Key Components of Sound Writing Instruction

Key Components of Sound Writing Instruction

- Writing to connect meaning across the curriculum in a variety of forms.
- Choice and mechanics in writing for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Direct instruction in composing and conventions.
- Large blocks of time for reading, writing, talking and sharing.
- Standards and assessments that guide teachers and students.
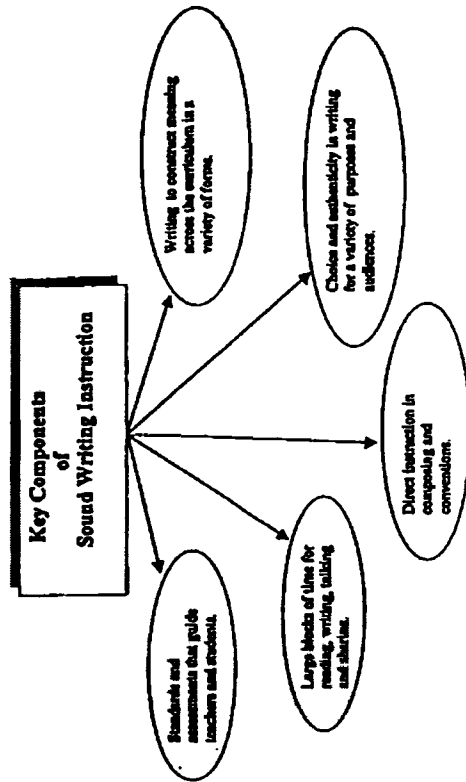
FIGURE 10.1. Consider these components in planning your writing program.

"After the standards came out and we started using them in our curriculum planning and teaching, I began to think I had short-changed students in the past. It wasn't intentional, but when you don't include the full range of language uses in your program and you don't pay attention to assessments that measure student progress, then you don't give them the experiences they need to become fully literate. I saw this especially in writing. Although we always did a fair amount of writing, it was separate from content learning and I always graded and corrected it."

Donna realizes that standards are controversial. Critics say standards narrow teaching, restrict learning, and take curriculum control away from teachers. While these concerns are valid, Donna believes in their benefits:

"The standards have helped my faculty talk about what we value in our students as writers. They've given us guidelines and a common language to use with each other, our students, and parents. The standards have made us more accountable and more definitive about what we teach. We had to decide what a good writer looks like at each grade level. We had to set higher standards for our students and change our assessment practices. We've begun to use rubrics and portfolios."

Donna is positive about the changes in her teaching as a result of the adoption of standards. But she is also cautious and says continued growth is important:

Chapter 10

KEY COMPONENTS OF SOUND WRITING INSTRUCTION

Karen Bromley

Over the years, writing instruction has changed in response to new ideas that have evolved from research, theory, and practice. These changes are like the sweep of a clock's pendulum. Simply put, the teaching of writing shifted from a focus on skills and the written product to a focus on writing process, and most recently to a balanced approach that embraces both product and process. But recent calls for "back to basics" in teaching to ensure higher achievement suggest that the writing pendulum is moving again in the direction of skills and product.

Where is the safe, sound, and prudent place to be? How can you avoid the pendulum and invite students to write, enjoy writing, learn as writers, and write well in a range of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences? Good teachers of writing find themselves somewhere in the middle, borrowing the best from both product and process approaches to develop writers who are fluent, competent, and independent.

This chapter identifies key components of sound writing instruction (see Figure 10.1) that span both approaches. It examines several classrooms where practices reflect each component and provides suggestions for good writing practices in K–8 classrooms.

STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS THAT GUIDE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Donna Evans, a fourth-grade teacher, feels she is a better teacher of writing because of the New York State Education Department's (1996) publication of *Learning Standards for English Language Arts*. Donna says,

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"I am more intentional now about including writing that helps kids analyze and think in science and social studies. I give them many more choices, and they can work together on more assignments and on revising their own writing. We talk about what a good finished piece looks like. We've started creating checklists and rubrics they can use to guide their writing and for self-evaluation after writing.

"I feel more confident in my teaching because of the conversations we've had around the standards. I know there is lots more to do and I'll continue to question and modify my teaching of writing. But I don't feel that I'm shortchanging my students as I was. I know I have better writers this year because I've changed my expectations and practices."

