teaching forever.

Tahita Fulkerson: I’m not sure we can solve it.

Connie Alexander: This business of having to have some study guides: being the kind of person that I am, I’ve got in the habit of doing that. And what I’ve discovered is: "I think that’s your writing; why should I bother with it?"

Mike Cinatl: They expect you . . .

Connie Alexander: Oh, demand it I think is the word, irate even. "What do you mean you’re not giving us one!" This year I’m getting tough about things. When they want to know, "Do I get a guide?" "No, I go through the chapter, and I have to make up a test. You go through the chapter and decide what you’d make up a test like. Because there are only so many questions you can ask out of each chapter out of a test of x number, you know, this length. And therefore, if it feels to you a test question, it probably would to me. And then you might look for the answer." We’ll see.

Tahita Fulkerson: I’m eager to hear how that works.

Well, I appreciate your coming today. I have some thoughts that are swirling in my brain, but not any answers for all these problems. I think that now that we have aired the negative we can go forward, possibly at a later meeting. And I hope that we can. If you would, if you read anything in your professional journals about writing in your discipline, if you’ll let me know where they are, or let me copy them, then I can make them available to others of us, because I think it would be helpful for us to see how other groups and how other campuses solve this problem, because we’re certainly not unique. The University of Dallas has a Writing-Across-the-Curriculum program, Dallas Community College, Fort Worth Public Schools has one ready to be in place. So these students will be coming to our school, to our campus, from an experience eventually of having to write in all their disciplines. So I think that probably we’re at the bottom in terms of ability. I think things will improve. I think we’re going to get students with more experience, and we’re going to have to be ready for the faculty to follow through, and not lose this skill that they’ve learned in the public schools. Sid Richardson Foundation is sponsoring Keystone project and is paying
three quarters of the salary of one national authority on writing who is training 16 public school teachers. These people have been working for a year and have another year to go. Then they will become trainers of all the other teachers. And it starts kindergarten through 12th grade writing in every class, and not writing themes, not formal writing, but writing to learn. The more comfortable they feel with writing as the way to learn—the less they'll need study questions. They'll learn to make their own questions. So we are really at a time that can be exciting for us. But we teachers, I think we need to be thinking about ways we can incorporate more informal writing. Maybe four short papers instead of one long one for one thing. Have them study Pavlov and write a little short paper on one thing. That might be easier for you and easier for them too. It might be more painful for you, I don't know, I'm not trying to add pain.

Connie Alexander: Just spell correctly.

Mollie Newcom: Yeah, just spell it right.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well thank you all for coming. I brought papers for you to grade, but I decided you are probably not in the mood to read any more papers. It's okay for us not to do that. Fill your plates with some refreshments.

As an organizational meeting, the foregoing was a failure. Quite clearly, the teachers wanted to talk, even to entertain each other, and their mood of conviviality outweighed for the researcher any sense of urgency in getting such a group organized to take definite steps. More, the arrangement of those relaxing sofas and chairs worked against any effective use of the portable blackboard ordered for the occasion, for not everyone could have seen the board. And, too, not everyone was able to arrive promptly or to stay until the end.

Still, the first meeting was valuable. In addition to those lessons in size and location of meetings, the
fellowship, sense of community, and airing of common concerns provided a positive atmosphere essential for initiating any campus-wide program for change. More specifically, the discussion clarified for the researcher additional facets of the writing problems at the campus. First, it was apparent that the group held very "compartmentalized" views of a faculty's responsibilities for literacy. In addition to the old "writing as punishment" technique vocalized by Mercer (p. 111), the researcher also heard the expected "you English folks . . . get them all squared away," reflecting the belief that English teachers were responsible for the students' spelling and paragraph development (Milner, p. 105). And even those teachers who retain a sense of their responsibility for correctness and mark errors seem to do so even though they do not effect change in students' performance: to the question, "do they repeat the errors you mark," the teacher replied, "I don't know if they repeat the errors, because [I mark them] at the end of the term" (Mercer, p. 112).

Yet there were important areas of agreement. The repeated concern of students' inability to think critically suggests that the teachers face problems which cannot be solved with more instruction in grammar or spelling. According to these teachers' reports, too many students at TCJC are unable to react to facts of the disciplines, to make meaning of the facts, or to apply the facts they
memorize. As Freisinger concluded about similar problems with Michigan Tech students, these deficiencies may suggest that students have not yet reached Piaget's formal operational stage of development, where they develop the capacity to reason and to make abstract meaning. To attack the problem, the researcher saw a need to suggest informal, exploratory writing techniques, those called writing-to-learn, and to continue to emphasize the importance of instruction in study skills.

Small-Group Meetings

The next meetings were influenced by the first, in both arrangement and in content. The researcher divided the large group into four smaller ones: psychology/sociology; history/government; science/business/vocations; and humanities. The two reading specialists were invited specifically for history/government and science/business/vocations, and the two librarians were invited to join any group they wished. Subsequent meetings held in N401 were facilitated by pulling chairs into a small circle around a low table, on which was placed the tape recorder. Again, committee members were notified of the meetings by inter-office mail; again, an effort was made to close meetings after one hour.

The content for those hours was carefully planned, not only because the time was limited but also because it was important for the researcher to be confident and relaxed
enough to follow the flow of the discussions wherever the participants took it. For all groups, however, the researcher began generally, first with statistics about students' past lack of practice with thinking and writing tasks and then with questions such as, "What kind of writing do we want students to do?" "How do writers in your fields present evidence?" "What are the major issues of the field?" "Do you want your students to follow the conventions of the field when they write?" As participants discussed these questions, the researcher was prepared to introduce relevant topics such as grading, vocabulary acquisition, and assignment criteria sheets. Invariably after approximately twenty minutes, the researcher introduced the topic of writing-to-learn activities (including journals, classnotes, and annotations of readings) as well as techniques of assigning formal writing assignments. For all these discussions, the researcher used examples from the disciplines, a practice which seemed necessary to reduce suspicions about a writing teacher telling discipline teachers to add more writing to their courses.

One of the best meetings to illustrate this approach was the first one (where unfortunately the tape recorder failed to work—a nightmare come true in qualitative research). At this meeting, attended by three psychology teachers and a sociology teacher, the researcher introduced
the concept of the writing process with a quotation from Jerome Bruner: "writing nourishes itself." Then the researcher introduced some ways to use journals, including reminders that Freud’s journals feature drawings of his explorations of relationships between id, ego, and superego; topics for journals, including behavior patterns and sexuality; ideas for readings that demonstrate psychologists’ awareness of needs of audience, such as Skinner’s writing for the *Ladies Home Journal* and for colleagues; and comparisons of textbook descriptions to Studs Terkel’s reports about classes of American working people. These teachers readily embraced the concepts of writing and learning processes, perhaps because their disciplines use self-expression for discovery, perhaps because the roots of the movement lie in their own fields. But for whatever reasons, these teachers as a group and as individuals showed continued interest in writing across the curriculum.

With a new tape recorder ready, the researcher assembled three of the history and government faculty and a reading teacher for the second small group meeting. The transcript of that meeting follows.

**Tahita Fulkerson:** Good afternoon. Many thanks to all of you for coming today to discuss writing in your disciplines. Do you have any early questions or impressions?

**Berry Woodson:** Do we still have the Writing Lab?
Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, it's located now in A216, with refinements. We now have fifteen computers and five printers and are in the process of acquiring software for writing and reading remediation. Of course we still have the traditional materials--notebooks, exercises, so forth. We encourage any of you who find students in your classes who are having trouble with reading to come to the Lab. They do not have to be enrolled in either class to make use of the facilities.

David Clinkscale: Is Carol Green still working there?

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, and we will have two other lab assistants hired right away. In addition, English teachers are spending two hours a week of their office hours in the Lab, to assist any student who comes there for help. I'll send you copies of the tutoring schedule. Now on to the results of some of my research: one fact that has discouraged me came as the result of a research effort by a college English teacher. He concluded that there is very little college teachers can do to get students to write standard English in terms of perfect spelling and sentences because by the time they get to college their habits are firmly set. There is very little we can accomplish unless the student has such strong motivation that he wants to make the effort on his own. Writing-across-the-curriculum has as this outside motivation learning content of the course. The grades sometime will be motivation for the student who is just marginal--the B history student, for example. If he has to write better for an A, then maybe he will try to write better. As subtle reinforcement of the idea that correctness counts, you might put this copy of Harbrace Handbook in your bookcase. Harbrace is the text we require of our composition students, and the book rep was happy to send copies for all members of our committee.

Group: Thank you. This is great, etc.

Berry Woodson: But what about those studies?

Tahita Fulkerson: These studies that have given this rather grim picture to English teachers about what we can hope to do in terms of remediation have given a better picture for content. The more students write about the subject they are trying to learn, the better they learn and the longer they retain it. And it's not long papers that they write, but more frequent, short papers. If weekly they write something that requires them to engage their brains with the content, they learn that material better. Obviously, we might add. And studies have also shown that teachers who do everything for students get poorer long-range results from the students. Teachers who have the
course completely outlined in terms of "you read chapter 6 and then go to the lab and listen to a tape I have prepared for you and then you do this and then you do that" with everything set up for those students—with lectures even summarized on overhead transparencies—produce students who simply copy that material and memorize it and forget it. But if they have to provide their own organization, if they have to discover for themselves how the tape in the lab connects to the ideas in the lecture and in the chapter, they learn that material better. The things that we know best—and you all know everything I'm saying already, but we do seem to think that we have to give our students everything—the things we teach ourselves are things we have for life. Or can at least retrieve when we need it. So the thrust of writing-across-the-curriculum, in every article I have read about history and government application, is more than just writing. It is also learning; it is also study skills. First of all, the teachers teach their students how to read the textbook. We have Juanita here to talk about that in just a second. But they also present their material so that students can learn inductively. Teachers who have the best success with students learning the material let the students do a lot of the work. I'll repeat the key word here—the students try to find the connections rather than relying on teachers who provide so many outlines, so much help that the student can't think on his own. He can't create his own outline to see how Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education connects to anything. I don't know if this strikes you as impertinent of me? Or invalid? Coals to Manchester?

Berry Woodson: Not at all. It is pertinent. That's why we are nodding.

Tahita Fulkerson: We complain that our students can't think, but we don't set them in the way of opportunities to think. We think we are doing it when we are presenting them material and all they have to do is learn it, but we often fail to give them chances to see on their own. This is not what most of us want to hear, because we think we are doing such a good job for our students, but if they are not thinking, then we are probably not doing a good job for them.

E. R. Milner: So you are saying to approach this inductively?

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes. Everything that's been done that's good—as far as I can see in terms of writing and learning—has been inductive.
Berry Woodson: But at what level? At the rudimentary level where we are teaching?

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes. This entire concept seems to be filtering backwards, or down. It started as an "innovation" in small liberal arts colleges where teachers believed that students must be able to write whole units of thought, logically, coherently, and it is all filtering down through many high schools to the elementary grades. I have tried to read what reading teachers, what chemistry teachers are saying, and at any level, Berry, they say that students have to do more writing. Now we can't do all this in one semester, but the writing part of this learning equation involves such easy things as having the students, when they first come to class, summarize what they've read. For five minutes they should write as much as they can about what they've read to prepare for the lecture, and then teachers can ask how many were able to write ten lines. They can ask about the content of these ten lines, they can have the students compare what they've written. Of course you can't do a very close comparison with fifty students in the class, but if there is some way that the students can look at each other's writing about what they've read they do get someone else's perspective—and they are reading the content one more time. Another technique I've read about is stopping in the middle of a lecture and saying "Summarize in your notebooks the important points you think I've just made." That kind of writing is enough practice for many students—many have never been asked to summarize what they've been listening to and supposedly taking notes on. Then a third alternative is at the end of the class to have the students write the answer to questions that begin with "What is the significance of . . . " or "Why did critics of Woodrow Wilson attack him on . . . "—questions that ask students to use their notes and analyze. If their notes aren't helpful, then they know something about their notetaking skills—and perhaps we learn something about the facts we have not presented as clearly as we'd have liked. But as you can see, we learn from what they can or cannot write that we may need to teach study habits.

Berry Woodson: I try to teach them study habits. I tell them "I'm going to teach you how to be in school again. It just so happens that the methodology is political science, but you are going to forget that."

David Clinkscale: Yes.

Berry Woodson: "But if you learn the methodology . . . " But I think we often can our courses so much with these behavioral gadgets that students are not being challenged today. Now we have a system of evaluation
which is essentially evaluating us based upon the clarity of our objectives.

Juanita Rodriguez: Yes, and many of the students cannot even read the evaluation instruments! They are not equipped unfortunately for making those judgments.

David Clinkscale: I think that everything you have said, Tahita, is probably absolutely right. I'm just not sure what we can do when we've got forty-five in a class.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I'm afraid that that may get worse. One thing we can think about: Dr. Carrier said that she would like the group of teachers who are working on trying to improve thinking and writing to come up with some suggestions for some progress, some ways to improve situations.

Berry Woodson: That would be great--teacher recommendations.

David Clinkscale: How? What kind?

Tahita Fulkerson: Well . . .

David Clinkscale: Class sizes of thirty! Class sizes of thirty would be marvelous.

E. R. Milner: Three sections would be even better.

Tahita Fulkerson: Three sections of forty five? Or five sections of thirty? You need to have probably the smaller sections. We all recognize that in the large classes we lose eye contact, we lose rapport and all the opportunities to do these things which would help the students learn the material. The bigger the class, the more we must rely on outlines and overhead projectors and other devices to make the material accessible.

Berry Woodson: Now, we are giving them an entry test, are we not, as far as their reading skills?

Juanita Rodriguez: Reading and English usage.

Berry Woodson: What if they do very poorly on these? Are they suggested to take reading before they take . . .

Juanita Rodriguez: They are suggested to take reading, but the students sometimes don't. I know this summer that students in Dave's classes were tested for reading levels and those who scored below 13.0 reading level were urged to take reading. Some of them took that advice.
David Clinkscale: Do you know how many?

Juanita Rodriguez: I have five of them in classes now.

David Clinkscale: Not as many as I'd hoped.

Juanita Rodriguez: No, but it's a start for them. One of the problems sometimes is that the students, regardless of their level, don't know how to read effectively. We make assignments to read chapter one and they just open the book and start on page one without doing any of the preliminary activities to make reading content stay with them. All of you have heard of SQ3R where students are advised to survey a whole chapter, including graphs, pictures, and questions at the end before they actually start the reading. They should turn the boldface headings into questions and read to find those answers, and write in margins as they read. That way they are actively reading, and they do not come as likely having their minds stray. They should also be reminded of the importance of the glossary. There are many techniques for becoming actively involved with the material and making the material easy to remember. And they don't know how to find main ideas.

Berry Woodson: Through the years I've gone to the bookstore and looked through some of the used books. They're depressing. There's no underlining, and that suggests to me that they're not reading.

Juanita Rodriguez: They don't know how to underline. When I see a students with a serious problem, I get him to tell me how he studies. "Bring me your books, bring me your notes," I say. I see nothing there. Not only is there no underlining--no finding of main facts--but no writing anywhere in the book. Writing is another mode of learning, but they don't know that. We need to use all modes of learning. All the modes require more of the brain.

Berry Woodson: So students who score poorly on this reading test, then, are filtered into your course?

Juanita Rodriguez: Well, if they are at seventh-grade level, they are required to take it. But beyond that, no. And you know that if the student is reading at the tenth-grade level, and your book is written at 13.0 . . .

Berry Woodson: What's the median score on that test?

Juanita Rodriguez: Well, it's about 10 or 11, but students do have serious problems even reading at 10 or 11 if they do not know how to take notes. So it's really the
responsibility of the content area teachers to teach them how to study for their area.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, to teach students what's important for a history or a government student to know. What kind of evidence counts in history? In government? One thing that we can do with the textbooks is to choose a sentence that you think is truly critical for students to understand and have them paraphrase it. You see the point. If they cannot paraphrase an important sentence and put key concepts into their own words, they don't know that material; that is to say, they cannot begin to understand, though of course they might be able to memorize it. Wouldn't you prefer for them to put those historical facts and concepts into their own words? Otherwise, it means nothing.

Juanita Rodriguez: Exactly.

Tahita Fulkerson: What Juanita has said earlier about active reading--reading and writing in combination--seems critical. Telling them to search for answers to test questions . . .

David Clinkscale: What I tell my students: "Here are the objectives for this unit. When you are reading--"

Berry Woodson: And taking notes--

David Clinkscale: "and taking notes, write out responses which seem to meet these objectives."

Tahita Fulkerson: You might encourage them to keep a reading log in the back of their notes that they make of your lectures. They could label the top of each page of the log with the statement of one of the objectives. Then each time they encounter some ideas that seem to relate to the point--say The American Dream--they could record those ideas there. Or is this a study scheme that they should figure out for themselves? At any rate, they should be encouraged more than just ideas or answers--but they need to write out questions, to develop a posture of asking for more details.

Group: Right, that's valid, etc.

Tahita Fulkerson: Two different schools have done some things that I would love for our school to do. Lee College has an interdisciplinary sophomore-level history and English class. The students do field research looking for answers to local historical problems, figures important to that area, or significant local landmarks . . .
Berry Woodson: Neva Peters is working a course similar to that on South Campus with English and it is designated an honors course. I don't know what the approach is.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do they still offer that?

Berry Woodson: Yes, and Loy Taylor is the English teacher.

Tahita Fulkerson: I know both of them, but I thought that course was no longer being offered. If your information is right, I will plan to talk to them. We need to consider if any of you would be interested in offering an honors class here with a high concentration of writing.

David Clinkscale: I have said for the last three years that I would like for us to develop an honors core within our curriculum, that we would have what would amount to an honors program, and that it lean heavily in the direction of interdisciplinary work.

Tahita Fulkerson: Again, you are talking about release time to develop that and that would be a hurdle. Still, I think it has merit and if you believe that it is worth the effort, I certainly would help in any way. We might look at other schools. At Lee College the students work a whole semester—sometimes even a whole year—on one project. They are still getting the history and English lectures and assignments, but time is also allotted for the history research project. And at the end of the year the students submit their papers to the Texas Historical Society—to some kind of contest they conduct—and the winning papers are published in the state journal. That's marvelous for those students—it is the incentive, the motivation, they need: to write for a real audience of historians. The University of Houston also has some kind of interdisciplinary program but specifically their history department publishes its own in-house journal. They have their history and government students submit papers. They can be first-person, first-hand exploration of an issue, such as "How do people in Pasadena feel about the abortion issue?" Students would conduct phone surveys, for example, or send questionnaires and compare their local results to national statistics they had found. Other topics including the more purely historical, of course, are researched, but after the papers are submitted a panel of teachers judges them and the school gives a cash award, that is, cash awards, to winners. That pride and competition are important for the students, obviously. The first year they had this contest a person who had not taken English, who in fact hated English, won the contest—a business major fired up by a history project!
You can see that they get a taste of what it is to be historian, a writer, and probably a more thoughtful reader.

Juanita Rodriguez: Certainly, and another thing I've seen advertised are booklets like "writing in history," "writing in psychology,"—here is the publisher's brochure. We may want to order some of these.

Tahita Fulkerson: It would be good to order one to see what they contain.

Berry Woodson: I've often thought about our special interest grants: I don't know why we don't have applicants write an essay.

Juanita Rodriguez: Great!

David Clinkscale: That is a superb idea.

Juanita Rodriguez: We used to have to do that at South Campus. I remember that I wrote one when I was a student there.

Tahita Fulkerson: Who would evaluate those?

Berry Woodson: Instructors in the area for which the student is applying.

Tahita Fulkerson: That's an idea that's worth passing on, Berry. Well, other important information for me to pass on: many articles I have read emphasize the importance of having the student summarize the content of the chapters before they try to analyze it. If they cannot say in their own words what the chapter is about, then they cannot, as we all agree, analyze or synthesize. Do you have your students write any summaries?

Group: No, not really.

E. R. Milner: Well, only as summary is part of research. In Texas history every one of my students has a research paper.

David Clinkscale: Mine do a project in which they write a subjective essay which is a summary of what they have done, their thoughts and reactions.

Berry Woodson: How do you grade them?

David Clinkscale: Clarity of their expression, the extent to which they develop their thoughts— in other words, if they say "the judge acted dumb," I want them to complete
"the judge acted dumb because he did . . . and I reacted to that action in this manner." That is obviously a more well-thought-out paper than just the plain opinion produces.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you give them models of the kind of writing you want them to do?

David Clinkscale: No, I don't.

Tahita Fulkerson: One thing that important thinkers agree on—Mina Shaughnessy in her study of open door students, for the best example—is that students need to have models they can attain. More, they need some trial runs on these big projects so that you can react to the rightness or wrongness of their work before they produce the big, grade-breaking paper. The saddest comment is "I hope this is what you wanted." I believe that we should be certain that they know what we want, what we consider an A project. You may want to make available some student papers—or choose one paper to discuss in class, either on overhead or dittoed. Tell the students what you like about the content, what you like about the writing. In the same way, when you find a really effective paragraph in the textbook—one that explains a process or supports an opinion--

Berry Woodson: Often I read good essays so that they can hear what I expect.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you give them a copy to look at?

Berry Woodson: No, I don't.

Tahita Fulkerson: If you could do that--I know that adds to your work—but if you could have a secretary type one page—a page is enough—and show the students what you like about it, tell them specifically what you mean when you say I want a well-developed paragraph. We English teachers have learned the hard way that just telling what we want isn't usually enough—we have to show. Again, give models and explain what makes them models. If you cannot find time to make a model accessible, scour the textbook—students have copies of it—and analyze with them and for them the way good paragraphs are written. And of course we hope that as they are scrutinizing the form they are absorbing a bit of the content.

David Clinkscale: One thing that I did, or do, when I teach either U.S. or state and local government is when we reach the legislative process I simulate in either the Congress or the legislature that each student assume the
role of a senator or a representative. Each must write two bills, and it just occurred to me: I've never really put that much emphasis on grading the bills that they turn in for form and mechanics. Maybe I should just begin to do that.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, that adds a lot to your load and you already have five classes of over forty. You would not be able to do it. But there are ways you can grade materials in this learning process: have them turn in maybe a draft or a partial draft of part of their bills and you could code in some marks, not make long comments. One math teacher I read about has students turn in written explanations of the processes that they have completed. And if it is a clear statement which he can understand, in which he knows that the student understands the processes, he just puts a plus on that paper. The students know that the plus says "I can tell that you understand the process, because you have written about it clearly and correctly." Then if the teacher is uncertain--based on the written explanation--about whether students understand, he will use a question mark. And the students know how to decode that sign: "You may understand this material, but I can't tell by the way it is written." The third mark is a minus sign, which signifies "You are not doing your homework." The genius of this system is that the student may in fact be doing his homework but he may not understand how to write about it convincingly. He doesn't want that minus because the teacher is telling him that he's not working. Thus the student who cares is compelled at least to question his writing. You maybe could use such a system, Dave, in the intermediate stages of those bills.

David Clinkscale: I'm also concerned about misspelled words.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes. Well, do you think we should all take off for spelling errors?

Berry Woodson: I don't, on exams.

David Clinkscale: Well, I'm hesitant to on in-class written exams, and I guess my thinking in that is that I am more concerned with the material and the organization of their thoughts in response to the question. I'm looking for content, and for that reason I've generally said that if I can understand what you're saying, then I will not mark off for spelling. But I don't know if that's right.

Tahita Fulkerson: I don't know either. On the one hand it says that spelling doesn't count, spelling is really
not important, it doesn't matter in history or in science or in reading. The only place spelling counts is in English.

David Clinkscale: See, that's what we've got to get away from.

Tahita Fulkerson: Will they ever be good spellers if they see that good spelling is only occasionally important? I say no. And I don't want a dean of instruction or a president saying to us that we must take off for spelling errors; I want correctness to be vital to all of us on our own.

E. R. Milner: You are right about that. We don't want it to be a rule.

Tahita Fulkerson: If we really want to effect change, the same basic things have to be important to all of us.

Juanita Rodriguez: Well, the other thing, too, is if the Coordinating Board ever mandates that students pass a basic reading, writing, and math test after sixty hours of courses before they go on to the universities, then we will need to start now.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes. Perhaps we could attack spelling as we are giving help with study skills. For example, "Your homework is chapter five. These are the ten terms you must be able to spell and explain in your own words." Suggest 3x5 cards or some other way for them to organize the material for spelling and for content. I prefer cards because they can make stacks of terms to learn and terms already learned. Sheets of paper sometimes diffuse the focus of study. It's too easy to keep repeating those items we know without realizing which items we do not know. Cards can put us face-to-face with what we need to learn. And of course you see my ulterior motive: they are writing, transcribing from their notes or their texts the terms.

Juanita Rodriguez: There are several good books at the bookstore which you might recommend to students for any serious problems in spelling—programmed units, about fifteen minutes per unit. They take a little diagnostic test themselves. Someone at home can call out the words, and then for every word that is misspelled there is a unit related to the kind of words or problem areas that word represents.

Berry Woodson: Are students really saying that no one cares about spelling? That's shocking.
Juanita Rodriguez: Yes, I hear it.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, you see they really do not have to write in some disciplines anything but individual words. Words are all they are asked to write, but spelling of the words is unimportant—at least misspelling doesn’t affect their grades.

Berry Woodson: Well, I always notice misspelling but I don’t deduct points. But it’s shocking for them to say it.

Tahita Fulkerson: But you can see how they might come to believe that it doesn’t count because their grades do not change. Yes, it is shocking, but think again about class size. If you have to tally and deduct all those points on each test but you really believe that content is more important . . .

David Clinkscale: It’s not that I believe that content is more important. Part of it goes back to the fact that they hired me to teach the content.

Tahita Fulkerson: And me to teach the spelling?

David Clinkscale: Well, I’m not saying that necessarily. I don’t mean you guys are falling down or anything. I’m just saying we’re going to overwhelm ourselves if we are not careful.

Tahita Fulkerson: You mean overwhelmed if you have to mark spelling?

David Clinkscale: I do that, I mean . . .

Berry Woodson: I can’t resist it.

David Clinkscale: I just cannot in good conscience read through a paper . . .

E. R. Milner: One answer might be to cut down on the number of tests, from four to three, and give nothing but essays. Then we could bear down on those three.

Juanita Rodriguez: Could you give extra credit if they worked on Workbook at home? could they re-write essays for extra credit?

Group: I guess.

Tahita Fulkerson: One thing that seems important to me is historians do not misspell terms. Legislators must be accurate, if they are to have an ethical base from which to
operate. You would not dream of submitting an article to one of your scholarly journals with a misspelling in it. Of course we might write notes to each other and misspell a word, but it wouldn't destroy necessarily the way we feel about each other. But as a historian who wants to be seen as a serious scholar you will spell the terms accurately. I just read today in a writing-across-the-curriculum newsletter that there is no reason to patty-cake around this issue. We need to tell our students that in our society only stupid people misspell. And I know we probably wouldn't use those terms in a classroom but it comes to the same thing almost.

Berry Woodson: Do you find that they misspell on these research papers? I don't require them . . .

E. R. Milner: Some do, but due to laziness.

Berry Woodson: To me that would be unpardonable. Tests and research papers are different.

E. R. Milner: Especially when they have fifteen weeks to do them. The ones who are really trying to make a good paper will start it early, write it, go through and check the words that there's some question on. Ones who write the last week, though, . . .

Berry Woodson: I'd make them re-write them.

E. R. Milner: I just give them an F, because it is turned in the last week and there is not time for re-writes.

David Clinkscale: I realize the quandary. You want to give them enough time to have the time to develop those things as well as to correct them.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, that's where we could work together. If history and government teachers want to require research papers, English teachers (maybe I shouldn't speak for all of them) or let me say I could accept some portion of that history paper or a variation of the topic in lieu of a paper I would assign. They could submit for an English grade a history paper, and I would mark major grammatical errors, though not correct them.

Berry Woodson: That would be a good relationship.

E. R. Milner: Since you have your government students writing bills, Dave, on the computer, do you find that students pay more attention to correctness?
David Clinkscale: No. What I have found is that the computer just makes it easier for them to misspell! The whole question of spelling is something we've got to address.

Berry Woodson: I think it would pretty much have to be in all disciplines. We would almost have to be resolved to do it, even if the dean told us to.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I would like for us to do it by personal choice. On the other hand, if our students are ever going to do truly parallel work—as in university parallel—we are going to have to have some common standards. And somewhere perhaps we should investigate just what the university standard for spelling is. I feel certain that university freshmen are not across the board stronger spellers, for example.

David Clinkscale: Well, I'll tell you what my approach is on that; regardless of what someone else is doing, if I consider it important enough to be a standard in my class, then like it or not they're going to have to come up to that standard.

Berry Woodson: I'm not that way, to count off for spelling if no one else does.

David Clinkscale: I will. In fact, the more I think about it, the more I would be inclined to do that. And if nobody else is doing it, I cannot be responsible for what anyone else does. I can only be responsible . . .

Berry Woodson: Even if the students are writing under duress in the classroom on a test?

David Clinkscale: Well, . . .

Tahita Fulkerson: The answer to that is to tell the students what words they will be responsible for to master that discipline. One has to be able to spell the names of the major figures, for example, and students do not go around misspelling Einstein if they are studying him in physics, and I hope they learn to spell T. S. Eliot in English. These represent minimal standards, and our students need to be conversant with the standards of our disciplines. Ideally and perhaps practically, they need to think of themselves as scholars in your field when they are in your classes responding to your questions. Perhaps if students could see the writers who are famous in your disciplines—mine, too—going through the stages of writing? The most fascinating reading I've done lately has been the drafts of the Declaration of Independence. Looking at the
words they took out, the phrases that they added, is truly a lesson in rhetoric and the power of persuasion and the way to use logic and the way to write for an audience. I confess to being stunned at the humanity of the writing. A good assignment, too, would be to compare the Declaration with later documents it inspired, to note adaptation of phrasing or even any wholesale lifting of ideas. History students should be able to discuss the appeals to logic which are used by historians and by historical figures, the emotional appeals, too. They should be able to distinguish emotion from fact. One history teacher I’ve read about wanted his students to write but felt that they weren’t up to standard in grammar so he had them prepare fact sheets, assuming they’d present these facts to lobbyists or legislators, for the purpose of persuading them to change their positions. The students were not writing research papers, per se, but were doing the research and were asked to provide bibliographies.

David Clinkscale: This brings something to my mind: I’ve seen as my students have worked on the bills that they cannot distinguish between persuasion (emotion) and fact. For example, I had a handout on what’s in a bill, what to use, and just as important what is not in a bill. I’ve found that they still will put argument in the bill—which doesn’t belong there. I explain to them: a bill is potentially a law. If you read that bill and any part of it answers the question "why," then is doesn’t belong in there.

Tahita Fulkerson: That’s good training for them. You are teaching them about word choices, aren’t you? And argumentation, too. I like very much the "real-world" base for this assignment. In English we need to work more on providing assignments that resemble the kind of writing students can reasonably be expected to do after college, for instance, problem analysis, a format which incorporates description, summary, analysis. Then follow-up assignments can be ways to solve this problem they’ve analyzed, and arguments for one solution over the others. I’d like to have examples of problems in history or government to use as examples. We English teachers need to broaden the base of our models.

E. R. Milner: This talk of models reminds me of an idea I’ve had. Rather than pass out model essays or sample test answers, I put them on reserve in the library. That saves paper and gets the students into the library.

Tahita Fulkerson: Good idea. If you would do me a favor, I would appreciate your sending me samples of what you consider good writing in your classes. Then I could compile a collection of good paragraphs developed to answer
your typical questions, copy and collate them, and pass them on to other English teachers and to the Lab, where students could review them as much as necessary.

Juanita Rodriguez: And I could work on vocabulary in them. Another thing: the more paragraphs they read, even students' paragraphs, the better.

