I begin my writing workshops by coaching the participants to think about why they are writing for publication, and I ask them to consider setting some time-specific goals, both long-range and short-term. This method gives us focus and, if we are wise, we will shape everything we do according to these aims. For example, having a few goals helps us select the most appropriate topics and journals. It can even help us write more effective titles. The ultimate result is that it gives our work direction, making it easier to complete while also producing a better product.

I recently asked a few highly productive authors why they write for publication. Here’s what they said.

Elliott Eisnor, Professor of Education and Art at Stanford University, commented,

I write for publication because it is through the process of writing that my ideas get clarified and revised. When one is speaking, words

have a short life. . . . Thus, for me writing is a way of learning to think more rigorously about ideas that I possess or want to develop. In fact, the act of writing is an invitation to discovery, to the location of new intellectual seas on which to sail. It is an act of exploration that provides the satisfactions that come from trying to make something beautiful.

David Gilman, a professor at Indiana State University and the editor of Contemporary Education, also mentioned the permanency of writing. He believes that

writing also helps me clarify my thinking. Often, after I’ve written a sentence or paragraph, I find myself reading it back and saying, “I didn’t know that.” I really did know it, but the writing helped
Like Dave Gilman, Professor Tom Good at the University of Arizona writes to clarify his thinking. He wrote the following:

Writing for professional publication provides an opportunity to conceptualize, explore, and on occasion reformulate one’s misconceptions and limits. Writing is often frustrating, tedious, and forced. At other times it is spontaneous and rewarding. However, it is always the perfect medium for self-reflection and professional growth.

Steve Hoover, Associate Professor at St. Cloud University, also uses writing to refine and improve his thinking. According to this author,

Publishing allows one’s ideas to be examined critically, to be tested and affirmed or refuted. No other form of communication of ideas allows for such critical examination. Herein lies the real essence of publication, that of inquiry. While writing can be a painful process, it forces individuals to critically examine their ideas. Writing creates a forum within which thoughts must be organized, refined, deleted, rearranged, and finally presented for scrutiny. Writing forces critical review as well as creative production; it is the essence of scholarship; it provides for growth; it is thought.

One of my favorite responses to this question, “Why do you write for publication?” came from Professor Richard Burke at Bowling Green University, who stated,

The reason I write for publication is fairly simple: I occasionally have something to say—some idea or set of related ideas that organizes itself in my mind and stays there until I do something with it. When you have a good idea, it doesn’t seem right to keep it to yourself.

My own reason for wanting to be published was very practical. I wanted tenure. Later, I wanted promotions and merit pay. Today, I have the first pair of this triad, and my merit pay isn’t affected by writing, yet I write more than ever. Apart from the feeling that comes from helping colleagues achieve their goals, writing for publication is still the most professionally rewarding activity I’ve found.

(Dr. Henson has written twenty-two books, including The Art of Writing for Publication, over two hundred articles, and two million dollars worth of funded grant proposals. In addition, he has presented Writing for Publication and Grant Proposal Writing institutes at SHSU for the past two years.)

15th ANNUAL CHILDREN’S LITERATURE FESTIVAL

The Sam Houston State University Department of Library Science is hosting its 15th Annual Children’s Literature Festival for librarians and educators on Saturday, March 15, 1997, from 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. Participants will attend such activities as workshops, autograph sessions, and book exhibits, as well as hear these authors speak: Joni Bodart, Lee Bennett Hopkins, and Don Wood. The cost is $50. For additional information and registration forms contact:

Dr. Mary Berry, Festival Coordinator
Department of Library Science
SHSU, P.O. Box 2236
Huntsville, Texas 77341

Phone (409) 294-1150
Fax (409) 294-1153
Face it, writing well can be difficult and time-consuming. For some students, it requires motivation that often exceeds the threat or promise of a grade. Grades may encourage adequacy, but the drive for excellence comes from within. We are often motivated to improve personal written communication skills by writing for publication. Writing well becomes the means to highly desired career ends in a “publish or perish” profession. Perhaps students would also find heightened motivation if they were writing for publication. Writing for a real audience on relevant topics could spark an interest and a sense of pride in some students, knowing that their work means more than a mark in an instructor’s grade book.

But publishing documents costs money. Optimistically, a two hundred page document would cost around five dollars per copy to produce, with additional distribution and handling costs. A minimum run of three hundred copies would cost about two thousand dollars, representing an outlay of approximately one hundred dollars per student. Without either a market or a deep pocket to underwrite such a publication, this method is clearly not a practical answer.