Donna is like many other teachers who struggle with how to help students develop into effective writers. She and her faculty have begun a dialogue that includes creating a writing curriculum and developing assessment tools. They know that good instruction begins with goals and a vision of exemplary student performance. They also know that assessment drives good instruction and has an enormous effect on what students produce.

Assessment for you as a teacher of writing should begin with an examination of your own beliefs and practices. Answers to questions such as "What do I believe about writing?" and "How do students become good writers?" will help shape your philosophy of writing. You can also examine your classroom practices with questions like the following ones, adapted from Marino (1997), to see how your teaching reflects your philosophy:

• For what purposes are students writing?
• Who are the audiences for their writing?
• Am I giving students choices in what they write?
• Are they writing in a variety of forms in all content areas?
• How am I helping them understand and use the writing process?
• What direct instruction am I providing?
• How am I using literature to inspire and model good writing?
• How am I helping students understand how conventions affect meaning?

Assessment should also include a regular examination of the climate for writing in your classroom and your students' perceptions of themselves as writers. Hansen (1996) suggests having students answer questions like the following:

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• What do I do well?
• What's the most recent thing I've learned as a writer?
• What do I want to learn next to become a better writer?
• What do I plan to do to work on this?

Bottomley, Henk, and Melnick (1998) suggest using the Writer Self-Perception Scale, which appraises students' self-perceptions so you can adjust instruction and curriculum appropriately. Of course, you can use observation, conferences, interviews, and self-assessment checklists to regularly gauge student interest and attitudes.

After taking a year-long in-service course on the language arts standards and new assessments, Donna often talked with her class before they began writing to decide what a good finished product should look like. For example, before writing letters to chambers of commerce in other states as part of a study of the United States, students brainstormed characteristics of a good letter and organized them into categories. Donna added levels of use, and then her fourth graders had a rubric to guide their writing (see Figure 10.2).

Creating rubrics with students before writing has a dramatic effect on the quality of the finished product. Helping students make a check-

Letter Rubric

	Needs Work	Getting there	Almost there	Got it
Content				
Message/meaning				
Organization				
Details				
Complete sentences				
Word use				
Mechanics				
Inside address				
Date + greeting				
Body / paragraphs				
Closing + name				
Capitals + punctuation				
Neatness				
Spelling				

FIGURE 10.2. Rubrics guide writing and make assessment more objective.

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list of criteria to include in a written piece is also helpful. Not only do these practices make assessment easier for you, but they show students and parents why a piece received a particular grade. Then a student's areas of strength can be noted and you know what to reteach. Of course, teachers don't use rubrics for every piece of student writing. Many teachers use a rubric only for a large project or final piece of written work, but they might well introduce rubrics to their students like the one that Donna's class used.

LARGE BLOCKS OF TIME FOR READING, WRITING, TALKING, AND SHARING

Donna and other teachers find that extending classroom time devoted to writing often has a positive effect. These teachers set aside large blocks of time for reading, writing, talking, and sharing during Writing Workshop. Of course, students also do other kinds of writing during the day for other purposes. In Writing Workshop, a regular time is set aside, usually daily, for writing by each student on a topic of the student's choice (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1994). Calkins (1994) suggests the following components of Writing Workshop: minilessons; work time for writing and conferring; also time for peer conferring and/or response groups, share sessions, and publication celebrations. Atwell (1987) spends an hour a day in Writing Workshop, about one-third of which is brief lessons focused on a demonstrated need of a group of students. She also spends time sharing and discussing a well-written piece of literature at the end of the workshop to help students improve their writing and learn to respond to each other's work.

Tonya Dauphin, a third-grade teacher, uses Writing Workshop and experiments each year with its organization and delivery. Through professional reading (Sudol & Sudol, 1995; Zaragoza & Vaughn, 1995) and talk with colleagues, Tonya has come to realize the importance of listening to her students, reflecting on what works and doesn't work, and developing and changing her approach each year. This year, Tonya uses Writing Workshop 3 days a week and begins each workshop with a lesson on a skill she has noticed that the class or several students need. Then students write for 30 minutes and there is a 10 minute sharing time when a student sits in the Author's Chair (Graves, 1994) and reads his/her work to the class. Tonya uses a wall calendar on which students sign up in advance to share a finished story, and she requires students to share at least twice a month.