Tahita Fulkerson: A last thing I want to pass on to you sounds a bit high schoolish, but it was written up by a college teacher as an experiment that worked for him. His students had to write on 5x8 cards "Dear Abby" kind of letters with questions about the lessons, questions he had designed to incorporate the important terms and ideas the students need. Then they are to write answers in the letter format, with length controlled by the size of the card. What he is doing, of course, is trying to get students to relax, to write informally about the content of the course. I'd prefer using such an assignment as a warm-up or a review of material for a test, but the concept is valid: researchers have shown that students typically revise and rephrase more when they are writing expressively--for non-graders--than when they are writing for a teacher. I see that our time is up. Thanks again for coming, and remember to let me hear from you if I can be of help as you design essay questions.

The topics addressed in this meeting clearly reflected the faculty concerns expressed in the first organizational meeting. To address the contention that students cannot think, the researcher emphasized activities which nurture thinking: summaries, paraphrases, and other practice writings which require students to convert lessons to their own language and to make decisions about meanings. And because these decisions must occur during study sessions as well as during class sessions, the researcher included reading and study skills as subjects in this "writing" meeting.

Of course, writing, grading, evaluation, and assignment design were also discussed; and as the teachers talked and
analyzed their views, they clarified a fundamental position. When Clinkscale reluctantly concluded "they hired me to teach the content" (p. 155), he seemed to speak for the other two. Their responsibilities to teach "content" make them ambivalent even about marking errors in spelling, let alone about requiring extensive writing. Yet their reactions to ungraded writing-to-learn suggestions were unenthusiastic; and even as they lamented the quality of students' work, they did not seem especially eager to change their methods. Still, immediately after this meeting, one of these teachers reported that he had changed his tests from all machine-graded, objective style to all essay style. The one who had been "shocked" that students would say "spelling doesn't count except in English" did not return for any other meetings of the group. (He reportedly still gives only machine-graded tests.)

As a final point of interest, the researcher realized that this group of colleagues was discussing each other's assignments for the first time. In a department of just seven full-time teachers with adjacent offices, one would expect perhaps a greater awareness of how colleagues conduct the day-to-day activities of teaching, but the evidence of their questions about evaluation ("how do you grade them?" "do they rewrite those?" "you take off on in-class essays?") reveals that these teachers were also unaware of the others' philosophies. As they discussed whether history
teachers should require correct spelling, they became for a
moment a closer group.

Before another small group meeting could be scheduled,
psychology teacher Connie Alexander came to the researcher’s
office, dropped half a dozen student papers on the desk, and
asked "Now what am I supposed to do?" In the first large-
group meeting, Alexander had explained that her students
were writing papers and that she had misgivings about how
well they would perform. "I wasn't wrong," she said.
"These are garbage--wretched, plagiarized garbage." She was
right; the papers were truly poor. Even a brief look showed
they were misspelled, incoherent, plagiarized collections of
sentences organized to look like research papers. When the
researcher asked to see the assignment sheet for the
project, Alexander said she had given oral instructions;
asked about student samples for the project, she replied "I
never get anything good enough to keep." When the
researcher asked Alexander what she usually did with such
papers, she said that she "made them write them over." The
researcher then volunteered to speak to the class, to show
them how to paraphrase, how to give credit, how to revise.
Keeping one of the papers as a sample, the researcher
prepared handouts, went to the classroom, and spoke to the
group and answered questions for the hour. Their re-write
jobs were not arduous, of course, because most had in their
"final copies" something really like a rough draft about the
topics. Alexander gave the class three weeks to rewrite the papers, and she reported significant improvements.

The irony of this event, obviously, is that Alexander, a psychologist, had predicted her class would not succeed, had sensed that they did not have experience with research, and still had pursued the assignment. As she herself said, she had not felt that she had "time to stop her class to teach how to write a research paper." She now gives written instructions for all her writing assignments and requires three short documented reports rather than the single ten-page report she formerly required. (See Appendix A for her letter about this event.)

The next small-group meetings were with science/business/vocations faculty and with humanities faculty. Planning for content of these meetings was foiled, however, by the fact that no representative from the vocational/technical division came to the first, and a business mid-management teacher came unannounced (but certainly welcome) to the humanities meeting. Still, the meetings were helpful in intensifying the camaraderie among participants and reinforcing the importance of writing as a tool for learning. The transcripts which follow show the flow of the discussions.

Committee Transcript 1

Tahita Fulkerson: Good afternoon. Thank you for coming today. I want you to have copies of the Harbrace Handbook. When I told the book rep about our committee, he was happy to send complimentary copies. I believe it might
just be a subtle way of letting your students know about the emphasis you place on correctness—if they come to your offices and see that even non-English teachers have the Harbrace, it might be impressive. Mainly, of course, I wanted you to have access to the handbook we require of all our composition students. The grading symbols we use are on the end pieces; a good glossary is at the back; there is an entire chapter on research, with an annotated research paper. Now on other matters: what I want to do today is summarize for you the facts I have discovered in journals and books about the emphasis on writing in your fields. Lynne is a chemist, Bruce a computer specialist, Peggy a reading expert—areas that do not seem immediately related but that seem to me to be alike in their emphasis on acquisition of terms and on systems of learning, on patterns. Writing is not a vital part traditionally of your fields—well, certainly people do not envision essay-writing as part of a chemist’s or a programmer’s agenda. Let’s begin with your description of the kind of writing you want the students to do. Bruce, let’s hear from you.

Bruce Elliott: At the moment we are not really requiring any writing in computer courses. We do have internal documentation programs which seem to be sentence fragments but in fact sentence fragments are appropriate in that environment. But we are beginning to request small program narratives. Some of the documentation includes program descriptions, which are to be essentially short paragraphs.

Tahita Fulkerson: Primarily process paragraphs? First this, then this?

Bruce Elliott: Definitely.

Tahita Fulkerson: Is that what you mean by narrative? The process of the program?

Bruce Elliott: Yes. The other thing of course that we are constantly trying to work on is logic. My biggest problem with the students I work with is that they have no ways to attack problems, they have no consistent mechanism for pulling information out of the program. They’ll be staring at the screen, the screen will say at the bottom "Press enter to continue." It will describe an error they have committed, and they will say "What do I do now?" They have no mechanisms for pulling information off the screen, seeing differences, noticing discrepancies, working out analyses of what the final product will look like. They have no discrimination ability apparently. Right now I would be very pleased if every student on campus were required to take a two-semester critical thinking course.
Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, and if we cannot have that, we are going to have to incorporate projects in our classes that assist students with attack skills—how should they attack problems? Interestingly, the writing-across-the-curriculum movements in this country received a big push when teachers began to require more writing and realized that students did not know where to start in attacking abstract topics. With no way to pull out information, Bruce, from these topics, students relied on generalities, on illogical relationships, weaknesses that glare out from the written page, just as they glare out from flow charts and diagrams. Such weaknesses are not necessarily revealed in short-answer tests. I recently was reading a book by a mathematician, George Polya—How to Solve It. He too was concerned with what you’ve termed the mechanism for solving problems. He suggests that teachers need to give students ways to attack problems, whether it’s the inability to see the parts or to restate problems. If they cannot paraphrase the problem, they probably will not be able to solve it. He’s joining the pleas of writers in all disciplines: teachers must insist that students have practice with putting concepts into their own words. I’m not a biologist—certainly not a computer specialist—but suppose this sentence came up in a biology class: "Implantation usually occurs three to four weeks after the young embryo reaches the uterus." That seems easy, but it is basic enough that if the student cannot say it in his own words, he will have trouble with mastering the entire unit on reproduction. If students get into the habit of paraphrasing important ideas, they will have at least one way to attack problems—to say them another way. Not so, Lynne?

Lynne Hardin: I ran smack into this very situation just yesterday. I had a student come in who had two terms left on the terms list that he needed help with. And so I gave him the definition, I gave him a synonym, I rephrased it still a third way, and then told him that all those were acceptable definitions. He looked straight at me with the most innocent blue eyes you ever saw and said, "Now which one of those answers is right?"

Peggy Ford: Because you see they want to memorize only one and regurgitate it back. They simply cannot handle possibilities of multiple meanings.

Lynne Hardin: The idea that the same thing could be applied four different ways? The student was going to have no part of that nonsense! Just tell me which one you want me to learn seems to be their mentality. This student I was trying to help infuriated me so that when he asked "Which one of these do I have to learn," I said "Since you had to ask, just learn all of them." And he sat there in my view and
carefully copied down all the answers I'd given him and then looked up at me and said "But these are all alike." I said "Yes, why didn't you listen in the first place?"

Tahita Fulkerson: Lynne, don't you think that such behavior is typical of students who do not have this problem-solving ability? You are suggesting that paraphrasing didn't work for him . . .

Lynne Hardin: Not just for him. I do it all the time. I never give them a new term without several ways to illustrate it.

Bruce Elliott: Do you ask them, "What does this mean" and find that they read the definition out of the text? They have read it, but when I ask them to tell me what that means, they look at me like a blank wall.

Peggy Ford: Part of reading, obviously, is vocabulary study. I tell them to go to their glossaries, which they do, but the explanations there usually mean nothing to them.

Tahita Fulkerson: We may have to start insisting that students write down these sentences they cannot paraphrase, and take them apart word by word, putting synonyms in the place of the confusing terms. I do not believe that we help the students when we continue to pour out answers for them to write into their notebooks, memorize, and as Peggy says regurgitate.

Peggy Ford: In their ears, out their pencils, bypassing their brains completely. I tell my reading students who refuse to trust themselves that unless they learn to take shorthand very well, they'll be lost in lecture courses where teachers talk fast and they cannot write down every word verbatim. Only when they learn to put lectures into their own words can they succeed.

Bruce Elliott: I know I'm in trouble in the courses I take when I'm trying to take down every word.

Tahita Fulkerson: Right. Obviously as we talk to our students about the way to take notes we are talking about study skills. Teachers increasingly seem to need to teach students everything--and I hope we can include some writing in that. But first I guess we must be practical and teach them how to read the textbook. Tell them what you want them to look for, tell them how to read graphs and charts in your disciplines. Bruce, that reminds me of an article I read about flowcharting. After students have read a textbook paragraph, they can be asked to draw the process, for example or to reproduce in a sketch the item described.
Conversely, they can be asked to write out in a paragraph the information conveyed in a graph or chart. This manipulation of symbols, this saying in other ways, gives the student more than one way to see the material. When teachers provide the all-knowing lecture approach or the neatly phrased outline for students, they are not allowing students to think or wonder about the ideas. A study in England revealed that school children there at one time were spending only 3% of their school time writing anything longer than a paragraph.

[Judith Carrier, Dean of Instruction, arrives at this point. Apologies for lateness, greetings.]

Tahita Fulkerson: Do we want the students in their writing to explore meanings and learn content? Is that the primary goal we need for our campus?

Lynne Hardin: That sounds good to me.

Tahita Fulkerson: You want them to learn the content, then, but not necessarily learn the conventions of writing as a chemist? Of thinking like a chemist?

Lynne Hardin: Oh, no. I'm working on all of it.

Bruce Elliott: I think we have to work on more than just content, but at the same time getting the content is a critical starting point.

Judith Carrier: We certainly want them to understand the courses they are in.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you like the textbooks you are using?

Bruce Elliott: Typically, no.

Tahita Fulkerson: Is there a textbook available in the field that you consider well-written?

Bruce Elliott: Usually not, but then I'm very critical.

Judith Carrier: Perhaps you'll write one?

Bruce Elliott: Well, not this semester.

Lynne Hardin: In chemistry I can answer that. There is absolutely not a well-written, freshman level chemistry book.
Tahita Fulkerson: What do you offer, then, as an alternative?

Lynne Hardin: A student/teacher document that's about two inches thick.

Judith Carrier: You need to be publishing some of it. Seriously. Some of you need to be taking leaves for a semester to write up your materials.

Bruce Elliott: One of the problems in computer science is that the field changes so rapidly that we are typically using first-edition texts, and the errors that we find are typographical errors, errors introduced by the typesetter because he thought he knew more than the author did. By the time you get the second edition book which corrects the typography errors, it's time for a more current textbook. The book we are using right now is an example. On one page, every symbol—that required a different type face—is missing; the page is full of blanks.

Tahita Fulkerson: A standard of sloppiness that students in programming or in any other field do not need to see in print. For many of them, textbooks are infallible.

Bruce Elliott: Yes, and when you are constantly apologizing for the text, you become embarrassed.

Tahita Fulkerson: Is there even a paragraph you can point to and say "This is a well-written paragraph" and show them its content as well as its style?

Bruce Elliott: Oh, sure.

Tahita Fulkerson: Good, because that's one way we can help the students. We can show them that we value well-written material and can show them what we value. Topic sentences supported by examples and facts, logic and reason, must not be just English-teacher "stuff" or students may not change their attitudes about writing and thinking.

Bruce Elliott: One of the things that interests me but I am reluctant to deal with is current events. I am reluctant only because of the time requirement for me. I don't know how to give the students credit for such assignments, either.

Tahita Fulkerson: One computer science teacher I have read about does this: he selects articles like the one I brought for you that has the new generation of computer specialists. He makes a copy of it for his class, has them read it and write a response to the premise of the author in
light of a lesson that he has been teaching. That is, to respond in terms of last week's lecture, for example. In science a teacher did this: the 5x8 card minitheme or even a letter about some concept. The students are graded on how clearly and fully they can explain the concept in the restriction of the front of the 5x8 card. In any discipline, to repeat, any writing that forces the student to use his own language to explain content is valuable.

Bruce Elliott: I'm sure that you've come across lots of articles on vocabulary. One of the things I've discovered that I must do is tear words apart for my students, to show their common prefixes and roots that they probably know in other contexts but haven't applied to my class context. I assume it's beneficial and that they need me to do it, but . . .

Tahita Fulkerson: It's undoubtedly beneficial.

Peggy Ford: We do it every day in reading.

Tahita Fulkerson: Peggy, what is your reaction to having the students compile their own glossary? Of teachers giving, say, ten words a week--critical words--for which students must provide definitions that they understand? Or using the 3x5 cards, with words on one side and clear definitions on the other?

Bruce Elliott: I hate 3x5 cards.

Peggy Ford: Try 4x6?

Judith Carrier: The only way I can learn is with cards, and I can learn anything that is ever given if I can find a way to use cards.

Peggy Ford: Study cards are the best way in the world for students to deal with large quantities of materials.

Bruce Elliott: For some people, not for all.

Judith Carrier: You may need to be careful. Most teachers teach the way that they learn. You can probably take a book and read it, highlight the main ideas, and have that material in your head. The vast majority of students I've ever known, though, have to have some way to learn that material, first by rote perhaps and then by application. Cards are great for that process.

Peggy Ford: Bruce, the value of the cards is the writing on both sides. When they have to write it, it is re-enforced.
Tahita Fulkerson: Bruce, how do you feel about spiral notebooks? Teach the students to take notes only on one side, leaving the left side free for explanations, flow charts, phrasing of questions, etc. For learning vocabulary, they can write the terms on left page with definitions on right page. That way they'll get the benefit of the writing and also of having terms and definitions easily organized for studying. I read about one Latin teacher who had a "computer nut" in her class who was having trouble with verb conjugations. She told him to write a computer program and make a game out of the lesson if he could, all for extra credit. Of course, as he did it, as he handled the forms in a different format, he learned the system of conjugations. You three have computer expertise—all of you are comfortable with the keyboards and use them regularly. If you could find ways to tap your skills to help students like this Latin student . . .

Bruce Elliott: Well, I had a student ask me in class today ask me about word processing. Could he use the lab to write a paper. Of course, we want to encourage that, but unfortunately we also have the opposite problem of limited hardware and so we've got to work it into the schedule. But I did ask him to see me about.

Judith Carrier: Don't forget the Writing Lab. It is available with five printers.

Bruce Elliott: We have another problem: IBM hardware in the computer classes, Apples in the Computer Learning Center. But with IBM hardware in the word processing classes perhaps my student can write papers there.

Tahita Fulkerson: We are buying software for the Apples in the Humanities Lab with a focus on writing and thinking. There is more to explore with computers, but I'm not sure that I know the questions to ask. If you can think of some way to encourage the cross-disciplinary work with computers, it gives confidence in the machine and in the discipline. Studies of poor learners suggest that they have no confidence, no way to attack problems, no way to fight the failures they seem always to have in classroom.

Bruce Elliott: Another thing that I would like to encourage from all of us is for students to see us using these tools. We are trying to encourage faculty members to use the Computer Science Lab when they have work to do. When students see instructors in there working on problems, then this may help them to see that people really do use these things. This isn't just a mechanical make-work dreamed up by us.
Tahita Fulkerson: Exactly. That's the same reasoning that I have for giving all of us the Harbrace Handbook. This summer I was talking to Terry Collet about writing across the curriculum. She gave me her reading list, the one she requires students to choose from for outside reports, and I read a few of them. I was impressed with the psychological concepts that seem to have direct applications to the literature we have students read. I think now I'll be able to reach psychology students more easily for having read those books—something I should have done earlier, of course. If students see that their teachers are not isolated from each other, it might make a positive impression. Lynne, I suddenly remember having read an article about a chemist who has a law degree. He advocates writing across the curriculum: he thinks that lecture notebooks should be reading journals as well and he asks at the end of each class that students write five-minute summaries of the day's lesson, perhaps even to draw pictures or illustrations of the concepts, and then when they come to class the next day he begins the class by asking students to write five-minute summaries of what they have read to prepare for the day's class. He says that he has found that most classes have a full ten-minutes' worth of wasted time for record keeping, paper returning, etc. So he fills the students' time with writing while he accomplishes his clerical necessities. He starts the class officially, then, by asking students to comment on their homework, about which they have been writing for five minutes.

Lots of good teachers do this kind of thing, of course, but I was impressed with the logic of his presentation. He is the one who stops in the middle of really difficult material and asks students to look over their class notes and summarize or comment upon some question he presents. He has found that his students learn better for having done this informal writing. He does not, by the way, grade this writing. At the beginning of the units—say a five-week unit—he gives his students five essay questions to begin writing responses on, one per week. Again, he doesn't grade these, but he allows one review day for the students to get together and compare their answers. You can see the logic of his plan: students read the text, hear the lecture, do mini-writings everyday in class, read essay answers of peers, and discuss the essays of peers. Obviously they are learning the material and are surely learning as well ways to write essay answers. They are not memorizing, they do not have to cram.

A similar approach is used by a math teacher who begins his class with writing on the board a question which begins with "Why is . . . " or "What is the significance of . . . " and tells them at the end of class they will be able to
answer the question. That not only focuses his lecture but helps keep the students focused as well. He asks the students to write those question at the top of the day’s lecture notes.

Peggy, you commented that students do not know how to take effective notes: this teacher says the question at the top of the page has improved his students’ notes. Again, what I am suggesting is not an increase in the requirement of perfect, written-for-grading prose, but practice in writing answers in advance, to learn.

Lynne Hardin: There’s something that I read two weeks ago, the first time I’d ever seen it in print. Peggy, you know that I have vocabulary lists which are fairly extensive. I found out that my list is not nearly extensive enough. The writer of the article compared the number of new terms for students in freshman chemistry and in foreign language. Whereas the foreign language list will average from three to five hundred words per semester, the minimum for a semester of chemistry in nine hundred—eighteen hundred for the year.

Peggy Ford: Lynne, you have nothing to be ashamed of. You have made chemistry so well organized that any student can learn it. I wish all of you could see what this woman has for them. Her lecture, the lab, the textbook are all coordinated in her student/teacher document, right down to the minute.

Tahita Fulkerson: I’d love to see it.

Peggy Ford: It’s wonderful.

Lynne Hardin: Well, but they’re still not being exposed, I guess, to all they should be.

Peggy Ford: Lynne, I don’t know how you can add one more thing to their year in chemistry.

Tahita Fulkerson: Lynne, is that eighteen-hundred-word list for non-chemistry majors or perhaps just for chemistry majors?

Lynne Hardin: Oh no, this is for anyone who takes general chemistry, college-transferrable general chemistry.

Tahita Fulkerson: That would be discouraging to students to see a list of terms that long!

Judith Carrier: They’d drop the list and drop the course!
Peggy Ford: They would spend the entire semester defining terms rather than learning the practical chemistry in the lab.

Lynne Hardin: The number I teach already is almost overwhelming to them.

Bruce Elliott: That’s the other problem that we seem to be encountering--mastery of terms.

Lynne Hardin: It’s like a foreign language, isn’t it?

Bruce Elliott: We present the student with information that we know is important but it’s a fight . . .

Judith Carrier: It’s probably the same thing in history: learning those dates, names, and ancient events is almost like learning a foreign language; certainly it’s foreign matter.

Lynne Hardin: I try to approach chemistry as if it were a foreign language because I realize that until they understand the terms, there can be no comprehension.

Tahita Fulkerson: I agree. Think about the way we learn language. We learn by speaking lots of things that we do not fully understand, but we acquire skill with language by using it as many ways as possible: we speak it, we ask questions about it. One mathematician insists that his students may be able to work problems but that they do not understand the problems until they can verbalize—in writing—the solution to that problem. He divides his class into two groups: workers of problems and transcribers. The students work in pairs. The workers must work with the math symbols and solve the problem, but as they use numbers, they have to explain to the transcribers of the pair the steps. The transcribers are urged to ask questions, to check just how well the workers understand the concepts they are demonstrating. Eventually the pairs change roles when they change problems. Studies have been done of theme-writing: oral themes. Students comment into a tape recorder every thought they have as they are writing. Researchers find that verbalization is doubly valuable when the students are having to use terms of a discipline in another context. I don’t know how or if this would work with chemistry.

Lynne Hardin: I’ll try anything.

Peggy Ford: The only way to improve is to try new ways.
Tahita Fulkerson: Everything that I read about in writing improvement across disciplines seems to include the use of journals, having students keep lecture journals or reading logs. That seems to be the fundamental component of successful learning and writing. I know that journals can be burdensome because I use them in English. Students seem to be reluctant to write seriously in them unless I grade them, but if I grade them, they lose their value as an exploratory writing about the lessons. So I have been glad to read of more effective ways to use journals. That is, to provide the focus for the writing. In science, for instance, "About embryos I have just two questions: . . . ." Students can vary that—or teachers can vary that—to require that the writing is more purposeful than just diary-keeping. The experienced teachers I have read about say "Do not grade journals." Some say "Do not read journals." I say teachers must read them occasionally just to see who needs help.

Peggy Ford: I agree. You can pick up immediately where they might be going astray. I wouldn't grade them but I'd use them to see how they are thinking.

Lynne Hardin: I don't think you should call on a student to do something that you are never going to look at.

Tahita Fulkerson: Then you are faced with "How do I grade all of this?" Forty six journals or thirty seven journals? Multiplied by four or five classes? Some teachers are reporting success by making very few written comments but using symbols that relate clearly how the teacher is reacting. One teacher uses a plus in the margin. In math students might write out the process for solving a problem. If the students have written so clearly that the teacher can tell that they know or understand the process, then he puts a plus—nothing more—in the margin and in his gradebook. The plus means "I can see that you clearly understand the process." Similarly, a question mark says "You may understand this material, but I cannot be certain because of the way you have expressed yourself." Then, if the teacher puts a minus, that mark says "You're not doing your homework." A couple of things ensue, and you can see immediately what they are. The student has either to improve on his written communication or to look again at the content. Either way we are accomplishing something good for him.

Judith Carrier: Especially since so many areas are instituting tutorial labs—teachers are there so students can come to check out their problems that very day. Teachers can help each other's students.
Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, and we can help ourselves by not diluting our vigor (is that the word?) by thinking that we can accomplish some good by using codes for grading of learning material. More clearly, when writing is used to check learning, it probably does not have to be graded for grammar—unless spelling the terms was the assignment, for example. Let students know that the journal is their chance to check their understanding.

Judith Carrier: I have some problems with people other than teachers marking students' papers—most of the time students write better for their own teachers—but if ever you wanted to try having someone who was trained to score papers or assist you, I would be willing for us to see if we could hire someone. You would have to come up with the idea of how it would work and submit a proposal, but I could support your efforts in that regard.

Tahita Fulkerson: If we are going to incorporate writing across the curriculum, we will have to have some help, either in reduced number of students or in clerical help because the grading of papers is a burden. We are Pollyannas if we do not admit that.

Judith Carrier: Why not ask for a change next semester? An experiment in X number of classes?

Tahita Fulkerson: We may come up with that. When we get through with our small groups, then we need to all meet again and see what seems really critical for us as a faculty group. We are recognizing the problems; we will have hard work in focusing on the solutions.

Judith Carrier: (Rising) It is just getting exciting—I wish I could stay. But I have to be somewhere else.

Lynne Hardin: Well, Tahita, if we are considering some definite action, may I suggest that we designate specific sections of courses to be writing intensive and let students know about that?

Tahita Fulkerson: That is certainly the way universities are going.

Lynne Hardin: We might be unable to manage increased writing throughout the entire curriculum, but we could set up sections to satisfy our serious, university-bound students. They would need to know that being in writing sections is not punitive, and maybe is helpful.
Tahita Fulkerson: No arguments from me. We can discuss that when we get our entire group together again. Before we adjourn, Bruce, let's get back to computers. What is the book that you use in your introductory course?

Bruce Elliott: Well, it's Mandell's--name escapes me right now.

Tahita Fulkerson: Is there a copy in the library?

Bruce Elliott: No. Drop by the lab or by my office and I can lend you one. Are you going to join the computer world?

Tahita Fulkerson: No, but I want to see the kind of writing students are reading in your discipline's texts.

Bruce Elliott: Something that may or may not be germane--but it goes along with the large vocabulary lists: one of the courses that I'm taking at North Texas involves word processing. The current availability of dictionaries and spell-check and such programs has made programmers aware that the small dictionaries are better than the big ones. It is a detriment to writing to have a large dictionary in your spell-check.

Tahita Fulkerson: Why? I don't understand.

Bruce Elliott: The more words there are in the dictionary the more likely it is that you'll misspell a word which is unusual but spelled very close--for example, transposing letters could be a misspelling which might be a correct spelling of a word wrong for that context.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I never would have thought of that.

Bruce Elliott: I wouldn't have either, but it proves that bigger isn't always better.

Tahita Fulkerson: In your area there is so much interest in artificial intelligence . . . computers that can think. You were saying that you did not have outside readings and writing activities?

Bruce Elliott: At this point I don't.

Tahita Fulkerson: I have a collection of articles that you might be interested in--just to copy them and put them on reserve for students in the library. You could have them read two and compare or contrast them; you could put an early computer textbook on reserve and have them compare it
with their textbook on selected topics. Robert Oppenheimer's article in *Harper's* in 1958 about relativity and science made me think of that assignment because he was trying to explain relativity to those of us who know no physics. He relied on almost poetic diction to explain this concept. I thought how interesting it might be to take a very recent article on that subject and compare the two, to see how much knowledge has changed, or how much we now take for granted about once-complex ideas. Any area like yours where there is so much change would have lots of similar writing possibilities. Anything that allows the students different perspectives probably helps them learn material. I was thinking about relativity because I'd read that Oppenheimer article, but it would work with simpler concepts. Have students write in their journals an answer to "What do you understand about programming?" Or about some principle of chemistry, Lynne. This could be done before they read the text, before they hear the lecture. Then tell them what you want them to know about it and have them read what you want them to read about it. Then re-assign the original question, having them write their answer after this exposure. There should be a significant difference in the two writing efforts.

Lynne Hardin: I like all these ideas, Tahita, but we have a long way to go to improve writing.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, and no more time today. I'll be in touch with you about a later meeting. Thanks for coming.

This meeting demonstrated the value of cross-disciplinary exchanges better than any other the researcher had. These bright, hard-working, logical teachers wanted to discuss logic, critical thinking, and problem-solving. In fact, Elliott, the programming specialist, admitted that his interest in coming to the writing meeting was not really in writing per se but in helping students who "have no ways to attack problems, . . . no discrimination ability" (p. 162). He added that content "is the critical starting point," the most important consideration, for him as a teacher of computer science (p. 165). Similarly, the chemistry teacher
and the reading teacher (neither of whom require writing) came because of their interest in teaching students how to learn, especially vocabulary. Thus the meeting featured discussion of taking notes, paraphrasing key statements, listening skills, creating study aids, keeping journals. The researcher made repeated efforts to thread all these topics with writing as a tool. Hardin, the chemist, concluded the meeting with the rueful comment "we have a long way to go to improve writing" (p. 175), but she and the others were willing to go a long way, for they remained faithful members of the committee. Elliott even added summary-writing of current events to his introductory course in computer science, authorized the purchase of software packages for writing research papers, and sent articles on computer literacy to other writing committee members.

Committee Transcript 2

Tahita Fulkerson: I appreciate your taking time to join us to discuss writing and learning on our campus. Before we begin, have you any comments you wish to make?

Charles Riley: Have you seen the Morris Massey tapes? "What You Are Is Where You Were When."

Tahita Fulkerson: What are they, Charlie?

Charles Riley: It's a set of tapes on values. I'd recommend them for all classes. We just bought them in the district here recently.

Barbara McCracken: They are not really new. They are probably ten years old . . .

Charles Riley: The originals are, but these have been updated. They are on values and how we were programmed. They are motivational, too. Another one is "Who You Are Is
Tahita Fulkerson: I'll have to preview them, if you think they are helpful. Now I want to bring you up to date on what has been happening with writing across the curriculum here. The large group meeting about a month ago—with 13 faculty members—was primarily a gripe session about student writing and student learning. After that meeting several participants said they really did not enjoy the negative comments of the large group. So I divided us into smaller groups where we could focus our deliberations on the writing and learning that we want in our specific areas. Then I had an evaluation—very informal and strictly volunteer—from one of those small groups suggesting that we need the "cross fertilization" of the different disciplines. So this is the last formal small group session. We will reconvene the entire committee a bit later. What we have discovered in our discussions in science, social science, and business is not so much that the students cannot write—although their writing is often below college level—but perhaps worse that they have nothing to say. So I would like for us to begin by discussing what kind of writing we want our students to do. Charlie, you were talking about projects with me the other day. Could you elaborate? Are they written projects? What kind of writing do you expect them to do?

Charles Riley: Well, I provide fairly specific forms for them to use to plan their projects. They are asked to give the motivation for selecting this project, what they expect to gain from it, how they expect this to benefit them personally and professionally in their company. What I look for is the worthwhileness of the project. After they have written out the form, I go over it and we discuss it and both sign it. Then they are ready to start the project. As an example, one woman who works for the National Trucking Service had as her career goal to become personnel manager. At that time she was assistant training officer. For these projects I have four i’s as criteria: personal interest, personal involvement, improvement for both students and companies, and implementable - or implementation. What she selected was to put together an employee guidebook or manual for new employees. The company didn't have one. She created one—a great project. I ask them to follow an outline: an introduction, a description of what they did and the results, and a summary of the experience, including recommendations.

Tahita Fulkerson: What kind of writing do you find the students doing? That is, are their sentences strong, do they seem to know their basic skills . . .
Charles Riley: I find the whole range, from very good to very bad.

Mollie Newcom: I think I've seen one of those projects.

Charles Riley: These projects are a big part of the mid-management program. As far as quality, I've seen doctoral quality and I've seen sixth-grade quality. I'm heartened by each year's improvement in the projects. I correct errors, errors in spelling and sentence structure.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do those errors affect the grade?

Charles Riley: I haven't let them affect the grades, no. But sometimes I feel I'm close to doing that. Otherwise I think they would tend to slide.

Tahita Fulkerson: I think you're right. Have you found that the more involved the student is with the project the better the writing is?

Charles Riley: I would say so. Also, the more mature, the older the student, the better. The younger students are the worst, but I honestly don't have very many young ones. The average age for my students is thirty-five.

