Writing as a Tool for Learning
Theoretical Rationale

- Writing is a way of learning.
- Writing is a way of personalizing learning.
Theoretical Rationale

• Writing is a problem solving strategy.

“Problem solving is common ground for all the disciplines and fundamental to all human activities. A writer is a problem solver of a particular kind.”

- Carol Berkenkotter “Writing and Problem Solving”

“The act of writing out a problem is a clarifying experience.”

- James Britton
A Belief

• Writing is one of the human learning processes because it requires us to engage ourselves actively with the material to be learned.
Some Premises

• Writing can fit specific requirements of content teachers.
• Writing can accomplish content objectives.
• Writing can vary the classroom routine.
• Writing can give depth to the learning process.
In English/ Language Arts

Writing can be used to learn:
1. Grammar
2. Vocabulary
3. Literature

And to prepare for:
1. Discussion
2. Writing tasks
"The first stage in learning a new concept is analogous to a ‘private dialogue.’ We proceed as if we were talking to ourselves, attempting to fit new and unfamiliar information into the world view we already possess."

-In Search of Meaning: Readers and Expressive Language
C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon

“The value of writing in any course should lie in its power to enable the discovery of knowledge.”

-Writing as Learning Through the Curriculum
Some Applications

• To prepare students for new material.

*For the next 10 minutes, write everything you know and all the questions you can think of about X.*
Some Applications

• To help students summarize material.

List 2-3 key ideas from today’s lesson.
What questions do you have that still need answers?
Some Applications

• To help students solve problems generated by difficult material.

_in “The Stone Boy,” why did Arnold keep picking peas after he killed his brother?_
Some Applications

•To help students reflect on, evaluate, and synthesize what they have done.

Spend ten minutes writing about your experiences in your project group. What did people do to help make the project a success? What problems did you encounter, and how did you resolve them? What suggestions do you have for groups working on similar projects?
Some Applications

• To help students speculate and see material in a new way.

*In Steinbeck’s* The Pearl, how would the story have changed if Kino had thrown the pearl back into the ocean? Why?

*OR*

How would the story have changed if Juana had found the pearl instead of Kino?
Some Applications

• To help students apply new information.

How does what we learned about Roger in this chapter help us understand what he meant when he said, “Nobody ever gives me a break!” earlier? Does this information change your feelings toward him as a person?
Responding to Writing-to-Learn

What are/ could/ should be the differences between:

- writing used as a tool for student learning
  AND
- writing used as a tool for teacher evaluation?
• Student-centered prose is writing to learn

• Teacher-centered prose is writing to demonstrate understanding for purposes of evaluation.