A Portfolio Model for Teaching Writing and Thinking

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A PORTFOLIO MODEL FOR
TEACHING WRITING AND THINKING

A Thesis Presented
by
PETER A. GALENO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
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March, 1996

Critical and Creative Thinking Program
A PORTFOLIO MODEL
FOR TEACHING WRITING AND THINKING

A Thesis Presented
by
PETER A. GALENO

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ABSTRACT

A PORTFOLIO MODEL FOR TEACHING, WRITING AND THINKING

MARCH, 1996

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Directed by Professor Delores Gallo

The college composition course is increasingly viewed as a pivotal course in fostering in students the skills they will need for meaningful participation in the discourse of the academy. This course is often the students' initiation into an academic environment that emphasizes the significance of the written word. Because of the nature of teaching the abstract and elusive subject of writing, the course presents significant challenges for many composition instructors.

This thesis focuses on the development of a student writing portfolio that provides a powerful means of addressing these issues. The work required to complete the portfolio fosters the students' transition from their original diction to the discourse that meets the standards of their academic community. The portfolio process does so by developing the critical thinking dispositions and abilities needed to succeed in the academic environment. Through the work required to complete the portfolio, students develop the
dispositions of self-awareness, intrinsic motivation, and the openness to reflect on their writing process and product. The portfolio process shifts the locus of instruction from the teacher to the students and is a concrete means for students to understand the evolution of their thoughts as they make the rhetorical choices that shape their written discourse.

The first chapter of this thesis establishes the general context within which this portfolio model was implemented. This is followed by an analysis of recent cognitive theories of writing as related to writing. Through a discussion of the works of Richard Paul and Robert Ennis, the third chapter of this thesis presents the critical thinking framework that informs the curriculum. The fourth chapter describes the portfolio model and discusses the type of in-class instruction required to prepare students to complete the portfolio. The final chapter discusses the impact of the portfolio on students, faculty, and the institution.

The portfolio proved to be a powerful tool in creating many benefits to students, faculty, and the institution. Most significantly, the portfolio was important in bringing about a cultural change, one that recognizes the importance of developing student writing through an interdisciplinary approach to establish writing across the curriculum.
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"Writing a novel is like driving at night with your lights on. You can only see several feet in front of you, but you can make the whole trip like that."

E. L. Doctorow

In many ways, Doctorow’s comment on the difficulties of writing a novel applies to writing in general. As Doctorow suggests, when writers create text, they are in a sense working in the dark. They slowly move forward knowing what thoughts and ideas they may want the text to contain, but because they can see only one or two ideas ahead, they are often uncertain if they are going in the right direction, or, indeed, if they are on the right road. Mature writers have the experience to know that this uncertainty is part of the writing process. They are often more comfortable with the ambiguity of seeing only "several feet in front" of them because they have successfully made similar journeys many times before. They know that slow, deliberate progress will get them to their destination.

For developing writers, however, the uncertainty of not knowing the road ahead may lead to confusion and a lack of confidence in their ability to start the journey and safely arrive at their destination. When they do start their
journey, they often rush to its completion without reflecting on their progress along the way. Such writers are uncomfortable with the ambiguity of moving forward in the dark; they are frequently impatient with the slow, deliberate progress that traveling in the dark requires; and they are often unable to see how every decision along the road impacts the safe arrival at the final destination.

Perhaps nowhere is the uncertainty of the developing writer more apparent than in the college freshman composition course. This is the course that creates the bridge between two communities: the student’s previous community and the academic community of the college. Consequently, in addition to the uncertainty that developing writers feel towards the writing process, they must begin to learn to adapt to the academic expectations of their new educational community. However, because they don’t have a clear sense of these expectations, especially in regard to writing, most incoming freshman feel an added level of uncertainty when they approach a writing task. Ultimately, one of the expectations of the college community is that students will be able to clearly articulate their thoughts and ideas in a written text: “College students in particular are immersed in knowledge-empowering uses of language, and their success depends in no small way on their command of language.” (Hayes, Stahl, & Simpson, 1991, p. 89). In order for students to become empowered and to successfully "make
the . . . trip" across this bridge and meaningfully participate in the discourse of their academic community, they must be given the means to evaluate their text so that they can clearly and confidently express their ideas.

Consequently, one of the major goals of a freshman composition course is to foster students' awareness of their own writing and to provide them with the life-long skills to continually assess their ability to generate a clear and engaging written text. Of course, since clear and effective writing is critical to their performance in college, the immediate objective of writing instruction is to help students achieve academic success. However, the greater goal is to provide students with the skills to become life-long learners so that they can participate in their communities of discourse in a meaningful way and become productive members of society.

Description of the Students

Because of open enrollment and the increasing cultural diversity of the student body, many students come to the college composition course with undeveloped, or underdeveloped, writing skills. In addition, many of these incoming freshman writers approach writing with the anxiety they have developed over years of taking classes in "English." For many of them, writing has negative associations formed from negative experiences in English.
They feel that they have never done well in English and that they will probably not do well in this their first course in college composition. These students also approach the composition class with a kind of numbness. They have taken English or composition in one form or another each of the twelve years they have been in school. Often the course content of one year was merely repeated in the second year. Such repetition has lead many to develop the preconceived notion that the college composition course will merely be a repeat of a similar experience they have "suffered through" in high school.

