Research into Writing Enhanced Curricula

"Architects of Change: Writing Enhanced Course Program Development and Core Reform"
Linda Anstendig, Eugene Richie, Shannon Young, Pauline Mosley and Bette Kirschstein, Pace University. http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/articles/pace2004/

Pace University's move to a WEC curriculum is discussed. A series of snapshots from the Pace University WEC Curriculum, including the establishment of a writing fellows program: "We discussed how the WEC strategies could be effectively implemented into her course so as to contribute to a greater mastery of content. I explained that I liked to think of writing as combing out a tangle. Until we write, the concept is in our heads in a state of vague disarray. Writing enables us to clarify our thoughts. Consequently, the writing process enhances learning, whatever the discipline."


"Researchers have yet to consider the intersections between the discussion of first-year writing and GE. Our work is a first step in doing so; ultimately, we suggest that threshold concepts may provide a productive frame for faculty to productively engage with questions about the purposes of GE and to consider how to support students as they work to achieve these purposes."


Trudy Bayer and her colleagues report the results of a study with 70 senior undergraduate biological science majors enrolled in a required course on Writing and Speaking in the Biological Sciences. Their study indicates that students demonstrated significant expertise in enacting a highly discipline-specific oral communication task. They attribute these results to a combination of students' ability to successfully deploy discipline-specific discourse to their own tacit knowledge of their field and instruction in both the disciplines of rhetoric and biology

http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/articles/bayer_curto_kriley2005.cfm


http://wac.colostate.edu/books/bazerman_wac/


Carroll followed 20 college students for four years, interviewing them about writing tasks, challenges, successes and failures, and reading (with a team of faculty researchers from various disciplines) the texts the students produced and the writing logs they kept. The pattern of development they note aligns with a ‘Cultural/Environmental View of Development’ based in the work of Jerome Bruner, Michael Cole, and Urie Bronfenbrenner. This view holds that development is uneven and that progress entails increasing ability to understand and respond to the environment in which one finds oneself. ....Faculty and WPAs should also work to: (a) think of student work as literacy challenges and not writing tasks; (b) help students focus on writing differently, not better; (c) learn from other faculty what demands they will be making and help students anticipate; provide more options in required literacy environments; (d) develop projects and assignments that will challenge all students — even if finished projects are less than great; (e) provide scaffolding to support development by directly teaching discipline specific research and writing skills, using grading strategically to reward improvement, scheduling interim deadlines for longer projects, and requiring classroom workshops, study groups, and teacher conferences.


"Writing is the coin of the realm here. It permeates the whole atmosphere rather than being compartmentalized into a single course or slapped on as a series of skills"...."We need to consider how overtly integrating critical thinking expectations into our writing instruction, writing assessment, and faculty development practices can complement the work we already do."


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Introduction, Anne Ruggles Gere

Chapter 1. Writing to Learn: The Nurse Log Classroom, Steve Pearse
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Chapter 4. Writing to Learn Social Studies, Bruce Beaman
Chapter 5. Teaching Special Education History Using Writing-to-Learn Strategies, Ray Mark
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Chapter 7. Writing in Math Class, Don Schmidt
Chapter 8. Writing to Learn Philosophy, Jessie Yoshida
Chapter 9. Writing to Learn History, Tom Watson
Chapter 10. Better Writers, Better Thinkers, Stephen Arkle
Chapter 11. Writing to Learn Means Learning to Think, Syrene Forsman
Chapter 12. Thirty Aides in Every Classroom, Janet K. West
Chapter 13. The Course Journal, Pat Juell
Chapter 14. An Impartial Observer's View of Write-to-Learn Classes, Barbara Bronson
Chapter 15. Writing and Learning: What the Students Say, Ralph S. Stevens III


The introduction of seminars to university teaching marks the onset of a new teaching philosophy and practice in which writing is used to make students independent learners and researchers. Although the beginnings of writing pedagogy at American universities are well documented, little is known about its origins in Germany. The article tracks the history of seminar teaching back to its roots and reviews its historical development from the very beginnings to the point when seminars became the pedagogical flagship of the Humbolditian research university. Twenty seminar regulations from Prussian universities, written between 1812 and 1839, are reviewed with respect to the prescriptions they contain about writing. They reveal that a writing-to-learn pedagogy was elaborated as early as about 1820. The most important claim of the article is that an early concept of writing in the disciplines was central to the development of the Humbolditian research university [journal abstract]


“The data from this study indicate that those students who had engaged in more writing in their courses consistently scored better on their assessed essays. This indicates the need for continued support of writing intensive courses in the General Education program. “


"Developing the kinds of thoughtful writers needed in business, and elsewhere in the nation’s life, will require educators to understand writing as an activity calling for extended preparation across subject matters."