Tonya's room shows evidence of her commitment to writing. Post-ers about each aspect of the writing process adorn the walls, and student

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writing is posted on bulletin boards. For Tonya's students, Writing Workshop was a new idea. One of the things she did early in the year to help children develop good habits was to have a discussion about the workshop. Tonya and her students created the accompanying T-chart she posted in the classroom as a reminder.
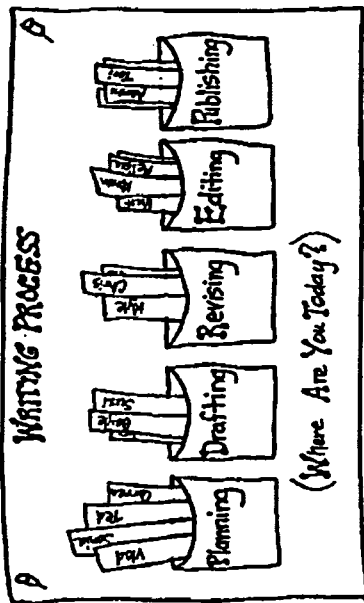
Our Writing Workshop

• Looks like—	• Sounds like—
• People being polite	• Quiet but not silent
• Working not talking	• No put-downs
• Sharing ideas quietly	• Clean language
• Cooperation	• No unpleasant noises
• People writing	• Listening during sharing time
• People reading	• Asking good questions

Stefan Zappey's second graders typically do Writing Workshop for 45 minutes every day. When he omits or shortens the workshop for any reason, his students notice the omission or abridgement and may voice their disappointment. Moreover, he says groans of frustration often accompany the signal to stop writing.

In Writing Workshop, not every piece of writing proceeds through the entire process. Students choose the story they are most proud of or want to bring to completion. In Stefan's school, parents run a project called "Books from Boxes," in which they use cereal boxes and other materials to make blank books for the best student work.

In her first year using Writing Workshop, Karen Wassell, a third-grade teacher, uses several strategies to manage it successfully. To help her students keep track of where they are in the writing process, Karen made a pocket chart with a tagboard pocket for each step of the process and with student names on tagboard strips (see Figure 10.3). Each day, students put their names in the pocket that shows where they are in the writing process. Then, Karen knows who is ready for a conference with her or prepared to share in Circle Time during the last 10 minutes of the workshop. Other charts remind students how to use a web (concept map) and story grammar (setting, characters, problem, events, resolution, and theme) to plan for writing.

Many teachers include the reading of literature during Writing Workshop so students are reading good models as they compose. To help manage the reading that is part of her workshop, Karen and her class created the list of Rules for Buddy Reading (see Figure 10.5). Pairs of students use these rules as they read books together, work at the computer to gather ideas for writing, or respond to each other's written drafts.

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FIGURE 10.3. Karen Wassell posts these charts to help manage writing workshop in third grade.

Karen has found buddy reading and collaborative writing particularly helpful for students who may have ideas to contribute but who may not yet have the language skills. Both ESL (English as a Second Language) students and struggling readers are supported in their work and encouraged to develop their abilities when they work in pairs with proficient English speakers. And native English speakers can learn about other cultures and languages of their buddies.

Both self-selection and guided selection of literature help develop readers with wide reading experiences and familiarity with a variety of

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language models and forms. In Figure 10.4, Alex keeps a record of each book he reads in his literature response journal and evaluates it using a sports-related symbol system he has created. With records like this to examine, Lisa Rieger, his teacher can see whether her fourth graders are reading a variety of genres and if necessary suggest other genres.

Many teachers introduce students to authors of children's books to help them see how authors use the writing process in their own composing (Calkins, 1994; Harwayne, 1992). You can help your students read and look at written products with new eyes—the eyes of writers—and help your students write with an audience in mind, as a reader would read the piece. As children are alternately readers and writers, they begin to observe how authors hold the reader's attention and how authors use conventions. When this happens, students often begin to use this knowledge in their own writing.

FIGURE 10.4. Alex's Reading Record shows the variety of books he has read.