Tahita Fulkerson: Considering the fact that statistically most students spend only 3% of their writing time in the public school on any piece longer than a paragraph, I guess we are lucky to find the quality we do find. If their skills seem undeveloped, it may be for lack of practice. And an article in Harper's called "Why Johnny Can't Think" adds to the grim picture. Most teachers don't know how to encourage thinking, according to this piece. They don't know how to give writing assignments that allow students to think, and only 1% of the discussions are really designed to elicit thought and opinion-making. Most of them call for "tell me what I want to hear" responses. "Tell me the facts you learned" rather than, "What is the significance of the facts?"

Mollie Newcom: It's "tell me what I said."

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes. The writing we generally ask our students to do is already organized, either it's fill-in-the-blank or duplication of materials already outlined. Perhaps we need to decide honestly what it is we want our students to do.

Charles Riley: I also require that they do a fairly extensive book report. I'm probably one of the few mid-
management instructors in Texas that does that. It takes a lot of work to get them to do that and then to read all of it.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you give them a list to select from?

Charles Riley: Well, I used to, but what I do now is bring down boxes of my own books and let students check them out. The choices are pretty wide open, but mainly I want the book to be something new and different to them, something that will be useful, usually self-improvement type books.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you give them a format to follow?

Charles Riley: I do now. I used not to, but I'd get a little bit of everything on paper, so now I have a simple, five-part form for them.

Tahita Fulkerson: I think that's the better way, don't you? Much of the reading I've done suggests that students usually do better writing when they have the criteria for the assignment in advance, not as a boundary on their thoughts but as a guideline for what is important in each assignment.

Charles Riley: That's really what I do.

Sue Milner: Interesting. At the UTA CACTIP project we have an absence of that.

Mollie Newcom: In my class students have a question and as they read they look for answers to the question. The answers become their paper.

Charles Riley: That's what I do. I have an introduction where the students tell why they selected the book. Then, what was the content, in essay or outline or a combination. Next, what did they gain from it personally. Then, how are they going to use what they've learned from the book? Actually I encourage them to discuss these questions chapter by chapter. Finally, there's a six-part evaluation: How would they rate this book as far as useful content? as far as interesting reading? as far as a book they could recommend to someone else in the class?

Tahita Fulkerson: Terry Collett does something similar in her psychology classes. The two of you might like to get together to compare your book review forms; hers is as thorough I believe as yours is. It sounds good.
Charles Riley: Since I have started using the form—like I said they are all questions—the assignment seems to be more relevant to the students.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, it probably makes them read more efficiently. All the reading articles say that if the students are reading with questions in their minds, they remember what they read better. Sue, what were you saying about the absence of criteria?

Sue Milner: I was just saying that initially all we want in the UTA project is for students to become more critical readers. So we give them questions—really one question—for them to be able to answer in essay form after they have finished the reading.

Tahita Fulkerson: So you don’t have a format for the paper, a guide for the students to follow in development?

Sue Milner: Right.

Mollie Newcom: Hopefully an answer will be original and full of critical thought.

Sue Milner: We usually give them three approaches. For example, they can select the approach they like. Early in the first semester we did not have much direction for the students in the CACTIP program.

Mollie Newcom: My group provided guiding questions from the beginning.

Tahita Fulkerson: Then you graded on the fullness of the answer? What about corrections of grammar? Most of us agree that scouring papers for every single error is destructive, but don’t you agree that you must mark errors that distract the reader and affect reader response?

Barbara McCracken: If you follow that thinking—that you mark only the most obvious errors which affect reader response—where do you think students should receive their corrections in grammar?

Mollie Newcom: Seventh through twelfth grades.

Barbara McCracken: But I thought we at the community college decided long ago that we cannot worry about what happens in high school, that we have to take students as we find them.

Mollie Newcom: Then they can go to 1203 for remediation.
Barbara McCracken: Okay, but we are talking about the students that people have in their classes, we are talking about writing across the curriculum, we may be talking about students who are sophomores in hours but who still haven't taken English here. . . .

Mollie Newcom: Well, they can use the lab, I guess.

Tahita Fulkerson: The lab unfortunately will not work for all these students unless teachers across the campus insist on excellence—no, not even excellence, but just correctness. If it matters to all teachers, then students may be forced to work on grammar just to survive. Or better, if they are asked to write regularly just to learn ideas and content of various disciplines, they may become self-motivated enough to want to express that learning well, or they may absorb through reading and writing some of the conventions we all want them to have. An example from your area, Barbara: would you ever subscribe to a journal which was accurate in content but flawed in spelling or in sentence structure? No self-respecting librarian or teacher would, and if such carelessness were clearly unacceptable, the journal would clean up its act or go bankrupt.

Mollie Newcom: English teachers penalize students for errors and become the bad guys because no one else does it.

Barbara McCracken: And I guess it's the same thing in spoken language. I don't feel that we are doing students a favor to allow them to continue to sound uneducated, especially because we are supposedly giving them an education. Language deficiencies work against them when they go out to get a job, socially, anything they do. If we close our eyes to that—I don't know how to deal with it—but . . .

Mollie Newcom: Do you think speech ought to be required?

Sue Milner: I do.

Charles Riley: I always have. It's a valuable course.

Mollie Newcom: Especially in the South, I guess.

Sue Milner: It certainly should be required in teacher education.

Barbara McCracken: You automatically grade down a person who uses poor grammar. You may value that person in other ways, but grammar . . .
Tahita Fulkerson: You are exactly right. But have you ever had a speech teacher—or heard of one—who would correct a student who said, "I don't never"?

Barbara McCracken: Not in years. And that's where we have been shorting our students.

Tahita Fulkerson: I think we have, too. But I confess that I am reluctant to correct those students in front of class because I really want them to respond. I think it is so important in their learning language skills to be allowed to respond without fear of correction. And after class—well, that's hard, too, because . . .

Barbara McCracken: Of course, part of the trouble is that such correcting should be done earlier, in school and in home. Is there any way we can help students at this level?

Charles Riley: I had an example of that yesterday. I was talking to a first-grader, six years old. I saw a hot-air balloon and I said, "Look at that thing." She said, "My teachers told me to say thing, but that in Texas people say thang."

Tahita Fulkerson: So you were corrected by a first grader! Good for her teacher! Barbara, I think you have introduced a subject that is really critical for us as a committee. We are going to be asked by the Dean to make recommendations for what we would like to see happen in an effort to improve writing and the general level of education of our students. It may be that we will want to recommend that all teachers correct written errors and penalize grades but perhaps even add the element of correct spoken language that you have mentioned.

Barbara McCracken: That bothers me a lot. You have two things going . . .

Sue Milner: But if the other disciplines—of course, again, they are overloaded. Why should they have to do our work?—But the only way the students are ever going to think that standard English is appropriate everywhere is that it is required in courses other than in English. Students think English courses are the only places correctness is required.

Mollie Newcom: But they don’t need to feel that it is ours.

Sue Milner: That's right. If it's done everywhere, then our purpose is just editing.
Mollie Newcom: In fairness, let's backtrack just a little. I was thinking about our getting those students who have had little experience in writing anything longer than a paragraph. Somehow we have to get the message that those people who are trying to teach English in the public schools can't survive with two hundred students and beside that, you people in other disciplines have to help us: we cannot continue to have 150-160 students at the junior college level and do anything about the problem. That's where we are right now.

Charles Riley: That's a big part of the problem.

Tahita Fulkerson: It's a major part of the problem with writing deficiencies. I shudder to think that the state's money problems may result in larger classes or increased loads. It is now almost so, but with additional papers it would be physically impossible to do any justice to our goals for improving writing. Berry Woodson told me in the history meeting that he had never heard anyone say that spelling counted only in English class. When I asked if he took off for spelling, he said, "no." I told him that his students probably would not be complaining to him then about spelling. He made some cogent comments in that small group meeting. I was delighted that he could come. But he admitted that he did not require essay answers, that he gave fill-in-the-blank tests. We laughed because I told him I'd like to take such a class, where all I had to do was memorize facts, but not be responsible for spelling or for analyzing them. And, note: I said we laughed. He joined in. Another thing about the idea of writing to learn is that we need to give the students chances to explore ideas. They sit passively in our classrooms, hear us tell them what is important, jot down what we tell them, and leave the class without our ever having given them--in most instances--opportunities to say or two write down some of their outrageous or thoughtful or concerned comments.

Mollie Newcom: And when we do, they are scared to death. Right now in my section in CACTIP they are so frustrated that I want them to tell me what they are thinking. They ask, "Well, what do you think about this?" and I say, "I'm not telling you until you tell me."

Tahita Fulkerson: Mollie, I read a philosophy teacher's comments about efforts to breach this barrier of the students being unwilling to think--to take risks--on their own. He made them see themselves as something else--the idea of self as metaphor. It may be an old trick from the '60's, but I had not read about it before. "If I were a means of transportation, I would be . . ." Students would have to decide what they were like and explain why they felt
that way. "If I were dance, I would be a . . ." "If I were a dessert . . ." "If I were an animal . . ." Of course this does what most thinkers say must happen before new concepts become yours: seeing something from two perspectives. According to what I have been able to read, students are unimaginative and thus boring as writers because we do not encourage students to see things more than one way. To change one's idiom is to change understanding. Charles, think about your student employed by the truck company. If she could say, "If this company were a dance, it would be . . ." she would be looking at that company from a totally new perspective. She might see something she had never seen before. And Sue, consider this: "If the poetry of W. H. Auden were a means of transportation, it would be a . . ." I cannot even imagine the kind of thinking one would do to complete that comparison!

Mollie Newcom: In a TCU class I took once I had to write from the perspective of my eye—or something. It was a course of left brain/right brain theory that I took.

Tahita Fulkerson: Maybe we all need to learn how to unleash (is that the word) both sides of the brains. To translate graphs from their textbooks into prose; to translate charts into written explanations; to make drawings which explain complex prose paragraphs—I've read that journals of the great minds—creators and thinkers—have ideas expressed through a number of ways. Freud drew diagrams of id, ego, superego, for instance. We may need to encourage our students to look at their ideas, their writing, their beliefs another way.

Charles Riley: What you have just said is really critical. I work a lot of seminars—seminars rather than classes often. Everybody is going to be a god in one way or another. Last week I used the drama triangle: the rescuer, the victim, the persecutor. When individuals can see themselves in each one of those roles, when they can tell about their experiences, we have some lively classes. It's the different perspectives.

Mollie Newcom: If we want students to look at different sides of things, there are lots of things we can do. I have a student stand up in class, look straight ahead. People in the class describe him just seeing his back, then seeing just his profile, and then finally from front on. That exercise is as close as I've come to giving them these perspectives you've mentioned.

Tahita Fulkerson: That's a good exercise.
Charles Riley: It's been several years since I've done this, but in the past we've done something similar. Each person has stood up and assumed different roles. It's fun, of course, but also valuable for forcing them to broaden horizons.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, and it may not make them better spellers, but it may make them feel more confident about themselves in other ways.

Charles Riley: It's the right-brain response I guess.

Tahita Fulkerson: I guess I'll need to study the right brain/left brain business. I may not be adventurous enough. By the way, Charles, I continue to think about your project. I read repeatedly that we have to provide sequences for these long assignments or projects. Barbara, in terms of the usual library assignments and research papers, you may have comments to add. The typical college research assignment might be phrased "Go to the library and write a report on acid rain" or "Go to the library and find information about the writer D. H. Lawrence." A more logical approach might be one I read about used by a philosopher: he would send his students to the library to find ten facts, to assemble a fact sheet with documentation. They didn't have them to make any evaluation or analyses but simply to present the facts from different sources about the subject, perhaps as a person might be reporting to a task force on acid rain. Students would present basic facts--found in research--about acid rain. Those facts were turned in as a report. Later in the term each student is assigned to find other articles on the subject, pros and cons about the subject for which he has found the initial facts. Students have to know what before they can work with why. If teachers can lead students in a direction and give them three short, related assignments rather than one long assignment, the individual projects seem to be better quality, students really learn how to find research materials--remember they go to the library three times--and they read materials with clearer understanding in the third assignment, for example. It's the process we encourage in composition, I guess: freewriting to discover the scope of the topic, drafting to focus it, revision for the serious writing. Each time students return to the material they should see it differently. Or so we hope.

Mollie Newcom: I believe that A&M is changing the entire focus of its composition courses for freshmen, so that they do lots of research on the subject and use that subject as focus for essays of argumentation, persuasion, definition, so forth.
Sue Milner: That's what I understand. The students are given guidelines for research and then are using that researched material for the writing of all their major papers.

Tahita Fulkerson: Charles, you would love this, to tell the students to become an authority on some subject that they like and then to compose papers based on that research. Obviously, students get the confidence that comes from knowing a subject well and the experience of writing about the subject in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes. Contrast that research experience with what many freshmen students tell about their high school research papers. They are assigned topics—the life of Walt Whitman is one I've heard of—write notecards, and turn in that paper during final week. They never get to see the paper or to discuss it, either content or form.

(At this point, Chris Sawyer, speech teacher, enters)

Mollie Newcom: Back to the high school teachers again, but they are overworked. They just have time to take students to libraries, discuss notecards, and explain how to organize notes into long papers. I did it myself when I taught in high school. It is library research but not thinking. The research was really enough to try to teach.

Chris Sawyer: I'll jump in—sounds like high school students don't get chances to analyze.

Mollie Newcom: Certainly no analysis. This is typical: "I wrote my research paper on The Scarlet Letter." "Well, did you enjoy the book?" "No, I didn't even read it. I just did my research paper on it."

Tahita Fulkerson: I've heard that, too. Let me change the focus of our thinking a minute. As content teachers we probably should use the content of other areas, when feasible, in our examples. This would show our students that we can think beyond English, for example, or beyond mid-management. For instance, imagine an English question like this: "Based on Toffler's definition of culture shock . . ."—and then give the definition—". . . discuss what happens to Gregor in Metamorphosis." Or this one: "Given the definition of the 'Peter Pan Syndrome,' can you explain the relationship between Linda and Willie Loman?" Such cross-disciplinary references seem valuable to me for our students—and of course for us, too, to stay fresh with the material we teach semester after semester.

Mollie Newcom: Today one of my students said she could not believe that she was reading the structure of the psyche
in English and also in psychology—in the same week. She asked me if we teachers planned such things. She had never made the connection that she would be doing something in English that she might hear again in psychology.

Tahita Fulkerson: I’m embarrassed these days about how often I use the word "connections," but almost every important article I read about writing across disciplines urges that students be led to discover connections between ideas. Chris, I know that your students are writing introductions to speeches, and conclusions. Some of my developmental students have said, "Mrs. Fulkerson, can we hurry along to conclusions? We need them for speech." What are you telling your students about introductions and conclusions?

Mollie Newcom: Are you really a frustrated English teacher?

Chris Sawyer: No, but I may very well become a frustrated speech teacher! What I have had my students do—well, I got tired of hearing all their speeches begin, "Well, mine’s on . . ." and end with, "Well, that’s it." So I decided that for their first speaking assignment they would write a manuscript of an introduction and a conclusion. I wanted to emphasize certain delivery skills, specifically speech rate and speech volume. I want students to arrive at 125 words per minute, all audible. Their 500-word theme length then is about four minutes long in speaking.

But Tahita, you are not the only English teacher being bothered by questions from my speech students. Agnes Bolesta mentioned a similar concern from her students who want to submit speeches as English themes. She has told them they will probably have to change the language. But to answer: I require essentially three things in the introduction: the attention-getting technique which you folks call a hook, the orientation of audience to subject matter, and then the partition statement which is a thesis statement, dividing what’s coming up in the speech into parts. Then the conclusion is a summary with a catchy or eloquent final thought. I give them a list of techniques for that and some examples. I’m sure that what I tell them very closely parallels what English teachers tell them. I don’t grade them on the content of the manuscript. I want them to read it because people feel more secure reading than they do speaking without notes, but I grade them on oral skills, speech rate, and speech volume. I can control those variables by requiring the manuscript because I ask them to count every word and then I use a timer to control the rate to achieve the 125 per minute. Their grade is determined on
how close they get to 125 words within the timed limit. Then we will move away from manuscript to outline so that we can work on eye contact. Eventually we want to get to extemporaneous speaking, but on the way my speech students do a lot of writing.

Charles Riley: Well, I think I'm probably a frustrated speech and English teacher because I have a lot of both. But there's a reason. I visit about seventy or eighty businesses a year, and I ask them if they were looking to hire someone to to send someone here for training, what would they want most? The answers narrow down to about five things: communications, human relations, attitudinal development, responsibility, and motivation with an emphasis on self-motivation.

Tahita Fulkerson: The communication is oral or written?

Charles Riley: Well, both, but the emphasis is on oral. Last spring a year ago Dr. Bill Hughes, president of University of Akron now, authorized a survey of M.B.A.'s and B.B.A.'s who had been out of the A&M system from three to five years and asked them basically, "What did you miss in your business education which you could really be using now?" Far and away the answer was communication, and the emphasis was on what they called the non-cognitive variety. Second, they said salesmanship—the ability to sell and persuade.

Fulkerson, Newcom, Milner: (Almost in unison) The persuasive essay!

Charles Riley: Are you a chorus? Third, but what they thought might be first was computer technology. Yet the exes didn't say computer technology but understanding different computer systems. Other answers came in, too, of course, but the main skill missing was communication.

Tahita Fulkerson: Chris, that makes you feel better, doesn't it? And it's good for English teachers, too. Well, in light of what we have said, or based on what you see in your classes, do you have any suggestions for us in terms of what you like to see the campus-wide committee on writing and learning do or recommend to administrators? Some of the other teachers have wanted honors courses wherein there would be a writing intensity; some control over class sizes in order to establish rapport and to facilitate increased grading or the increased writing. This morning I was a guest speaker in a psychology class that had forty six students in it—students so scattered that I had to walk from side to side and up and down just to establish eye
contact. I could see exactly why that teacher wasn't rushing to add writing to her syllabus. I found it tiring even to lecture to a group that size. But there may be other needs that this group sees, other topics that you wish to discuss with each other.

Chris Sawyer: I'm still interested in writing and learning. The biggest problem my students have is being able to make predictions or do analysis of something. They seem unable to think critically.

Mollie Newcom: So what do you suggest?

Tahita Fulkerson: How do you touch that subject? How do you encourage them to let themselves go and think?

Chris Sawyer: I don't know. I really don't. Maybe I need to find case studies to help them develop problem-solving skills. Charles, I guess you do a lot of that as students work with real cases, with companies.

Mollie Newcom: I have become so comfortable with team teaching at UTA that I really would be open to teaming with any other subject.

Barbara McCracken: That's what I was thinking, too. But the teachers would need to make a real connection, not just alternate lecture days and refer in passing to the other teacher's discipline.

Tahita Fulkerson: That was another suggestion that came from other groups, too. There are problems with it in terms of release time and loads, but we certainly should discuss the best way to recommend it.

Mollie Newcom: One way we might start it would be to put two classes back-to-back and just get another workhorse to work together, without release time, within the regular load. That would at least get a foot in the door. The release time is best, of course. Sue can testify that it takes a lot of planning to be an effective team. We spend a lot of hours at UTA with our teams.

Sue Milner: If we had such a team concept here, the convenience of not having the drive to Arlington, of not having to restructure an entire nine-hour sequence of courses would make up for the lack of release time. We have been working with a new concept in Arlington. That's why it has required so much time.

Chris Sawyer: I've had a bit of experience with such an idea. When I was a sophomore in college, I had to take a
required course in western civilization. We had a professor of literature, a professor of philosophy, a professor of art, and a professor of history. We discussed ideas from four perspectives, with the purpose of getting students to synthesize all elements of an entire historical period. It was a tough course. It was funded through some special foundation or we probably could never had four professors for one course. We wrote quite a bit as I recall.

Tahita Fulkerson: Sounds like a dream situation for students and teachers alike, doesn't it? Well, we've reached the hour when I promised Sue and Mollie they could leave for UTA. Before we go, is there any last comment?

Barbara McCracken: Do you get any feeling, Tahita, that there is to be another meeting? I don't believe that we have had enough group discussion to make formal recommendations.

Tahita Fulkerson: Oh, I agree completely. But the purpose of asking for tentative recommendations is that I could search for articles or reports on how other schools have implemented similar ideas.

Sue Milner: Tahita, don't think that the lack of response from English faculty indicates a lack of interest. But I believe that English teachers are so wrapped up in the concepts of writing and correcting that they are reluctant to sound as if they are trying to persuade other teachers to be English teachers. You know that we will support any recommendations the committee wishes to make.

Tahita Fulkerson: Thank you, Sue, and I do realize that. Is there anything else?

Mollie Newcom: Just that it is fun and also helpful to get together.

Charles Riley: I believe there is a lot of interest in the business world in what is happening in education. They want more speaking and writing, but probably are not willing to pay what it might cost.

Tahita Fulkerson: Quality does cost, doesn't it? Thanks to you all. I appreciate your participation.

The combination of strong personalities—Milner and Newcom, English; Riley, management; McCracken, library; Sawyer, speech—made this meeting a bit of a "show and
tell." For example, in discussing the value of writing to see subjects from different perspectives, Riley reported his method; then Newcom reported hers. In discussing assignment-giving, Riley described his technique; then Milner noted hers. And when the researcher summarized an article about ways to use research, Newcom offered her understanding of Texas A & M's approach to research in composition courses, on which Milner elaborated. Writing and evaluation were thus discussed, but the researcher had no sense of progress in developing a writing-across-the-curriculum program, except in camaraderie.

Perhaps this meeting demonstrates most clearly Elaine Maimon's remark that English faculty should probably receive immediate and concentrated attention of anyone trying to initiate writing across the curriculum. The English faculty, which one would expect to be fully supportive, was not keen on attending these meetings. Their absence was, in fact, noted by the coordinator of the Humanities Division. Apparently, the English teachers believe that they know what is to be known about teaching writing and that they certainly do not need to come to an extra hour-long meeting to hear what they already know. Even Sue Milner, a supportive colleague and friend, remarked that she was reluctant to "talk too much" at these meetings for she felt the purpose of the discussions should be to tell non-English faculty about ways to teach writing. Too, in referring to
cross-disciplinary writing, her comment "Why should they have to do our work" (p. 181) shows a discouraging view of "our job writing, your job content." In balance, though, other English teachers did come to writing meetings occasionally, one expressing genuine surprise at the amount of discussion engendered by the topic of writing. As she noted, "There was a lot more than I had expected." (A sample evaluation sheet is in Appendix A.)

The Vocational/Technical Series

At the request of the coordinator of the vocational/technical division, the researcher led three discussions about WAC in a two-day period with a small group of teachers from business and vocational areas. Transcripts of these meetings follow. Not all of these teachers knew each other when the sessions began, thus the introductions and explanations which had been unnecessary in previous sessions. These three meetings were held in a classroom in the vocational/technical building. (Documents used in these workshops are in Appendix B.)

Committee Transcript 3

Tahita Fulkerson: I want us to start by telling the group exactly what we teach and what kind of writing we have our students do. Gladys, let's start with you please.

Gladys Wytch: I teach shorthand, all levels of typewriting, and this semester two business English classes and two business math classes. In the business English class we start having students write sentences, paragraphs, short memos, and short letters to get them prepared to go
into the next communication class which is to be called technical writing in the fall.

Tahita Fulkerson: So you feel that you are having to teach a little English along with your office occupations concentration?

Gladys Wytch: Yes. We have just revamped that curriculum to include more writing. At one time we were going over strictly the grammar but now try to incorporate more of the writing. I've seen these changes come slowly over the ten years I've taught at the community college.

Jan Robertson: That makes you an old-timer. I've taught just three years, but I teach basically the same thing Gladys does. Business communication is my favorite course to teach. It is predominantly letter-writing, report-writing, proposal-writing—that sort of thing—and I also teach business English, shorthand, and legal terminology. By the way, I'm unhappy because the English faculty may be getting to teach our business communications courses.

Tahita Fulkerson: What do you mean? I haven't heard about that.

Jan Robertson: Because of that fifteen hours that has to be—

Jay LaGregs: The new Southern Association standard that all curriculums that offer a degree must require 25% of the courses to be in academic fields. Our students will have to take English composition—the university-parallel course—as part of that 25%. Our technical writing is just a follow-up. It's a change that affects primarily the voc/tech areas.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, but it would certainly affect the teachers of the academic courses as well, don't you think? There will be an influx of students into academic courses who consider themselves business-voc/tech majors and they have a different frame of reference, a different perception of what they need in terms of writing. No. Jay, I think the change you describe will affect us all. When does it become the standard?

Jay LaGregs: Don't know—maybe it already is. Anyway, we are acting as if it is.

Tahita Fulkerson: It will probably be good for us all in the long run. Fortunately, this entire writing-across-
the-curriculum movement comes at a time when we can meet this need—but let’s hold on that. Jay, your turn.

Jay LaGregs: Well, even though this is just my second year as a community college teacher, I taught years ago in public schools. Then, after twenty years in the military, I got my master’s degree with an emphasis in business. I teach mostly accounting—where we do very little writing—and I also teach computer accounting. As you know, our students have two options: the AA is the transfer program, the one leading to a university degree, and it has a lot of humanities courses, a lot of chances, I guess, for the students to write. The AAS is a kind of certificate program, its students rarely have as their goals university work, and its curriculum is highly oriented toward the practical, the applied. That’s where we need to add more writing. And I understand our teachers’ reluctance to accept this idea of writing. I teach accounting and I don’t challenge my students to do any writing at all. Everything we do is problem-oriented, objective-type testing.

Tahita Fulkerson: I have recently spoken with Cindy and Nancy [two accounting teachers], and they say the same thing: that they will have to re-think many of their teaching methods if they are to add writing to their courses. We may need to redefine terms: perhaps we aren’t talking just about formal writing but about informal, writing-to-learn activities. Suppose, for example, that you stopped in the middle of a lecture and asked the class to summarize the points you’d been making. That is certainly writing; it involves the students with the content; and when you ask some of them to read what they have written, you know how clearly you have made your points.

Jay LaGregs: That’s a super idea. I can see immediately how that would help. Wow! Instantaneous feedback. I love that!

Tahita Fulkerson: I do, too. And there are variations of that trick that we will discuss later. Jean, what about you?

Jean Hatch: Well, in my cosmetology courses, I need some help. My background isn’t academic. It includes years of working, owning three shops of my own, teaching for the last twelve years—a professional in my field for thirty years. And I have taught for commercial schools, public schools, and the community colleges. I need help with writing because I require my students to take notes and to take lots of tests over their notes to get them ready for boards so that they can make a living. Some people don’t realize all that is involved in the procedures of my field.
Imagine turning students loose with chemicals for your hair! They have to know what they are doing—there are no easy ways to erase their errors! I never rely just on hands-on proof of skill. I require that they be able to write down every step of every procedure. And also, I intend to share what I learn about writing with my instructors in the program, because we have to turn in written lesson plans to become certified to teach. And of course we have specialty areas that require careful record-keeping for both teachers and students.

Tahita Fulkerson: Jean, I’m embarrassed to say that I have never even considered that cosmetology required writing.

Jean Hatch: Oh, yes. For the state examination for an operator’s license, students begin at 8 a.m. and don’t finish until about 3 p.m. It’s not an essay test, but it is a test of point-blank content—"Do you know this? Do you know that?" Then the students have to demonstrate hands-on skills. I guess the course and the test is divided into theory and practice. And as I teach them to get ready for their boards, I must require repetition to the point of redundancy because that knowledge has to be automatic for them. I am hoping that I can find ways to add writing to help students master the theory. They need to practice the theory in a variety of ways.

Tahita Fulkerson: Certainly writing is an important mode of learning, as you have said. Now, let’s hear from Norma.

Norma Lawless: Well, I'm an office occupations instructor and I teach everything from elementary accounting to word processing and business correspondence. Writing in accounting? Not really. It is a problem-solving course which is best taught with short-answer, objective-style tests. Business correspondence is obviously almost totally writing. Shorthand has a lot of emphasis on mechanics, paragraphing, punctuation, that sort of thing, but as far as composition, we don't require it except when they try to fill in what they've left out or been unable to transcribe. Typing? Well, there's some occasional composition—they have some legal or technical words and they are to compose some sentences showing that they understand how to use those words. At the same time, of course, they are practicing typing the kind of words they’ll come across in some business settings. And in word processing, the emphasis is on the mechanics. Students get documents already in rough-draft form and they have to enter them correctly, so they do have decisions to make, but nothing I'd call really creative.
Tahita Fulkerson: So you have a standard of correctness that you want your students to bring to those letters.

Norma Lawless: Definitely.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I sense that we have the same ideas about what is important. We all want the students to learn that content first of all, we want them to leave us competent. How much writing do accountants do? Do CPA's have occasions to do writing?

Jay LaGregs: Oh, yes. Absolutely. When they prepare financial statements and reports, especially if they are working in a large corporation, there is quite a bit of writing being done. The accountant that is working as a CPA out in the field, though, actually working as a public accountant, probably doesn't do all that much writing other than maybe just corresponding with clients or other agencies. So it depends on where the accountant is working, I would say. Those in the large corporation--yes, they probably do a lot of writing; those in the public arena, probably not as much.

Tahita Fulkerson: Jay, you and Norma could probably help your students by thinking of situations from the real world of accounting that your students might meet and give them opportunities to do that kind of writing, if you think that would be easier for you than to have them write about the lessons. Applications of the lessons with some real-world scenarios or case studies might be a real help to your students.

Norma Lawless: I do have one composition in my second semester of introductory accounting. Students go through a practice set and job simulation and part of their responsibilities is to check the invoices to be sure that everything is correct. If it is not, they are to write a memo indicating the correction that needs to be made to the records. That's a very short type of writing situation, but it does show them what they might actually have to do.

Tahita Fulkerson: That sounds good. In that very area of real world simulation, business and voc/tech teachers have an advantage over the so-called academic teachers. They don't have a built-in area of interest for the students. If you have taught English, you know that we often teach students to analyze the writing of others; and yet how often in the real world are we asked to analyze the written word of others? No wonder our students yawn. Do you have any problems grading the papers that students turn in?
Jay LaGregs: I don't have any problem with it because I spent several years teaching history and I used nothing but essay exams for several years. So for me to grade an essay or a composition is not a problem, but I would venture to say that the overwhelming number of my colleagues, who are predominantly out of the accounting/business area, would have a lot of problems with grading. They are accustomed to grading numbers, problems, that kind of thing. Also, I want to make one other comment. The reference to what accountants do: we are teaching different kinds of students here. There is a difference between the students in the secretarial, office occupations track and in the transfer program. Second, only about 20% of my students are actually going into accounting. Eighty percent are going into some other area of business.

Tahita Fulkerson: I see your point. My point, though, is that any experiences we can give them to write—regardless of their destination—is valuable because you know just practically speaking that English teachers cannot reach your students all they need to know to accomplish the writing in your field. I had a teacher say to me, "My students can't spell and I'm leaving it up to you English teachers to teach them how to spell." I grimaced. Obviously, he and I needed to talk about standards. You and your colleagues need to talk about standards. What do you as professionals require? If teachers lay the burden of correctness only on English writing—only in English class—then we deserve the poor writing that our students turn in to us. That's my free sermon! But let's get on with writing and our students. I usually show my students these statistics about the kinds and amounts of writing they can expect in the business world. [Show of transparency] Do these numbers still seem accurate to you? Or are the figures high?

Jay LaGregs: For my area, the figures are in fact low.

Jean Hatch: For mine, they are high.

Tahita Fulkerson: Engineering friends at Bell Helicopter tell me that the time spent writing in their profession is over 50%, but the figures I'm showing are from a mixed professional group, not just engineers. But one Bell engineer was quoted recently as saying that Bell had lost an important contract because points were reduced from the proposal because of typographical and grammatical errors. Those signs of sloppiness reflected on the company's image and cost it the contract. That's why many major corporation hire writing teachers to conduct seminars; poor writing reflects negatively on a company, as I know you tell your students regularly. [Here put up transparency of...
very weak student's writing.] This student will likely not be an engineer or an accountant; perhaps you don't even see students this weak, but this sample is authentic. Jan, you do have students this weak?

