

Creating Intentional Communities to Support English Language Learners in the Classroom, Judith Rance-Roney

To make the English language learners in her classroom feel more welcome and part of the community, Rance-Roney asked students to interview each other so they could get to know each other better. "The Feature Story—Fifteen Minutes (and 500 Words) of Fame!" asks students to write a profile of a classmate, with a particular focus on a talent, interest, or passion of that classmate. In the process, students learn how to differentiate between a news story and a feature story, practice interviewing techniques, develop voice, and write for an audience. Perhaps most importantly, they come to celebrate their individual strengths.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=987

Writing Steps: A Recursive and Individual Experience, Bonnie Mary Warne

During the revising process, Warne would often ask her class to write a note explaining what was changed in their draft. "Draft Letters: Improving Student Writing through Critical Thinking" invites students to write reflective letters to the teacher, identifying their thoughts on the piece that the teacher is about to read. This lesson explains the strategy and provides models for the project, which can be adapted for any grade level and any writing project. It may be completed only for major assignments or on a more regular basis with all composition that students do.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=902

Uniting the Disparate: Connecting Best Practices and Educational Mandates, Pamela K. Coke

Coke highlights the importance of student ownership in their learning; they are the ones who take the tests. One of the strategies presented was the Socratic seminar. Another student-centered approach is reciprocal teaching. This strategy is at the forefront of "Using Student-Centered Comprehension Strategies with Elie Wiesel's *Night*." Working in small groups, students use reciprocal teaching strategies as they read and discuss the memoir of Holocaust-survivor Wiesel. Everyone takes a turn assuming the "teacher" role as the class works with four comprehension strategies: predicting, question generating, summarizing, and clarifying. Reciprocal teaching allows students to take more responsibility for their learning by participating in the classroom as equal partners.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=884

Mandates and the Writing Curriculum: Creating a Place to Dwell, Sarah Irwin and Cyndi Knodle

While Irwin and Knodle acknowledge the importance of students' writing a comparison paper, they do not advocate fill-in-the-blank worksheets or simple outlines. They believe there should be more substance. An option is the ReadWriteThink Comparison and Contrast Guide. This interactive guide provides an introduction to the basic characteristics and resources that are typically used when students compose comparison and contrast essays. The Comparison and Contrast Guide includes an overview, definitions, and examples. The Organizing a Paper section includes details on whole-to-whole (block), point-by-point, and similarities-to-differences structures. In addition, the Guide explains how graphic organizers are used for comparison and contrast, provides tips for using transitions between ideas in comparison and contrast essays, and includes a checklist, which matches an accompanying rubric. This Guide can be useful in the classroom, as well as outside of school when students are writing.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/compcontrast/>

Teaching beyond the Test: The Possibility of Success, Kristin L. Main

In her grade 10 class, Main had students identify the types of materials that they read. This idea can be taken further with "Defining Literacy in a Digital World." While students interact with a range of print, visual, and sound texts, they do not always recognize that these many documents are texts. By creating an inventory of personal texts, students begin to consciously recognize the many literacy demands in contemporary society. With this start, they create a working definition of literacy that they refine and explore as they continue their investigation of the texts that they interact with at home, at school, and in other settings.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=915

"The Rose That Grew from Concrete": Postmodern Blackness and New English Education, David E. Kirkland

Kirkland reminds teachers of the importance of including students' interests in classroom instruction. One way to do this is through music—most students listen to some kind of music. Most students are aware of the ways that music can be distributed—and some have probably participated in sharing music themselves. "Copyright Infringement or Not? The Debate over Downloading Music" takes advantage of students' interest in music and audio sharing as part of a persuasive debate unit. Students investigate the controversial topic of downloading music from the Internet. Students use graphic organizers and interactive Web tools to synthesize information and evaluate content and point of view. Students map their information and take a stand on the controversy by developing persuasive arguments on the position that they present in a class debate on the subject of downloading.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=855

Chatting with Letters: Developing Empathy and Critical Literacy through Writing Communities, Mary B. Nicolini

Nicolini describes how she used a letter exchange between her classes, discussing texts with similar themes. "Exploring Literature through Letter-Writing Groups" details a similar process. Exchanged letters can take the form of handwritten letters, typed letters, electronic documents, email, online discussion posts, and even blog posts. Letter series can be used in conjunction with any work of literature and any other assignment. Students can even be asked to carry on a year-long discussion in which they make connections among a number of literary works.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=397

ReadWriteThink (<http://www.readwritethink.org>) is a nonprofit Thinkfinity Web site maintained by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA), with support from the Verizon Foundation. It provides to classroom teachers free lesson plans, interactive student materials, and Web resources linked to ELA standards.