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Just as Lancia (1997) suggests, Stefan encourages his second-grade students to engage in *literary borrowing*. He finds that literature is an effective model for writing and that in a Writing Workshop where reading occurs students make natural connections between their reading and writing. Jesse had read several of R. L. Stine's books where he incorporates "THE END" into the final sentence, for example, "It doesn't really matter in . . . THE END." Jesse borrowed this technique, concluding his nonfiction report on volcanoes with "Volcanoes are very cool but when they erupt it's . . . THE END." Stefan's feeling is that reading all types of literature can have a positive impact on student writing.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION IN COMPOSING AND CONVENTIONS

In the past, some teachers who adopted a writing process approach believed that students would become good writers when they chose topics themselves and had many opportunities to plan, draft, revise, and publish. Direct instruction that emphasized the finished product and skills was replaced with a focus on the writing process. But an overreliance on process doesn't always yield students who can write in different forms for a variety of purposes and audiences. Good teachers of writing believe that writers need direct and systematic instruction in writing as well as time to write (Routman, 1996).

Shanahan (1997) also reminds teachers that in classrooms where integrated thematic instruction occurs and reading and writing are linked within the context of meaning, students still need "opportunities for enough instruction, guidance, and practice to allow them to become accomplished" (p. 18). Good teachers of writing have learned to strike a balance between the writing process and the written product, honoring each in their writing programs. Good teachers of writing:

• Celebrate and encourage individuality, creativity, meaning, standard form, and the conventions of language.
• Grow and change in their philosophies and practices from year to year.

Many teachers incorporate direct instruction in composing and the conventions of grammar, spelling, form, and handwriting into Writing Workshop. Bromley (1998) suggests ways to do this both directly and indirectly in situations that make sense to students without engaging in

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isolated skill instruction. She believes that knowing grammar terms gives students a common vocabulary for discussing and improving their writing. Routman (1996) suggests teaching and discussing word usage and sentence construction in the context of writing for a specific audience. Kane (1997) uses sentences from real literature that students know, rather than "fix-the-error exercises," to teach specific grammar skills. And you can use your own writing and student writing to demonstrate how quotations, commas, and periods are used, for example.

Like Tonya and Stefan, Karen begins her workshop with a 10- to 15-minute lesson on a specific aspect of writing. Her lessons may focus on organization, run-on sentences, adjectives, verbs, punctuation, or other things she has identified through assessment that her third graders need or are ready to learn. Karen uses the term *focus lesson* because she agrees with Routman (1996) that *minilesson* may appear to trivialize the direct instruction she feels is so important in Writing Workshop. Karen began a recent workshop with a lesson on common and proper nouns after she noticed the overuse of pronouns in several stories. Part of the lesson included revising the work of a student who wanted help with her story. Karen often uses her own writing in these lessons because she believes this is a meaningful way to teach revising.

To extend her students' writing beyond topics they select themselves, Karen incorporates Calkins's (1994) idea of a genre study into the workshop. In a genre study, students immerse themselves in a particular kind of literature and then write in this form themselves. For example, during recent Writing Workshops and in conjunction with a social studies unit, Karen's students read nonfiction books about animals, gathered information from a CD-ROM encyclopedia, took an electronic field trip to a zoo, and then created their own informative report about an animal. These were compiled into a book of chapters, each about a different animal, to share with a first-grade class and as a culminating activity for the unit. Karen encourages students to coauthor at least one book together because she believes that collaboration can be a catalyst for learning. From the talk, shared decisions, and joint creation, Karen has seen some students acquire skills, knowledge, and confidence.

Diane Leskow is a special education teacher who finds that students with learning disabilities need direct instruction and modeling to support their writing. In teaching persuasive writing, Diane first shared a paragraph she wrote to her husband to convince him to try her favorite sport, roller blading. She had students brainstorm a list of their favorite hobbies and identify someone to whom they would like to write to convince him/her about their hobby's attractiveness. Then, they analyzed

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Diane's paragraph and identified the persuasive writing frame she used in planning:

Persuasive Writing

Introduction (Position or Purpose)

Facts and Reasons

1.
2.
3.

Conclusion (Restate Position)

Next, students planned their writing using the frame, composed rough drafts, and self-checked to revise and edit (see Figure 10.5). Then, Diane used a volunteer's rough draft and had a whole-class lesson on revising and editing, which she followed with student revision and then peer editing before final copies were made. The classmate Amy chose to write to (Sha-tobbya) was so important that Amy included Sha-tobbya's name in her writing even though it was not suggested. Each finished paragraph went to the person for whom it was intended, who then wrote a response.

