Glossary

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As might be expected of teachers who worked together for several years, project participants developed a common language. In particular, the group settled on terms to describe various strategies for writing to learn. The following section defines terms, explains the value of the writing that results, and, where possible, credits sources. For a more complete explanation and for examples of variation in implementation, turn to chapters by authors named at the end of each listing.

Admit slips are brief written responses (which fit on a half sheet of paper) often collected as tickets of "admission" to class. These are collected and read aloud by the teacher with no indication of the authorship of individual statements. Admit slips are frequently used in community building. Exit slips are a variation.

See Forsman, Juell, Pearse, Schmidt, Yoshida.

Biopoem follows this pattern:

Line 1. First name
Line 2. Four traits that describe character
Line 3. Relative ("brother," "sister," "daughter," etc.) of _____
Line 4. Lover of _____(list three things or people)
Line 5. Who feels _____(three items)
Line 6. Who needs _____(three items)
Line 7. Who fears _____(three items)
Line 8. Who gives _____(three items)
Line 9. Who would like to see _____(three items)
Line 10. Resident of _____
Line 11. Last name

Biopoems enable students to synthesize learning because they must select precise language to fit into this form.

See Johnston, Juell, Pearse, Watson, West, Yoshida.

Brainstorming collects, in writing, all ideas generated by an individual or group charged with a given topic.

Brainstorming provides students with an abundance of ideas about a given subject, showing them how many perspectives are possible.

See Beaman, Juell, Marik, Peterson, Yoshida.

Clustering is a strategy described by Gabriele Rico in her book *Writing the Natural Way: Using Right Brain Techniques to Release Your Expressive Powers.*

Clustering helps arrange ideas that have been generated by writing.

See Beaman, Forsman, Juell, Marik, Peterson, Watson, Zimmerman.

Community building is an essential part of writing to learn in any classroom because students need to establish trust before they will be willing to take the risks involved in writing to learn. Many strategies are used to develop community in a classroom and to continue the process throughout the year. Here are a few examples of community building activities.

Have students observe their classmates and then write a list in their journal of all the things they have in common with others in the class. Ask each student to share one thing not previously mentioned by another classmate.

Have each student interview another and then introduce the person they interviewed to the class. After every three or four interviews ask the class to name those students who have just been presented. When all have been interviewed, ask each student to write the names of all students in the class.

Take roll by asking each student to respond to a metaphorical question such as: If you were a dessert (or junk food, or breakfast cereal, or animal, or road sign), what would you be?

Ask students to write an epitaph for themselves. What do they want people to remember about them? Students share in their groups and a group leader shares the results with the class. This can be modified to fit an assignment in math, history, science, art, or any other subject. For example, in history class write an epitaph for a historical character, in math class write the epitaph for a mathematical concept, in art class write one for an artist or art concept.

See Juell, Pearse, Schmidt, Yoshida.

Completions ask writers to supply endings to sentence fragments. Writing completions pushes students to focus their thinking.

See Beaman, Juell.

Creative definitions resembles the parlor game Dictionary in asking writers to invent definitions for words. This process of inventing stretches the imagination.

See Juell.

Dialectics draw on a strategy described by Ann Berthoff in *Forming, Thinking, Writing*. Writers divide a page in half and on the left side record notes from reading and on the right side list comments or questions about the material read. This written interchange leads to the development of new ideas about a subject.

See Arkle, West, Yoshida.

Dialogues are a form of role playing in which the writer creates an exchange between two characters being studied.

See Beaman, Forsman, Juell, Pearse, Peterson, Watson, Yoshida, Zimmerman.

Dictation asks writers to copy exactly the words that are read aloud to them. The usual procedure is to read the whole selection through once and then repeat in sections.

Dictation helps students absorb new material, and at the same time makes them conscious of how language works.

See Beaman, Peterson, Yoshida.

Dramatic scenarios present writers with situations of conflict drawn from subject matter and ask them to respond. By asking students to project themselves into the material, dramatic scenarios increase involvement with what is being studied.

See Beaman, Forsman.

Exit slips are usually distributed at the end of class and provide closure for learning by asking students to summarize what has occurred during the preceding class. These slips provide closure for students and, if collected by teachers, indicate what students know and need to know.

See Juell, Yoshida.

First thoughts were identified by Peter Elbow in *Writing with Power.* Their immediate written impressions frequently become the basis for further writing. First thoughts provide students a benchmark with which to measure their own learning.

See Arkle, Juell, Marik, Pearse, Peterson.

Focused writing invites writers to concentrate on a single topic during nonstop writing of specified duration. Like brainstorming, focused writing enables students to see how much they have to say on a given subject.

See Beaman, Forsman, Juell, Marik, Pearse, Watson, Yoshida, Zimmerman.

Free writing emphasizes fluency by asking writers to write continously for a specified period of time. The fluency induced by free writing makes other forms of writing to learn possible.

See Juell, Zimmerman.

Guided imagery is described in Tristine Rainer's *The New Diary*. It combines relaxation techniques with oral narrative to provide writers with an imaginative experience which becomes the basis for writing. Like role playing and dramatic scenarios, guided imagery asks students to become directly involved in what they study, gives them direct instruction in how to proceed.

See Juell, Watson.

