Mary K. Healy

WRITING IN ALL SUBJECT AREAS

During the past five years, the Bay Area Writing Project has increasingly included science, social studies, mathematics, business and home economics teachers in its summer institutes and school district inservice programs. Teachers of all subject areas can insure that writing plays an important role in student learning by joining with English teachers to explore the nature of the writing process, the demands of writing assignments, and methods for teaching students to handle those demands.

In past summer programs, teachers from subject areas other than English have demonstrated how to use peer response/editing groups during the early stages of drafting papers. These teachers have used sentence combining activities, both as a way to focus attention on structuring the papers their students write and, uniquely, as a means of reviewing information for subject area tests.

Science and mathematics teachers have demonstrated how journal writing has allowed their students to put into words tentative understanding (mis-understanding) of a subject area, thus allowing both teachers and students access to the learning process at a stage earlier than the final test or paper.

Through the discussion of writing done in their respective classes, both English and other subject area teachers have learned much about their conception of the writing process and, in so doing, have broadened their range both of teaching methods and of possible writing activities. No longer, then, need the English teacher be the only one concerned with “teaching” writing.

(An excellent source book in this area is Martin, D'Arcy, Newton, and Parker's Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum, available from Ward Lock Educational, 116 Baker Street, London W1M 2BB, England.)

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