At all grade levels, besides conferring with students themselves, teachers use peer conferences to give students real and immediate audiences for their work. Often, when a student reads work to a peer, the student can see and hear what needs to be revised. In sixth grade, Michelle Lehr often has students work in pairs or in small groups to give each other feedback on writing. She introduced the acronym PQS (Bromley, 1998) to her students as a way to give constructive responses.

P—Praise
Q—Question
S—Suggest

The classroom examples included here show how Tonya, Stefan, Karen, Diane, and Michelle combine direct instruction in composing and conventions, analysis of a model, and peer interactions to help students become competent writers. Where does handwriting fit in these classrooms? Many of these teachers teach handwriting and spelling together. Some have set standards for neatness in their students' written work, refusing to accept a *sloppy copy* for a rough draft, believing this term gives students the wrong message. Other teachers have students regularly self-assess their own handwriting.

In many of these classrooms, there are a variety of tools for writing available for student use, including the computer.
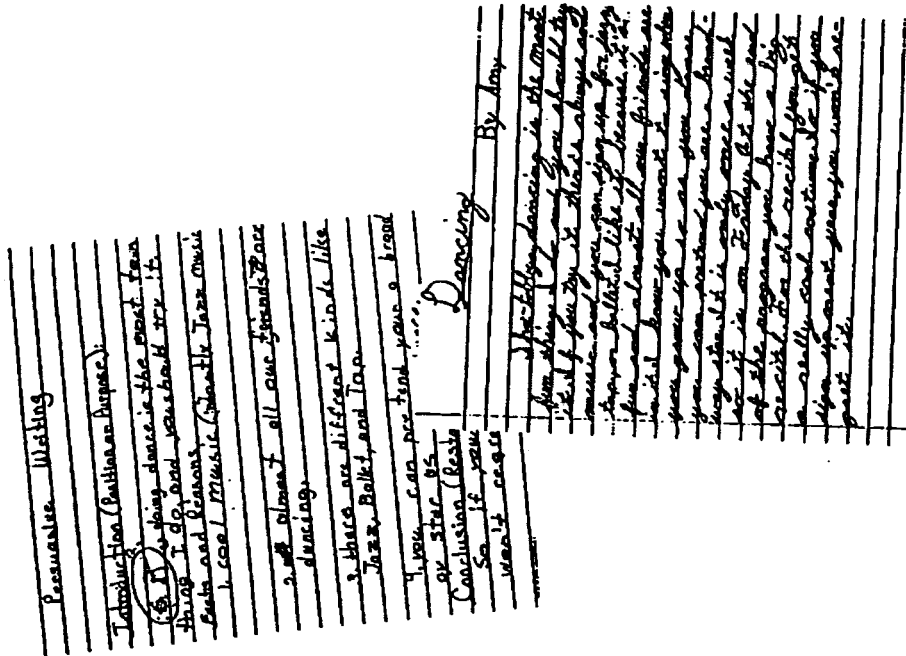
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FIGURE 10.5. A paragraph frame helps a fourth grader plan for persuasive writing.

CHOICE AND AUTHENTICITY IN WRITING FOR A VARIETY OF PURPOSES AND AUDIENCES

Writing for a variety of purposes and audiences builds students' fluency, competence, and independence. This chapter contains many examples and references to student writing for different purposes (to persuade,

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inform, entertain, and narrate) and for different audiences (adults in other states, peers, parents, teachers, and self). Does giving students a choice in what they write and making it authentic or genuine build competence? Yes, choice and authenticity invite writers, especially reluctant writers, to write by giving them a personal reason to write and building ownership for the task and product.

For many students, technology is intriguing and it provides choice and authentic opportunities for writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. Electronic literacy has replaced what was meant by being literate in the past. Leu (1997) says we should think of ourselves and our students as *becoming literate*, rather than *being literate*, as we learn to use the navigational strategies and critical thinking necessary for electronic literacy. He believes electronic literacy is a necessity for today's teachers and students (Leu & Leu, 1997).

Most often in schools today, students use computers to search for information to include in written reports and presentations. Teachers use computers to find ideas and information and prepare lessons. Both students and teachers use CD–ROM encyclopedias and primary sources on the World Wide Web (WWW) such as historical documents or secondary sources like museum or observatory web sites.

