

## WHAT YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE SAYING . . .

“*Teaching Writing From Content to Career* offers useful tools and techniques that you can put to work immediately, while inviting you throughout the book to pause and reflect on what you and your students are trying out in your classroom. The authors routinely connect their concepts and content to the world beyond school for which we are always preparing our students.”

—**Jim Burke, Author**

*Teaching Better Day by Day* and  
*The Six Academic Writing Assignments: Designing the User’s Journey*

“Don’t go to school without this book! It is chock-full of ideas, tools, and engaging lessons for teaching writing to middle and high school students. It is just the resource you need to ensure your students write well in and out of the classroom.”

—**Steve Graham, Regents and Warner Professor**

Arizona State University

“Grant, Lapp, and Thayre have developed a book that allows teachers to reflect upon writing beyond the ELA classroom – then teach the necessary skills. These authors bridge practicality with theory and research, something that is much needed in professional literature. Their insight and ideas into fostering confident and competent writers is inspiring and timely.”

—**Rebecca G. Harper, Associate Professor of Literacy**

Augusta University, and  
Author, *Writing Workouts* and *Write Now & Write On*

“Grant, Lapp, and Thayre’s book bravely tackles a necessary (yet often humbling) question: Why do our students really need to write? Both now, and in a future that is getting harder for us all to predict? The authors patiently show us how teachers can ensure that our approach to writing instruction remains focused on these real-world applications. *Teaching Writing From Content Classroom to Career* offers no shortage of concrete lesson examples; my favorite is the one about how students (and teachers!) might best write an email that is not only clear and understandable, but also strikes a friendly enough tone—something that students in my classes always need instruction on. The authors also provide a refreshingly honest take on the role of artificial intelligence models in writing instruction, going so far as to include Chat GPT prompts in a lesson plan and how to refine the prompting process. Overall, this is an important, timely book—one that will remain useful for a long time.”

—**Matthew R. Kay, ELA Teacher and Author**

*Not Light but Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom*,  
and Co-Author, *Answers to Your Biggest Questions About*  
*Teaching Middle- and High School ELA*

“The overall focus of this book and the importance of considering purpose and audience is fresh and inspiring. I haven’t seen other professional literature on the subject, and it’s becoming more vital every day. We must prepare students for THEIR future and stop parroting what and how we were taught.”

—**Ruthanne Munger, Writing Specialist**

Union School Corporation  
Modoc, IN

“This book provides clear explanations on the meaning of writing purpose, of audience, and of the writing process with scenarios and examples that allow teachers to see the transformation of guidelines to actionable items. Through embedded stopping points, the teacher is asked to take the position of the writer -- and write as their students will. The text and its stopping points are well designed, making the book interactive, clear on its meanings, and equipping teachers with skills and knowledge to help students write well beyond classroom contexts.”

—**Zoi Philippakos, Associate Professor**

Literacy Education  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

“In *Teaching Writing From Content to Career*, Grant, Lapp, and Thayre have skillfully crafted a book that shifts writing instruction from a “one day you’ll need this” to “see how you’ll need this” approach. This is so needed in classrooms that are determined to meet true, useful writing expectations postsecondary writing students will encounter.”

—**Andy Schoenborn, National Writing Project Teacher Consultant**

Co-Author, *Creating Confident Writers: For High School, College, and Life*

“This is a book every teacher should read. We sometimes forget that there is a world out there beyond our standards because we do have so much to cover. If we can shift, as the authors suggest, to a curriculum built around student interest and their ideas for their future careers, we can better evaluate their mastery in a way that is effective for our classes as well as relevant to their lives. Students will be more engaged and will develop a sense of agency well before many of us did.”

