



## What's Current?

### Writing as a Talk-It-Over Topic

If you've read the companion *What's Current?* article in this issue of the *Appleseed*, you're aware of the findings about the importance of teachers' ongoing, open dialogue about instruction—a key to increasing student achievement across the curriculum.

For an upcoming talk-it-over topic, consider *writing*. It is the synthesis of all the knowledge and skills associated with greater achievement. We see that both the SAT and ACT have writing components now. Some states and school districts include writing within their achievement standards. Of course, teaching writing is nothing new, but all the findings confirm that when students write, simply the process of creating a written piece causes them to think on a challenging, sophisticated level—an exercise in intellect.

Writing is the litmus paper of thought—the very center of schooling (Ted Sizer, 2003).

Writing is how students connect the dots in their knowledge. It is the engine of opportunity...putting the power of language and communication in its proper place. If students are to learn, they must write. (National Commission on Writing, 2003)

A deeper look at writing reveals its impact on our ability to learn and think at the highest levels across the disciplines. Writing literacy makes students smarter. We don't hear nearly enough about these benefits (M. Schmoker, 2006).

For all the talk on teaching higher-order thinking skills, deep reading, background knowledge, academic dialogue, and vocabulary—well, writing puts it all together. Writing is the connector.

I can say this truthfully. I think writing *teaches me what I'm trying to learn*. I can't say it's always easy, but it's worth it. I very much like the clarity of thought and logic writing provides. It is an exercise that becomes the best thinking I am capable of on a topic.

For me, writing has led to invention, insights, and solutions to problems that would otherwise have gone unsolved—at least, by me. It's led to the development of the Sourcebook Series, a definite alternative to the status quo. Still, today, when I try to explain its rationale and help educators embrace its paradigms to achieve the success it has afforded others, it is an enormous triumph for me to realize that my written effort toward this end also opens my own perceptions. As I try to teach *you*, I learn!

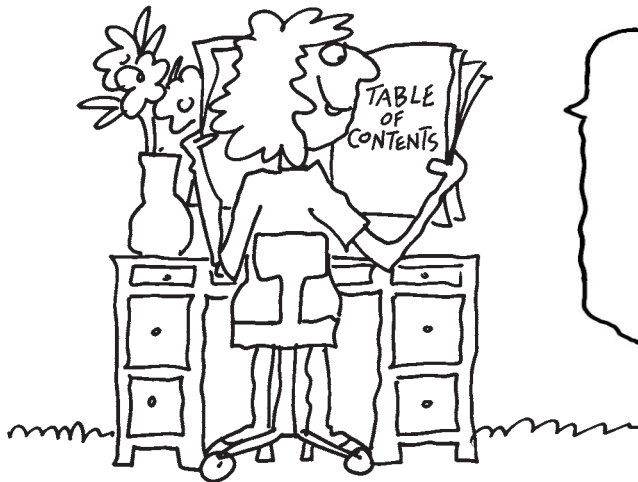
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## What's Current? (continued)

I read with interest that this is exactly what the writing gurus are preaching. They all agree that writing is an essential component of achievement and teaches students to think in a way that can't be matched. I believe their sermon about writing is true. It works! I only wish I'd learned to do it in school. I might say, I learned it on the job, *me* being my own employer. Because I credit writing as what equipped me to think, I highly recommend writing for center stage in your classroom.

PS And please be sure you're teaching your students how to spell in their writing, not just on a test.



There are multiple opportunities for writing in every unit of the Sourcebook Series—an authentic application of spelling and word skills.