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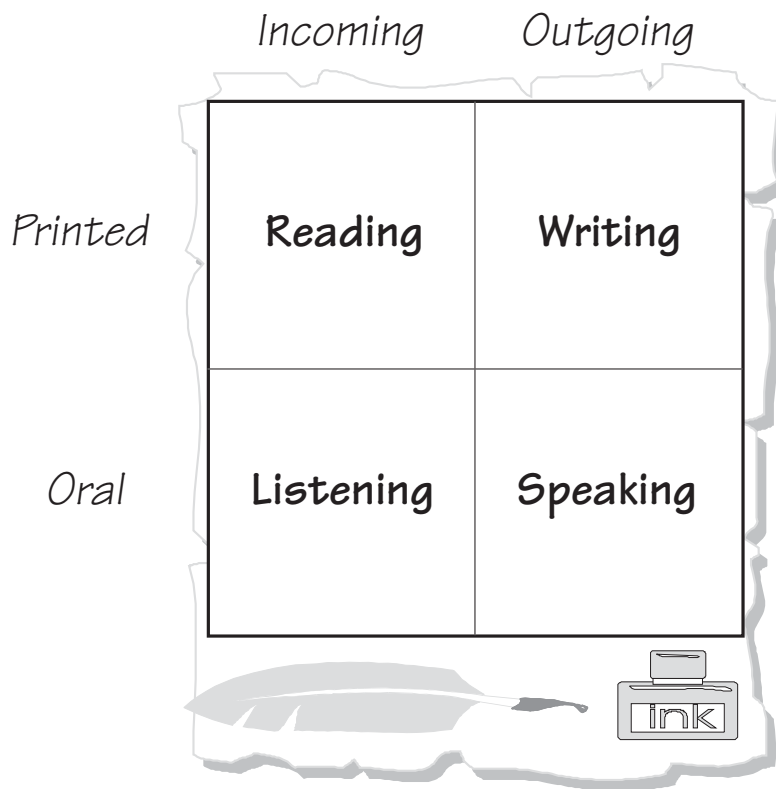


Section 1:

The Rationale

Simply stated, all learning includes language. The study of science requires reading, discussion and listening to the ideas of others. Musicians and artists enhance their craft through reading about and studying other artists, as well as lectures and interchanges with master craftsmen. Even learning mathematics, a system of numerical representations, requires that teachers and learners discuss both method and theory.

It is common practice to employ at least three of the language arts in instruction across content area.



Even in the most traditional classrooms of content area study, students regularly engage in reading. Textbooks and primary sources are used to enhance instruction. Listening to teachers, instructional media or fellow students provides greater understanding. Speaking in discussion to ask or answer questions is pedagogically advisable in all teaching. Why not, then, make the logical extension and include writing in the study of other subject matter?

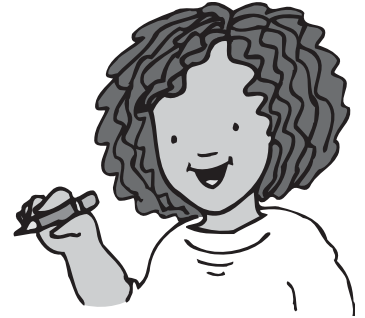
In writing, or in preparing to write, students must clarify their thoughts on a topic. They must make sense of what they have read or listened to, and synthesize that information. Writing requires a higher duty of preparation than simply conversing about a subject, because in writing there is an expectation that students include specific content and maintain a logical organization of ideas. With writing, students may use the material learned to draw conclusions, make inferences, or express opinions, rather than simply recite facts.

Section 2:

Everyday Writing

Activities

Learning Logs



Using a learning log is not unlike maintaining a content area journal. Teachers may use a learning log for students to maintain a record of what they have studied, simply by writing from their point of view, what occurred during a particular lesson and what it seemed to mean. Following a lecture, reading selection, discussion or hands-on activity, students would write to reflect on what happened. In writing this way, the students will be dealing with new vocabulary and synthesizing the main concepts of the lesson. A learning log is a place where students would also be encouraged to write about the things they did not completely understand. A written record of their questions will be available for subsequent lessons on the material.

A learning log can be maintained as a separate notebook. Many teachers create separate learning logs for content areas in a composition book. Others may choose to require students to maintain a log in their regular notebook alongside any notes from the lesson. It is important to make the log convenient for your situation, so do what is practical for you and your students!

In a typical learning log, students would record the date, subject, “main idea or purpose” of the lesson, and any new vocabulary or content learned. Any questions, misunderstandings or additional inquiries should also be recorded.

By routinely responding to class activities your students will gain experience in writing and analyzing the content material. You need only to set aside a few moments at the end of a class activity for completion of the learning log. This could even be used as an “at-home follow-up” to a classroom activity.

Name _____

My Learning Log Sample

Subject: Science-Plants

Date: _____

What new things did you learn? I learned about the way that plants sprout roots. They push them down into the soil.

What new words did you learn? Germination-when plants start.

Photosynthesis-the way plants make energy

Chlorophyll-It makes plants green.

Draw a picture that shows what you learned.