Jan Robertson: Sadly enough, I do have occasionally some students just like that one—not suited for the academic courses and thus sent to voc/tech for skills.

Tahita Fulkerson: How do you work to help such a student?

Jan Robertson: At the very beginning of the semester I mark their papers as specifically as possible--telling them exactly what I see their problems to be. But I find that these kinds of students will not seek help, even if I write notes on their papers asking them please to see me after class, even if I ask them personally to stay a minute after class. Yet ironically, they continue to come to class, continue to turn in the same errors every time.

Tahita Fulkerson: Jan, you've given me the perfect chance to hand out a bibliography of sources for writing, because what you have said reminds me that I have omitted a really critical book that all teachers should read: Mina Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations. Her work explains the basic writing student so clearly that it changes the way teachers look at the unsuccessful student writer. This book explains the complexity of writing for the student like the one whose writing I showed you earlier. If you have time to read just one book this summer, I urge you to choose this one. Thank heaven most of us do not face the extraordinarily unprepared writer, but we may see student writing like these samples. [Here pass out sample papers from voc/tech students.] I know you didn't come here to grade papers, but perhaps we need to discuss the errors in these papers to see if we can agree on standards. Do you suppose we have different standards in different disciplines? Do you suppose those differences confuse students, or at the very least undermine the importance of correctness? Let's look at this sample. These were the students' instructions. They were told to read two articles in professional magazines and write summaries so that the teacher who had not read the articles could understand the thesis of each article. Students were told to submit the summaries in a formal, memo-style format. By the way, most of the students in this class are second-semester college students. Our criteria for evaluation, then, are content and style: can you understand the point of the article as the student has presented it? Is the form what you would consider formal?
[Here we work individually through the papers.]

Tahita Fulkerson: I decided in advance that I would give us just six minutes to read these papers because I want us also to discuss the time factor in grading writing. If you had sixty students and you spent six minutes on each paper, how long would it take?

Norma Lawless: Too long, that's for sure.

Tahita Fulkerson: Most of us would agree, Norma. Now, what are the major errors that you see, the kind that make the piece hard to read?

Gladys Wytch: Sentence structure, for one thing.

Norma Lawless: Punctuation.

Gladys Wytch: Subject/verb agreement and verb tense errors.

Jan Robertson: The format is awful. It is unappealing even on sight.

Tahita Fulkerson: I agree. Who but a teacher would read this? No executive I know of would, that's for sure.

Jay LaGregs: But there's a problem with what you are trying to do here. I understand the entire piece. I know the subject. I can read through all these grammatical errors and poor structure and still get the meaning. And that's a problem we run into when we are familiar with content. And after reading sixty of them, the later papers will seem clearer than the first ones did. I simply have problems with this whole matter of grading. If I am a content specialist, which I am, then my primary concern must be transmitting that content and reading to see if the student understands what he is writing about.

Tahita Fulkerson: Can you be sure that he understands it? Or has he simply followed the organization that the writer of the article imposed upon the material?

Jay LaGregs: Well, if he had followed the organization of the writer, he'd have written a better summary! The student read the article and put it into his own words. Essentially the student seems to understand the content, so I cannot lower his grade for form.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I have an answer, Jay, but I'd prefer to have the reactions of some of the rest of you.
Gladys Wytch: This may not satisfy Jay, but I keep relating all this to my field. In skills classes—typing, shorthand—we do grade format; when I grade my English class' paragraphs, before I know it, I mark some of the same kind of format errors but I do not take off for them because I think the content of the English paragraph is more important. That's the same kind of problem Jay has brought up here.

Jay LaGregs: When I was teaching management classes, I gave a lot of essay exams dealing with management subjects, and the students are always concerned that "this is not English class," as they'd say. I would answer, "O.K., but if I have a problem reading through your material, even though the material is factually correct, it will impact your grade, even if I don't take off consciously." You can see that I don't know if I should be grading for format and structure and punctuation when I am dealing with management, finance, so forth. Subconsciously, I know correctness affects my reactions.

Tahita Fulkerson: Would you subscribe to a management magazine that was poorly written?

Jay LaGregs: No, of course not.

Tahita Fulkerson: Then why should we accept inferior work from students? Perhaps we need to emphasize to our students that they will be graded as practicing members of our professions. Students should be encouraged, I think, to see their serious, polished writing in any class as that which satisfies the standards of that profession, or the conventions of that profession. In our society, when a student misspells, he is branded as educationally impaired or stupid or lazy. In our society, spelling correctness counts. Similarly, regardless of the discipline, we have to have standards of correctness, have to make those standards known to our students. Otherwise we get these questions: "Does spelling count in finance?" All teachers shudder at that question; all of us probably need to say, "Yes, of course it counts. You are in college."

Jean Hatch: Look, professions do have standards; my students are not allowed to roll square curls or to cut hair without a plan.

Tahita Fulkerson: You are exactly right.

Gladys Wytch: How do you get across to students the importance of spelling? We have a lot of students who will just tell us that spelling isn't important if they can get their message across. And they will refuse to enroll into
the classes where teachers have high standards and count off for mistakes. And teachers are faced with wanting to add writing to help their students learn content but not wanting to become English teachers and mark and deduct points for every error. After all, they are not English teachers.

Tahita Fulkerson: I guess my response is that English teachers may lack experience with real-world, professional writing of the voc/tech disciplines. Teachers of voc/tech who want to deduct points can simply say, "I do this because professional success depends on correctness. It has nothing to do with English class." Besides, in the world of business, every piece that is written is potentially a legal document. For self-preservation alone, students should get the habit of writing accuracy.

Jan Robertson: Hooray! I feel better. I mark every error.

Jay LaGregs: Do you take off points?

Jan Robertson: No, but I mark them.

Jay LaGregs: Then why do you mark them?

Jan Robertson: Well, because I want them to see their errors.

Tahita Fulkerson: Perhaps it would be more effective for us not even to mention English, but to discuss correctness in terms of the discipline. For instance, tell the class you want to show them a memo you have received—a real one or one you create for the purposes of the lesson, one with an unintentional error (hoping rather than hopping, siphon rather than cipher). After they have had their laugh over the comedy of it, they are ready to hear your lectures on correctness. Give them a must-know list for your discipline: these words must be spelled correctly. Run the class like a business.

Norma Lawless: Well, for business teachers that should be easy.

Tahita Fulkerson: I learned that in a word processing class. I have always been so aware of the beginning writer's ego that I have given lots of kind words to lots of trashy writing, with many opportunities to re-write and re-submit. But then I enrolled in that word processing class and found myself seated beside one of my own composition students. When we became peers—both turning in the same kind of work—I saw that she accepted without question the business teacher's straightforward refusal to read through
non-mailable documents. That teacher simply circled the first error she found, cross the paper, and returned it for the student to re-do. Her standards were accepted without question because of her insistence that all student work meet a professional level of correctness. She changed my life.

Jay LaGreggs: In my area we have been having informal philosophical discussions about this very thing: we ought to run our classrooms like a business. Just as we would expect certain things from employees, we ought to expect certain things from our students. But there is a tremendous difference between a student and an employee.

Jan Robertson: You’re right about that.

Jay LaGreggs: And this business metaphor may just mess us up. We have now a district-wide marketing committee, whose mission I guess is to think of ways to sell the school to students. And that philosophy makes the students consumers who have to be satisfied by teachers—we become the employees in effect. We re-focus our attitudes toward student as client or consumer who is paying money for a service.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I hope we aren’t urged to believe that the customer is always right or students never will have any of their errors marked!

Jay LaGreggs: You always get us back to writing and errors, don’t you?

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes—call it a one-track mind. But the business metaphor will work if we let it. We are giving our clients the skills they will need to survive without us. We know that the content of what we teach today may be totally irrelevant to the world of 2000, and many of our students will have to retrain themselves if they plan to be employed.

Jean Hatch: Most of my students are doing just that—coming back to learn a marketable skill. Most of them don’t know how to learn, but that’s true whether they are 19 or 40.

Tahita Fulkerson: Teaching the students how to learn is also a part of the whole concept of writing-across-the-curriculum.

Jay LaGreggs: Well, let’s talk about this grading of format and style in non-business-writing course but in a content course. For the sake of discussion, let’s say that
we agree that we should grade mechanics as a factor. Now, how much? If we given it 10% of the overall grade—if we say, "O.K. students, 10% of this grade is going to be based on your style and format and spelling."—we have just told them that correctness is only worth 10%, and that's not very much.

Norma Lawless: No, you're right. They can still make A, still make 90.

Jay LaGregs: Yes, and the thing still be lousy in content. So what do we do? Thirty percent? Fifty percent? Isn't this a very subjective area?

Gladys Wytch: These are questions I have too.

Jay LaGregs: We are talking about the non-writing courses, like accounting, not business English.

Jean Hatch: Well, no matter what we decide here, I would never take off more than 7%, I'd prefer five.

Norma Lawless: Most of my mechanics grades come in business writing. In accounting I do not take off for spelling errors, at least not enough to affect their grade significantly, but most students have enough trouble with accounting that they cannot afford even a small deduction for spelling. And I know from experience that most of them will misspell "trial balance." I have my little joke all ready about the "trail balance" and I take off.

Tahita Fulkerson: You do, then, tell them that in the profession they must spell terms of the profession correctly, and you do penalize them in class for failure to meet the professional expectation?

Norma Lawless: Yes, but I hope I never have to give spelling tests. And I don't like to feel that I should publish my penalty chart—minus five points for each misspelling, minus six points for each sentence fragment.

Tahita Fulkerson: I agree that the point business can become burdensome. Some business teachers use the four C's. They grade on whether the work is clear, correct, concise, and complete. With that criteria list, content and grammar seem to work together, not as separate parts one more important than the other. Why don't we grade a piece of student writing, just to experiment with the four C's. We need to see if we can find some way to handle the grading problem. Look at this sample of a page from a formal research project in a med tech class. The student knew that
the project would be about 25% of his grade; he had half a semester to prepare it. Read it and apply the four C's.

[Group takes time to read and mark hand-out.]

Tahita Fulkerson: I guess the first question is, "Do you find errors in clarity?"

Jay LaGregs: Yes, I don't even know what he is saying. I knew what the other guy was saying. But I don't know this subject.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do any of you know this subject?

Group: No, not really, etc.

Tahita Fulkerson: Now I'll tell you one critical thing: students were told to write for a lay audience, not for a specialist. Of course, what the teacher hoped for was that the student would put the information into his own words.

Jean Hatch: Well, I'm really a lay audience, as you say, and on that basis he fails because I cannot understand a word of it.

Tahita Fulkerson: Right. It isn't clear; therefore we cannot assess its completeness. And the other C? Concise? It seems to me wordy. Correct? No, it has typos, which should always be treated as misspellings, don't you think? So the four C's might be a way to evaluate content-oriented assignments. I'm not being as definite as you might want, but these C's call attention to the whole paper, to the entire impression, to the writer's image and concern for audience. So, Jay, back to the question of how much to take off for grammar—we may not be able to say that 10% is form, we probably should not divide message and medium. In the classroom early in the semester you can pass out papers just like this one, papers from your discipline, and let the students read them, mark them, discuss the merits and demerits of the paper. Duplicate what we have done here, I guess. Have students evaluate content; have them discuss the writer's concern for audience. And show a paper that is perfectly spelled, perfectly punctuated, but unclear. Let them decide what matters on these examples; then they will accept more willingly your insistence on correctness in form and in content. Gladys, I keep thinking about your concern with your own attitude changes as you grade for business and for English courses. Would such an approach work in both fields?
Gladys Wytch: I've been thinking about exactly that thing. It's a system worth a try.

Tahita Fulkerson: It may take a few trials to get students used to the new concepts. Any new evaluation program should probably be announced in the beginning of the term, don't you think? And of course it is easier for both our students and for us if the students have in advance of the assignment a criteria sheet which spells out purpose, requirements, format. The criteria sheet is also of course the basis for evaluation of that assignment. If they disregard the stated purpose or format, they can expect points deducted. And, Jay, if you can specify the relative point value of each item on the criteria sheet—if you must think in terms of percentages—you can say meeting purpose is worth 40%, format 20%, and so on. And for many students that may be all you’ll have to look at; they may determine their success or failure right there. But I would urge you to let students see a sample of past successful handlings of that assignment. Save good papers and put them on transparencies to show what you expect. In the process of explaining how the paper meets the criteria, you also are exposing those students to a peer’s handling of content, so you are not losing time for content in this activity. And when you return your current students’ responses to the assignments, put a good one on transparency for them to see again what you like. It's a good way to build a transparency file, by the way.

But on subject, it's difficult to grade work when you are uncertain that the students understood the assignment. Criteria sheets, examples of past work, and even writing out your instructions prevent uncertainty. Before we go any further, please get your paper and let's do some writing. Think about your own absolute minimum standards of correctness; if you had to write out for the students you teach your values, your standards for their papers, what would you write?

[Group spends four minutes writing.]

Before we discuss what each of you wrote, I want to tell you something I remembered having read. A teacher of mathematics required his students to write out explanations of processes for math problems. Instead of marking these daily activities elaborately, he used just three marks to convey his assessments. He used a check-plus to say, "This is clearly written; I can tell that you understand the concept." He used a simple check to say, "I cannot tell that your understanding is complete; work on clarity." He used an X to convey the message, "I can see that you are not doing your homework or that you are doing it incorrectly.
See me for help." Aside from its simplicity, this system had the merit of being clear to his students and quick for him, and the students realized the importance of writing to explain procedures. Perhaps grading can be simplified for us if we make a difference in the way we grade just for content.

Jay LaGregs: I used such a system last semester in a management course, and I explained to the students that most of the grading was based on the completeness of their daily assignments. My students responded to that approach. They liked the conciseness of it, I guess, and I felt that their grasp of the concepts of personnel management improved markedly over the course of the semester.

Tahita Fulkerson: I'm glad to hear that it worked for you. And was your grading time excessive?

Jay LaGregs: No. I was putting one mark per paper.

Tahita Fulkerson: Now, let's look at our individual standards and see if we have any agreement, regardless of discipline. Gladys, what are some of the things that you wrote?

Gladys Wytch: Correct spelling, correct use of subject and verb agreement, correct pronoun usage, correct format. Then punctuation, complete sentences, a completed assignment.

Jan Robertson: I wasn't quite that specific, Gladys. I guess my background in business communications shows, for I wrote almost automatically that A work is usable in an office the first time it is submitted. Which doesn't mean that it must be perfect in every way, but I insist on the C qualities that you mentioned earlier. I insist on no misspellings, no major grammar errors . . .

Tahita Fulkerson: What are those for you?

Jan Robertson: Commas used in joining compound sentences, commas after introductory subordinate clauses, semicolon joining two independent clauses together--just basic punctuation, not the use of dashes, parentheses, and so forth.

Jay LaGregs: My list is not like those. I say that numero uno is knowledge of the subject matter; students must show that they know the material. Second is the ability to communicate the knowledge they have, regardless of the kind of writing, or even in oral tests. Third, students must follow the standards of the profession. They cannot be
creative in memos or accounting forms. Next there must also
be a degree of completeness. For instance, I don't grade
homework. If it's wrong, I correct it, but only if it is
complete. Then a degree of responsibility. If a student
misses an exam, he must initiate make-up. Finally, they
must respect their fellow students, or I don't want them in
class. As I tell them, one client is not better than
another client. I use a contract with my students; we agree
on it and we sign it.

Tahita Fulkerson: It sounds as if you have given lots
of thought to evaluation. Jean, how do your ideas compare?

Jean Hatch: Mine are different. My standards have to
be based almost totally and completely on knowledge. When I
am grading, knowledge is the number one thing I look for.
Spelling is of course secondary. Format is tied to
knowledge because if they leave out one step of their
procedures, they will have worse trouble than a low grade.
They may have burned someone's hair. My students also have
to take a high responsibility for their classroom success.
I must grade on their knowledge and their format, and
unfortunately spelling and commas have to take a back seat.

Tahita Fulkerson: Given the nature of your business, I
can understand what you are saying.

Jean Hatch: Well, when academic teachers are preaching
about spelling and grammar, I am telling my students about
the importance of grammatical speaking. Most of their
clients will not want country-talking bumpkins doing their
hair. My students become personally involved with their
clients, and some of those clients want good speech habits.

Norma Lawless: My standards are different, too. I am
very general, I guess, but I rely on a one-page description
of standards for each grade level. An A shorthand student,
for example, must be able to take several sessions of
dictation at 100 words per minute and transcribe it.

Tahita Fulkerson: That sounds pretty specific to me.

Norma Lawless: Well, I guess it is. I grade on
knowledge--can the student take dictation at speed x?--and
grammar--can the student transcribe correctly what he has
taken?

Tahita Fulkerson: It is as I suspected: we all agree
on mastery of content and correct presentation for the A
student. At least, that is what I have heard us say in
different ways. With this understanding, we should be able
to find ways to help our students learn by writing. We are out of time now. Thank you for coming.

Committee Transcript 4

Tahita Fulkerson: Hello again. I am so glad that you could get together again to discuss writing and learning skills. I thought our last session was especially productive. The fact that we agreed on basic criteria for assignments in all disciplines should encourage us to give some specific writing tasks to our students. We know that other teachers share our concerns; that makes our insistence on standards easier. Jean, I noted that you were taking down most of what we said. What criteria did we agree on?

Jean Hatch: Well, I probably don't have everything—for instance, I didn't write down all the special verb things Gladys said—but in the most general terms, we all said that following instructions is important, correct spelling matters, of course they must show that they know the subject or the skill, and students must be responsible for their own work—make-up and understanding of requirements and so forth.

Jay LaGregs: Sounds complete to me. And we also said that each discipline probably has its own conventions, that we should insist that our students follow those. What we said last meeting was that our criteria list is minimal for all kids across all disciplines.

Jan Robertson: This is just the most basic stuff.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, and my notes agree with Jean's. Another way to approach correctness is to discuss it in terms of the prestige dialect. Linguists use that term and I think it makes an impression on students. It sounds more sophisticated or something, but most students are in college because they aspire to be better. If we impress on them that part of being better is communicating according to the code of acceptable written and spoken language, then they may not balk so much when we take off for spelling or insist on correct, complete sentences. One of my colleagues poohs my use of that term. He says that to misspell in our society is a sign of stupidity.

Gladys Wytch: I certainly would never go that far, but I do tell my students that there is no acceptable excuse for misspelling words. Stupid? No, probably just lazy.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, whatever the word, we need to show students that spelling matters. Every teacher's office should probably have handbooks of grammar and spelling books
as well as dictionaries. When students come for conferences, they surely get subliminal messages when they see their cosmetology teachers, for instance, with Harbrace College Handbooks on their shelves. And similar books with the word business in the titles also catch students' attention—they think business equates with real-world matters.

Norma Lawless: I find sometimes even with the students who are very knowledgeable that they are embarrassed to admit that they can't spell well or punctuate, and usually I talk to them on a one-to-one basis and tell them, "You don't need to be ashamed or to hide from it. Let's face that weakness and overcome it so it won't hold you back."

Tahita Fulkerson: A good approach.

Norma Lawless: They are usually fairly responsive and will agree to my suggestion that they take the remedial course and business English. But again, these are the better students.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, and the better students are invariably willing to try because they have the confidence of knowing the material. I want us to think now about ways we can use writing to help all students learn the material. Writing to learn is a new concept for many teachers, and it perhaps needs a bit of definition. Certainly it is a different concept from the phrase writing-across-the-curriculum. Norma, when you saw the memo about coming to a meeting to discuss writing across the curriculum, what did you expect the content of our discussions to be?

Norma Lawless: I really didn't know, to tell you the truth. In fact, I almost didn't come because I thought we voc/tech teachers were going to be asked to add more work to our courses, but then I thought that if that was the case, I wanted to come to fight against it. I hoped we'd do what we have been doing—discussing writing problems and how to solve them.

Jay LaGregs: I expected various techniques to inject more writing into typically non-writing courses.

Tahita Fulkerson: For what purpose? Just writing for writing's sake?

Jay LaGregs: To develop communication skills.

Tahita Fulkerson: Rather than writing to learn content?
Jay LaGregs: Definitely. I was putting emphasis in my mind of the development of writing skills.

Jan Robertson: Now that I think about it, I wonder why I came, because I didn’t have any idea what we’d be doing in specific terms.

Gladys Wyatch: I thought our discussions would be geared more for business majors, but don’t ask me why. That’s just what I thought.

Tahita Fulkerson: O.K., no questions. Let’s just try to do some good for you here. I think we’d all agree that once students come out of public schools with spelling habits and attitudes about writing firmly formed, we have a hard time convincing them that there is any useful purpose for writing, except in writing business memos. But we can use writing to help students learn the content of the disciplines, and when they are more confident as learners, they can sometimes be persuaded to become more confident as writers, just as Norma commented earlier. If they know the material, they just may want to participate on a more serious, more formal level. The Miami-Dade public schools and the colleges connected with that system have had writing across the curriculum in their system for about three or four years, long enough anyway to be able to document rising scores on their sophomore achievement tests in the college. The rise coincides directly with the beginning of increased writing. This does not mean that they are necessarily better writers in terms of spelling, but they are demonstrably stronger in content. I found that to be a stunning statistic.

But it is logical, this writing-to-learn approach. Think about how most schools are run: the students come in and sit in their usual seats, open their notebooks, take down what we say, read chapter one, fill out a study sheet on chapter one, learn both notes and study sheets for a short-answer test on chapter one. They sit, we give, they give it right back and then forget it. We repeat that pattern with chapter two and so on. Education is unfortunately just that passive. I still hear teachers say, "I just wish I could pour it into their brains." That figure of speech which we have all heard and maybe even said shows how wide-spread the passive-student/active-teacher concept is. As long as the students are not active participants in what goes on in the classroom, they may never learn what we want them to learn. Writing engage the students. It is active; they are participants; perhaps they even learn how to learn. The most valuable lessons we learn are those we teach ourselves, or so I’ve read.
Jean Hatch: Do you find that each class, though, is unique? That what works one semester won't necessarily work the next?

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, I do. But what I have in mind is so basic to learning that it will work with any class. For example, I believe that most students need to be told how to read chapters of textbooks in disciplines that are totally new, disciplines for which they have no contexts when they read the material. What I have here is an excerpt from a current economics textbook. Eco is one course that many students have extreme difficulty with, and probably because the material is brand new. Let's experiment. Let's read through the pages I've brought--you'll see that they are from chapter one, the very beginning of the course. We probably are in the same situation as new students are in that the material is unfamiliar to us. Let's read it, with Norma and Jean making marginal notes as they read and the rest of us underlining or doing whatever else you think students do as they read this material. Then we'll have some class discussion.

[We read the material.]

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, classtime is over! Would students have trouble reading this material?

Gladys Wytch: I think it's awful.

Norma Lawless: I'm glad I'm not taking the course.

Tahita Fulkerson: Why? It is a college textbook, in its tenth edition I believe, and is written between the eleventh and thirteenth grade level. Why would students have trouble?

Jay LaGregs: Because they don't read on level.

Tahita Fulkerson: Right. And this is not unlike what we ask our students to do--to read material that is new on a level that is above their reading level. But we read on level. So I'm the economics teacher. "Class, discuss the different definitions of the word economics that you found in your reading today." Instead of discussing, would you prefer to write? If it were an open-book exercise, would your markings help?

Jan Robertson: But really, now, this isn't fair. We were reading under unusual circumstances, and not even a full chapter. Have mercy!
Jean Hatch: Well, of course I see your point. Because I was allowed to write in the book as I went, and because I had to write even to see what it was about, I could pass the open-book test. But I'd feel better if I could read the whole chapter and have a teacher lecture over the material, too.

Tahita Fulkerson: What about instruction in how to read economics? Would that be a help?

Jean Hatch: Sure. Remember, I don't come from an academic background. Is there a special way to read economics?

Tahita Fulkerson: An economics teacher could tell you. I cannot. But I do know that most students have not had any reading instruction since the fifth or sixth grade. They need help with it. And they also need to be introduced to the SQ3R approach taught by reading teachers.

Jay LaGregs: What?

Tahita Fulkerson: Reading teachers divide the reading of content textbooks into five steps: the s is survey—look at the chapter headings, the maps, the study questions to get an overview. The q is question—convert each subheading into a question, and then read to find the answer to the question. For example, the subhead "The Settling of Virginia" could be converted in a question like, "What is important about the settling of Virginia?" Students read to discover the answer, and that read is the first r. The second r is recite—say aloud what you have just read. But here I add a fourth r, as a teacher of reading suggested, and that is write—write in the margins the answers to the questions. The final r is review—review the questions and the answers at the end of each week, and re-read only those sections which you cannot discuss aloud.

Jean Hatch: I'd like to know more about that. Is there an article I can read?

Tahita Fulkerson: On the bibliography I gave last time.

Jay LaGregs: Well, it sounds pretty elaborate to me, and time-consuming, but I can see how it attacks the context problem. And I hadn't thought about the need to teach students to read textbooks. That's really a new idea for me—and it's discouraging, too. Writing and reading and content? That's too much to teach.
Jean Hatch: It overwhelms me, Tahita. I have students who have been out of school for thirty years, who don't read anything but T.V. Guide.

Tahita Fulkerson: Have them read with a pencil or a pen. Tell them not to underline everything that is unfamiliar to them, but to underline only key words or concepts and to paraphrase in the margins the sentence in which the key word appears. That is something concrete they can do to feel good about their work—it is the activity that inexperienced learners need to get into the groove. Jean, they want to learn your field, they see it as immediately marketable, and they will eagerly follow your instructions on how to be successful in the class. And if they find that they cannot paraphrase th sentences, have them write specific questions in the margin, questions to ask you once they get to class. Either way, they are engaged in the material.

Jean Hatch: Now that makes sense to me. I could show them how to do that; I really cannot be concerned with sentence structure and verbs.

Tahita Fulkerson: You don’t have to. Just teach them how to read and write about their reading. If other teachers across disciplines are requiring more writing, the students surely will the the exposure they need. If some terms are critical, tell the students they are. Suggest a 3x5 card with term written on front and definition on back. That is writing to learn. Even charts and procedural ideas can be handled on cards. Similarly, you may have to tell students how to take notes. Encourage them to write on one side only and to use the reverse side for phrasing possible study questions for the material written directly across. That way they have read the material, made marginal notes, taken class notes, and written possible test questions about those notes. Three-fourths of the learning is writing, and little of it is memorization. Too, encourage students to write the concepts in different ways. Have them convert charts in the textbook into prose paragraphs; have them convert prose into a flow chart. Or maybe draw diagrams. Freud’s and Darwin’s notebooks are full of materials looked at in a variety of ways. Well, do you have any study tips that you give your students, either using writing or some other means to learn? This long silence suggests that you do not.

Norma Lawless: I confess—I had never thought about teaching them how to study. I tell them I want them to learn material and leave the way they learn it up to them. They’s how my teachers did me.
Jean Hatch: Well, in my area I have to teach the steps of each process—one, two, three, like that. I insist that my students number their steps when they are first learning the procedures. It’s not enough that they try to learn the steps; I want the steps to be numbered in the beginning so that they will stay in sequence, because again, my students work with chemicals and people’s hair. They can’t be wrong. But perhaps this study tip wouldn’t work anywhere else.

Tahita Fulkerson: No, I can think of ways it could . . .

Jay LaGregs: It is very applicable. I can see teaching an income statement by using numbers for each part of the form. But I can see better, I think, how writing could be used. Blank sheet of paper, write out exactly what you would do to fill out an income statement, break up into pairs, compare the written steps, then look at the book and re-write until it looks like the one in the book.

Tahita Fulkerson: Right. And Jean, you might want to very it by using mnemonic devices instead of numbers. The first letter of each step is combined to make a nonsense word that can be remembered. Of course, the sequence of the numbers is mnemonic, but for some students, words help.

Jean Hatch: Oh, I do that with the seven shapes of the face.

Tahita Fulkerson: I felt certain that I was repeating ideas that you already know, but my point is that sometimes we forget that our students need help in learning critical concepts.

Jean Hatch: Well, now that I think about it those nonsense words help students make the theories or concepts relate to them. That’s the context you were talking about. And when they write down the word, it helps them see what they know and what they need to learn.

Jay LaGregs: Well, here’s something we need to consider, if we are talking about writing revealing what needs to be learned. What do you do when you want to implement writing across the curriculum and the writing skills of the instructors are poor?

Tahita Fulkerson: Of course that would be unfortunate, but perhaps not uncommon. If writing across the curriculum were being implemented by the administration—that is, not by teachers with an interest in writing and learning— instructors could be required to attend workshops, take courses, whatever was necessary to meet the school’s stated
level of competence. As we have seen with the state-wide competency exams, most teachers don't appreciate having anyone disparage their skills and abilities. But I know that when administrations mandate such writing programs, they bring in writing specialists who do the very things we are talking about trying to do for our students. For one thing, making teachers aware that writing can be a means of acquiring skill, that writing is a process that requires multiple drafts, that writing does not pour forth in a logical linear way but that it is recursive.

Jay LaGrega: I'm asking about schools where writing across the curriculum is made a college policy.

Norma Lawless: I keep hearing that the state is going to mandate more writing. I'm not ready for it.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, it is a basic concept—students need practice in reading and writing if they are to become proficient. Businessmen lament the number of secretaries who cannot spell, corporations hire engineers who cannot write reports, the woes multiply, and we become accountable for the shortcoming of our students, particularly if we say that they are college graduates. But we cannot expect non-writing teachers to add writing to their courses. So Jay's issue is an important one. And I've talked around it, haven't I? Let me answer.

Teachers may have to write their own assignments when they are beginning to add writing. For example, they could write out their class lecture notes—not all of them. Say for just one week. And during that week, they could have all the students concentrate on writing full, complete notes. There could be an exchange, where students compare, as you suggested, Jay, their notes. Then the teacher's notes could be put on transparencies for students to make one more comparison. The teacher would be writing about his discipline so that he wouldn't have to concentrate so much on content as on fullness and organization. He would have a real audience and an important purpose. That kind of practice would be helpful, but again, only if the teacher really wanted to do it. By administrative mandate, I'm not so sure. Let's hope that teachers embrace the idea on their own.

Jean Hatch: The notetaking comparison would certainly work in my classes where so many students have never taken notes. I tell them exactly what to write down; so the comparison would help those middle-aged women who return and are so scared their hands shake. I also tell my students to listen, then to write what they think I've said in their own
words. Then I repeat exactly what I've said so that they get instant review of their summaries.

Tahita Fulkerson: I like that. When teachers put their entire lectures on handouts or transparencies, then all students have to do is copy, and they can copy mindlessly. Any notetaking that involves thinking and synthesizing gets my vote.

Jay LaGregs: Of course, we often have to give them the subject matter terminology. We want them to see that.

Tahita Fulkerson: Indeed we do, but we want their understanding to come from having written or summarized or paraphrased the definitions in their own words. I'd even advocate doing away with glossaries so that students could write their own definitions of critical terms.

Norma Lawless: I do that. I have the ten new terms spaced down a sheet of paper and hand out one to each student. Then we search out the definition in the text, I have someone compare the textbook definition to one in a dictionary, and then they are required to write in their own words the meaning of the terms. What I will add to this assignment is the peer comparison and then my own definition for a further comparison.

Tahita Fulkerson: I like that.

Jean Hatch: Another one I can use. A good idea.

Norma Lawless: I want to ask something about what we said about the use of transparencies. I use them just as you described. I put my lectures in full outline on transparencies in legal terminology, because so much of the material is critical, in spelling, use, and definition. What do you think about having a blank transparency on the screen and have my students see me write a summary of each phase of the lecture? Where before I might have typed for them all of Roman numeral I, now I might provide a prose summary of the material I'd consider to be Roman numeral I and have them see me write it? Wonder if I could do that without embarrassing myself?

