

Writing Instructional Time: Secondary

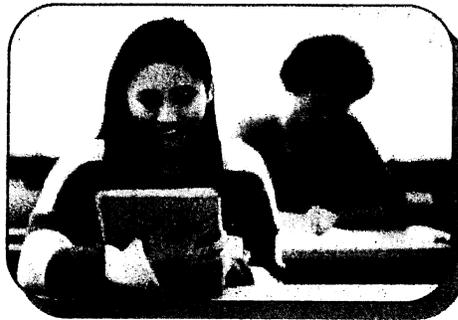
The K-12 Illinois Standards for Writing include writing standards for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. These standards are listed across content areas in grade level bands for students in grades 6-12.

Incorporating writing across the curriculum increases the opportunity for both writing instruction and practice opportunities. It also acknowledges that effective writing

can occur in different ways, with different structures, and with different production procedures depending

context, audience, and purpose for which written communication is produced.

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Effective Use of Time

Secondary students should spend at least one hour engaged in writing-specific tasks each day (Graves, 1994). The one hour daily recommendation can be distributed across secondary classes if subject-area classes deliberately schedule and coordinate how writing time is focused across classes. For example, a science class might include 15-minutes of daily writing instruction

related to hypothesis testing and the scientific method while a social studies/history class might devote a daily 20-minutes to argument-writing related to current or historical events.

For schools to double the amount of time for writing instruction and practice at the secondary level, writing instruction cannot be confined to the English classroom, but should

occur across the curriculum in all content areas.



Content Writing

The research is clear: *discipline-based instruction in reading and writing enhances student achievement in all subjects* (National Commission on Writing, 1993). Reading and writing in science is not the same as reading and writing in social studies or a technical subject like drafting. This means that student achievement can

be enhanced by teachers who focus on helping their students develop strategies for reading and writing within their respective content areas. A written report for a science experiment, for example, will differ in process and form from a multi-paragraph essay prepared for an English class. Writing to advertise a product in a business

class requires a different approach from writing a persuasive piece on a contemporary issue in a social studies class. Learning to write across the curriculum helps students employ a life-long need to understand how audience, purpose, and type of writing task influence the written product.



History and writing are inseparable. How would we know about history if it wasn't documented? (Marius & Page, 2010)

College instructors estimate that 50% of high school graduates are not prepared for college-level writing (Achieve, Inc., 2005). Recent reports by the National Commission on Writing (2004, 2005) reveal that the majority of both public and private employers say that writing proficiency has now become critical in the workplace and that it directly affects hiring and promotion decisions.