

Incorporating Formal Writing in the Content Areas

Description

- Refers to longer written assignments used several times per grading period
- Involves teachers using a variety of mentor texts to explicitly model how to read and write different text types, genres, and text structures or patterns encountered and used in specific disciplines
- Generally includes prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, conferencing, and publishing
- Helps students learn how practitioners or professionals in a specific discipline communicate and articulate ideas
- Focuses on students learning to transfer different types of genres and text structures to their own writing
- Improves comprehension of content area textbooks and enhances learning of content
- Includes almost any writing genre across content areas, especially if the genre has been introduced and taught

Instructional Protocol

- Explicitly introduce and teach—by modeling and thinking aloud—a type of formal writing specific to your discipline.
- Read aloud an example of a mentor text. Notice the elements (characteristics) of the genre and common text structures (organizational patterns): concept and definition, sequence, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and problem and solution. Remember, authors usually use more than one pattern in a piece of writing.
- Model that particular type of writing (or genre) in front of the class. Think aloud as you show students one stage of writing at a time: prewrite, draft, revise, edit, conference, and publish.
- Merge opportunities for students to practice and apply (read and write) what they've learned about a genre and appropriate text structures with content learning. Differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Schedule time for students to prewrite, draft, revise, edit, and conference with you and/or their peers.
- Teach and reinforce a variety of genres throughout the year.

Examples of Formal Writing Activities

	English	Math	Science	Social Studies
Literary				
Biographies	X	X	X	X
Memoirs	X	X	X	X
Poems	X	X	X	X
Personal narratives	X			X
Autobiographies	X			
Short stories	X			
Informational (Expository, Procedural, Persuasive)				
Essays	X	X	X	X
Summaries	X	X	X	X
Analyses	X	X	X	X
Interviews	X	X	X	X
Newspaper or magazine articles	X	X	X	X
Reports	X	X	X	X
Editorials	X	X	X	X
Procedures (how-to)	X	X	X	
Directions		X	X	
Letters	X			X
Reviews	X			
Critiques	X			
Observational notes			X	
Campaign speeches				X

Source: Teach for America. (2011). *Secondary literacy*. Retrieved from http://teachingasleadership.org/sites/default/files/Related-Readings/SL_2011.pdf