

WHY WRITE? WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM GRADES 4-12

FALL, 1985

INSTRUCTOR: Wendy Strachan

Thursdays, 4:30 - 8:20

LOCATION: MPX 7600

In recent years, the phrase "Writing across the Curriculum" has come to suggest a general focus on writing in school. In the context of this course, the phrase refers specifically to strategies for integrating writing into the teaching of all subjects. Current research in writing and learning is showing the important role that writing plays in individualizing learning, in helping students to understand their subject matter, and in stimulating them to think in creative and logical ways. In this course for teachers at the Grades 4-12 levels, we shall examine the nature of writing and plan teaching strategies that draw on those functions of writing.

The way the course is conducted presents a model for classroom organization and interaction which teachers can translate to their own settings. The format will encourage a workshop atmosphere and include small and large group work, lecture and video presentations, and general discussion. The illustrations and examples used in the course content will be selected to fit the needs and interests of the participants' particular grades or subject areas. Throughout the course, teachers will be asked to integrate what they are learning into their classroom practice and to reflect and report on the effects of their new approaches on their students.

The course will have a double focus: it will be about writing and about teaching writing. Teachers can expect to develop their own skill in writing as they learn ways to teach it more effectively.

Course Topics will include:

1. Creating a climate and organizing the classroom for writing.
2. Motivating students with purposeful writing assignments.
3. Using writing to assist learning in all subjects.
4. Strategies to develop creative thinking through and in writing.
5. Ways of responding to writing.
6. Identifying appropriate topics, materials, forms and audiences for writing.

Each class session will include:

1. Individual writing.
2. Demonstrations of effective method of teaching writing.
3. Small and whole group sharing of reflections on 'how the idea worked in my class'.
4. Lecture and general discussion based on assigned readings.

Requirements for Grade/Evaluation:

1. One-two page responses to four of the assigned readings.
2. Weekly commentary on implementation of a teaching strategy in teachers' class.
3. A plan for a series of 4 lessons which incorporate writing as an integral part of the teaching/learning process.
4. A process journal recording experiences and thoughts about writing and reflections on the implications for teaching. (Entries made during and outside of class).
5. A final position paper on the teaching of writing, 7-10 pages.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Mayher, J.S., Lester, Nancy B., Pradl, Gordon M. Learning to Write/Writing to Learn Boynton/Cook, NJ 1984
2. Torbe, M., Medway, P., The Climate for Learning. Boynton/Cook, NJ 1983.
3. Handed out articles