An alternative to the traditional hard copy is electronic publication. Most academic institutions provide students and faculty with free access to the Internet and may allow them to establish their own home pages on the World Wide Web. We enjoy easy access to home page development resources through the Department of Computer Services, making publication feasible. Also, the use of utilities, such as Microsoft’s Internet Assistant or WordPerfect HTML templates, greatly reduces the problems of translating documents from their word processing form to the web page.

To encourage my students enrolled in an introductory research methods class to publish, I give each student a different topic as a final class project. Topics such as “levels of measure” and “reliability” cover the range of material presented. Students prepare a textbook quality passage on their assigned subject from a variety of sources. They consult with me individually for information resources and feedback. All final documents must be submitted on disk or via e-mail in either MS Word or WordPerfect format. Students who do not wish to have their work or names published on the Internet can submit a request up to one month after the semester’s end before materials are uploaded. This procedure assures students that no grade penalty may be associated with their decision.

Having a special place for student work on the Internet makes their writing available to the world. Students can view their papers on the network which reaffirms public access to their writing. I plan to embellish the class web page with copies of course notes and PowerPoint presentations. Framing the assignment in this way helps students view their writing efforts as instructional support for future generations of research methods students. I hope that students will find added motivation and pride in their written work by publishing on the Internet.
While it is too early to tell how successful this venture will be, some preliminary indicators are encouraging. Despite other written assignments coming due in the interim, about one-third of the students began working on their publication topics two months ahead of time. So, if you're surfing the web come February, visit the CJ 478 page at www.shsu.edu/~icc_sjc and see the students' work for yourself.

When it comes to accessing writing resources, the world is literally at your fingertips with the World Wide Web. There is a myriad of virtual resources available from libraries, private and government agencies, businesses, and individuals. In a recent Across-the-University Writing Program session, faculty members investigated some of these sites.

Interlinks, the first source discussed, is a free service to help beginning web users navigate the Internet quickly and efficiently. It offers World Wide Web resources including news, library, and reference pointers, while providing additional services such as gopher, TELNET, FTP, IRC, Usenet news, Listservs, community networks, bulletin boards, and WAIS. It also includes a scout report, a weekly publication of the InterNIC Net Scout project at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This report lists newly discovered Internet resources and network tools which will be of interest to researchers and educators. Please contact http://www.wisc.edu for more information.

Next, we visited the World Wide Web Virtual Library, another easy-to-use site which organizes its collection alphabetically and topically. Then we moved on to the Clearinghouse for Subject-Oriented Internet Resource Guides, a site organized like a comprehensive library. Many of the topics have been added by librarians and academicians. The pointers in this site tended to be universities. For the criminal justice professors attending the workshop, we looked at a more primary on-line resource—the Department of Justice’s web site. This reference point includes the FBI’s home page with its infamous Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list.

One hit site, Favorite Education Places on the Web, organized by the University of California at Berkeley, provides a connection to all the hot topics in education. Busy Teacher’s Network was a popular spot too, entertaining SHSU faculty with an anthology of favorite quotations by Shakespeare. The faculty left the session with the following URL (uniform resource locator), which provided them with hot links to all the addresses. You may locate this site at http://unx1.shsu.edu/wcb/schools/SHSU/edu/jhirtle/6/index.html.
HYPER ACTIVITIES FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY WRITING COURSES

Sandra Ward and Joyce Walker
Graduate Students
Department of English
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

In *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*, George P. Landow discusses the limitations of interdisciplinary courses, which often provide superficial coverage of the participating disciplines, an overwhelming amount of work needed to develop course materials, and a lack of student understanding about how the topics interrelate. In contrast, he describes “qualities of connectivity, preservation, and accessibility” (Landow, 1992) that make hypertext a means by which interdisciplinary studies can overcome the disadvantages he mentions. This article examines two ways of making hypertext a viable means for developing writing across the curriculum courses.

One way to provide “connectivity, preservation, and accessibility” is to allow students to develop hypertextual journals for the interdisciplinary courses. Students concern themselves with developing content, such as personal information pages, brainstorming, and rough drafts. In addition, they may create discipline-specific resource pages which offer easy access to on-line journals, manuscripts on specific topics, Listservs in particular fields, and chat or virtual environments.

Another way to create a constructive environment for students with diverse majors is to plan a fictional, hypertextual community where they develop related “pages” which deal with the residents’ lives. After forming this virtual community, students write about issues related to the specific fields (as part of their fictional characters’ lives), while they explore the interrelated connections to their work.