—**Melissa Wood-Glusac, ELA Teacher**

Thousand Oaks High School, Thousand Oaks, CA and  
Co-Director, CSUN Writing Project

# Teaching Writing From Content Classroom to Career, Grades 6–12

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# Teaching Writing From Content Classroom to Career, Grades 6–12

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**CORWIN** Literacy

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# What Happens in English Language Arts Class Shouldn't Stay There

*. . . The English language is a multifaceted oration*

*Subject to indefinite transformation*

—Jamila Lyiscott, “3 Ways to Speak English”

*To write well, express yourself like the common people, but think like a wise man.*

—Aristotle

*A writer, I think, is someone who pays attention to the world.*

—Susan Sontag

Writing is often a source of anxiety and confusion for both students and adults alike. It can be difficult to know where to start when asked to compose a piece of text, let alone manage the courage to eventually share it with someone else. This is problematic for a variety of reasons, since we know that, beyond the college requirements for writing, writing is a common tool used in almost every workplace setting. Therefore, it becomes an urgent task to find ways to develop our students' confidence in their own writing process, so that they will be empowered in their chosen careers. People who approach the writing process with apprehension are more

likely to deliver a subpar end product (J. Daly, 1978; J. Daly & Miller, 1975; Faigley, et al., 1981; McCarthy et al., 1985), and writing anxiety can even go on to influence the types of majors students choose (Wiltse, 2006). The aim of this book is to explore ways in which you, the teacher, can guide your students through a purpose-based writing process that will equip them with the skills and confidence to address writing tasks in and out of the classroom. We believe students should leave school with the realization that no matter what plans they have for their futures, they will be asked every day to communicate their ideas when talking, reading, and writing.

The prerequisite for writing effectively is to know what you want to say, why you want to say it, and who you want to hear it. Writing without personal meaning and writing without an authentically chosen audience turns purposeful writing into a nebulous writing task. Additionally, it's essential to understand and acknowledge that language is regional, situational, and community based. Not all scenarios that demand writing can be addressed with a formulaic approach. Instead, apprentice writers need to learn to assess audience and purpose before they even begin to outline their approach to a piece of writing. What's more, our understanding of "conventional" writing norms is evolving as we learn to embrace the diverse ways in which different communities approach language. While traditional academic writing may be appropriate in some workplace settings, in others it may be considered cold, detached, or simply not effective for the audience and task at hand. Instead of teaching students that there is one "right" way to approach an audience, what if we taught them how to assess what their connection to the purpose and audience is, and then select the best approach to reach them? As part of this introduction we quote Trinidadian American poet Jamila Lyiscott whose spoken word poem reminds us that language is dynamic and ever changing, which means our approaches to writing should be too.

Lyiscott points out the real-world application aspect of language: part of being a successful communicator is knowing how and when to move in and out of different modes of speech. She addresses the need to flexibly use all of one's language resources to be understood and valued in different arenas. To understand this a bit better let's consider both the practices of code-switching and translanguaging. Code-switching, which was explained well by Joos (1962) in his book, *Five Clocks*, typically refers to the practice of switching between two or more languages or language varieties within a single conversation.

Translanguaging on the other hand refers to a broader use of language and language varieties to support communication, learning, and meaning

making. Translanguaging involves the practice of flexibly using multiple languages and semiotic and linguistic resources to achieve one's goals during a communication. For example, a multilingual speaker may use translanguaging in their writing by combining their knowledge of multiple languages and semiotics, signs and symbols, such as diagrams and symbols, to more effectively convey their ideas. This speaker is using their multilingualism and their knowledge of multiple modes to convey their ideas.

Researchers García and Lin (2017) explain the following:

Translanguaging should also be seen differently from code-switching. Code-switching, even to those scholars who see it as linguistic mastery (see, for example, Auer, 2005; Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 2005), it is based on the monoglossic view that bilinguals have two separate linguistic systems. Translanguaging, however, posits the linguistic behavior of bilinguals as being always heteroglossic (see Bakhtin, 1981; S. Bailey, 2015; Bailey, 2007), always dynamic, responding not to two monolingualisms in one, but to one integrated linguistic system. It is precisely because translanguaging takes up this heteroglossic and dynamic perspective centered on the linguistic use of bilingual speakers themselves, rather than starting from the perspective of named languages (usually national or state languages), that it is a much more useful theory for bilingual education than code-switching.