Using computers, CD–ROM, or the Internet extends literacy beyond traditional print to viewing and evaluating hypertext composed of pictures, animation, and sounds. Students learn to search for information, interpret and analyze data, and think critically about the validity of sources. But be careful about which sites are valuable and appropriate for school use. Sites like "Thinking Critically about World Wide Web Resources"* provide criteria to consider in evaluating the usefulness of WWW resources.

Examples follow for using the computer to develop student writers. First, many teachers establish electronic key pal exchanges with students and classes in other states or countries. Sometimes the exchanges are social, and sometimes they are related to a science or social studies unit. Second, classes take electronic field trips to places around the world to extend learning in a particular content area. During these field trips, students can often ask questions of experts and get answers that might not yet appear anywhere in print. Third, many teachers and students participate in collaborative projects with other schools. For example, middle school teachers Mickie Flores-Ward and Tricia Normile invite K–12 classes to create a virtual tour of a local historical landmark with electronic graphics to post on their Historical Landmark Website (for more information, contact hilites@gsn.org). Fourth, students publish their own

*http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/instruct/critical.htm

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original writing in *ezines*, electronic magazines that include opportunities to write poetry, book reviews, and stories, enter contests, chat with others, and submit original artwork.

A variety of Internet sites offer student-writers choice in the kind of writing they do and in what they compose. The web sites for writers in Table 10.1 were selected according to several criteria: appearance, ease of use, content, and suitability for K–8 students. No matter which opportunities for writing with technology you and your students decide to pursue, there are rich opportunities for developing and refining both their writing and your own.

Writing on the Internet integrates reading and writing. It requires skills in viewing, gathering, interpreting, and analyzing information; keyboarding and navigating with browsers and search engines; and word processing. The skills required for writing with technology prepare students to be better learners in school and for the world beyond school.

WRITING TO CONSTRUCT MEANING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IN A VARIETY OF FORMS

Paul Walens, a sixth-grade teacher, believes it is important for teachers of writing to be writers themselves. He keeps a personal journal, uses e-mail, and writes curriculum, lesson plans, and grant proposals for his classroom and school. He believes, as do Vacca and Vacca (1999), that writing regularly is a powerful strategy for learning subject matter. Paul says:

"From my own writing, I've learned that writing is a process of constructing meaning. I never realize what I know until I start writing. Then I make connections and come up with ideas that I didn't have before. When I understood the power of writing for me, I began to realize what it could do for my students. I make writing a conscious part of science, social studies, and math now. My students keep journals that we use for a lot of different reasons at different times of the day. I've found that it's pretty amazing what my students can relate about their thinking when they write. It's a totally personal quiet time in our classroom when students reflect and make insights about a unit we are studying, for example, or make connections between math and social studies or relate it to the world."

Paul and many other teachers like him have discovered that when students write in a variety of forms in the content areas, they construct new meaning and demonstrate their content knowledge too. Like Paul, Arline Drann, a fourth-grade teacher believes strongly in the importance of writing as a learning tool across the curriculum. In a unit on Native

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TABLE 10.1. Web Sites for Writers

1. Internet Public Library—world-reading@ipl.org
   Kids can post class book reviews or individual student book reviews and read about good books. Includes formats for review.

2. Scholastic Network—http://www.scholastic.com
   Ask the Author—http://ipl.org.youth/AskAuthor
   Kids can ask authors questions and read answers from them.

3. MidLink Magazine—http://longwood.cs.ucf.edu/~Midlink/
   An electronic magazine for kids where they can write articles and poetry, participate in projects, exchange art and writing, view projects from other kids worldwide in grades 4–8.

4. Global Heinemann Keypals—http://www.reedbooks.com.au/
   heinemann/global/global1.html
   Intercultural e-mail Classroom Connections—http://www.stolaf.edu/
   network/iecc/
   Kidlink: Global Networking for Youth 10–15—http://www. kidlink.org/
   Kids can exchange letters, do joint projects, enter contests, and play games with teachers and classes from other countries and cultures around the world.

5. The Quill Society—http://www.quill.net
   Encourages kids to explore their imaginations through writing advertisements, fantasy, mystery, science fiction, and poetry. Kids receive comments from the "Board of Critics" and discuss topics on a Bulletin Board.