WHY JOIN WAC?

Dr. Patricia Williams
Director
Across-the-University Writing Program

Do you want to know how other faculty members are using writing to teach agriculture? History? Calculus? Criminal Justice? Are you interested in creating a syllaweb, a syllabus on your home page? If so, you might want to join the Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) Listserv. Individuals respond to questions regarding such topics as successful writing assignments, assessment strategies, and technological advances.

In addition, users debate issues concerning best teaching practices and share information about current research. If you are interested in joining this Listserv, send the following one-line message, subscribe(WAC-L)(your name), to listserv@postoffice.cso.uiuc.edu.

The Writers’ Forum was organized to help creative writers across the university and community. This group strives to meet the individual needs of writers, whether by answering specific questions or giving feedback. Members provide honest criticism without platitudes. For more information about meetings please contact:

Jennifer Krall (409) 294-3265
Dr. Paul Child (409) 294-1412
GENERATING A GOOD IDEA IS OFTEN THE EASIEST PART OF THE IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Dr. Victor E. Sower
Excellence in Teaching Award Recipient 1995-96
Associate Professor
Department of Management and Marketing

Most business graduates will begin their careers several steps removed from the final decision maker in the organization. They will typically spend several years in staff or lower-level line management positions where the authority to create substantial change is limited to making recommendations. To communicate their suggestions then becomes at least as important as the ability to express those ideas.

On the first class day of MGT 481, the Quality Assurance Management course, I announce, “Your final in this class will consist of two parts: a one-week-long practical exam taken during the week prior to finals and a written test taken on the scheduled day.” Student response takes two forms, stunned silence and/or hands shooting up to pose questions about the nature of this practical examination. When I finish explaining, there is at least acceptance and usually some excitement.

Most of the semester, students spend time working in teams to improve processes, products, and services. This is a writing-enhanced course, so the students complete written reports and essays throughout the semester. These assignments allow them to present the results of their archival research or to explain their understanding of the tools and processes.

To communicate ideas in the business world, a different type of writing is required. Often the decision maker is aware only of the symptoms rather than the nature of the problem. For example, an increase in customer returns from 0.1% to 1.3% of sales is a symptom. The problem might be poor product design, inadequate manufacturing processes, defective purchased materials, or a variety of other possibilities. A problem-solving team assigned to address the increase in customer returns must define the problem, select the appropriate tools to identify the cause(s), generate alternative approaches, evaluate the solutions, and make recommendations to the supervisor. Students are given a similar scenario, which is as realistic as possible to create within a classroom setting.

The practical exam’s impetus comes from recent articles which criticize traditional approaches to learning employed in colleges of business for “overemphasizing quantification, specialization, and being irrelevant to the world of practice” (Wren, Buckley, & Michaelson, 1994). Many educators (Albanese, 1989; Keys & Wolfe, 1988; Wexley & Baldwin, 1986) have concluded that simply teaching the tools and theory is insufficient if not accompanied by practice. These criticisms can be applied especially to highly quantitative, tool-oriented courses such as MGT 481. Brumagim (1994) provides some insight into appropriate responses to these criticisms. His research has shown that integrative, in-class simulations which require students to apply class material to real-world situations are particularly effective in bringing rather abstract concepts alive.

Practical Examination Format
I always begin the same way: “You are scheduled for your practical examination during the next two class meetings. Your instructor will not be there. Report to room 207 at the regular class time.” When the student teams arrive, they are
greeted by a graduate student who assumes the role of XYZ Company's Director of Operations. The individual welcomes the new employees, provides them with handouts containing background information about the firm, its products, and problems. After answering questions, the graduate assistant invites students to the work center where I (in white lab coat and safety glasses) play the machine operator's role.

The machine operator and the Director of Operations provide information upon request and answer questions. They cooperate with student teams who wish to collect data or to conduct experiments designed to address the business' problems. No information is volunteered; students must ask for what they need. A computer lab is reserved for the students' use, and all university software resources are available.

During the practical examination week, student teams may question the XYZ Company staff via e-mail or FAX and spend extra time researching the information outside of the regularly scheduled class periods. On the last day, each team must turn in a written report addressed to the Director of Operations documenting the group's findings and recommendations.

**Grading the Practical Examination**

Identifying the problem and its causes, applying the appropriate tools, and defining the corrective action are necessary but insufficient conditions for receiving a good grade. Each project team must prepare a written report that effectively communicates all of the above, but more importantly, motivates an often skeptical decision maker to accept the recommendations and to allocate the resources necessary to implement the course of action. If the team cannot convince the manager, then the group has failed to solve the problem—even though they have indeed found a technically correct solution.