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, and one thing you might try is having them write their summaries while you write yours, but don't show yours until they have written and perhaps read theirs. This reminds me of a way you can use freewriting as a way to explore. Are you familiar with the term?

Jan Robertson: I know what I mean when I say it. It is writing without concern for punctuation or spelling,
writing just to capture the flow of ideas as they lead to each other.

Jay LaGregs: Is that like brainstorming? I know about brainstorming.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, I guess you could call it written brainstorming. The key to it is saying to the students "I'm going to set the timer and for five minutes I don't want you to do anything but write about subject x." I want to demonstrate the value of this technique. And Jean, it will really help your little trembling ladies who think they know nothing. This is one writing-to-learn technique that is also a good ice-breaker. Given them a term or an important name--let's use Sigmund Freud. I'll time us. For five minutes do nothing but write about Freud: who he was, what he represents, rumors you have heard, anything that comes to mind. Then, at the 4.5-minute mark I will say time, and that is your cue to write down a question that you want answered. Not who was he or who cares, but a real question. Ready? Begin.

[The group writes for five minutes.]

Tahita Fulkerson: Norma, did you write anything you want to read?

Norma Lawless: Well, are you asking me to show my ignorance?

Tahita Fulkerson: Of course not. This is a quasi-scientific demonstration among professionals!

Norma Lawless: O.K. I'll give you the main ideas. I just put that he thought that certain gestures or movements indicated something about a person's attitude or personality and that Freudian theory is often mentioned in casual conversation today as if we all knew what it was--for example, the Freudian slip. I put he was a psychologist, but I'm not even sure of that distinction. He was widely recognized and yet controversial. His theory--and I may be wrong on this--is that many actions have a sexual base. That's about it.

Tahita Fulkerson: What was your question?

Norma Lawless: What was his basic theory?

Tahita Fulkerson: You see, don't you, that if a student asked you that question, he himself is opening the discussion. And can you tell from what is written there that the student has some fundamental ideas about Freud. As
you were reading, your writing reminded me of some things that I had forgotten about Freud, and I jotted them in my freewriting after my question.

Jean Hatch: And as you read, Norma, I realized that I had Freud mixed up with another name that sounds like it. So don't expect me to read; it'll just show my ignorance.

Tahita Fulkerson: Not at all. Remember that we were pretending to be students, trying to explore and remember what we already know. That misunderstanding is valuable and non-threatening to a student. And if he admits that he was mixed up to the instructor, other confusions can be cleared away before the lecture actually begins. Freewriting is valuable for what it reveals, whether positive or negative. And in their notebooks if they can have a freewriting section, you can use it for them to explore potential research or formal writing topics. They have their impressions, their informal ideas, the ideas that others' ideas have jogged, and then they have all the formal information that you have given them of the topic. That's a good start for any writing assignment. They've written, but you haven't yet had to grade anything. They've written and cleared their minds of the day's events; they are receptive to the lecture. They have provided a kind of context; their questions are a beginning for a lecture. As you can see, I'm absolutely sold on it. I know it works. Jay, do you want to read what you wrote?

Jay LaGregs: Well, I certainly don't mind doing it, but I'd prefer to ask a question. Do students mind reading freewriting aloud and exposing themselves? And do students try to take advantage of the light-heartedness of some of the replies to get the class off course?

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes to both, but the trick is to turn every flawed writing response into something useful for the class—even if it means going off the track. I don't mind going off track occasionally.

Jay LaGregs: O.K. But instead of reading my entire half page, let me read my question. I think it's good: "Did Freud help or hinder the advance of psychology?"

Tahita Fulkerson: Good question—and it deserves a better answer than I can give right now, but if this were a psychology class, I'd say to the class to jot that question down as a good potential test question, one they should be able to discuss after we have read and analyzed Freud for a while.
Jay LaGregs: Well, you walked right around that one! But I see how the questions and the freewriting could be used to advantage.

Tahita Fulkerson: Is that a compliment? Anyway, I'll accept it as one. Now, while you are thinking about freewriting, think of other professions where it might occur. Engineers freewrite to anticipate the problems they might face with certain designs. In the incubation time of most creative endeavors, writing or drawing of some kind occurs, followed by the questioning, just as we have done here. Gladys, can you think of any ways you could use freewriting in your courses?

Gladys Wytch: Not right now, but I'm sure there are some.

Norma Lawless: In accounting I guess I could have them write about the profession or some term to see what preconceived ideas they had. In business correspondence, I guess once an assignment was introduced to them they could write everything they knew about that particular situation as far as background to prepare themselves to write a persuasive letter, because we emphasize the importance of understanding a situation before they attempt to write about it. And I can see how freewriting could help, because many times they don't realize all the implications of certain responses to business situations.

Tahita Fulkerson: I think that's a good idea. More, if they write about the situation before you have class discussion, the quiet students won't be swayed by the more verbal, aggressive students who always answer every question and take up a lot of class time. The quieter students are especially helped by freewriting because they are more likely to speak when they have written something and have it before them. And perhaps we can even go so far as to suggest that some business courses do not encourage any thinking of the students because of the importance of completing the forms correctly. Business students might really profit from chances to freewrite. Slow, reluctant writers in all disciplines have a chance to gain fluency with just production of numbers of words by use of freewriting and journals. And you can demonstrate to them that they can write by having them freewrite frequently and then comparing the length of the earliest to the length of a later one. But like any of these new writing activities, freewriting may not work the first time. We as teachers have to be patient and let the students and us see the benefits of new techniques. But freewriting is great for helping students get into new subjects. Jay, how could you use it in your classes?
Jay LaGregs: I was just thinking about that. One of the things I do is typically walk around the room, reviewing the preceding class lecture by asking strong students to answer pointed questions about the material I have covered. I rarely call on shy or weak students because I don't want to put them on the spot. Freewriting would be a better technique, for the very reasons you gave earlier. But now this question: don't you ever take up freewriting? How can I be sure that everyone is writing?

Tahita Fulkerson: Surely. Take it up whenever you feel the urge. Reserve the right early in the semester to take up freewriting rather than give reading quizzes, if you like. After all, we want them to write to learn, and we have to check that learning progress. Freewriting leads into some other ways to use writing, more sophisticated perhaps, and that is writing to solve problems within the discipline. My favorite use is one I read about from an engineer. He requires his students to produce the typical engineering drawings and then requires that they write out for their own use the directions or instructions for reproducing that drawing. Then he takes up the drawing and holds it for about a week. Then he asks the students to get out their instruction and re-draw the piece. He says his students have become much more careful with the written word. The reproduced designs tell the students precisely where they need to correct their written communication. A variation of that technique would be to have a classmate follow the written instructions and then compare the drawings. I was so excited about this teacher's idea that I told our math chairman and she said that she always has her students in advanced courses write out an explanation of how they reached their solutions. Then students exchange instructions and their classmates try to solve the problem by following the instructions.

Jean Hatch: In cosmetology we have an adaptation of that procedure. We call it the round table. I divide the class into groups of five and for each group I have one set of written instruction on how--let's see--say how to part hair for a four-way cut. One student reads the instructions and the others try to follow it. Then they compare their models. Then student number two reads and the other four follow the instructions and so on.

Tahita Fulkerson: That's good, Jean. Now let me add one other step. Take up the written instructions and have them write instructions.

Jean Hatch: Well, I couldn't do it at that very moment, because remember we are working with live models and messy solutions and procedures. But I certainly could ask
them to write down those instructions the next day when they
come to class.

Tahita Fulkerson: A good way to test recall. And you
would be giving the students one more way to work with the
material. Jean, is all your content process-oriented? Do
you have any problem-solving content, for instance what went
wrong with this permanent?

Jean Hatch: Oh, yes. The chemistry of the solutions,
the texture of the hair—none of it sounds important to
academic teachers, but it is important in my field.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, in any field students need
practice in solving the problems of the field. Writing can
help them. At the beginning of a class period, for example,
teachers can put on the board questions which begin with
"What if" or "Why" and let students write preliminary
answers to those questions. Then the class can address the
questions either with lecture, film, demonstration.
Afterwards students can re-write or revise their original
answers. They can see immediately some gain in
understanding, or at least we hope they can. The writing
gives them concrete proof that something has been going on
in that class period.

Jean Hatch: I can see lots of ways I can use that.

Gladys Wytch: Those kind of problems could be used for
the freewriting assignments, I guess, couldn't they?

Tahita Fulkerson: Certainly. And if you give essay
tests, you could phrase five potential questions at the
beginning of the unit and have the students write out
preliminary answers as you give your lectures and they do
their readings in the course of completing the unit. Then
on review day before the exam have the students bring their
drafts of the essay questions, break up in groups, and
compare their answers. Have the goal for the day to find
the best answer for all five questions. You can discuss
completeness of content as well as clarity of expression.
One other way you discuss content as well as logical
presentation of ideas is to give them a sample of a flawed
assignment—a letter, for example—and have them discuss why
the letter is unacceptable in terms of logic and format.
Then have them express as clearly as they can in writing to
the supposed author of the letter the problems with the
letter. But I suppose you do something like this?

Jan Robertson: Verbally, or orally, but never in
writing.
Norma Lawless: We also do something like it but also orally.

Tahita Fulkerson: A variation of emphasizing content is to have them discuss—and this is profitable even if it is done only orally—ways individual words change meaning. For example, cordially rather than sincerely, probably rather than usually, these would change tone as well as meaning. Discussions about words of the discipline are helpful for many students. And for teachers, too, I guess, because so often our familiarity with content makes us overlook blind spots students might have.

Jay LaGregs: That might be a valuable exercise in the advanced accounting courses for accounting majors, because they need to know how to write letters of appeal to IRS.

Tahita Fulkerson: Take samples of such petitions or letters to class sometime and show students at least what they may have to do as accountants. Let them know that the profession does in fact require writing skills, persuasion skills.

Jay LaGregs: Right. Annual reports would also be good for them to see because there are all kinds of writing in those. Descriptions of financial statements, why we have a third quarter loss, etc.

Tahita Fulkerson: I'd certainly like to see some of those get into the hands of business correspondence teachers. Well, we have run past the hour when I promised we'd be out. There are certainly more ideas we could share about writing to learn, but perhaps we have set the wheels rolling in your minds. The next time we meet I want us to discuss ways to use letters in all disciplines, ways to facilitate research projects.

Committee Transcript 5

Tahita Fulkerson: Welcome again. It’s good to see a new face with us. Sarah, introduce yourself to those who may not know you.

Sarah Keith: Hello. I'm Sarah Keith. I teach medical lab technology. I'm so sorry that I have had to miss all the good stuff you have done in earlier get-togethers.

Tahita Fulkerson: I’m sorry, too. I wish now that I had practiced what I preached and had a designated notetaker prepare full records of what we have said and done just in case someone new is able to come. I had told the group about one teacher’s suggestion that a student be
designated as note-taker for a week, have the so-called
class minutes ready to read so that his classmates can
compare what they've written down with what he has written,
and then allow the official note-taking task to be passed
around so that all students have a chance to write for the
others, including anyone who is absent. Do we have any
volunteers to tell Sarah what we have said, or at least some
part of what we have said?

Jan Robertson: Well, I'll volunteer. Yesterday we
talked about freewriting as a way to get students involved
in the topic for each day's lecture. We did some of it
ourselves. The rules are that students write without
worrying about correctness, just to get down everything they
can think of about the topic.

Tahita Fulkerson: I'm glad you started with
freewriting, Jan, because after our last session I
remembered something that I think might be helpful. Linda
Flower calls freewriting "memory dump." It may be a more
descriptive term than freewriting, may free students from
any negative connotations that the word writing has. Think
about that language: tell students to dump out everything
they can remember about the topic. "Dump out" suggests the
freedom from constraints of grammar and correctness that we
want with freewriting, but sounds more informal. And while
I am remembering Linda Flower, I want to pass on one other
idea that I like. She introduces her student writers to
WIRMI — What I Really Mean Is. When students are struggling
to sound correct or mature, they often write some terribly
unclear sentences, so unclear that they themselves are
uncertain what they mean. She tells such students to try
WIRMI, to stop right where they are and say, "What I really
mean is," and rephrase the awful stuff they've written into
the language of speech. Then, once the idea is clarified,
they can polish it and formalize it. The act of saying it
another way clears up the confusion.

Gladys Wytch: I like her style. That kind of
language, or rather those terms, might really help the kids
who are weak.

Tahita Fulkerson: I agree. And back to freewriting,
or memory dump if you prefer: students should be encouraged
to go back to what they have written in search of particular
ways or modes they have approached the topic. What I really
mean is, did they write definitions or comparisons or did
d they give examples? Sometimes in the freewriting we go to
the rhetorical strategies, the patterns of development,
which make the freewriting seem more important to them than
just a collection of random thoughts. If they can find
examples of strategies or modes of development, it shows
them in the act of making sense or meaning of the topic. Somehow I doubt if any of that makes sense. I guess I need to WIRMI!

Jay LaGregs: Maybe I've listened to this stuff too long, but it makes perfect sense to me!

Tahita Fulkerson: Thanks, Jay. All presenters need someone like you! As I mentioned to you, Norma, I think letter-writing is a perfect bridge between the informal, exploratory writing of the memory dump and the more formal writing which most teachers assign such as reports, book reviews, term papers, essay tests. You people who teach letter-writing, tell me what you tell your students about form and content.

Jan Robertson: Everything depends on the purpose of the letter.

Tahita Fulkerson: What do you tell your business correspondence students about audience?

Jan Robertson: Well, before we even start letter-writing, we cover nine C qualities of effective business communication, and audience is part of one of those C's but I can't remember right now which one. We approach letter-writing with patterns for use with particular kinds of letters.

Tahita Fulkerson: But are audience and purpose the two primary considerations?

Jan Robertson: Yes.

Tahita Fulkerson: Since all writing assignments should probably start with those two considerations, you can see why I am interested in using letters as part of the writing across disciplines. If you think about it, every bit of writing we do seems to have as its purpose to get someone to see something our way—to see that we do understand how to prepare a trial balance, how to review a book, how to teach a course—whatever: all writing seems to have audience needs. But I am telling you what you already know. I guess I'm being repetitive about it because most student-writing seems to be written with no concern for audience.

Jan Robertson: I see that often. Always students forget the concept of audience when they put pen on paper. And their papers sound as if they are talking to themselves rather than to a human being. Well, that isn't exactly what I meant--WIRMI—their papers sound as if they are not talking to another human being!
Tahita Fulkerson: How do you combat that inhuman tone? I can't even find words right now to phrase the quality in student writing that you are discussing.

Jan Robertson: I return lots of papers with the comment, "Sound more natural. Do you talk this way?" And I do what we have recommended: I puts lots of examples on transparencies; we discuss weaknesses and strengths; I am very clear about what I expect.

Tahita Fulkerson: Is there a difference between the writing they do on machines and in longhand, that is, in tone or consideration of audience?

Jan Robertson: I haven't detected a difference.

Norma Lawless: I will not accept any business correspondence documents in longhand. That would be unheard of in my field. But I don't get any informal language in my classes, at least not on what they turn in. On the other hand, they don't have many chances to compose. A lot of what they do is correct errors in the exercises in the texts. But perhaps we need to give them chances to compose, because when they get jobs they may be asked to do some of that.

Tahita Fulkerson: A psychology teacher has discovered the value of using letters to enhance content in her courses. She has always wanted her students to write about the lessons but found the requirement of daily journal writing to be ineffective, a waste of time for most of the students and certainly for her as she had to read all of it, or so she thought. Anyway, in my session with the sociology/psychology teachers I recommended letters, and she began using them. She borrowed from the business correspondence case study approach: she told her students to pretend, for example, that their neighbor needed to submit to hypnosis for some medical purpose and the neighbor was reluctant. The students had to write a letter to that neighbor, urging the neighbor to go ahead and presenting all the facts about hypnosis that she had been teaching them in class. She wanted her students to write, she wanted them to be conversational about the concepts, and frankly she wanted to grade something a little different. She was in my office for an hour yesterday, absolutely ecstatic about the results. She has read at least six of them to me, and I admit that they are delightful. More, the students seem to be making real efforts to include all the points of the lectures. And the proof for her was that on tests, the students seemed to be able to provide fuller listings of the traits or ideas they had written about in their letters.
She is convinced that the letter-writing gave the students a way to learn the material.

Gladys Wytch: I can see how that would work in her field, because the content is so people-oriented.

Tahita Fulkerson: You're right about that. But the idea of writing letters would work in any field. Get one of the professional journals of your discipline that has letters to the editor. Look at a past issue to find a relevant article, either one that enhances some point of the unit or one that sounds off the wall, in any event one that you want the students to read. After they have read and summarized and you have discussed it in class, bring a letter to the editor that was written in response to that article and have the class write to the respondent. Now obviously, this takes a bit of pre-planning on your part. You have to find both the article and the letter to the editor about the article, but the possibilities for broadening the students' understanding make the effort worthwhile. For one thing, it would help students get ready for research because it incorporates summary and writing about the content in their own words. Anytime students can look at material from another point of view they broaden their own perspective.

Jean Hatch: This is something I could do because the publications of the National Beauty Schools publishes quite a few magazines. Occasionally there are some good articles, but usually there is too much advertising in the ones I've seen. Still, this would work.

Tahita Fulkerson: I think it would work with most fields. It reminds me of a project of the economics teacher at the Northeast campus. He has his students write a mini-research paper in one class. He assigns topics early in the semester, requires students to read from at least four different sources, to make notes on notecards, and to prepare a formal bibliography. Then they come to class and he gives them paper on which they are to write about the articles they have read, either synthesizing or comparing. They may use their notes, of course, but he point is that they have to be very familiar with the articles--so familiar that they can write about all four of them in general terms, and that in a limited time.

Norma Lawless: That sounds very advanced to me.

Jay LaGregs: I've taught economics. Two semesters of eco are required for students to go on to the junior level of almost all business degrees. The textbooks and the materials that have to be covered are so massive in terms of
quantity that I don't see how you could in fact spend time in class actually writing in class.

Tahita Fulkerson: Just one day?

Jay LaGregs: Oh, I misunderstood. You mean that the synthesis assignment is done in just one day? Well, of course there's time for it. And it's a good idea because it forces the students to have the concepts in their minds, and in their own language, as you've said. Also, it is pressure-filled, almost like an exam.

Jean Hatch: It is, but didn't you say they have their notecards?

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes.

Jay LaGregs: Then it is really more of an open-book test than a research project.

Tahita Fulkerson: A variation of this would work for med tech or nursing, Sarah, where currency with issues is especially critical. Students could read, for example, three critical articles about the same subject, make notes on the content, and be ready to write in class a paragraph which summarized key concepts. And if the exercise could be repeated about two or three more times in the course of the semester, students would have read six to nine important articles and written about them. That would constitute a serious research component in the course and get the students really familiar with the journals of the field. That seems to me better than one large term paper which encourages sometimes procrastination and plagiarism, to say nothing about the one-shot approach to library sources. Many shorter assignments seem preferable to one long one. Students need chances to recover if they fail the first one. And if library sources are limited, this idea could be adapted; students could collaborate. Two articles per student, with students working in pairs, explaining to each other the points of their articles and then writing the synthesis together. That would in fact give them one other way of handling the content of the articles.

Jay LaGregs: Well, you probably know that this concept of working in pairs has even been taken to the point of what's called now tandem testing. Have you heard of it?

Group: No, I'd like to hear, etc.

Jay LaGregs: Two students pair off at the beginning of the semester and work together as a team the entire semester. They do all their work as a team, including their
examinations, all their homework assignments, all their outside assignments. At the end of the semester you give both students the exact same grade, based on their work as a team. Typically what happens is that the stronger student pulls the weaker one with him and the weaker one learns more as a result. One might think that the weaker one would pull the other one down, but it doesn't happen that way.

Tahita Fulkerson: Where could I read more about that?

Jay LaGregs: I honestly cannot remember where I read it, but if I come across it, I'll send you a copy.

Jean Hatch: What kind of courses can this be done in?

Jay LaGregs: As I recall, the article was written by a mathematics teacher who had found it successful in her discipline, but I don't see why it wouldn't work for any discipline. On test days, the students sit together and work out the problems and turn in one paper—it cuts down grading by 50%. And I can see that it would work in any class. For instance, in an English class, I don't know what kind of examinations you give, but if they were in fact essay, subjective exams, students would have to agree on what to write and how to phrase it and spell it.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, I can certainly see the merits of that as a study technique. I'd need more time to think through using the one-grade-for-both idea.

Jay LaGregs: The big advantage I can see this having is that it teaches compromise. In the business world, few people work alone. They must work with groups and issue single responses to tasks. I think it would be great.

Norma Lawless: Looks like the weak students would be glad to share the grade of the strong ones.

Jan Robertson: Right. I can see some conscientious A student doing all the work for the sake of her GPA and donating everything to the weaker one, who goes along for the ride, contributing nothing.

Jay LaGregs: Maybe the students could pick their own partners? It seems to me that that was part of the deal.

Norma Lawless: I'd need to see the teacher's article. I can see problems with having odd numbers in the class, with absence, with withdrawal. I cannot see right now how anyone would benefit except the weak student.
Jay LaGregs: Well, the goal of the teacher was, as I recall, to do just that, to help the weak students by getting for them some individual attention. I guess she would need to do some studies, say a year later, to see if the tandem pairing had the desired effect.

Gladys Wytch: I'd like to try that in my business math class as a study. At least I could adapt it.

Tahita Fulkerson: That's what I hope all of us will see as we hear about the techniques of others. Adapting new approaches has to have an effect on our enthusiasm. Of course the problem with the research project in any course in any discipline is that the students usually do not have the time to practice reading and synthesizing different sources. So if we can adapt any of these ideas so that students get practice with material—whether with a partner in a tandem or with a series of in-class summaries—we improve writing skills and content. Again, though, I encourage you to provide examples of what you expect. And you may have to write the first ones on your own, but it is important to have the examples be from your discipline. Avoid using generic examples or examples from other disciplines if you can. The context of the material makes your example more meaningful. Nursing examples should be from real nursing assignments or articles. And if you plan to require summaries of articles, require that some of them be entirely in the students' own words, with no quoted material.

Norma Lawless: In intro to business one time I had a research project but it was the regular research paper that required five outside sources, ten pages, and so forth. It was a headache for us all, and I haven't required one since. But I could certainly require outside reading and summaries.

Tahita Fulkerson: It might be easier on everyone and still accomplish a good purpose. Jean, what about your courses?

Jean Hatch: My students have to do research on hair color. But I don't require footnotes, bibliographies, and all the other stuff that we've been talking about. I just want them to get the information and to write it clearly for me to read.

Tahita Fulkerson: You might want to introduce the new method of documentation, where students put name of source and page number right in text where the reference to it occurs. Footnotes are no longer necessary.

Norma Lawless: Where have I been? I didn't know that.
Jean Hatch: Let me see a sample of what you mean. I don't understand.

Tahita Fulkerson: I intended to hand out this sample earlier, Jean. It's a hand-out I prepared for a psychology teacher who needed help in explaining documentation form to her students. As you know, students can enroll for almost any course they wish whenever they wish. So not all students who are asked to write research papers have had the freshman composition sequence. That makes the preparation for research papers all the more important in other areas.

Jean Hatch: Lots of my students don't know English at all. They get what they want to pass their exams. They aren't interested in degrees usually. So I have not been requiring some of the academic things of other disciplines.

Tahita Fulkerson: I understand your point. But if you do, you will like the convenience of the internal documentation. The handbooks are on reserve in the library and in the Writing Lab. You can send your students there if they do need help.

Jay LaGreggs: I don't require any research in accounting at all. Our practice set is the only outside work there is. Of course I use research papers when I teach management courses, but I have found that research assignments are usually gambles. I never know what backgrounds my students have, never know what kind of papers they'll come up with. I think we put the unprepared student at a disadvantage. Perhaps he came from a small high school, perhaps he has just the GED, and perhaps no one told him that he should take English at the beginning of his college work. The research paper penalizes him.

Tahita Fulkerson: Clearly, and that's why the use of examples of what you want and lots of intervention in terms of due dates for notecards, for drafts, and so on are necessary when you put all the research effort into a single project. I spoke earlier of the psychology teacher who asked me to speak to her class. It was a case of too little too late. She had assigned the research paper early in the term, assumed that students know how to do one, and absolutely fainted when they turned in pages of plagiarized, incoherent, unpolished papers. So I visited the class, took samples of errors from their papers, and discussed summarizing, drafting, polishing. She then had them write the papers again. So both she and her students were penalized. It was a dreadful semester for her.

Gladys Wytech: And for the students. I'd have dropped.
Tahita Fulkerson: Some probably did. I recommended that she have them work in pairs through the revision stage. Students could read each other's drafts aloud and help them find rough spots that need attention. But they had to do the revision of the research documentation on their own. Anyway, enough of that history. For any future research projects, if you use just one traditional paper, I recommend taking up rough drafts that the students have marked a bit: have them underline main ideas; put Roman numerals or headings in margins so that you can check their organization; even have them write out any questions that they have about form and content. That way they get a rest from the piece before they start revising it to submit and you have a chance to catch the really serious errors before the grading occurs. And I am not recommending grading or even reading the entire draft. Just looking it over is usually enough to see if the students are on track.

Norma Lawless: We do that with the practice sets. I have them bring the work at different points in the sets so that I can be certain that they are working steadily and accurately before the entire final set is due.

Jay LaGreggs: I do that, too.

Tahita Fulkerson: When there is a regular prose project being done outside, teachers can require that the first page be submitted with a formal progress report. The report can be divided into three parts: What I have Done So Far, followed by a list in terms of progress; What I Intend To Do Immediately, followed by the items that he schedules himself to do within the next few days; Questions I Need Help With. This commitment in writing while the paper is in progress keeps the students on track and helps him avoid last-minute work, which in turn might result in better papers to grade. The idea of cover letters can be adapted to almost any project.

Jan Robertson: There are form letters students could be given, and they could choose the version that fits their needs. That variation might give them a sense of independence.

Norma Lawless: I agree.

Tahita Fulkerson: Good idea! Another kind of research which is especially appealing in voc/tech areas involves career opportunities. Students are told to read an ad describing employment opportunities; then they are given copies of two letters written by the teacher in response to the ad, one intentionally stiff and jargon-filled, the other more appealing and down-to-earth in language. Students can
discuss what the letters say about the personalities of writers, can discuss tone, audience, even format. Then they are asked to write their own response letter.

Gladys Wytch: I'd like to reverse that and have the students write the response letter before they see the weak and effective examples.

Tahita Fulkerson: That's good.

Jay LaGregs: But how is this research?

Tahita Fulkerson: It is just a warm-up, so that the teacher can discuss the contents of the ad as he discusses the answers to it. Then students are asked to find ten additional ads in their newspapers, to analyze the career requirements, to study the opportunities for salary, and so forth. They can write at least two assignments from this research: they can write a summary about what is necessary to get a job in their field and then they can write a cover letter for that assignment in which they discuss what they have done in the past to meet those job requirements, what they are currently doing, and what they must do in the future. It is an assignment that involves everything from list-making to self-analysis.

Sarah Keith: I really could use such an assignment. My students need that kind of information, but sometimes they don't listen as I give it. This way they'd be getting what they need to know on their own, they'd believe it, and they'd see where they needed to go. That's very practical. In our classes we do not give enough writing. We give them a lot of essay-type study questions about the volumes of reading they do, but we do not have formal research. We have them write paragraphs about themselves, but they probably need to do more.

Tahita Fulkerson: I'm curious about how you mark errors, Sarah. We spent some time in earlier sessions discussion spelling errors, for example. How seriously do you take spelling errors?

Sarah Keith: I take them more seriously as time goes by, but during the first semester when they are trying to get a handle on such a large number of medical words, it is a difficulty. We are trying to teach so many concepts and ideas that I feel elated when they understand, so I overlook spelling.

Tahita Fulkerson: Of technical terms?
Sarah Keith: Of technical terms. By the sophomore year we are pretty strict about spelling, particularly the words we are constantly using.

Tahita Fulkerson: Do you use essay tests? You mentioned essay study questions.

Sarah Keith: Yes, we use some essay tests. We use more multiple choice because they will take certification tests in that format. We are trying to prepare them to pass that state test, and we want them to be familiar with the format.

Jay LaGregs: That's an important point that she's made there because in voc/tech we are getting them ready to pass a certification test.

Sarah Keith: To make them test-wise. That's one of our main goals.

Jay LaGregs: Out of the possibility of the rising junior test that we keep hearing about, we should all start a pre-test/post-test program and use the format that we expect that junior test to be in. In accounting, for example, our tests are practical, problem-style. But the rising junior test they'll face will be in a different format. And as we get them prepared for that kind of test, we steal time away from what could be used for more writing. And while we may want to add writing, we also have the very real concern about competency testing. By that I mean, how can we prove that we are teaching our objectives? Teachers with students who have certification tests to pass are home free in that regard, because the state test is in place and to pass it proves that the objectives or goals have been met. But in accounting or economics, somehow, we are in a gray area. How do you prove in secretarial sciences, for example, that your students learned anything? You can't even prove that those students can get jobs.

Jean Hatch: There is a negative side to that, too. We have been testing for years—ever since I can remember—for certification, and now all of a sudden we are teaching for the final exam, this one exam. Programs for certification lead teachers to teach just the exam material.

Jay LaGregs: Teaching to the test, Jean.

Jean Hatch: Yes, that's it, teaching to the test.

Norma Lawless: You have to work hard not to do that, which voc/tech teachers must do.
Jay LaGreggs: I think the accounting profession has found an answer to that problem. There's the CPA exam in the state of Texas. What the universities have done is teach the accounting, the full scope of the field, and then offer one course to prepare the student to take the CPA exam, and that's what it's called—the CPA preparatory course. It's not required in the curriculum, it's an elective, but most students take it. Jean, you may want to consider making the last half of the last course in your sequence strictly exam preparation. That way you would not feel the pressure to make everything in your regular courses test-relevant.

Jean Hatch: That's a good idea, but I'm so used to starting different parts of my lectures with, "Now this is part of the exam", that I probably wouldn't be able to just relax and teach the material. Besides, we do have a two-week review for the exam.

Norma Lawless: Yes, we do that, but the point we started with here was format—we should try to prepare students for test format.

Tahita Fulkerson: Are the questions worded in such a way that students have trouble understanding what is being asked? Can students be tricked by wording in alternative answers?

Jean Hatch: Definitely. I believe there are some trick questions.

Norma Lawless: Well, I don't think any of the CPA questions are trick. But all the answers are weighted, criterion-referenced, and I believe the test is fair. We review our students to make them test-wise. Students often have the facts in their heads but perform poorly because they haven't seen and practiced the format.

Tahita Fulkerson: I agree with all that you say. And if you think about it for a minute, you'll see that your remarks are applicable to writing. Students may be told repeatedly how to write sentences or paragraphs, may do dozens of exercises, but all are in preparation for prose production. If they do not get practice in writing, they cannot be expected to perform well. And one other thing that occurred to me as you were talking is the importance of confidence in use of the language of the discipline. If they know the content and can read those questions and see the differences in how specific words change meaning, they will perform better. That's where writing comes in—not that writing runs counter to the training you are giving
them for the test but that writing gives them ways to manipulate the language of the test.

Norma Lawless: That's true. A large part of it is confidence with the language in which the facts are stated.

Jay LaGregs: I still think the key to this whole thing is what we have already talked about—writing to learn. Writing is a tool to learn and it doesn't necessarily have to be a tool for testing.

Tahita Fulkerson: Well, you know I agree with that. And more, one reason students have so much trouble with writing just to explore what they know is that the only time they have had to write has been on this research paper, or on an occasional test. They have never or I should say rarely had chances to write just for the sake of seeing what they know. I think that students who have this tremendous pressure for these professional exams probably need even more opportunities to practice with language, to see their own competence. Every testing situation involves language. Jean, even your most skilled stylists must read and answer written tests, don't they? And if students write only for a test, only for a grade twice a semester, they don't have a chance to develop facility with language.