6. The Book Nook for Kids—http://i-site.on.ca/booknook.html
   Publishes student reviews of books and provides interactive book conferences.

7. Inkspot for Young Writers—http://www.inkspot.com/~ohl/inkspot
   young/
   Publishes writing tips, interviews, contests, markets for kids' writing, and loads of other writing information.

8. Kids' Space—http://www.kids-space.org/
   Kids can share original writing with kids from other countries, improvise music, submit original stories, participate in a Bulletin Board, and find links to other kids' sites around the world.

9. Internet Public Library Youth Division—http://1pl.sils.umich.edu/youth
   Kids can enter contests, share stories, do experiments with "Doctor Internet," tour a museum, read about books other kids are reading, talk to authors, and find resources for science projects and science facts.

10. Mind's Eye Curriculum Projects—http://www.csnet.net/minds-eye/
    KIDPROJ—http://www.kidlink.org:80/kidproj/
    These sites let kids share language arts and science projects with other kids.

(continued)

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TABLE 10.1. *(continued)*

11. Math:Kidsweb "Ask Mr. Math"—http://www.npac.syr.edu/textbook/
    kidsweb/math.html
    Kids can find answers to math questions, solve math problems and puzzles alone, or collaborate with other students.

12. WRAL Postcard Shop—http://www.wral-tv.com/mall/cards/
    Blue Mountain Arts—http://www.bluemountain.com/index.html
    Kids can design, send, and receive custom-made postcard messages.

13. Girl Tech—http://www.girltech.com/
    Girls can write stories, read women's history, chat with other girls, give and get advice.

14. Children's Book Creation Station—http://www.cybermail.net/~kjcbooks
    A place to read, write, illustrate, and review children's books in progress.

15. Looking Glass Gazette—http://www.cowboy.net/~mharper/LGG.html
    Publishes stories, poems, artwork, book reviews, and creative work of kids up to age 13. Includes writing contests, kids' columns, and a "Kids Speak Out Against Drugs" column.

16. Little Planet Times—http://www.littleplanet.com
    An interactive online newspaper for K–5 kids that publishes letters to the editor, movie reviews, stories, creative ideas for and by kids.

17. Kidworld—http://www.bconnex.net/kidworld/
    Kids under 16 can write stories, play games, or visit a bulletin board.

18. Positively Poetry Website for Kids & Teens—http://www.advicom.net/
    ~e-media/kv/poetry1.html
    Publishes poems from other kids around the globe. Each month an "Editor's Choice" poem is selected to highlight one poet's creative work.

19. Stone Soup—http://www.stonesoup.com
    This international magazine contains stories, poems, and book reviews written and illustrated by kids through age 13.

20. The Young Writers Club—http://www.cs.bilkent.edu.tr/~david/deya/
    ywc.html
    Publishes *Global Wave*, a monthly online magazine of writing by kids ages 7–15 that includes story suggestions, stories to finish, book reviews, and more.

Americans, small groups of Arline's students researched different tribes. After reading a story about the Cheyenne, she asked groups to write what they had learned on a partially constructed web. In Figure 10.6, Arline's main categories are in bold print and the student wrote what he remembered. Students could add information to the web as they learned more about the tribe. Near the end of the unit, Matt created the acrostic poem

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in Figure 10.6, showing that he had learned about the Cheyenne people's respect for the environment and pondered about their undeserved fate.