As the instructor, I must read the project reports twice, wearing a different hat each time. The first time through I grade for technical correctness wearing my quality management professor's cap. During this reading I also grade for grammar, syntax, and spelling. If the project team was so careless as to send me a report with errors of this type, how can I have confidence that they were not equally careless in their technical analysis?

On the second reading, I grade for clarity of the presentation. Has the problem been defined in terms that I (the manager) can understand? Has the team provided me with an outline to explain how they addressed the problem? Do they present me with convincing evidence that their diagnosis is correct? Do they identify the alternatives and the positives and negatives associated with each? Do they make clear recommendations and justify those in language that I can understand? Is the report concise enough that a busy decision maker will take the time to read it, but complete enough so that, upon reading it, will understand the recommendations and be motivated to take action? Has the necessary supporting detail been included in an appendix?

**Summary**

The practical examination helps students integrate all the material, tools, and concepts that they have studied and hones their writing skills. They see that these are not discrete topics, but complementary concepts which, when used together properly, are very powerful. The students feel the satisfaction of actually solving a real problem, not an artificial one.
They are challenged, and for the most part, they are equal to the challenge. They leave the class with more than just knowledge; they take along an increased feeling of self-confidence.

**REFERENCES**


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**CUTTING CLASS: EXCUSES, EXCUSES, EXCUSES**

Dr. Corliss Lentz  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Political Science

While all of the upper-division classes in the Department of Political Science are writing enhanced, it is often difficult to incorporate as much written work into the Principles of American Government sections, which average seventy students or more. During the Across-the-University Writing Program Retreat, I was introduced to an idea that rectifies this dilemma. I require absent students to write a one-half page, typed excuse note when missing more than two classes. I like the concept because it incorporates writing on a limited basis and gives me insight into why students are missing valuable class time. I am not using it as a punishment technique, but as a way of getting to know my students.

In a class of seventy-two students, I received forty-four letters from twenty-five students. While most of the excuse notes were of a mundane nature, several students tackled the topic with a zestful spirit. The following is a series of notes from “Andrew,” who wanted some fun with the project. The first excuse shows Andrew as a conscientious student, at least in his major field of study.

**Excuse Note #1: The Case of the Soon-to-Be Famous Broadcaster**

I was not able to attend your class today because I had a crucial project due for my single camera editing class in the RTF (Radio/Television/Film) department. Editing time in the booths is hard to come by. . . . The only time that was available coincided with your class period. . . . I am sure that you will be happy to know that I received an A on the project and drew praises from my professor. So when I become a world-famous broadcaster in the future, you can say to your friends, “You know, I had that student in my political science class in spring 1996, and I helped advance his career by allowing him to skip class in order to finish his broadcasting project.”

The following notes show Andrew as a courteous and caring person.

**Excuse Note #2: The Case of the Sickly and Weak Student**

I missed your class for the second time today because when I woke up this morning I had a horrendous case of the SHSU flu. I tried to garner every last bit of strength in my body to make it to your class, but my attempt fell short when I collapsed from exhaustion. Okay, I may be exaggerating a little, but I really was sick, and instead of coming to your
class and spreading germs to everyone else, I sacrificed my education. I hope you will be happy to know that I read the book during my absence. It just so happens that I could conjure up enough energy to turn the pages.

Finally, the workload caught up to Andrew. My colleagues in the Department of Sociology should appreciate his diligence.

**Excuse Note #3: The Case of the Sleepy Alarm Setter**

I missed your class today because I fell asleep. I spent the entire night before studying for my sociology test and was exhausted. I set my alarm clock to go off at eleven-thirty, but it was for eleven-thirty at night. I woke up that afternoon at one o’clock. Instead of coming to class late like everybody else would do, I decided to stay home. After all, walking into a class late (especially that late) would be extremely rude. I have more respect for you than that.

When Andrew becomes the next Dan Rather, I will not remember him for the grade he earned in my class, but for his creative initiative and enthusiasm.

NOTE: I appreciate Shirley DeVoll, Assistant Instructor, Department of Political Science, keeping the attendance records and collecting the excuse notes.

Dr. Barbara Walvoord, Professional Specialist, Kane Center for Teaching and Learning, and Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame, will present an all-day Across-the-University Writing Program Institute on Monday, March 10, 1997. This program will be free of charge to all SHSU faculty members.