According to researcher-scholar Rodriguez-Valls (2023), translanguaging involves empowering students to use their linguistic repertoires without the constraints of using one named language at a time. Rodriguez-Valls shares these examples: *I like esta paleta* and *This tree is grander than the other*. Translanguaging promotes the fluidity of language. As we grow to embrace the assets that all our students bring to the classroom in terms of language, we must consider the promotion of language fluidity to create and promote a message or a written idea. To contrast, code-switching involves changing from one language to another depending on the audience, the purpose, or the context. Rodriguez-Valls offers this example: A student speaks in Spanish to other students in her project group but switches to English when presenting to the teacher and the whole class. Translanguaging skills are not skills to be taught; rather they are linguistic assets that students bring to the classroom (Dover & Rodriguez-Valls, 2022). While we should teach students to pay attention to purpose, audience, language, structure and evidence, and revision and editing, we should also embrace the linguistic riches they bring to the classroom. These two concepts, while related, differ in that translanguaging refers to a broader and more strategic and integrated use of multiple languages and language variations to support one's communication goals.

In a math classroom where the teacher and the students are speakers of both English and Spanish, the teacher may use translanguaging strategies by drawing on the students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and multiple forms of representation. First, the teacher might introduce the math concept in English with the support of visual aids such as diagrams and graphs. Next, she might model the concept by sharing some of the key concepts in Spanish or whatever additional languages they all speak. Finally, she could ask the students to communicate as pairs or in small groups to solve the problem in both English and Spanish and to include any semiotic representations they feel support their thinking. In this way she is encouraging them to use all of their language resources to solve and share the problem.

As educators, we support both code-switching and translanguaging since we believe one can never have too much language or knowledge about language use. Instead of privileging one method of communication, we want to encourage you to ask students to capitalize on their various funds of knowledge, including their language knowledge, to meet their audience and purpose.

### PAUSE AND CONSIDER



What language practices do your students already bring to the classroom? To answer this, consider their interactions. Whom do they talk with? What are they talking about? What are the styles they use for these communications? How can these be leveraged in the teaching of writing? Jot down any ideas regarding how you might encourage your students to use and broaden their language practices. Revisit these ideas as you read through the chapter.

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Many take for granted that one must know how to read and speak well to communicate effectively. But we posit that to be a success in most jobs one needs to know how to write well, too. In fact, in a study compiled by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, **73.4 percent of employers** said they wanted employees with strong written communication skills because, *Clear writing is a sign of clear thinking. Great writers know how to communicate. They make things easy to understand. They can put themselves in someone else's shoes. They know what to omit. And those are qualities you want in any candidate. Writing is making a comeback all over our society . . .* (Fried & Hansson, 2010).

Think about it! Are we preparing our students to be these workers? As students, we completed many teacher-assigned writing tasks intended to teach us to think and to share our thinking, often as arguments, debates, essays, stories, and poems. We were usually taught the nuances of each genre in the process of completing the assignment. To support us, our teachers shared model texts and posted sentence frames to illustrate examples of the desired language and format. Many of us learned to write these styles fairly well. Those of us who attended college were tasked with similar assignments, and, hopefully, we got even better at writing these genres. Then, off we went into the world of work, where we are sometimes asked to write within these same genres—probably not so many stories unless we chose film writing as a career, and we are seldom asked to write poems unless we are sending a greeting card to a friend or crafting a roast for a colleague.

You might wonder then, instead of the five-paragraph essay, what are folks writing at work, and how did the preparatory writing courses and assignments they did in school prepare them to succeed? Wolsey and Lapp (2017) asked many professionals what they write at work. One re-emerging theme from this study was that while the features and practices of writing required when working in various disciplines vary, all of the professionals who were interviewed noted how important it was for them to be able to communicate complex ideas specific to their fields with nonexperts, as well as other experts in their profession or discipline.

Realizing this need for good workplace writers, we wondered what type of writing instruction should occur across disciplines in order to prepare students for the unknown writing tasks that lay ahead of them. To be able to share some specific instructional practices, we continued asking additional professionals what type of writing they were required to do at work. We wanted to extend the insights provided from related work (Gallagher, 2011; Graham & Perin, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Wolsey et al., 2019) with a view toward instruction that prepares students to flexibly use the knowledge they learn in school to craft their future workplace and situational texts. To share what we learned—and help you put it into practice in your classroom—we've organized this text into six chapters and an



