Writing across the curriculum takes many forms. In first grade, Jane Hores linked math, social studies, and language arts in a unit called Quilt Connections. After students read and heard many stories about quilts, researched other cultures' quilts in the library and on the Internet, visited a museum exhibit, and learned about shapes, equal parts, and fractions, a final activity involved creation of a classroom quilt. The finished quilt, made of special fabrics and designs contributed by each student, went home each day with a different student. A journal accompanied the
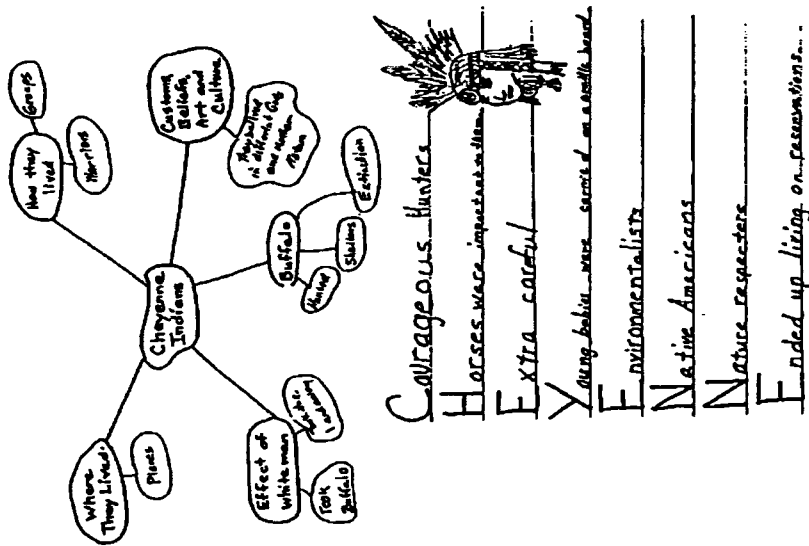
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quilt in which each student wrote an entry about the experience and parents wrote responses. In Figure 10.7, Tyler says, "It is warm. Everybody made it. We had to tie it to keep it together. My pattern has green iguanas. Some patterns have bats. They are cool." While Jane's writing activity had students write to explain and inform their parents, it also gave parents an opportunity to be involved in a small way in their child's classroom learning.

Like other teachers, Rebecca Beers finds that graphic organizers support student research and writing (see Figure 10.8). In a study of Mexico, her second graders read and gathered information using Venn diagrams to show similarities and differences between two things and data charts to gather information from several sources.

There are many other types of organizers that show important ideas and information and relationships among concepts in text, providing helpful structures for student writing (Bromley, Irwin-DeVitis, & Modlo, 1995). As part of a unit on immigration, Michelle Lehr's sixth graders were better prepared to write about the characters' feelings in *How Many*

FIGURE 10.7. Writing for a real audience gives Tyler an incentive to write clearly to inform everyone about the class quilt.

FIGURE 10.6. Webs and poetry writing have a place in social studies.

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Character Relationship Web

Molly's Pilgrim by Barbara Cohen

FIGURE 10.9. Michelle Lehr's sixth graders use graphic organizers to gain insight into characters and their relationships.

(see Figure 10.10). Colleen also has students explain answers to incorrect test items for extra credit. This lets her see students' reasoning so she can reteach a concept if necessary. For Colleen, writing is an assessment tool that shows math learning and misconceptions (see Figure 10.10).

Teachers of younger students use journal writing in math as well. Venita Dibble says it helps her second graders clarify, extend, and document their thinking. Macall drew and labeled a Venn diagram to show the results of research with her classmates about sports (see Figure 10.11). Venita encourages her students to draw pictures to help them figure out

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Venn Diagram

FIGURE 10.8. Rebecca Beers's second graders find that graphic organizers aid their research on Mexico.

Days to America?, by Eve Bunting (1990), and *Molly's Pilgrim*, by Barbara Cohen (1990), often creating graphic organizers. The character map and character relationships map in Figure 10.9 are straightforward ways to help students take the perspective of a character or focus on relationships among characters.

Today, writing is used in math class, a content area traditionally ruled by numbers. Gordon and MacInnis (1993) say that dialogue journals in math add a personal dimension to learning and provide "a window on students' thinking." Colleen Schultz regularly asks her eighth graders to write to her in their journals about what they enjoy and are having trouble with

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FIGURE 10.10. Colleen Schultz uses math journals to assess her eighth graders' math learning and misconceptions.

FIGURE 10.11. Venita Dibble encourages her second graders to draw Venn diagrams, and Sarah Evans checks her students' conceptual understanding through their writing in math journals.

problems and write their own problems as well. Sarah Evans's third-grade students explain their computations to demonstrate understanding of a concept. From his writing, Sarah knows that Kyle can teach subtraction to another student (see Figure 10.11).

pendulum swings overemphasizing one and excluding the other in teaching writing means that you can borrow the best from both approaches in order to develop writers who are fluent, competent, and independent. Good teachers of writing use a variety of practices that invite students to engage in and enjoy writing, learn as writers, and write well in a range of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences.

IN CONCLUSION

The key components of sound writing instruction and the practices examined in this chapter provide ideas for balancing your teaching to include both the written product and the writing process. Avoiding the

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