Instant versions are suggested by Peter Elbow in *Writing with Power*. They ask writers to pretend that they are actually composing a final draft long before they are ready to actually complete such a task. The instant version helps writers focus and clarify ideas. Like first thoughts, instant versions give writers a benchmark for measuring their own progress, and they also push writers to generate a great deal of material quickly.

See Arkle.

Journals are, as Roethke says, greenhouses in which ideas grow. Journals provide a place to keep many of the writings described in this list and are central to writing to learn. Without journals, writing to learn loses its effectiveness because students have no way to preserve evidence of their learning.

See Arkle, Beaman, Forsman, Juell, Johnston, Marik, Pearse, Peterson, Watson, Yoshida.

The following are ideas to get students writing in their journals:

List the smells you like.

List the famous people you would invite to a party you were giving.

Write a letter to someone in class you don't know very well explaining why you would like to know him or her.

Write a response to something you read in the paper last night or watched on television.

Write a dialogue between you and your pen exploring the obligations you have to one another and your responsibilities to each other.

Begin your entry with "What if. . . ."

Begin your entry with "I wonder. . . ."

Begin your entry with "I remember when. . . ."

Begin your entry with "The field trip I would like to take with this class would be to _____ because. . . ."

Begin with "Before I was five, I. . . ."

Describe a wound you got as a child.

Write a letter to your future child or grandchild.

Write a letter to your hair, your feet, or some other body part.

Write a letter to a particular trait or ambition.

Assume you are a rock. Write a monologue telling us your history. Select a particular rock and set up its environment.

React, comment on, explain, defend, or argue with one of the following quotations.

"I can't be human. I haven't the time" (Theodore Roethke).
"There are worse words than cuss words; there are words that hurt" (Tillie Olsen).
"It is impossible to persuade a man who does not disagree but smiles" (Muriel Sparks).
"I expect you to be human beings. Don't laugh—that's already an incredible assumption: they're a disappearing species" (Theodore Roethke).
Write a narration that contains each of the following words: quarter, Bahamas, staple, ruffles.
Make a list of your important possessions.
Speculate on where you will be and what you'll be doing on this date next year.

See Beaman, Forsman, Juell, Marik, Peterson, Watson, Yoshida, Zimmerman.

Lists invite writers to generate information for further examination. Listing provides students a shorthand form for recording many ideas.

See Beaman, Foresman, Juell, Marik, Peterson, Watson, Yoshida, Zimmerman.

Metaphorical questions draw on Peter Elbow's discussion of metaphor in *Writing with Power.* They invite writers to think in analogous terms. Metaphorical questions lead to metaphorical thinking, a form essential to cognitive development.

See Arkle, Foresman, Juell, Pearse, Yoshida.

Nutshelling is described by Linda Flower in *A Problem-Solving Approach to Writing* and asks the writer to identify central ideas in information. This process enables writers to begin the process of selection essential to critical thinking.

See Pearse, Watson.

Question of the day invites writers to describe themselves or others within a specified category. Responses to this question open the way to metaphorical thinking.

See Juell.

Role-playing invites writers to participate imaginatively in material being studied. Like other forms of imaginative projection, role-playing fosters learning through involvement.

See Forsman, Johnston, Juell, Marik, Peterson, Yoshida.

Treeing as described by Linda Flower in *A Problem-Solving Approach to Writing* organizes bits of information into forms that show their relationship.

Like nutshelling, this strategy leads to evaluative thinking.

See Marik, Pearse.

Unsent letters are a form of role-playing that asks writers to draft letters in response to material being studied. They are described in Tristine Rainer's *The New Diary.*

Like other forms of role playing, unsent letters require imaginative involvement with material studied.

See Beaman, Juell, Pearse, Watson, West.

Writing Groups provide writers with peer response to work in progress. Procedures for groups vary, but the following set of directives draws on Peter Elbow's *Writing without Teachers.*

Each member is allocated an equal portion of the available time. Groups designate a timekeeper and divide the time available by the number of people present. It is the timekeeper's responsibility to be sure the group stays on schedule, allowing an equal amount of time for each member.

Each member's allocated time is divided into half for reading and half for group response.

The timekeeper stops the reading if it goes too long. If an individual has a total of thirty minutes, no more than fifteen minutes should be spent reading.

Work in progress is read aloud once, the author pauses long enough for group members to write initial responses, then the author reads the writing a second time. During the second reading, group members take detailed notes on their responses to what they hear.

Oral rather than written versions of work in progress are presented to writing groups because hearing rather than seeing work prevents fussing with small features on the page and keeps attention focused on the larger effects of writing. Group members take no notes during the first reading, but before the second, they record general impression responses. During the second reading, group members take careful notes so that they may refer the author to specific passages.

Group members give oral responses to the author immediately after the second reading.

Each member speaks in turn with no comment from anyone else in the group. Usually responses begin with "After the first reading I felt/thought . . ." and then proceed to the list of responses collected during the second reading.

Oral responses are from the perspective of the audience: they do not offer advice. Rewriting is the author's job. Members of the writing group are responsible for telling the author what they hear and how they respond.

The author remains silent as group members respond and writes all comments for future reference.

During the meeting of the writing group, the author's job is to collect as much information as possible about the effect of the piece just read, not to defend or explain the writing.

See Forsman, Pearse, West.