Sarah Keith: The memory dump is very appealing because by the end of two years of intensive preparation for the exams students are so panicked with the magnitude of the whole thing that they say, "I don't know anything. I'll fail. I can't remember." I can see myself now saying to them, "No, you do remember. Write down everything you remember about—whatever," and let them see by the number of words they produce that they do remember. They may discover they know a lot of stuff.

Tahita Fulkerson: Yes, and put some of those good memory dumps on transparencies, show them how much they know. And if the test format allows such a thing, remind that the memory dump helps them get over their test jitters, that words often inspire or elicit other words. Give them memories of good memory dumps to take to the test.

Jan Robertson: It's so difficult to change their attitudes about writing, though. Many of my students say they have done very little writing, often just paragraphs. Longer papers have been reports copied out of encyclopedias.

Norma Lawless: Jan, be careful with generalizing. My son is in public schools and he seems to be writing all the time.
Jay LaGregs: Both of you, the truth is it depends on the teacher. I have two daughters in the same high school. One has to write almost every day in her English class; the other with a different teacher never writes, never does homework.

Jan Robertson: Well, the students from the second teacher must be the ones I get!

Tahita Fulkerson: I get some of those, too. And if we have these students who have been deprived of writing in high school, our efforts to add writing on a daily basis across the curriculum become more urgent, even if it is just five minutes.

Jean Hatch: I have no children, so tell me about this lack of writing in the schools. Is it just in the small schools?

Jay LaGregs: Oh, no. And it's not just in English. Some teachers just do a better job. In Spanish, for example, my older daughter had a teacher who conducted the class in Spanish almost exclusively. My fifteen-year-old has the other Spanish teacher who teaches Spanish in English.

Tahita Fulkerson: If you think about the way a good language teacher teaches, you know that students hear the language regularly and are given opportunities to use the language regularly, both to speak it and to write it and read it. They are expected to make mistakes, but they are given chances to practice and recover from those errors. The same applies to writing, wouldn't you agree? Students need chances to practice, regular chances. Now, one last thing: when you are thinking of a writing assignment for your classes, try to incorporate as many different modes of learning as you can. Include time for freewriting, drafting, incubating of ideas; give them chances to exchange ideas informally in class; have them see the information in a variety of formats or from other perspectives; give several short assignments rather than one long one. Let them write memos to you or to another students putting ideas or concepts into their own language. Make assignments real, life-like, relevant, and insist that final copies be as correctly written as possible. Obviously, I'd like to spend three days with you discussing writing and your specific fields, but our time today is over. I hope we can get together again. I want to hear of any ways you decide to use these ideas in your classes. Thanks for coming.

[Good-byes]
The researcher's job for these teachers was to concentrate on more practical uses of writing, more "real world" applications. It was invigorating to think of journal topics for office procedures courses, letter-writing units for accounting courses, free-writing for cosmetology lessons. Moreover, the experience with participants who neither routinely assign research papers nor encourage any kind of expressive writing only reaffirmed the researcher's belief that the concept of writing across the curriculum is valid, and especially in vocation/technical areas. For one thing, the interest in content is built in in these courses. Students are not required to take business correspondence unless they have realistic chances to use the course in a job or career. Thus interest in the subject matter for writing is already there.

Ironically, though, the courses with this built-in motivation usually provide none of the benefits of writing to explore meanings and to learn content. When students in business correspondence leave the classroom, for instance, they may indeed be skilled at keyboards but may be unable to compose original memos or letters in response to situations at work. As Lawless noted, her word processing students do "have decisions to make, but nothing [she would] call really creative" (p. 194). And both Lawless and LaGregs commented that they require "very little writing" in accounting, even though the students eventually "will need writing" skills
Two accounting teachers who did not attend the meetings had voiced concerns about that very problem. They told the researcher in individual conferences that their students' weakest skills were writing letters related to accounting practices taught in the sophomore sequence. But when the researcher suggested that they incorporate the writing of cover letters as simply another realistic step in their students' practice sets, these experienced teachers said that they could not take time from their content to teach letter-writing. Unfortunately most teachers across the curriculum share this philosophy: LaGregs' comment—"My primary concern must be transmitting that content... I cannot lower [a] grade for form" (pp. 197-198)—echoes directly what Clinkscale in history and Elliott in computer science had said earlier. Even this group's visible success with evaluation by using business education's venerable "4 C's" (clarity, correctness, conciseness, and completeness) could not mitigate their concern about grading papers for form.

Given, then, their determination to teach content to students who were expected to make immediate use of that content, these teachers were eager to hear about writing-to-learn. The introduction of focused freewriting and the memory dump, the suggestions for summaries of class notes, the varieties of letter-writing activities, the practical experience with the excerpt from the economics textbook were
appealing techniques to these teachers. Hatch adopted freewriting almost immediately; LaGregs reported requiring students to write summaries of their classnotes. Both were pleased with the changes.

Large-Group Meetings

To avoid further departmentalizing of the effort to increase writing across the curriculum, the researcher planned all future activities to be open to the entire faculty. To start, she asked the Dean of Instruction for a place on the agenda of a required faculty meeting to discuss briefly the committee's activities and to encourage the attendance of any teachers who had not yet come to meetings. The researcher specifically reminded all teachers of the potential need to teach study skills, everything from notetaking to chapter reading, and asked anyone with success stories or ideas to call.

In the week after the meeting, the researcher had three positive responses. First, a business teacher reported that the researcher's comment about notetaking caused her to ask to see her students' notebooks. She was dismayed to see that only one-third of the class had any order to their classnotes and some of those had written in pencil and crowded words into all margins. So the teacher took a day of class to use a "how to organize a notebook" lecture as a means for discussing the importance of careful record-keeping in the world of business. Then, the very next day a
government teacher told the researcher that he, too, had been curious about the study skills of his students. He asked them to read aloud some critical passages and discovered their lack of attention to sentence patterns and even to publisher's study aids in the text. He immediately told the students how he recommended they read their chapters in government. In addition, this instructor gave the researcher a copy of his book review assignment, a really thoughtfully-prepared statement of content and format criteria. Finally, just two days later, a geology teacher came to the researcher's office to bring a bibliography he had found on the subject of writing in science courses. He said he had begun using journals in his geology classes, including logs on field trips, and had changed the format of exams so that 30% of the possible 100 points come from essays. For qualitative researchers, such weeks are truly blissful.

The next meeting followed what might be called the more traditional way to emphasize writing to explore meanings and to learn. Asked to bring pads and pens, teachers from all divisions gathered in N401, where tables had been brought in and arranged in a large rectangle so that the group all had writing surfaces, and were able to see each other and the researcher, who stood at the front. (Perhaps because of the "newness" of the arrangements, or perhaps because of the presence of Randy Popken, a visitor from Tarleton State
University, the researcher failed to bring the tape recorder.

The meeting began with the question, "What are some of the myths you’ve heard about writing?" As the group of thirteen discussed the myths that "good writers are born," that they write quickly without errors and produce outlines and follow them without deviation, the researcher asked how many of the teachers were themselves good writers, how many of them personified the myths. Once it was verified that the myths are not necessarily true, the researcher briefly explained the process of writing, the overlapping stages of prewriting, writing, and revising, and the importance of designing coursework to enable good writing.

This design has at least three parts, writing to learn or discover, writing to remember, and writing to communicate; and the researcher's goal was to demonstrate as many as possible, as Fulwiler said, "to show not tell." The concept of freewriting was explained, and then the teachers were asked to freewrite to discover or remember. They were asked to write quickly with few pauses for about ten minutes, committing to paper any memories about learning the discipline they teach or about learning how to write. They were urged to give examples, to report specific details, to record triumphs, but not to edit and not to worry about order. After that writing, the researcher asked for a show of hands: "How many wrote something you hadn't
thought about in a long time?" Seven hands went up. Thus
was demonstrated, according to the researcher, a powerful
reason to use writing: to generate ideas.

To emphasize the value of peer involvement even in this
early stage, the researcher asked the teachers to listen as
each one read selected parts of their freewriting.
Listeners were not to react but instead were to let the
words of the reader remind them of similar events. Those
events were to be jotted down as well. Five teachers said
they had indeed had memories stirred by hearing the words of
others.

Then another way to use writing was demonstrated when
the researcher asked the group to spend five minutes writing
everything they knew about the phrase "artificial
intelligence." Whether they knew the term or not, they were
to jot down what it sounded like, what it might mean, and
what questions they had about it. The group read these
responses aloud and saw how even the funny responses
broadened the concept and "cleared the air" for a correct or
informed definition. The researcher reminded that these
five minutes of writing allowed students to focus ideas in
preparation for reading and lecture assignments. This idea
of writing to get students ready to learn was well received.

The next topic, writing to check learning, involved a
reading activity. The teachers were asked to read a two-
page excerpt from Polanyi, with half of them making marginal
notes about meaning, the other half underlining important parts. The material was new to the teachers, philosophical, densely written, abstract. At the completion of the reading, the researcher asked the group to take a "pop quiz" of three general questions over that material they had just read. The strictly unscientific results were that the underlining group had only one reader who could answer all three correctly; the notetakers had two who answered all correctly and two who missed just one answer each. Obviously, the point was that writing can improve reading comprehension; at least it did on this occasion.

When the meeting was adjourned at the end of the hour, only two people left the room. The rest stayed another 45 minutes to talk about teaching, writing, and reading. The efficacy of "doing together" had clearly been demonstrated. (See follow-up letter about this meeting, Appendix A.) And more important, the applications were clear for classroom use: sitting and hearing are simply not as memorable, not as advantageous to learning as are reading and writing and listening with a clear purpose in mind.

Planning activities and relevant content did not always guarantee success, however. Letters were sent to all the faculty announcing the next meeting, on the topics of ways to encourage summary-writing and ways to facilitate grading of large numbers of papers. The researcher prepared handouts, made more careful preparation than usual, and
asked the help of two colleagues who already successfully have incorporated summarizing of classnotes, readings, and outside articles into their classwork. The afternoon came, but only the two specially invited colleagues appeared. The sudden absence of usually faithful ones was disturbing and puzzling to the researcher, until an accounting teacher dropped by to say hello and ruefully added, "Guess I'd better go get my taxes done!" Suddenly, the reason for the empty room was clear: it was April 15. For all the researcher's talk about careful planning, she had not paid any attention to the calendar! She and the two others went for coffee, taking the handouts to the central mailroom to be distributed in faculty mailboxes.

Within ten days another letter of invitation (Appendix A) was sent, this time for the final meeting of the year. The program topic was announced as a review of the year's activities, with special reports from colleagues who had successfully put into practice ideas presented at earlier meetings. The Dean of Instruction called to say that she planned to provide refreshments because she was coming and bringing the chairman of the four divisions with her. The librarian called to say that the library coordinator from the South Campus also wanted to come, and two part-time English teachers said they would join us. Accordingly, N401 was set up with extra chairs and three tape recorders. Unfortunately, the taping effort was unsuccessful because of
the size of the group (29) and the arrangement of the chairs. Thus no transcript is available.

The researcher passed out a bibliography of recommended sources of information about writing across the curriculum (Appendix B), and she reviewed briefly the premises of writing across the curriculum: that all teachers are language teachers, that language and thought are inextricably related, that writing should be used for more than communicating learned facts in a classroom. Then teachers who had used writing-to-learn or had changed testing procedures spoke:

1. The librarian volunteered to be first. She said that she now was asking for a paragraph on the students’ evaluation of library orientation tour. In paragraphs, she said, when students revealed what they had understood, she realized that she had not been as clear as she thought she had been.

2. A history teacher told that he was now requiring essay exams, that the grading load was almost overwhelming, and that he was considering combining essay and objective questions. He said that he had formerly given all machine-graded tests.

3. A geologist told how he had started using "seed" questions to start almost every class. He would put on the board an incomplete statement or a question directly related to homework, letting students write while he checked roll
and returned papers. Those questions were the starting points for his lectures and often reappeared on unit tests. He said that he "felt" that his students were performing better; and that because this informal ungraded writing was the only change in his procedure, he credited some of the improvement to the writing. But he said that in fairness he had to add that the increased attention he gave to content by deciding on the question for each class might have made his lecturing more effective. For whatever cause, he liked the result.

4. A computer science instructor told of his informal research into how teachers at the other campuses taught a specific unit in word processing. His plan was to coordinate writing assignments to teach up-to-date information available only in professional journals.

5. A reading teacher told of teaching a study skills class how to use writing to learn difficult material. Specifically she taught them how to take classnotes, annotate textbook readings, and make out study sheets for tests. She encouraged the formation of study groups and reported that one student raised his D average in government to a C by the end of the course.

6. A psychology teacher (Connie Alexander of the research paper fiasco) brought copies of work her students had done, based on assignments she had carefully written out. One particularly impressive paper was written by a
girl with a learning disability. She could not perform on formal tests but could complete all the writing-to-learn activities. The paper was poorly written and misspelled, but the content was excellent, full of facts and analysis. Alexander suggested that she would never go back to her former way of teaching (lecture, test, grade) because that old way encouraged and rewarded memorization rather than learning. She said her next goal was to get students to write correctly.

As the meeting ended, the Dean of Instruction announced that she wanted all the faculty hear these success stories. She asked the researcher to be responsible for a professional development activity on writing to learn and writing across the curriculum, a meeting required of all teachers and administrators on the first day of the 1987-88 school year. Thus was completed a full-year initiation of the concept of writing to learn across the curriculum.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This concluding chapter has two parts. First is a summary of the results of this study, the major purpose of which was to describe the development and initiation of a writing-across-the-curriculum program at Tarrant County Junior College, Northwest Campus, Fort Worth, Texas. Second is a presentation of the implications of the study.

Summary

To achieve the purposes of this study, the methods of qualitative research, especially the case study, were implemented, including questionnaires, unstructured interviews, and collections of documents.

Specific purpose one, a description of the number and kinds of writing assignments made at Tarrant County Junior College, was achieved by administering a survey. Responses revealed that many teachers required writing but that there was little uniformity in kinds of assignments, formats, or grading practices. Also, the respondents almost unanimously deplored deficiencies in students' writing skills, and several expressed a willingness to meet to discuss common problems.

Specific purpose two, an analysis of the structure of specific writing assignments made across the curriculum, was
accomplished when individuals and groups identified in the
survey submitted copies of their writing assignments.
Again, the researcher discovered little uniformity in the
teachers' responses, either in quantity, format, or
documentation of required writing. Based on this
information, the researcher discussed assignment-giving
techniques as part of each group meeting and spoke privately
with all teachers who responded to the request.

Specific purpose three, group and individual
conferences about writing problems, became the focus of the
study. Eleven different meetings with various volunteer
members of the faculty were held. Transcripts of six of
these meetings reveal that the process for introducing new
concepts to faculty is inductive and informal, a process
characterized by conversations about writing, exchanges of
ideas for successful teaching, and voluntary efforts to try
new techniques.

Specific purpose four, a description of a level of
writing competence that faculty at the campus would agree on
as "good," was achieved through faculty discussions of
correctness within individual disciplines. Transcripts
reveal that most teachers want to insist on correctness in
the writing of their students but often are satisfied with
evidence of "mastery" of content at a school with open
admissions. At this point the teachers clearly prefer
content over style and correctness.
Specific purpose five, making available to faculty current research and practices of other teachers in their disciplines, was accomplished through discussion in the committee meetings. In addition to summarizing the reported practices of teachers at other schools, the researcher sent photocopies of key articles, ordered library books for faculty use, and prepared a bibliography of sources for writing across disciplines.

Implications

With all the purposes of the study thus achieved and documented, one could ask an obvious question: "Is there now a writing-across-the-curriculum program at Tarrant County Junior College, Northwest Campus?" Regrettably, the answer is "no," at least if one suggests with "program" the formality of uniform, required assignments, mandated numbers of words written, and codified standards for evaluation of students' work. Next one might ask, "Are there statistical measures to verify pre-WAC and post-WAC skill levels?" Again, regrettably, the answer is "no." As Richard Lanham, Director of the UCLA Writing Program and a recognized authority on composition and writing curriculum, has told Recoulley about evaluation of WAC programs: "statistical measurement is impossible because of the mutable character of the student body and the character of language usage as qualitative" (1985, p. 5). In truth, Lanham's comment only hints at the complexity of the problems common to community
colleges in general. Regardless of the genuine enthusiasm engendered by the meetings described in Chapter IV of this study, these persistent problems almost prohibit the establishment of a formal "program."

Most immediately, the students at the campus are unscreened. Almost anyone can come to the school and can enroll in virtually any entry-level course. Thus government teachers, agreeing this year to add research to their courses, find themselves facing students who may also be taking remedial English and reading, students who cannot write paragraphs and who read at the seventh- or eighth-grade level. And even if other government students are "average" in English and reading skills, they may not be enrolled currently in English classes, may never have written a research paper, are likely totally ignorant of the conventions of writing within the political science discipline.

This problem of students' inability and inexperience is intensified by the number of students in each class, by teachers' loads in general. The district's policy for class sizes (45 in political and social sciences, 32 in composition, 27 in developmental English, 38 in literature) produces such large groups that even oral instruction is difficult; and writing requirements produce frustrations for all. Students cannot get the wide range of personal and academic help they need; teachers cannot give the help
because they teach five of these full sections. To give just ten minutes each to the reading of 150 essays, to say nothing of marking and responding to content, requires as much as 25 hours a week. Such conditions work against success of even the most dedicated.

Added to that problem is the high percentage of part-time faculty. In the English department at the campus in the fall semester, 1987, for example, 47% of the total number of classes were taught by part-time faculty; 53% of the composition classes were taught by part-time faculty. These teachers, many of whom are highly trained and experienced, are often hired just hours before class starts, because class offerings are subject to the vagaries of registration figures. These teachers are not required to attend any in-service meetings, and their instruction is often unobserved and unmonitored except for the obligatory one-class-a-year visitation by administration. In fact, part-time teachers in most disciplines typically are outside the mainstream of academic life of the campus, but still are responsible for large numbers of students; and it is possible that a student at the campus could attend classes for two years without ever taking the course of a full-time instructor. Unless the part-time teachers are included in a writing program, then a school cannot really be said to have a "program."
Related to that reality is the problem of many teachers' lack of confidence in a cross-disciplinary approach to writing. So-called "content" teachers feel untrained to mark errors beyond the obvious ones of spelling and incomplete sentences; English teachers feel inadequate to use content of other disciplines to demonstrate their lessons on writing correctness and style. Of course, information exchanges, seminars, and team teaching could go far to alleviate this problem, but again sheer numbers defeat any realistic chance for thorough-going improvements across the institution.

Even with these conditions, however, the successful achievement of the purposes of this study has effected perhaps surprising positive changes at the campus:

1. At the start of the fall semester, 1987, all full-time faculty were required to attend an inservice meeting about writing. The researcher of this study was totally responsible for the meeting. She presented an introduction to the writing-across-the-curriculum movement; coordinated the appearance of faculty who have begun to require more writing and were willing to discuss their experiences; and prepared a 34-page booklet with ideas for the faculty. Evaluations of the four-hour program were favorable. (All materials related to this in-service program are in Appendix C.)
2. The counselling staff asked the researcher for a way to identify entering students who might need help with writing but were not enrolled in English courses. In response, she wrote a brief questionnaire to elicit information to help the counselors orient new students and to reveal as well the students' skill in writing answers (Appendix D). Ninety-two students were thus identified, and tutorial sessions arranged for them. The counselors want to continue the procedure with future students in orientation courses.

3. For the first time all government teachers have agreed informally to require research projects in their courses.

4. During the first week of classes history teachers have reported using writing assignments to gather information about their students' attitudes and past experiences with history.

5. The data processing chairman has ordered for the Computer Learning Center software programs designed to facilitate preparing research papers on word processors.

6. Individual teachers continue to report interest in writing as a way to learn. Now they send copies of articles to the researcher. For example, a tennis teacher sent an article about the uses a professional tennis player makes of a journal.
7. As a group, the English faculty has planned meetings to discuss grading standards and rationale for lowering class sizes. That rationale will be shared with English faculty at the other campuses in an effort to lower the district's class size maximums. In addition, three of the English teachers volunteered to present two free seminars on techniques for research papers for all students who need special help. These seminars were videotaped for future use.

8. As a result of a committee meeting about teaching study skills, the chairman of the Aeronautical/Technical Division will ask his faculty to provide more teacher-written guidance for students in the area. The researcher has been asked to present a program to that division on assignment-giving techniques.

9. The President of the South Campus has written the researcher to express interest in an inter-campus meeting to discuss common writing and literacy problems and ideas for solutions within the district.

Thus the results of this study are clearly positive. A number of teachers in all four divisions at the Northwest Campus have augmented their teaching styles by introducing writing to facilitate learning; all teachers have heard several of these cross-discipline colleagues describe their successes and their rationale; administrators at the campus
support philosophically the move toward improvement in quantity and quality of student writing.

Groundwork is laid. For a "program" to be built on it, two additional elements are necessary, at least according to Toby Fulwiler. "Administrative support at some significant level" (i.e., release time for a director and money for workshops) is a key requirement. Second is whole-hearted support of the English department, not only of the process/workshop approach to teaching writing but also of the notion of "language as essential to the core of the curriculum" (Wess, 1985, p. 10). Historian David Russell says that three elements are essential if WAC programs are to "overcome institutional inertia for more than a few years." Along with funding "to purchase faculty time dedicated exclusively to WAC and to guarantee reasonable class sizes--the sine qua non of writing-to-learn--" programs must become "part of an institution-wide plan," the achievement of which requires patience, Russell's third element. As he concludes, "ten--or thirty--years may not be enough to change century-old university priorities and classroom practices" (1987, p. 191).


APPENDIX A

The following documents represent a portion of the communication between the researcher and the faculty.
To Northwest Campus Faculty
From Tahita Fulkerson
Re Writing Across the Curriculum
Date 30 April 1986

In an effort to improve the writing and thinking of our students at Tarrant County Junior College Northwest Campus, I invite interested faculty members to help in two ways: first, complete this short survey about the writing tasks your students are asked to complete; second, describe briefly the writing problems your students exhibit in completing these tasks.

Once these surveys are returned to me, I will send copies of the results to all who replied and to the faculty committee interested in writing across the curriculum.

Thank you for your help at this busy time.

1. What courses do you teach ____________________________

2. Do you believe that writing should be an important part of most college courses?

3. Do you see a significant connection between the quality of student writing and student mastery of course content?

4. Do you make writing assignments in your courses?
   YES NO (If no, disregard the following questions except for #11)

5. Which of the following writing assignments do you routinely make during a semester? Please check.

   _____ Book review or report   _____ Lab report
   _____ Personal essay   _____ Journal
   _____ Summary or paraphrase   _____ Essay exam
   _____ Research paper   _____ Short-answer test
   _____ Other (Please list)   _____ Business instruments
6. Do you use a standardized format for these assignments?

YES_______ NO_______

(If YES, would you be willing to provide samples of these formats to me? YES_______ NO_______)

(If NO, would you be interested in having me help create standardized formats for these assignments? YES_______ NO_______)

7. If you require a research paper, do you require a specific form of documentation? YES_______ NO_______

(If YES, what form? ______MLA ______APA ______Turabian ______Other)

8. When you grade writing assignments, do you deduct points for punctuation errors, including fragments and run-on sentences?

YES_______ NO_______

usage errors? YES_______ NO_______

paragraphing problems such as lack of development, lack of coherence, lack of unity? YES_______ NO_______

9. Would you like to see all teachers on this campus mark writing assignments using the same code, regardless of discipline?

YES_______ NO_______

10. Describe briefly the writing problems your students exhibit in their writing.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

11. Would you be interested in participating in an interdisciplinary group to study the writing needs of the college?

YES_______ NO_______

Any comments?
To Respondents to Writing Survey

From Tahita Fulkerson

Date 16 July 1986

Re Promised Results

Thank you for your response to the survey on writing on our campus. You will be interested in knowing that 60 faculty members responded, five part-timers and 55 full-time teachers. Every division on the campus was represented, from business to aeronautics to chemistry to music.

The responses suggest that our students are being taught by caring, "un-burned-out" faculty, for most of you took time to write comments, to explain answers, to provide even more information than I had asked for. Thank you for your generosity of time and effort.

Here are a few of the results:

1. To the big question—

   Do you believe that writing should be an important part of most college courses?—

   fifty-three said yes; others names specific courses such as math and accounting where they perceived a less important need for writing.

2. Not surprisingly, then, fifty-one respondents said "yes" to the question "Do you make writing assignments in your courses?"

3. When these fifty-one described their writing assignments, I learned that eight major kinds of writing are being required:

   short-answer tests by 29 faculty;
   essay tests by 25;
   book reviews or reports by 22;
   research papers by 23;
   summaries or paraphrases by 14;
   lab reports by 11;
   journals by 10;
   personal essays by 10.

4. When the assignments have writing errors, twenty faculty members invariably deduct points; eighteen do not; one gives "no credit" if the student fails to "get points across"; several mark errors but do not penalize the grade.
5. In answer to the question "Would you like to see all teachers on this campus mark writing assignments using the same code, regardless of discipline," fifteen said yes; fifteen said no; four said maybe; four replied with a question mark.

6. The writing problems students exhibit seem to be most obviously mechanical or grammatical:

   27 mentioned spelling;
   13 noted incomplete sentences;
   10 noted punctuation;
   7 said "grammar in general."

But several of you complained of undeveloped paragraphs, inability to express ideas, inability to communicate facts of the course, faulty connections, and lack of logic and clarity. These errors and "the poverty of content" you mention suggest that we may have problems in learning, problem-solving, and critical thinking, all more troubling in my opinion than misspelling. These "content" problems will be an important concern of the NW faculty writing committee.

If you can join us when we convene this fall, please do. But if you cannot, you should be proud to know that you have already helped us by completing the survey. Thanks for that important contribution.

cc Dr. Carrier
Division Chairpersons
To Selected Northwest Faculty

From Tahita Fulkerson
Coordinator, English/Reading

Date 19 June 1986

Re Your Writing Requirements

Thank you for responding to the survey about the student writing that occurs at Northwest Campus. You were one of fifteen respondents who mentioned that you require book reviews or reports in your classes. Obviously, I applaud that assignment.

Unfortunately, book reviews/reports are not taught in our composition classes, so your students may be unprepared for your assignment. To help the English/Reading faculty become aware of specific needs of students, please send me a copy of the usual review assignment you make, including if possible the book list. I will make three confidential uses of this information:

1. I will share the basic assignment formats with English/Reading faculty and ask their advice on how we can prepare students.

2. I will pull together the exciting elements of all the assignments (including any duplication of titles across disciplines) and send you the results.

3. I will forward to your attention information about specific sections in the grammar handbook, about Writing Lab exercises, and about instructional television lessons which may benefit your students in more successful completion of your specific assignment.

Again, thank you for your time in replying to the original survey. Call me if you have ideas which you believe will help us to improve the quality of writing on our campus.
To Selected Northwest Faculty

From Tahita Fulkerson
Coordinator, English/Reading

Date 20 June 1986

Re Your Research Paper Requirement

Thank you for your response to the 30 April survey about writing across the curriculum. I appreciate your taking the time to give me some information.

Specifically, I am interested in your required research paper. It is conceivable that the research papers students complete for your courses are the only papers of that type they will be assigned at TCJC Northwest. Be sure that English teachers are not "shirking," but the district and most faculty do not require a full, five-source investigative paper of freshmen. What is required is an introduction to research in English 1623, Composition II, and all our faculty require at least one documented paper in that course. In addition, we invariably require research projects in sophomore literature courses, but not all students take the sophomore sequence. Thus, your research assignment becomes doubly important.

To help English/Reading faculty prepare students for your specific requirements, please send me a copy of your usual research assignment. I will make three confidential uses of this information.

1. I will summarize all the basic requirements and pass that summary on to English/Reading teachers and to Barbara McCracken in the library. I will ask them to give me ideas or tips to pass on to you.

2. I will send you a copy of this summary plus ideas about unique or special ways your colleagues are handling similar assignments.

3. I will send as well information on format, research techniques, and writing aids which are available to all NW students in our grammar handbook (Harbrace College Handbook, 10th ed, on reserve in LRC), in the English Writing Lab, and in special ITV telelessons on research.

Perhaps this exchange of information will make research paper assignments more meaningful learning experiences for all our students and less burdensome teaching tasks for our faculty.
Greetings! Because you checked "yes" on the writing-across-the-curriculum survey this past spring, I know that you are interested in being part of a faculty effort to improve writing and learning and thinking at Northwest Campus.

Let's begin right away with an organizational meeting next week. I guarantee we'll use every minute profitably—even if we do spend the first fifteen minutes with food and fellowship.

To minimize scheduling conflicts, please check your first and second time preferences as listed below and return this form to me. You will hear from me again immediately.

Tuesday, 9 September 1:30 - 3:30 □
Wednesday, 10 September 1:30 - 3:30 □

I am excited about the enthusiasm of your survey responses. They convince me that this committee can effect immediate, positive change on our campus.

cc: Dr. Carrier
Division Chairpersons
MEMORANDUM

TO: Tahita Fulkerson
FROM: Connie C. Alexander
DATE: October 28, 1986
SUBJECT: Cross-Curricular Teaching/Thanks

Tahita, I wanted you to know how lucky I think TCJC NW is to have you on the faculty. When I asked for your help in finding ways to teach my PSY 1613 class students how to re-write their term papers, I was really impressed with your willingness to make several trips to my office to discuss their writing problems and to help me identify areas I could focus on to make my assignments better tools for teaching writing. But when you agreed to come into the classroom (at 8:00 a.m. no less,) and teach the process to the students themselves -- well that is way above the call of duty!

I wanted you to know that they are rewriting their papers and are asking questions that indicate they have a far better grasp of what they were supposed to have been doing. As we discussed earlier, most of my students have not had a college level composition course and were not required to do a paper in high school. This cross-curricular approach has certainly gotten their attention and they now appear to see the relevance of needing to know how to write and I predict that you will see the majority in Comp. I next semester. At the very least the English Lab participation should be up this month.

I'm also very excited about our plan to videotape a similar session that you will teach for me next semester. I intend to make the tape a permanent part of the course - to be played the first week as I make the writing assignment.

Again, thanks for all of your time and effort. Please let me know how I may return the favor.

cc: Dr. Joe Rode
    Ms. Linda Hines
    Ms. Rachel Johnson
    Dr. Judith J. Carrier
To Dave Clinkscale
From Tahita Fulkerson
Date 20 November 1986
Re Your Use of CLC

I have been thinking about your use of the CLC in having your government students write legislative bills. I told you at the WAC meeting that I thought it was just super.

If it is your original idea, or if you have refined someone else's idea, it most certainly should be written up for Innovation Abstracts. I have spoken to Dr. Suanne D. Roueche, editor, and she says that there are no publication guidelines, other than that the idea be original and successful in the classroom.

Both you and Mike Cinatl are doing such exciting things that I will repeat to you the offer I made to him: if you will consider writing up your assignment, I will edit, type, even mail it, just for the pleasure of seeing you get some publicity for your good ideas.

I enclose a sample of Innovation Abstracts.
To Mike Cinatl
From Tahita Fulkerson
Date 20 November 1986
Re Your Recent Story Project

If you won't let me nominate you for Piper, at least let me suggest that you write up the wonderful project you and the signers have just completed with the video and the accompanying stories.

I have spoken to Dr. Suanne D. Roueche at the University of Texas, editor of Innovation Abstracts. In fact, more than speaking to her, I have bragged about our faculty here at TCJC. She now expects at least of sheaf of descriptions of our good works.

Would you consider writing up your project? I'll edit, type, even mail the thing. I'll bet it's publishable.
EVALUATION

Please help me assess the meeting we had yesterday. Your comments on both strength and weaknesses of our exchange will help me in my efforts with writing across the curriculum.