In addition, there are many other "non-traditional" freshman who approach the course with the anxiety of those who approach the unknown. These are older students who often have not written for a public audience for many years. Others may have been educated in foreign countries and face the double difficulty of learning to participate in the discourse of the institution while at the same time adapting to a different educational system with different cultural values and expectations.

Moreover, many of the incoming freshman often view writing for English composition in isolation. They fail to see the connection between writing instruction in English and writing in their major area of academic study and, indeed, in their lives. Students often complain: "Why do I have to take English? What does it have to do with my major?" Obviously,
such a complaint indicates that these students are more interested in spending time on their chosen area of study. To them, the connection between study in their major and success in college and later success in their careers is readily apparent. They rarely make such a connection or see such rewards in their success in composition. As Peter Elbow (1990) has pointed out:

Our students approach college more as consumers than as learners. They enroll in courses to get an education. For most, getting an education means receiving credit or a degree that will increase earning power; learning means attending classes, doing assignments, and going through other motions that lead to credits. Along the way, students expect to pick up discrete pieces of information and develop isolated skills, but they do not expect to engage in the exciting but often frustrating process of learning. . . . Most define learning in concrete additive terms, as a series of isolated activities, not as an interactive process of questioning, generating possibilities, and seeking connections to make meaning (p. 11).

One of the expectations of the academic community is that students will "engage in . . . the process of learning" by writing. In fact, not only is writing important for engaging in discourse, but it is also an important means for making "connections" among "discrete pieces" of information so that they come together "to make meaning" in a new way.

Composition and the College Curriculum

The college composition course is increasingly viewed as the course that is critical in broadening the students' concepts of "what an education is and what writing, reading,
and learning involve." Indeed, the college composition course is viewed as not just key to the students' success in their major but essential to the students' participation in the discourse of the college and of the greater academic community. As Kutz, Groden, and Zamel (1993) have stated, the college composition teacher is often viewed as the "gatekeeper" to the academy. In some colleges and universities, students must demonstrate a level of proficiency in writing before they can progress to their junior level courses. In the position of gatekeeper, the composition teacher is expected to prepare students by providing them the skills they will need to become successful in their academic area of interest.

Students become engaged, functioning participants in the intellectual and social life of their communities by speaking, listening, reading, and writing with other participants about the issues that burn at the community's heart; by being listened to, having their words read, by being held accountable for the ideas they express; by being responded to with care. Everyone agrees that language is the key to helping outsiders become insiders (Kutz et al., 1993, p. 7).

Helping those "outsiders" become "insiders" of the academic community is one of the goals of the composition course, and the composition instructor is the "gatekeeper" to the community. Of course, besides helping "outsiders" become "insiders," the other function of a gatekeeper is to restrict the entry of those who are unlikely to become successful members of this community. If students cannot express their ideas in writing, they are unlikely to be successful in their other...
areas of study, and unlikely to participate meaningfully in the discourse of the institution.

Such a position places increased pressure on the college composition instructor. Not only must college composition teachers function as a "gatekeeper" but they must also address the complex and varied needs of their students in a very limited amount of time. Composition instructors are often expected to condense and convey twelve years of instruction in a fourteen-week semester. In addition, unlike the disciplines where the instructor can assume a certain degree of homogeneity of students and an accepted standard for success, the composition teacher is usually faced with a heterogeneous student population and a certain degree of ambiguity of success. Clearly, condensing and conveying twelve years of instruction into a fourteen-week semester is impossible; but in the face of such a need, it is important for composition teachers to recognize what can realistically be achieved and on what skills instruction should be focused in the composition course.

The Changing Approach to Instruction

This thesis asserts that in such an environment the primary goal of the composition course should be to increase the students' metacognitive development of their processes as they complete a writing assignment and thereby increase their understanding of the complex process of writing and
their control of that process as they work to complete a written text. That is, students should be encouraged to reflect on the texts that they have produced and on the thought processes brought to bear on the production of their texts. Through this self-reflection, developing writers will be able to initiate the self-regulation required to continually access and improve their skill in writing. As Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) state, "learning to overcome the saliency" (p. 56) of one's own text is an important stage in developing a writing system that can develop with "feedback from its own output" (p. 57). Linda Flower's (1979) theory of "writer-based prose" also acknowledges the importance of the ability to evaluate the text that one has produced in terms of the reader and not the writer.