Before joining the Notre Dame faculty, Walvoord directed the Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) program at the University of Cincinnati. She also initiated WAC programs at Central College in Pella, Iowa and Loyola College in Baltimore. In fact, she cofounded and codirected the Maryland Writing Project and Baltimore Area Consortium for Writing across the Curriculum. These two organizations now work in tandem to train hundreds of teachers each year. They are featured among thirteen other nationally outstanding programs in Toby Fulwiler and Art Young’s *Programs That Work* (Boynton/Cook, 1990).

In 1987, Walvoord was recognized as Maryland Teacher of the Year for English Language Arts. She is the author of numerous publications, including *Helping Students Write Well: A Guide for Teachers in All Disciplines*, now in its second edition (Modern Language Association, 1986). A seven-year research study of college classes in biology, psychology, history, and business, coauthored by Walvoord and Lucille McCarthy, resulted in *Thinking and Writing in College: A Naturalistic Study of College Students in Four Disciplines* (NCTE, 1991). Plus, her most recent work, *In the Long Run: A Study of Faculty in Three Writing across the Curriculum Programs*, is due on the bookshelves next month (NCTE, 1997).
THE READING, WRITING, AND CHEMISTRY OF CURRENT EVENTS

Dr. Lisa A. Zuraw
Assistant Professor
Department of Chemistry
The Citadel
Charleston, South Carolina

Many science departments have changed their courses for non-science majors to reflect science’s presence in students’ lives. Chemistry textbooks are including selected newspaper articles in response to this trend; however, the articles are usually two years old by the time the text is published. To expose students to current articles and to promote the benefits of science, I assign a current events notebook.

During the semester the students choose eight scientific articles published in the popular written media. In the notebooks, students write summaries describing each article’s relationship to science and their substantiated opinions about the ideas expressed. Copies of the articles are attached to the essays.

The notebook evaluation is fifteen percent of the course grade and must include at least eight entries. Students choose two summaries to be graded. This assignment obtains a maximum amount of work from the students with a minimum amount of grading.

Students can find applicable articles of personal interest in their current reading material. After the initial complaints that they shouldn’t have to write in a chemistry class, the students like the assignment. I have successfully used the current events notebook to stress the importance of science in their lives and to enhance the learning of scientific principles through writing.

WRITE, READ, DISCUSS: WRITING-TO-THINK ACTIVITIES

Dr. Dennis Chowenhill
Instructor
Language Arts Division
Chabot College
Hayward, California

Instructors who implement writing-to-learn assignments are familiar with brief in-class writing that begins or ends a lesson. A common activity I use within the first ten minutes is to have students write what they remember from the last class session. By using this technique, they can focus on the subject, and I can answer their questions before beginning a new lesson. Common end-of-class writing assignments, such as the “one-minute paper” freewriting, can be used to elicit feedback on a day’s lesson.

Another instructional strategy can be used in the middle of the class period. In a Composition and Critical Thinking course, I often interrupt my presentations to have students think independently about the topic at hand. For instance, while conducting a class discussion on university affirmative action policies, I ask for volunteers to speak about their experiences and voice their opinions. After hearing several viewpoints, I have everyone write for a few minutes on the topic. Students then read aloud what they have written. This strategy can be simple and brief, with only a few students reading, or it can be as complex as having students read their responses to each other in small groups. We then return to the whole-class discussion format. Consistently, this practice has kept students more engaged in what we are doing and increased the number of students actively participating as speakers, note takers, and listeners.

There are other positive effects as well. Students have an opportunity to reflect on material as it is being presented. Plus, it helps my students identify and clarify material that is unclear and gives them a greater sense of ownership of the material.
POETRY THERAPY

John W. Chance
Graduate Student
Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling

What could I write that you would read?
Perhaps something cute or trite;
And in so doing meet your need
For cheer, and joy, and light.

To pen a verse, to touch your mind–
The goal of every author;
We write of things of special kind
Trying thus to make an offer.

So with these words I pen for you
Search for the colors given
To words and symbols of different hue,
Of sounds, and rhymes, and rhythm.

If, per chance, others see
The smile you wear today,
Is it because this verse from me
Has helped you in some way?

For smiles will make you look your best,
Others cannot help but note–
How you fare through every test
Of song, or dance, or quote.

And if this poem has met success
In helping with your day,
Then you may feel that you’ve been blessed
By words with which to play!

So remember this when things go bad–
Verse has a soothing power,
And try to smile and not be sad–
No one likes a puss that’s sour!
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