Was the information helpful? Clear? Too elementary or too advanced for our campus? Appropriate to your discipline?

The information was very clear, helpful, and appropriate for my and Soc.

Was the format of the meeting appropriate? Yes

Ideas for improvement?

Do you think you can incorporate some of the ideas into your teaching? Yes

Which ones? Give students more feedback on their writing.

What other ideas have come to you, either about writing and learning or about our meeting?

Would you be interested in meeting again? I would like to meet after evaluating some of these new ideas.

Thank you for your time and for your interest.
From Tahita Fulkerson

Date 25 February

Re Writing Across the Curriculum

Thank you again for taking your time to come to our WAC committee meeting today. I was pleased—as I have consistently been—with your generosity of time, spirit, and expertise. And I must tell you that our visitor from Tarkenton commented that he was impressed with the bright ideas and the sense of camaraderie. The variety of disciplines especially surprised him.

Afterthoughts:

1. Bruce's comment that he'd like to know what other teachers are teaching shows a truly interdisciplinary spirit. Do you have ideas about how we could get such info to each other?

2. All articles I've read support Juanita's reminder about writing being the way to make students active learners as they read. Probably we all should encourage at least marginal notes, if not reading logs.

3. As I've reconsidered Mike's remark that some "artificial intelligence" answers were so good that he felt shy about reading his, I believe that he reflects some potential responses from students. We might want to use such exploratory warm-up writings privately unless the whole class seems to be on approximately the same level of understanding.

4. We may need to be patient with freewriting. It takes a while for students to relax with it, and in fact ten minutes may be too long to ask non-writers to write without stopping because their hand and arm muscles really do tighten up. But regular, five-to-eight-minute writings are valuable. A research study two years ago concluded that freewriting is one of the most immediately productive heuristics for writers. The more ideas they can write, the more likely they'll produce a good one. So encourage students to talk to themselves in freewriting, to forget spelling and punctuation. (Perhaps they might pretend to be talking into Anna's and Rick's tape recorders?)

enc.

CC Dr. Carrier
Division Chairs
To Faculty  

From Tahita Fulkerson  
Writing Across the Curriculum Committee  

Date 23 March 1987  

Re Meetings of Interest  

As the semester's events close in on us, calendars fill quickly. Can I urge you, then, to save these two dates?  

**On WEDNESDAY, 15 April, 2:00, N401** the writing across the curriculum committee will meet to discuss (1) ways to teach content through the use of summary and (2) ways to evaluate writing quickly. (I have just read the results of a study which provides enlightenment on what students value in teachers' grading practices.)  

**On WEDNESDAY, 29 April, 2:00, N401** I invite you to bring a sample of your most effective assignment, a kind of informal "Show and Tell." For my part, I will bring a bibliography of articles that I have found on reading, writing, and thinking in a variety of disciplines. (If you have found any that I should include, please let me hear from you. One of my students knows of my interest and brought me an article called "A Sociologist Examines Sherlock Holmes.")  

Finally, think through ways you might be able to incorporate more writing into your discipline, even into just one section of your load as an experiment, and let's submit to the Dean some requests for special projects. We'll have time to discuss these on 29 April.  

Thanks again for your interest and support.  

cc Dr. Carrier  
Division Chairs
To Northwest Campus Faculty
From Tahita Fulkerson
Date 27 April 1987
Re Final Meeting for Year
Writing Across the Curriculum Committee

Even if you have never come to a writing-across-the-curriculum meeting before, I urge you to join us for our last meeting of this school year on Wednesday, 29 April, 2:00, N401.

This meeting is especially exciting because a number of teachers will be reporting informally on the results of their efforts to require more and different kinds of writing in their classes. In addition, I will have a summary of the most helpful ideas that have surfaced from our meetings this year and a bibliography of key articles which have been published about writing across the curriculum.

Finally, we will have time to discuss your ideas for ways to make this committee even more relevant to your needs. For instance, would you like to see us focus our efforts on learning rather than on writing? Do you want to team up with a colleague from another discipline to exchange lectures or collaborate on assignments? Are you interested in your own professional writing?

As if good ideas and camaraderie were not reason enough to come, Dr. Carrier has volunteered to provide some light refreshments. Clearly, this is an invitation you can't afford to pass up.

Hope to see you.

cc Dr. Carrier
Division Chairs
APPENDIX B

The following documents are the handouts referred to in the series of workshops with vocational/technical teachers.
Dear

Junior College

I would like to work the 15 years college thin summer or any other part. I wish like to sit years college. Will you send me the friendly aid paper and a catalog to your colleges and send me a affine of addition or conjine of a student. Soon if I need one.
Myasthenia Gravis

Myasthenia gravis is characterized by weakness and undue fatigability on exercise. It most frequently affects the oculomotor, facial, laryngeal, pharyngeal, proximal limb, and respiratory muscles. Partial recovery with rest and after administration of an anticholinesterase drug is an important characteristic.

Myasthenia gravis occurs at all ages and in both sexes, but females are affected twice as often as males. Twenty percent of cases have their onset before the twenty-first year of life.

The onset is often incidious but may be subacute and rarely acute. Weakness of ocular muscles with drooping of the eyelids, which may be unilateral at first, and diplopia occur in 90 percent of cases. This is often transient and intermittent but may progress to complete paralysis of ocular movement. The pupils are never affected. Facial and pharyngeal muscles are weak in 70 percent of the cases. The facial muscles involvement gives rise to a characteristic smile where the lips elevate but do not retract. The tongue may be weak and is sometimes furrowed bilaterally.

Weakness of the laryngeal and pharyngeal muscles
Writing Across The Curriculum Sources


February 13, 1987

To: 
From: 
Re: Article summaries for technical writing

Below are summaries of two magazine articles from professional publications you requested related to my major field of study, business. Both articles are from the field of business the first relates to debts owed to American banks by third world countries and the second is about the growth of McDonald's internationally.

The writer of "It's Time for Rich Nations to Forgive Needy Debtors" argues that the international debt crisis between U.S. banks and less developed countries or third world countries has gotten to the point of being critical. In the early 1980s Americans want to help third world countries by sending aid in the form of loans. Four years later the loans have not begun to be repaid and the interest which has accumulate has increased the amount owed to the United States to the point of being unthinkably inhumane to expect repayment. The mountainous debts were in some cases made by now-departed governments reduce the odds that these democratic countries will survive as democratic countries. In order to begin to repay monies owed our Latin neighbors must generate large export surpluses to finance their interest payments. This would mean that they will have to slash imports and promote their exports, which would mean lost foreign business and more foreign competition. The results being that our banks will be paid but our manufacturing will suffer. If banks refuse to grant some relief they may risk losing everything, some may prefer to get 70 cents on the dollar instead. Another thought that if allowing the less developed countries to default on any part of the loan would result in lowering the prospects for future borrowing, to this the answer is simply a question "Can the creditworthiness of the debtor nation sink any lower?" The last consideration which must be made is the possibility that countries might come to believe that heavy borrowing and economic mismanagement will be rewarded would mean that everyone will be in trouble.
APPENDIX C

The following documents represent the work done in preparation for presenting writing across the curriculum as the faculty development activity for Fall, 1987, at Northwest Campus.
Thanks to all of you again for agreeing to tell the Northwest Campus faculty about your uses of writing. To hear a group of peers relate their experiences with writing may encourage even our most reluctant colleagues to use writing as a learning tool.

I cannot yet tell you precisely when we will present, but the meeting will likely be in the library so that we can use the tables to facilitate some small group activity. The order of events will resemble that I have enclosed.

Two reminders:

1. Get any handouts or transparencies to me as soon as possible so that John Martin's staff can prepare attractive, easy-to-read materials all in the same format and color to make our presentations more cohesive and professional looking. Not all of you are using materials, by the way, but if you are, let media prepare them.
2. Say whatever you feel is important, but please consider including a statement of your objectives in using writing, how the writing achieved the purposes you intended, and how you would alter or refine the assignment. Include a recommendation to colleagues if you can.

About length: for consideration of pace, plan for your portion of the program not to exceed eight minutes. At the same time, to avoid the jack-in-the-box effect, don't make it too short.

Thank you again for the time and effort you are giving to make this activity both helpful and exciting. If you have questions, don't hesitate to call me (x. 740 or 293-0689).

cc Dr. Carrier
Dean Claussen
Dr. Martin
TENTATIVE OUTLINE OF PROGRAM

Max. Time

1. Brief survey with questions about writing/reading/thinking to help focus attention
   Administered by Dean Claussen 15 minutes

2. Introduction of program by
   Dr. Carrier

3. Overview of writing across curriculum by
   Tahita Fulkerson 30 minutes

4. Individual presentations 50 minutes
   Anna Holzer, Juanita Rodriguez,
   Don Mack, Ken Griffin,
   Winston Dennis, Bruce Elliott,
   Connie Alexander

5. Break 15 minutes

6. Introduction for individual work on objectives--Fulkerson 10 minutes

7. Small Groups (by disciplines or related studies) 20 minutes

8. Reports from Small Groups to Entire Faculty 30 minutes
9. Closing Remarks--Fulkerson  
   5 minutes

10. Brief evaluation--Dean Claussen  
    10 minutes
    Approx. 3 hours

* Presenters will likely be needed to work as small group leaders, facilitators. Faculty will be asked in advance to bring a copy of their objectives; we will ask each instructor to think of ways writing could be used to achieve one or more of those objectives.
All of us have events in our lives which are benchmarks, times so important or so memorable that we measure subsequent events, whether good or bad, from them. A benchmark in the lives of professional educators was the publication in 1955 of Rudolph Flesch's *Why Johnny Can't Read*. For you youngsters, that book was, among other things, an indictment of the way reading and writing were taught in the public schools at the middle of this century. It was disturbing—and largely true.

And because it was true, that book was almost predictably followed in 1975 by a cover story in *Newsweek*, reporting the sad news the journalists called "Why Johnny Can't Write." And the next Johnny story was Flesch's follow-up in 1981, *Why Johnny Still Can't Read*, a compilation of educational woes that made the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* and the 1985 "Why Johnny Can't Think" really no surprises at all.

Even if you personally have not read these books or articles, you undoubtedly cringe with such public exposes. Because we are professional educators, we all feel somehow accountable for the literacy crisis that reports say faces America. More than that, we know something about this crisis firsthand. Last year, for instance, in a survey of the writing practices of our Northwest Campus students, we
complained of such writing flaws as inability to spell, illegible penmanship, fragments, and other technical grammatical errors. We also named "no logical progression of ideas" and "a complete inability to express thoughts on paper" as even more serious indications of our students' weaknesses. It was as if our conclusions confirmed the bad news, what U.S. News and World Report has called the drift toward coma in American education.

But there is a complexity to this dreary picture. Our students are not illiterate, at least not according to our own measures. The average reading test score at NW Campus is at the tenth grade level; the average grade in Composition I is 80. So we have here at our campus--and I suspect at other institutions of higher education--a peculiar kind of illiteracy, if illiteracy means inability to read and write. These tenth-grade readers and writers are knowledgeable, but their knowledge, as one critic/observer has noted, "is often incomplete and fragmented and is not organized in ways that they can readily use in academic writing situations."

It is curious, and puzzling. Why are they so deficient in the skills we expect of them? What are the causes?

Well, of course there are many, but two recent studies are enlightening. Observers of 1000 classrooms at all levels found that not even 1% of instructional time was devoted to discussions that involved students in the act of
reasoning. Another way to say that: 99% of instructional time is devoted to content and facts alone, with most classrooms entirely teacher-dominated and students passive observers. Another study found that only 3% of the writing students do in all twelve years of school is longer than a paragraph. Another way to say that: 97% of our students' pen-to-paper time has resulted in work no longer than a paragraph. Little wonder they seem inept. You should see "Why Johnny Can't Think" (on reserve in the library) for sources of these and other statistics.

The situations that produced those dismal numbers are being attacked locally. Many of you know that the Sid Richardson Foundation is underwriting the costs for implementing more writing in all grades and in all courses in the Fort Worth Public Schools. Without the Richardsons, we here at Northwest Campus are also fighting to improve student proficiency. Our most promising weapon is writing across the curriculum. Also called writing across disciplines and learning across the curriculum, writing across the curriculum has been listed as a major source of hope against illiteracy in the 1987 report "A Second Chance for Texans: Remedial Education in Two-Year Schools." Our Writing Across the Curriculum Committee met several times last year, and we want to report today successes which we hope will encourage you. To be honest, we want to inspire you to join us. Before that, though, we should answer some
questions you may have.

"Just what do you mean by writing across the curriculum?"

It has been called an education movement, perhaps because writing across the curriculum programs are in place at over 400 college and university campuses. But it is in reality a state of mind, an old idea reborn because of the truth of that book and those articles: too many Johnnies and Janies leave high schools and colleges as functional illiterates. Writing across the curriculum as an educational movement has as its thrust increased writing, not just in English and in other courses typically associated with writing, but in all courses. But the point isn't just more writing—it is a different kind of writing, writing to learn.

Philosophically it reflects an understanding of the complex interaction of language and thought. More simply stated, it confirms that language and learning are inseparable. Learning is making sense of new information as well as making new sense of old information, and writing enables students to make both kinds of sense. Writing across the curriculum, then, broadens our view of language to connect writing to learning. It insists that language be seen first as an exploratory tool to understand thought, a way to allow words and thoughts to nourish each other, and second as a goal, a product, a vehicle for transmitting those thoughts. Thus, writing-across-the-curriculum programs emphasize two meanings of the word writing: both the process of writing--
which includes the idea-generating and the drafting—and the product of that process, the final written version that we grade.

"Why can't English teachers do their jobs and teach students how to write?"

That's a fair question, and I can answer that English and language arts teachers do work very hard at their jobs. But a vast number of students, added to societal causes too complex to discuss here, work against the chances of success for teachers in a single discipline to be responsible for the literacy of us all. Besides, language is the medium of instruction in all subjects; if a student does not understand a teacher's language, then he will not understand the content, regardless of the discipline. If the student cannot explain in clear spoken or written form what has been taught, then no learning has taken place.

What's even more obvious is the relationship between educational specialization and the decrease in students' abilities. Educational compartmentalization has so isolated fields of study that the interrelatedness of all knowledge has been lost. The more specialized we are, the more segregated we seem to become. For teachers, this means that we have no chances for discussing our disciplines or our pedagogies with each other. We have on our campus, for example, no cross-disciplinary team teaching, few philosophical exchanges, little cross-fertilization of
ideas--really, not even a mutual support system outside our own departments. It's not our fault; it's just the way things are. For students, though, this status quo means that we provide them few connections between our fields and no consistent philosophy of what constitutes correctness in the writing we ask them to do. That Northwest Campus survey I mentioned earlier revealed that only 23 of the 60 responding faculty deduct points for errors in spelling, punctuation, coherence. Not surprisingly, then, we have history and voc/tech and business and fine arts students who think that spelling and sentence structure do not count except in English. And when they think it counts only in one course, they do not take it seriously in other courses. "Does writing across the curriculum mean that I must teach English?"

No, you can't have my job! Writing across the curriculum simply means that language has as much place in the science, math, and tech classrooms as it has in the English and religion classroom. And we teachers do make the difference in students' attitudes about language. We are at the center of the education process, or we certainly should be, because we are responsible for teaching students how to use language in our fields. And here I remind that a field of study is nothing except the literature written about it. That plainly makes every teacher a teacher of language. And we can enhance student learning of the language of our fields
by using a variety of classroom strategies that incorporate writing.

"But what about grading all that writing? Even if I want to add more writing, I have 150, sometimes 175 students!"

I know what grading means. In English, where writing is what we teach, we carry the same 150 students, and if we can't help ourselves with that other crisis--overcrowded composition classes--we certainly can't help teachers in non-writing courses. But, the surprising part of this movement is that even as students do increased amounts of writing, teachers' grading loads are not necessarily significantly increased.

It is a paradox that can be explained in the philosophy of the movement. Remember that I mentioned earlier that language is now seen as an exploratory tool--a way to discover meaning, what one authority calls "an act of cognition" in itself. Some of this writing we are suggesting is for the students' own benefit, for them to see directly what they know, to encourage them to phrase questions about what they see they do not know. This kind of writing doesn't have to be--and in fact probably should not be--graded. It compares to playing finger exercises in piano, to hitting the bucket of balls in tennis. It is the practice without which there can be no mastery. Perhaps if we could see ourselves as writing coaches, we might take the pressure off ourselves to grade every piece they write.
In the same way, occasional ungraded writing practice takes grade pressure off students. Researchers find that students who write only for a teacher/examiner invariably produce sterile, unimaginative prose. They play it safe. These are the students who seem not to care--those who erect a facade of indifference to cover their inadequacies. These are the students whose only questions about our writing assignments are, "How long do you want it? When is it due? How much will it count?" They rarely think of themselves as writers and thus rarely invest any of themselves in the assignment. They simply don't know how writers behave, and they certainly don't know how to write as historians or economists or geologists. Students' attitudes and skills can be changed, though, when they have multiple drafts, some short prose responses, log or journal entries as non-threatening explorations or practice sessions in writing.

At this point I should clarify my meaning: I can hear your unspoken comments: "they won't put anything into it if they know I'm not going to grade it." At first, they probably won't; you're right about that. But remember how little writing they have done through the years--they are just learning. And another point that needs clarification: last spring in a writing meeting Linda Hines articulated some of the group's reservations about ungraded work. I'm not saying "don't grade." Certainly we teachers should continue to take up homework and grade it or give reading
quizzes and grade them if that's what we need to do. Those practices are not endangered here. But in fact the grading of them may become unnecessary on a daily basis. If a student can explain in two sentences, for example, how he did his homework, or can tell in his own language what a formula means, then that written explanation confirms the learning that the homework or reading was designed to accomplish. And instead of three pages of homework from each student, we may have occasionally just two sentences from each.

At the point of writing those two sentences, by the way, there is a minor breakthrough for students--minor for them but exciting for us. If they can write those two sentences, they see immediately for themselves that their study time has been worthwhile. They think of themselves as learners. If they cannot put the point into their own words, the knowledge of the failure comes just as immediately but with a subtle shift in perspective. The student sees "I can't even summarize what I've done." There is no blame, no, "He gave me a 50 on that quiz." Thus writing as an activity takes students out of their accustomed roles as passive recipients--little vessels to be filled--and makes them active participants in the classwork. It's not a miracle; it won't work immediately, and it won't work for every student. But nothing does, and the very activity engages the student with the content--and that is
important and new for some of them.

"But what if the problem is reading deficiency? Can students who can't read be expected to write?"

Not very well, but informal writing-to-learn activities can make them better readers. And because reading is the key to everything else in school, it deserves a program on its own. It is a subject we will focus on in later meetings of the committee this semester. So I'll leave that facet of the problem to our reading specialists with this reminder: writing can help improve learning in every discipline.

"But what if the problem is inability to think? Can students who can't (or won't) think be expected to write?"

Certainly. We expect it all the time. Anytime we pour the material out to them to memorize and repeat verbatim to us we expect them to write without thinking.

Now obviously this is not an indictment of us for wanting our students to learn content, for content is the foundation, the immediate purpose of most education. Content is the equipment of thinking. We cannot expect students to write or to think about abstract problems in psychology or in government if they don't first know the fundamental ideas and concrete content of psychology or government. Still, content alone isn't enough.

First of all, just practically speaking, in five years content in some of our fields will be dated. In fact, in aviation technology and computer science (just to name two)
some of the readings we assign next week may well be dated by Christmas. But philosophically, the point is this: to focus on content alone does not equip our students to make any future use of our material—if they can even remember it—and may in fact impoverish them for times when they are faced with new ideas and no teachers. If we fail to give them a framework, a structure, a context, for thinking about the subject matter, they will be unable to attack future problems. In "Why Johnny Can't Think" Walter Karp suggests that the emphasis on the right answer, that is, on content alone, actually smothers students' efforts to become effective intuitive thinkers.

But to start requesting next week that students think—just by saying "think about it"—won't solve the problem, because when we say, "I want you to think carefully about this question," we can't expect them to do much more than recite the facts they remember. Only if they have had practice with the way thinkers in the discipline use facts can we expect students to probe, to synthesize, to think critically in the field. And practice in writing and thinking can't occur just on tests. Back to the coaching analogy: when all we've had time for is fact-giving, we compare to coaches who tell tennis students how to serve, have them watch experts in the act of serving, test them by having them outline on paper the steps in the serve, but
never give them racquets and balls to practice. In the real world of tennis, they will get killed.

But I know that tennis doesn't matter as much as writing, so I'll get directly back to the subject by answering the last question: "Are you saying that writing is the answer to the writing, reading, thinking problems of our students?"

Yes, I honestly believe that writing practice is critical to learning any field. Students who grapple with making meaning on their own are in better positions to understand how writers of newspapers, magazines, and textbooks have made meaning. That connection seems clear. And studies of psycholinguists verify that the similar processes of writing and thinking are just as connected.

Let's think about thinking and what happens when we think. One idea sparks another, and then comes a flow of ideas, a stream of consciousness, which can ironically lead us away from the very subject we are trying so hard to think about. When we suddenly get back to the original idea, the thinking, the flow of ideas starts again. The process is fluid, recursive, circular. And sometimes as the thoughts flow naturally, the connections are made between the problem and the solution. Now recall what happens when we write. We jot down a phrase or a sentence, pause, go back and read it, perhaps change a word or two, re-read it, and then continue. And this procedure doesn't always work, even when
we are experienced. Sometimes we write as much as a whole page before we realize we are off the trail. But we had to write it down, to see it and to read it, before we realized what we did not know. So we go back. This process is also fluid, recursive, circular.

Best thinking, like best writing, most often occurs when there has been time for the whole process, time for false starts, when there has been an incubation period for the brain to work on its own. Isn't that one reason we say we'll sleep on a problem— to let our brain sort through the data at its own pace, in its own flowing way? Most thinkers require this physical inactivity. So do writers. They need incubation, rethinking time, drafts, revisions, re-writings. And so do learners. As learners, we all need time to assimilate new ideas, practice them, decide how they are like what we already know; and we all know that the learning process is also fluid, recursive, needful of incubation.

Unfortunately, though, as we push to do all we can to cover content, we have too little time to allow for these similar processes to take the course of time. And because we believe that our content is so critical that we'll leave the writing practice to other classes, we too often produce students who can parrot facts but do not know what the facts signify, memorizers but not learners, not writers, not thinkers.
It will take us all some time to rethink our needs and objectives, to try some writing to learn, to refine it, to look at it from different perspectives, but that is the single request the writing-across-the-curriculum committee is making today. And we are not asking anything that we ourselves have not tried. It now gives me pleasure to introduce formally our colleagues who want to tell you about their experiments with writing.
Writing is effective when it accomplishes its purpose for its audience - Barbara Walvoord

Writing represents a way of making meaning from experience. - Janice Lauer

Learning to write may be a part of learning to read. - Eudora Welty

Writing makes more thoughts in my head. - Terry, a student

I write to find out what I'm thinking about. - Edward Albee

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Writing to Learn, Learning to Write:

Literacy Across the Curriculum

How do I know what I think until I see what I say?
- E.M. Forster

Effective writing is built from specific, accurate pieces of information. - Donald Murray

Educators must rethink their roles and concentrate on teaching students the skills and attitudes needed for self-directed inquiry. - Chet Meyers
PREFACE

Warning: this slim booklet could change the way you think about the way you teach.

Let me explain. These pages reflect the efforts of a volunteer committee of Northwest Campus administrators and teachers who have met for a year, discussing cross-disciplinary problems in literacy and searching for ways to attack the problems through writing. That exchange of time and expertise has produced some stimulating conversations and some exciting ideas for assignments, some of which we have included for you.

But just as critical, our working together has fostered a camaraderie that has enriched our professional lives. As we have focused our concerns on student writing and thinking, we have found ourselves analyzing as well our goals, our objectives, our philosophies. Having worked together has broadened our perspectives.

As we start a new academic year, we hope you will consider joining us. Discovering the value of writing as a tool of learning really can change the way you think about the way you teach.

Taliita Fulkerson
Chairperson, Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Committee

August, 1987

L.S. Vygotsky - "Thought is born through words . . . thought unembodied in words remains a shadow."
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Dr. Randy Popken for the sample of the "weak assignments," to Dr. Jeanne Gerlach for ideas for the book review format, to Phil Gaines for his research paper criteria sheet.

Thanks to Dean Bob Claussen, Dr. John Martin, and the media staff for making this booklet available to the faculty.

Thanks to the faithful members of the Writing-Across-The-Curriculum Committee, many of whose ideas follow in this booklet.

Very special thanks to Dr. Judith Carrier, Dean of Instruction and Student Development Services, for unfailing support and enthusiasm.

E.M. Forster – "How do I know what I think until I see what I say?"
GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Let students write to learn. Provide them opportunities to write just to explore the significance of new ideas or to test for themselves the significant content of their courses. Such opportunities allow students to gain fluency of expression and clarity of content.

2. Point out examples of good writing in your field. Tell how professionals in the field write: how they present evidence, how they support generalizations, how they consider audience.

3. Be certain that students understand your assignment. Let them see an example of what you want them to do. Give them a criteria sheet to clarify precisely what the assignment should include; then grade the work by those criteria.

4. As you return graded work, show examples of good work the class has done. Make suggestions about how to improve the next assignment.

5. Be clear about how the grade was assigned. Resist the temptation to assign a content grade and a grammar grade.

6. Be generous with praise.

7. Give several short assignments rather than one longer one. Allow time for several drafts if you prefer the longer single assignment.

Some implications of assigning drafts rest on the assumption that you will in fact look at them:

a. do not try to comment on everything;
b. read quickly;
c. comment on rethinking, reorganization, further research;
d. remember that drafts are unfinished.

8. Reduce the number of multiple choice questions on tests; reduce the number of class discussion questions that are too closely keyed to textbook, memorized answers.

Ann Berthoff - "Whatever you really learn, you teach yourself."
Stephen Tchudl - "Writing is a learn-by doing skill."
Writing to learn is a way of learning to think (concretely, on paper) about how ideas connect. Specifically, writing to learn provides students a way of looking at how their past knowledge fits with what they are presently learning.

This approach to learning builds on what we know about the process of learning. Psychologists have found that we learn best when we use several modes at the same time: hand, eye, and mind. Putting words on paper obviously involves all three modes.

Writing, then, is essential to mastery of content, but writing also facilitates making judgments, discerning relationships, thinking independently about that content.

Because teachers across disciplines routinely present new ideas to students, they may need to incorporate informal writing-to-learn activities to make the new ideas more meaningful. Reading logs and journals, explained on pp. 7 - 8, are the most common cross-disciplinary means of writing to learn. Other techniques include these:

1. Clustering (also called mapping) is a mode of discovery that engages the creative, artistic side of the brain. It has – like all writing – the additional advantage of being concrete, sensory. It requires students to write related ideas around the critical term or concept and to draw circles and lines which show clusters of ideas – how related terms connect to each other and to the term.

   ![Clustering Diagram]

   See pp. 81 - 83, Four Worlds of Writing (on reserve in LRC) for excellent explanation and examples.

2. The classic strategies of definition, classification, comparison/contrast, analysis, argumentation also help students look at content from more than one perspective. For example,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Used to Answer</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>What is it?</td>
<td>What is a democracy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>What is the pattern?</td>
<td>What are the kinds of democracy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>What is it like?</td>
<td>Are democratic countries like socialist countries? How?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Thinking in three's is another good heuristic. Encourage students to clarify, discover, and explore by subjecting their ideas or writing topics to consideration as left, middle, right; top, middle, bottom; animal, mineral, vegetable; beginning, middle, end; past, present, future.

(Studies show that unsuccessful problem-solvers cannot divide wholes into parts.)

4. Consider using metaphoric language to suggest new perspectives and relationships. For example,

If Van Gogh's paintings were a dance, they would be a ________________.

If a diesel engine were a plant, it would be a ____________________.

If the Supreme Court were a singing group, it would be like _____________.

Such activities are not as childish as they may appear. Obviously students must understand Van Gogh's work on more than a superficial level to make such imaginative leaps. Insist that students explain how their analogies are valid.

No answer, then, is "wrong" unless the students are unable to support their metaphors, and even the search for that support clarifies their ideas on the subject.

[Peter Elbow's Embracing Contraries is enlightening on this approach, especially pp. 1-37; Lakoff and Johnson's Metaphors We Live By (in LRC) proposes that our conceptual system is "fundamentally metaphorical in nature."]

Janice Lauer - "Writing represents a way of making meaning from experience."
ASSIGNMENT IDEAS

Variations of the following suggestions have been used successfully on a number of college and university campuses. Many of these assignments are designed to encourage students to restate, to look at parts, to re-think old ideas, to integrate new ideas.

Not all of them will succeed in all disciplines, but let them fire your imagination for ways that you as a content specialist can use writing to serve your learning objectives.

Reading Logs

Objectives: Students respond in writing to each reading assignment.

Ideas: 1. At the end of each reading assignment have students write in their own words two-sentence summaries of content. After the summary they can jot any questions about content.

2. Students can submit lists of possible essay questions based on material in reading logs.

Evaluations: You may want to take up logs early in term just to check that students are able to find main ideas to include in summaries.

Journals (or think books: students think in writing about the course)

Objectives: Students explore ideas about content through writing about their own questions (perhaps from reading log) or about teacher-provided topics.

Ideas: 1. Before a unit on a particular topic, students can write in general terms about their experiences with the topic. The more they write, the more receptive they are for the unit. (For example, experiences with death, budgets, buying on credit, installing a machine). Follow-up topic after you have completed unit: students write “How My Views Have Changed on”

2. Students can write on same subject from different perspectives, taking pro and then con positions on issues.

3. Students can express opinions about the content of the class, usefulness of content, alternative methods of presentation.

4. Immediately after major exams students can react in journals: did I study enough? did I anticipate the questions? how should I change my study strategies? what areas need more study before the final?
5. Students can respond at the end of the class lecture: "In class today, I wanted to ask (or say or explain) ___________." Then they should be certain to re-read their journals before testing, to see if they can answer their own questions.

**Evaluation:** Because journals are repositories of ideas and explorations of meaning, you rarely should assign grades. Some teachers ask students to read from entries as part of class participation; others require students to turn in their journal entries on topic X, giving credit to all who have the work.

**Classnotes**

**Objectives:** Students record for their own use important facts from lectures and classroom procedures.

**Ideas:**

1. Encourage students to take notes only on one side of paper, using the opposite page to create study questions and mnemonic devices about the content. Encourage students to correlate reading assignments with class notes. Discourage them from trying to take notes verbatim or from trying to make class lectures conform to an outline format. If they want to outline, suggest that they do it as a review activity outside of class. If you want to be sure that they understand the relationship of ideas, prepare an outline on transparency to show them after you have completed the lecture. Avoid having entire lecture before them as you speak, or they may simply copy it mindlessly.

2. Occasionally give time for students to make graphic notes or draw flow charts or even stick figures to help them cast concepts in other expressive modes. Show them diaries/journals/logs of significant figures in the field. (A list of diaries/journals available in LRC is at check-out desk.)

3. On the day of a particularly important lecture, have students use carbon paper to duplicate their notes. Have them exchange the carbons and compare their original notes to a classmate's copy. Encourage them to ask questions about disparities.

4. To review students for multiple choice tests, prepare sample questions or give them old tests and have them justify in writing their answers to selected questions. Allow them to use their notes for the justifying. This is a good activity for group work and an excellent review of content.

**Evaluation:** You rarely need to see classnotes. Even so, it is important to require students to keep a written record of the class.
Impromptu Summary Writing

**Objectives:** Students and teachers get instant feedback from students' written summaries.

**Ideas:**
1. Stop in middle of lecture; ask class to summarize key points of lesson so far. Have several of these read aloud, and comment on disparities, omissions, completeness. Students hear the content again; you discover if you have made the points of the lecture clear.
2. Give class five minutes at end of class to summarize lecture notes. Begin next class with reading of some of these summaries.
3. Begin class by having students write for five minutes, either a summary of what they remember from the reading assignment or specific questions they have about it.

**Evaluation:** Use these summaries instead of pop quizzes, with emphasis on clarity and correctness of content. Mark grammar only if errors impair understanding of reader.

Formal Summary Writing/Paraphrasing

**Objectives:** Students put key concepts in their own language, with emphasis on content as well as writing form (invaluable preparation for research activities).

**Ideas:**
1. Select a critical sentence from the text for students to paraphrase. Have them compare what they have written. In addition to repeated exposure to content, students see different ways of saying the same thing. Point out advantages of original wording; note differences in meaning created by different word choices. (Good exercise to review for multiple-choice style tests, where changing a single term changes meaning).
2. Have students read and draft a summary of a short article with content directly relevant to classwork. Discuss their drafts; consider letting them work in groups to find best one - - again for repeated exposure to content. Then let them see your own written summary of the article. Allow them to revise and polish their drafts before they submit them for grading.
3. Find two different versions or perspectives of some issue in your field. Have students read and summarize them; then they can list similarities and differences in the two. From this assignment they could be expected to write a defense of either view.
4. Choose an important document from your field that has become at least partially dated by advancements or discoveries in the field. Have students read it and compare it to the more recent discoveries as explained in their textbook or in an article from a professional journal.

**Evaluation:** Provide criteria which make correct format or writing form count significantly (say 25%) but have content count more (75%). (See sample criteria statement with book review, p. 32 and with research, p. 30.)

**Current Events/Career Clippings Notebook**

**Objective:** Students read and respond to current articles relevant to course content and career goals.

**Idea:**

1. Relevant to any topic in your field, find *Newsweek* or *Time* articles to put on reserve for students to read and respond to in light of specific explanation of the subject in the textbook. To require one such activity a week results in the same amount of reading and writing required for many research papers.

2. Have students collect eight-ten advertisements for career positions they are interested in or positions that the course prepares them for. Assign them to list educational requirements, experience required, salary ranges, and chances for advancement they find explained in the ads. Then based on this informal research, they can write a paragraph or two describing qualifications for the career. (A good assignment because it interests students, and it divides naturally into two or three parts: "For job X, I have discovered that I must meet specific requirements in education and experience.")

3. As a good warm-up for technical components of any class, show students samples of ads for professional items they will use in the course (textbooks, calculators, tools, microscopes, word processors). Then have them compare the item to the way it is advertised, noting in their journals or notebooks any ambiguous or misleading descriptions or claims. After students have learned to use the tool, have them write a "professional" description of the tool, as if for a magazine or sales brochure.

**Evaluation:** Include in criteria that students must demonstrate understanding of audience and confidence in presentation.
Correspondence Reading/Writing

Objectives: Students become aware of writing for different audiences and of their own images as conveyed through their writing.

Ideas:
1. Show students letters written by important figures in the field. Show letters written to professional journals. Show letters from prominent leaders in one field to leaders in another: for example, Freud's letters to Einstein. Discuss content, form, appropriateness, image of writer. (Many important writers and thinkers are represented in collections of letters in LRC.)

2. After students have read articles in professional journals, have them write letters to editor, explaining how the articles agree or disagree with the presentation of the concepts in the textbook.

3. Instead of giving a weekly or a unit test, have students write letters which demonstrate their understanding of the material.

4. After students have read an important article, give them two letters written about the article. Have one letter jargon-filled and pompous, the other natural but still businesslike in tone. Have students evaluate the letters, telling which is more effective and why. Insist on specific reasons. Include what each letter reveals about its writer.

5. For career clipping assignment p. 10, have students write a formal letter of application for one of the jobs. Require the letter qualify the student for the job, a second describing how present activities are appropriate for the job, and a third describing how student plans to meet rest of job requirements.

6. Require three-paragraph letters of progress for semester projects: work completed, work in progress, work still to do.

7. Require memos to explain absences when students are asking for make-up work.

8. Let students write letters of complaint about school, job, or course requirements. Insist on logic and clarity and specific causes in these complaints.
Evaluation: Follow practice of business correspondence teachers: any error makes a letter unmailable in "the real world." Return all unmailable documents for revision. Then grade content-oriented letters; use credit/no credit for complaint letters.

Regardless of your discipline, assign writing that involves the student in an active effort to state the relationships or procedures of the discipline.

In mathematics
outline the steps of an algorithm; explain in one or two sentences the relationship between a line and a plane

In foreign languages
translate a song into _______________: report on the folklore of ________

In history
narrate the events leading to the impeachment of Governor Ferguson; research the historical significance of the White Elephant Saloon in Fort Worth

In biology
analyze the nutritional value of the Rotation Diet; write an explanation of photosynthesis for a fifth-grade class

In physics
evaluate the accuracy of science fiction and science fact in one of Bradbury's Martian Chronicles; assemble facts a layman can understand about black holes

In accounting
write a letter to IRS justifying deductions in the practice set; explain when and why one computes a trial balance

In speech
report and then evaluate the tactics of local sportscasters to hold audiences; observe and record the responses of your peers to some of your teachers to discover if ________

In art
compare an early Wyeth painting to one of the Ileigas; discuss the non-verbal communication in the art of Monet

In physical education
explain the difference between the continental and the western grip; outline your personal goals in taking aerobics and then explain how you plan to achieve them

In drama
write a character study of Willy Loman so that an amateur actor will understand how to read Scene 2; tell how different inflections change a scene
In government
outline the steps for submitting a legislative bill; analyze the logical and emotional appeals in the Preamble to the Constitution

In economics
explain briefly the relationship between supply and demand, using your household as the example; discuss the concept of supply and demand with a local businessman

In business correspondence
describe the implications of the following closings: Cordially, Yours truly, Very sincerely yours; tell how you think business ethics relates to secretaries

In psychology
explain how daydreaming is healthy mental functioning; analyze the reasons for your success in __________________

In agribusiness
describe the kinds of fungi that attack wheat so that a layman could understand; interview a farmer to learn about __________________

In horticulture
provide instructions for transplanting mesquite trees; interview three local florists about labor problems in their profession and then summarize your findings

In computer science
explain the meaning of computer literacy; translate the instructions of a flow chart into prose

In management
explain the concept of division of labor, using your place of employment or your household as the example; describe the similarities between managing a small business and managing a classroom

In music
analyze how the score adds to the intensity of the movie Star Wars; describe the musical qualities in Langston Hughes' jazz poems

In marketing
describe the logical fallacies in advertisements you find for the car you drive; outline a marketing plan for product X

In aviation
decide if aeronautical systems compare to any other systems you know about; describe how parts X and Y achieve effects Z
In philosophy
speculate on ways a poet might argue, as Emily Dickinson has, that truth is
God's twin.

In automotive programs
explain how this statement is inductive: Plymouths are unreliable cars; write a
manual for________________________

In small engine repair
after making a record of the kinds of repairs you make on Brand X, write a letter to
the manufacturer with suggestions for improving the product

In composition
explain the implications of choosing "Let's wrap this up" over "In conclusion" as
the transitional device for a final paragraph

In photography
tell how the components of a good photograph compare to the components of
good writing

In reading
compare a chapter in an original version of a book with an abridged or edited
version of the same material; analyze what has been omitted

In interpreting for the deaf
paraphrase the meaning of proverbs such as "Don't count your chickens before
they hatch" so that fifth graders could understand; sign your paraphrase.

Terry, a student - "Writing makes more thoughts in my head."
FORMAT FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Be certain that students know what you want or expect when you make writing assignments. If you will be reading their work for specific content or organizational pattern, let assignment instructions clarify that.

Any extra time we spend building stages and detailed instruction into a writing assignment will usually turn out to be a worthwhile investment, both in terms of the improved quality of our students' work and in terms of the time saved in evaluating the finished products (when our feedback generally serves little purpose).

Weak Assignments
A. Below are some possible titles for a cause and effect paragraph. Select one of these or make up your own.
   1. How My Life Changed After
   2. If I Had a Million Dollars
   3. After I Passed the Exam

B. You are a student in an American Studies Class. Your class has just finished reading Edward T. Hall's *The Silent Language*. One of your assignments is to write a short paper in which you express your opinion regarding Hall's discussion of Americans' concern with promptness.

   Your task: first, reread the excerpt from *The Silent Language*. Begin your essay by summarizing in your own words Hall's view of time as a form of communication and his belief about Americans' concern with promptness. After you have summarized Hall's position, indicate whether or not you agree with his opinion and list your reasons for either accepting or rejecting his views. Finally, give at least two specific examples to support your position. Describe at least two incidents from your own experience which show how Americans view promptness. Be sure to use the expressions of opinion and reason discussed in the chapter. Introduce your examples with phrases such as *for example*, *for instance*, or *to give an example*.

Obviously these assignments are weak for different reasons. The first is imprecise on content, explanation, suggestions; more, the ideas students will be writing about have no carry-over value either in the course or in their college work. The second assignment is weak for almost exactly opposite reasons: it is so detailed that most students would get lost in the welter of words.

Aim for a compromise between these two. Use the direct format of the first, the instructions on how to do the paper of the second. Let students see a sample of work of former students.
Assume that you are a student in an American Studies Class. Your class has just finished reading Edward T. Hall's *The Silent Language*. One of your assignments is to write a short paper (350 - 500 words) in which you express your opinion of Hall's discussion of Americans' concern with promptness.

1. First, reread the excerpt from *The Silent Language*.
2. Summarize in your own words Hall's view of time as a form of communication and his belief about Americans' concern with promptness. (paragraph #1)
3. After you have summarized Hall's position, indicate whether or not you agree with his opinion and list your reasons for either accepting or rejecting his views. (paragraph #2)
4. Finally, support your position by describing at least two incidents from your own experience which show how Americans view promptness. (paragraph #3)

Throughout your paper, use the expressions of opinion and reason discussed in the chapter. Introduce your example with phrases such as *for example, for instance*, or *to give an example*.
The following symbols might be helpful for marking grammatical or technical features of students' writing. They are consistent with the Harbrace College Handbook, the grammar handbook we require of all freshmen English students. Copies of Harbrace are on reserve in the LRC and are available for use in the Writing Lab, LRC 315. If you want a personal copy, see Tahita Fulkerson.

1. ss = sentence sense
   *(Good to indicate sentence that is unclear for any reason)*
   If you want to be specific, you can use
   - frag = incomplete sentence
   - cs = comma improperly used to join 2 sentences

2. , / = comma needed
   - superfluous commas

3. ms = error in manuscript form
   *(Good to indicate problems with legibility, arrangement of ideas on page, word division, proofreading)*

4. sp = spelling error

5. <--------- paragraph needed
   - <--------- dev = more details needed; organization of paragraph unclear

6. log = error in logic

**Reminder:** Content specialists do **not** have to be grammarians. However, it does help students become more proficient as writers in any field if they know that the field has standards of correctness.

Erika Lindemann - "Research does not support the notion that learning grammar is useful in attaining any other goal, except learning grammar."
WAYS TO ENCOURAGE CORRECTNESS

1. Make a grammar handbook an optional text in your syllabus.
2. Make a paperback dictionary a required text.
3. Put a copy of a handbook in a prominent place in your office.
4. Refer students to a handbook if they make persistent errors.
5. Resist the temptation to co-author and rewrite for your students.
6. Give students five minutes before turning in a paper to correct (neatly, in ink) one or two errors that always bother you.
7. Decide for yourself exactly how you see yourself in relationship to your dual role as coach of content and evaluator of assigned work. Could you coach on drafts, evaluate on final copies?

(See Chapter 3, "Planning to Coach the Writing Process," in Helping Students Write Well, on reserve in the LRC.)
Listed below are a group of tutorial aids available for all students on our campus. These items are self-explaining and effective for most students. Other texts, aids, and programs are also available in the labs.

**In the Writing Lab, LRC 315**

I. **Sentences / Punctuation**
   
   Packet E/6 - 1 1/2 - 2 hours to complete; an audio tape and work packet on major sentence errors

II. **Paragraph Development**
   
   A. Packet R/6 - 1 1/2 - 2 hours to complete; an audio tape and work booklet on rudiments of paragraphing
   
   B. Series P/8 - 10 minutes each; audio overviews of components of paragraphing and different modes of development (such as how to compare, to define, to classify)
   
   C. Paragraphs: 14 lessons - 4 - 6 minute tapes with reproducible instruction sheets; good on topic sentences

III. **Spelling**
   
   A. **14 Steps to Better Spelling** - a textbook which divides spelling into a 14-week self-study course; includes pre-test, self-assessment chart, post-test
   
   B. **Solving Spelling Problems** - concentrates on troublesome pairs such as *affect/effect*; pre-test, exercises, explanations, post-test

IV. **Reading Textbooks**
   
   **Reading Textbooks** - 3 30-minute audio tapes which lead students through how-to-study process for a textbook (students should bring their own textbooks)

**In the Computer Learning Center, East Wing LRC**

I. **English MicroLab** - 12 disks; remediation packages keyed to textbook *Evergreen* (copies of which available in Writing Lab); both MicroLab and *Evergreen* often used by English 1203 students
II. **Writing Is Thinking** – 18 lessons, each 50 minutes; leads student through draft, evaluation, and revision of one paper

III. **Proteus** – idea processor; leads student through different ways to generate ideas about writing topic

Les Perelman – "To be an effective writer of college papers, a student needs to learn how to read books, what to do with the ideas he acquires from a text, and how to express his new perceptions in the language of a particular academic discipline. It is obvious that a freshman writing course alone cannot teach a student to do all these things."
As part of orientation tours in orientation, study skills, and freshman composition classes, students are routinely introduced to research aids in the LRC, including Reader's Guide, specialized indices, and reference works.

In addition, the librarians will conduct special sessions to show your students how to find discipline-specific materials. To facilitate such sessions, you should provide librarians with copies of research assignments. Call librarians to schedule these tours.

On reserve in the LRC are these books which explain the process of writing research papers:

1. Harbrace College Handbook – includes a full chapter on notetaking, documentation, and a sample paper (annotated to explain every feature)

2. Academic Writing: Working with Sources Across the Curriculum – step-by-step guide; an excellent source

3. Norton's Writing Research Papers – good general information; especially helpful annotated list of source books by discipline

4. Writing Research Papers Across the Curriculum – all samples of documentation are especially clear because the typeface looks like typewriting; 2 sample papers

5. Shaping the Literary Essay – although emphasis is on literary analysis, the steps of research are clearly outlined.

6. Resources for Practicing Research – less thorough, but first 40 pages are useful; easy for students to understand.

7. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers – authoritative and complete explanation of standards of Modern Language Association

8. The Bedford Guide to the Research Process – Chapter 2 is especially helpful in explaining how to use a search log to narrow topics; an outstanding source

Lessons 23 and 24 of the ITV Composition I course, “The Write Course,” show a student in all stages of writing a research paper; library setting is authentic (Dallas Public Library). Tapes are available in LRC.
Michael Polanyi – "Before there is meaning there has to occur some personal act of vision."
Paraphrasing and summarizing are two important, related skills which will enable you to assimilate the materials you are asked to read in all college courses.

**Paraphrasing**

To paraphrase is to rewrite or restate in your own words the whole content of a piece of writing. Your purpose is to include all details and attitudes of the original so that your reader can readily understand the original without having to read it.

Paraphrasing is vital to mastery of content and is particularly helpful in learning definitions. Unless you can state facts in your own words, you may not be certain that you understand them. Also, learning to rephrase key sentences helps you to remember the ideas, and obviously paraphrasing is important in preparing research papers and reports.

Follow these basic steps to paraphrase:

1. **Use synonyms** which come as close as possible to the meaning of the original word, using context clues to be sure that your synonym choice fits the meaning of the sentence. Repeat only **key terms**. For instance, consider this sentence:

   Photosynthesis refers to a biochemical process by which green plants make their own food using light as a source of energy.

   **Photosynthesis** and **biochemical** are key terms which could be repeated. A paraphrase of the preceding example might be this:

   Photosynthesis is the term for the biochemical activity that occurs when living plants make food from the energy of light.

2. **Alter sentence patterns**, being careful not to vary meaning. Compare these:

   **Original** – To encourage critical reading and informed evaluation of written statements and to test knowledge of principles, a college physics teacher asks students to revise a poorly written or erroneous statement.

   **Paraphrase** – A teacher of college physics asks pupils to revise an inappropriate or false statement. His purpose is to foster critical reading and purposeful evaluation of written statements and to measure knowledge of fundamentals.
(Notice that the paraphrase may be longer than the original because often you may want to break long sentences into shorter ones.)

**Summarizing**

To summarize is to reduce a source so that your audience reads only the main idea or gist of the piece.

Summarizing is vital to learning; it helps you differentiate primary ideas from details and examples. Like the paraphrase, it is essential to writing reports and research papers.

Follow these basic steps to summarize:

1. Read the original carefully.

2. Look up any unfamiliar words; try to paraphrase the passages where the unfamiliar words occur.

3. Reread the passage to determine the author's format; that is, determine the parts of the piece such as the introduction, the body, the conclusion, and locate the thesis or main idea.

4. Reread a second time, annotating the main ideas as you find them and drawing lines through all unnecessary words, repetitions, digressions, minor supporting details.

5. Rewrite the material coherently, providing the connections between ideas. Remember that a list of facts does not constitute either a paraphrase or a summary.

**Important Reminders for Both Skills**

Neither the paraphrase nor the summary contains your reactions or opinions.

Both the paraphrase and the summary require an identification of the source material, either in a headnote or a footnote. Use the format in the *Harbrace College Handbook* or some other research guide.
Original – Assuming that the brain and the computer are both machines, how are the two to be compared? The exercise is interesting. Computers are invented by man and are therefore thoroughly understood, if human beings can be said to understand anything; what they do not know is what future computers will be like. The brain was created by evolution and is in many important ways not understood. Both machines process information and both work with signals that are roughly speaking electrical. Both have, in the largest versions, many elements. Here, however, there is an interesting difference. For cells to be manufactured biologically appears to be reasonably simple, and neurons are in fact produced in prodigious numbers. It seems to be not so easy to increase the elements of a computer, even though the numbers are expanding rapidly. If synapses rather than neurons are considered to be elements of the nervous system, however, I can hardly imagine computers catching up. No one would want to be held to a guess as to the number of synapses in a brain, but $10^{14}$ (100 trillion) would not be implausible.


Paraphrase of one important sentence:

Original – If synapses rather than neurons are considered to be elements of the nervous system, however, I can hardly imagine computers catching up.

Paraphrase – If the points at which nerve impulses pass between nerve cells are called the elements of the nervous system, however, Professor Hubel finds it hard to imagine that parallel elements of the computer can compare in numbers.

(Notice that the paraphrase removes the first person pronoun and makes the entire passage less personal.)

Summary of paragraph above:

If the brain and the computer are both machines, they contrast in their origins but compare in ability to process information through electrical signals and through their large numbers of elements. They also differ in that the fundamental components of computers may not be increased as rapidly as the elements of the brain with its almost infinite connections.
SAMPLE HANDOUT FOR QUOTING SOURCES

To prepare students for research assignments, spend one class period explaining the assignment, showing samples of past students' work, and discussing how to start the project.

A handout like the following one (prepared for a psychology class) shows how you want students to use outside sources. Begin with an excerpt (#1) from a source in the discipline. Have students read it, summarize it in their journals, perhaps paraphrase a selected sentence. Then show them (#2, #3) ways to incorporate the material they have just read. Be specific (#4, #5) about your preferences.

Incorporating Outside Sources

1. First read the source, paraphrasing key passages and then summarizing in your own words the main idea.

   Culture shock, the profound disorientation suffered by the traveler who has plunged without adequate preparation into an alien culture, provides a third example of adaptive breakdown. Here we find none of the obvious elements of war or disaster. The scene may be totally peaceful and riskless. Yet the situation demands repeated adaptation to novel conditions. Culture shock, according to psychologist Sven Lundstodt, is a "form of personality maladjustment which is a reaction to a temporarily unsuccessful attempt to adjust to new surroundings and people" (69).

   The culture shocked person, like the soldier and the disaster victim, is forced to grapple with unfamiliar and unpredictable events, relationships and objects. His habitual ways of accomplishing things – even simple tasks like placing a telephone call – are no longer appropriate. The strange society may itself be changing only very slowly, yet for him it is all new. Signs, sounds and other psychological cues rush past him before he can grasp their meaning. The entire experience takes on a surrealistic air. Every work, every action is shot through with uncertainty.

2. If you wish to quote directly, you must include the author's name and quotation marks around his words:

   According to Toffler, a victim of culture shock "is forced to grapple with unfamiliar and unpredictable events, relationships and objects" (428).
3. If you wish to quote indirectly from your paraphrase, you may or may not use the author's name in your own sentence.

   Toffler notes that culture shock is the result of lack of awareness or "preparation" (428).

   Culture shock results when one is thrust into a society for which he is unprepared (Toffler 428).

4. If in doubt about whether to quote directly or not, choose not and simply cite the source of the information.

   If in doubt about how much to quote, choose to quote small segments of critical material rather than whole segments of explanation.

5. In all instances, be certain that your reader knows what is your material and what is quoted.
The following statement on plagiarism is given to composition students.

- SAMPLE -

Plagiarism

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism means using someone else's work as one's own. Specifically, to plagiarize is "to steal and use the ideas or writing of another as one's own" (American Heritage Dictionary).

When does plagiarism occur?

1. Students plagiarize when they copy directly from a book without using quotation marks and references to sources.

2. Students plagiarize when they summarize or paraphrase the ideas of an author without citing the author as the source.

3. Students plagiarize when their papers do not reflect their own knowledge, voice, and style, usually as a result of having had a friend or tutor rephrase or complete their ideas.

The statement on plagiarism on pp. 413 - 414 of the Harbrace College Handbook (10th ed.) gives specific examples of plagiarism.

What is the penalty for plagiarism?

The Northwest Guide (Item IX) addresses scholastic dishonesty:

The college may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of scholastic dishonesty. 'Scholastic dishonesty' includes but is not limited to cheating on a test, plagiarism and collusion.

Individual instructors may penalize plagiarists by assigning a zero for the paper, by requiring a complete re-write of the paper, or by referring the student to the Dean of Instruction and Student Development Services for appropriate action.
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<td>2. Paper received on time (a must!)</td>
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book review

A. your title page should identify you as writer of the review and provide bibliographic information about the book:

Jane Doe

Review of


B. the body of the review should include five parts. use numbers to identify each part; write the information requested in traditional paragraph form.

1. in a short paragraph (75 - 100 words) identify the author, including personal and professional background and qualifications for writing the book. some of this information may be available in the preface of the book; you may need to consult Who's Who in America or a similar biographical reference. be certain to use your own words and to include your source for this information.

2. summarize the book (300 words). include the scope of the book, the subjects and time period covered, any surprising information it contains.

3. state in a sentence or two the thesis of the book; that is, tell the significant point the author makes.

4. describe the scholarly features of the book (150 words). does it include notes, an index, a bibliography? is the format appealing? is the book well-written?

5. report your reactions to the book (150 - 200 words). is it profitable or enjoyable reading? explain clearly. conclude this paragraph by telling why you do or do not recommend the book to another student.

C. criteria for grading are listed below:

1. 70% = content requested in instruction above

A reader of this book review should be able to understand the main idea of the book and your reaction to it. Equally important, your reader should know beyond doubt that you have in fact read and understood the book.
2. 30% = Format

Format includes following the explicit instructions on order and length; it also includes correctness, neatness, and timely submission of the work.

NOTICE:

Lesson 25 of the ITV Composition course is "Writing About Books" (tape available in LRC). It tells how to get content for reviews but offers no format for the actual writing.

See also Chapter 9, "Planning the Review," in Academic Writing: Working with Sources Across the Curriculum (on reserve in LRC).
The following titles, on reserve in the LRC, represent a selected bibliography, listed in order of personal preference.

Teaching Students to Think Critically – practical, down-to-earth, reasonable; a key source

Errors and Expectations – truly the seminal work for anyone who would understand the writing deficiencies of the Open-Door student

Language Connections – a fundamental text on writing across disciplines; a collection of essays by professors who have succeeded; a starting point for the concept

Embracing Contraries – clear explanation of the contradictions in teaching and in learning

Helping Students Write Well – clear, reasonable ideas for teachers in all disciplines; covers almost all facets of problem; many examples

Roots in the Sawdust: Writing to Learn Across Disciplines – a collection of essays by teachers who give explicit instructions/explanations for writing to learn in a variety of disciplines

Interdisciplinary Teaching – a helpful overview; a collection of essays by teachers

Teaching Writing in All Disciplines – another collection of essays by practitioners

Four Worlds of Writing – an excellent writing textbook which discusses writing according to its purpose

Why Johnny Can't Read – and photocopies of “Why Johnny Can’t Write” and “Why Johnny Can’t Think.”

“Teaching Critical Thinking: Eight Easy Ways to Fail Before You Begin” – photocopies of Phi Delta Kappan article; clear explanation of rationale for group work

Copies of a selected bibliography on writing and learning across the curriculum

A list of journals and diaries available in LRC
James B. White - "Literacy is not merely the capacity to understand the conceptual content of writing and utterances, but the ability to participate fully in a set of social and intellectual practices."
Barbara Walvoord - "Writing is effective when it accomplishes its purpose for its audience."
SUMMARY
WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM WORKSHOP
AUGUST 28, 1997
EVALUATION/INTEREST SURVEY

I. PLEASE EVALUATE THE MEETING TODAY.

A. HAS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF WRITING CHANGED? HOW?

yes-- 24

Need for more writing emphasized, awareness by and training of all teachers.
Students must be taught reading and writing skills.
How to use globally on campus.
The emphasis on more written comments,
I am more conscious of the need for expanded w.a.t.c. class work.
Must be used more in class.
I am more aware of how much this truly does enter into my discipline.
All writing need not be graded and can be used with any subject.
My consciousness of using writing as an integral part of effective teaching
has been enhanced.
It has increased my awareness.
I have a better appreciation of writing.
It has reinforced my understanding of the concept of writing,
I understand better the importance of developing effective communication
skills.
A very good workshop. I realize the importance much more.
A new need for student writing.
Differences among subject areas. Students learn to write by writing.
I feel more of a need to integrate writing into my course.
Incorporating more writing into evaluation of students.
It has evolved as a more important tool in the teaching of thinking.

No-- 10

They have been driving this concept for 10 years at TCJC.
Not exposed to anything new.
I have always considered writing crucial to learning.
We know that it is a great, common problem.

B. IN WHAT WAYS HAS THE PROGRAM BEEN RELEVANT TO YOUR NEEDS?

Exchanging ideas with other faculty members was excellent.
Small groups were most helpful; also individual presentors.
It has been helpful to understand different discipline needs.
The 35 page booklet can be most helpful.
It offered new ideas on how to get students to write more.
It gave me some ideas I can incorporate in my classes.
It has given me some new ideas and has shown me that our problem is campus
wide.
Exploring ways of implementing writing in a technical classroom setting
was helpful.
My group helped me to solve a problem.
It gave me ideas and ways to promote writing.
The suggestions from varied areas were the best.
It's reaffirmed and convinced me that writing in my area is needed.
It sparked ideas and increased awareness.
Different ideas presented could be applicable to my courses.
The sharing of ideas with other faculty members.
By discussing how problems in other areas are similar to our area.
The discussion within our discipline was informative, as well as hearing the
views of problems of other disciplines.
It gave me some good ideas to try in my own classes.
It has been fairly relevant not only in the awareness of writing skills,
but also in the awareness of lack of sufficient reading skills.
I saw how other disciplines plan to use writing. It encouraged me to find more means to utilize students' writing abilities. It has made me more aware of the students need to write. Making me more aware of student being able to put ideas in writing. It directed attention to its possible new use as a problem solving tool. Relevant to improving relationships with students. Suggestions I might try. Relevant to see the use of writing in a technical class. Written improvement in all classes. Setting everyone together/realizing the need for writing across the curriculum.

C. COMMENT ON THE KIND OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS YOU WANT IN THE FUTURE.

More like this one. Practical "hands-on" applications and exchange of other faculty and college applications. Promotion!! i.e. How to more effectively promote, advertise and sell TCJC. More programs relating to current issues in education. More of the same. The same version. Practical ones would be appreciated. Teaching methods of critical thinking. How to deal with student's expectations. More applicable to the technical area of interest of our program. Introducing computer usage into the technical field. This one was very good, but it lasted too long. It showed a great deal of preparation. Allow us to get together (either within or across disciplines) and brainstorm with each other. Be shorter, so it is easier to stay on the task "mentally". Explain more about changes occurring in new regulations for higher education in Texas. Teaching methods for the classroom. A program such as this. Similar to today's program. Total faculty--superordinate goal--state requirements, mandates. Chapter 2 of today--more like this.

II. PLEASE EXPRESS YOUR INTEREST IN FUTURE PROGRAMS OR MEETINGS ABOUT WRITING TO LEARN.

A. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE IDEAS PRESENTED TODAY?

Yes-- 32 No Response-- 3
No -- 6

B. DO YOU WANT TO BE NOTIFIED ABOUT WRITING COMMITTEE MEETINGS?

Yes-- 25 (only 16 signed their names) No-- 8 No Response-- 8

Edna Greenwood	Barbara McCracken	Ken Griffin
Sue Milner	Berry Woodson	Judith J. Carrier
Charles Riley	Dave Clinkscale	Margarita Zamora
Beverly Daniels	Mike Cinatl	Lynne Hardin
Chris Sawyer	Winston Dennis
Charles Lycan	Larry Cotton

C. DO YOU PREFER SMALL GROUPS WITHIN DIVISIONS OR THE ENTIRE FACULTY MEETING FOR PROGRAMS LIKE THIS?

Small Groups-- 20 Entire Faculty-- 10
Both/Either-- 10 Other Small Groups
Across Faculty-- 1
D. PLEASE CHECK IDEAS THAT APPEAL TO YOU FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS, NUMBERING 1,2,3,4,5,6 TO SUGGEST PREFERENCES:

1. Help with Study Skills in Your Discipline
2. Designing Brief Writing Assignments and Evaluating Writing Assignments
3. Practical Applications of a Critical Reading Program
4. Helping Students with Reading
5. Getting Your Own Writing Ready for Publication

E. PROVIDE OTHER IDEAS YOU WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE WITH COLLEAGUES.

I believe we are scratching the surface of the problem and not beneath the problem. In other words, the focus is on the symptoms and not the cause of the problem.
Provide more all faculty socials--"get together" etc. so that we have more opportunities to become better acquainted with each other.
Ideas that improved my classes.
Assistance in integrating this concept into the "mechanical" field.
I would like to explore ways to devise a research paper where plagiarism would be minimized.
Brief writing assignments.
Excellent program...keep up the good work.

F. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING ON A PROGRAM FOR OTHER FACULTY?

Yes-- 2
Judith J. Carrier
Sue Milner

No-- 11

Maybe-- 17 (only 9 signed their names)
Mike Cinatl                   Joe Vaughan
Charles Riley                Dave Clinkscale
Beverly Daniels              Ken Griffin
Chris Sawyer                 Richard Jolly
Dick Hakes

Not yet-- 1
Maybe after I have tried some things in some classes.
APPENDIX D

The following document is the survey the researcher prepared for use by the counsellors.
During the next five-six weeks, you will have opportunities to become familiar with many facets of academic life at TCJC. Please complete this form to enable the instructors to select topics and study strategies of special interest to you.

1. What general questions do you have about college life, either academic, social, or extracurricular?

2. Describe any past experience you have had as a college student. If you have had no such experience, describe your image of the typical college freshman.

3. What courses have given you difficulties in the past? Describe your experiences and tell what you did to overcome your difficulties.

4. Provide your semester schedule in the blanks below. If you have a job, please give the number of hours you work per week.

   MWF                  TTH

   Work Hours?  ____________________
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