Such recent theories have been one of the factors that has lead to the development of new approaches to composition instruction. The traditional method of teaching writing through drills and the study of rhetorical modes assumes that the components involved in the complex process of expressing thought through language can be understood and mastered when studied in isolation. As Kutz et al. (1993) state, this view evolves from the theory that "language shapes thought"; whereas: "A more appropriate position recognizes that language and thought are related and interwoven in complex ways and that the development of new ways of thinking and new uses of language (including writing) are deeply interwoven"
This view that language and thought are deeply interconnected in a dynamic process is also reflected in Vygotsky's view (1962) that:

\[T\]he relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought. In that process the relationship of thought to word undergoes changes which themselves may be regarded as changes in the functional sense. Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. Every thought tends to connect something with something else, to establish a relationship between things. Every thought moves, grows and develops, fulfills a function, solves a problem (p. 125).

**Grounding Instruction in Student-Generated Text**

The student is more likely to develop an intuitive understanding of the complexity of expressing thought through language if instruction is student centered. Such instruction should evolve from the written text created by the students; it should focus on increasing the students' awareness of the cognitive processes they employed as they developed that text; it should foster sensitivity to audience through collaborative writing and peer review; and it should encourage self-regulation through review and self-reflection of the students' own text.

One way of achieving these goals is through the introduction of a writing portfolio assignment that is an integral part of student assessments. The portfolio can be a powerful tool in helping students understand that writing is a recursive process that explores, discovers, analyzes, and
selects words, sentences, and ideas that are expressions of thought and that engaging in the process shapes thought as well.

In addition, through the activities of self-reflection on one’s own written text, the students will improve their ability to “decenter” and thereby increase their sensitivity and awareness that writing takes place within a context of writer, audience, and purpose. This increased awareness of the writing context and increased sensitivity to the writer’s response to that context are critical for the students’ ability to initiate self-monitoring and self-regulation strategies that lead to later success in writing.

This paper will present a model for a student-writing portfolio. This model is designed to ground instruction in student-generated writing and to encourage students to make connections between writing for composition course and writing for other courses that are part of their curriculum. This model is in its third year of implementation. Since its inception, the model has evolved as institutional confidence in portfolio assessment has increased. As with any instructional tool, this model should not be viewed as static but pliable to the needs of a specific student body and fluid enough to evolve to the changing demands of an educational culture.

Although the reasons for the adaptation of this portfolio model are varied, the primary reason it was adapted
was that it focuses instruction on student-generated writing and thereby shifts the locus of the composition curriculum from the instructor to the student. This in turn provides the flexibility to meet the individual needs of each student in the classroom. Kutz et al. (1993) reflect a similar view when they state that they were led to reject some pedagogical practices—language drills, rhetorical model texts, and grading systems that looked only at a student’s performance on a particular task—and to develop others—encouraging discussion, assigning journals and other exploratory modes of writing, and using portfolios to evaluate a semester’s work (p. 82).

Since students enter this composition course with varied backgrounds, expectations, and needs, it was necessary to find an assessment vehicle that had the flexibility to address the variety of needs that are typical of the college composition class. In addition, it was desirable to establish a means of assessment that was fair and impartial and that would address what some have believed to be a tendency towards grade inflation in composition.

Overview of the Portfolio Model

The portfolio model presented in Appendix A is designed to encourage the inexperienced writer to develop those traits which are characteristic of the expert writer. The primary goal of this model is to increase the students’ metacognitive skills and knowledge of the processes they use as they write.
In addition, this portfolio model is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase students' awareness that writing is a recursive process and that each student employs an individual approach to that process.
- Promote students' awareness of the various subprocesses and strategies they use in finding solutions to problems they encounter as they write.
- Develop students' sensitivity to writing for an audience that is not immediately present.
- Foster an awareness that there is an interconnectedness among the writing texts of different discourse communities.
- Encourage an awareness that the immediacy of the written text impacts the writer's ability to self-evaluate and self-edit because the implicit is also present at that time.

The portfolio consists of four separate sections. Each section contains a sample of the students' writing and an accompanying letter in which the students discuss specific aspects of their writing as illustrated in the writing sample. The first two writing samples are selected from assignments the students completed for the composition course. The third is a sample of writing that the students have already completed in their major area of study. The fourth is a sample that the students completed at least four months earlier as part the English placement test after they were accepted for admission. The portfolio is submitted anonymously (identified by the student's social security number) for evaluation by an English instructor(s) other than
that of the student. The results of this evaluation may determine whether or not the student successfully completes the composition course. Moreover, since the portfolio is a college-wide requirement for all students in composition, it increases the students' awareness that their writing for portfolio is not completed in isolation but as part of the discourse community of the college.

**Outline and Content of Thesis**

In chapter two of my thesis, I will present the cognitive psychology component of the theoretical framework for my thesis. I will review the recent cognitive psychology theory of writing, especially, but not limited to, the work of Lev Vygotsky, Carl Bereiter, Marlene Scardamalia, Linda Flower, and John Hayes. I will examine the limited ability of developing writers to reflectively evaluate their written text. I will explain the difficulty that the inexperienced writer has in writing for an imagined audience, in working within the two cognitive dimensions of long-term and short-term memory, and in devising problem-solving strategies to overcome barriers to generating text.

Chapter three will present the critical-thinking framework for the curriculum presented in my thesis. I will draw on the work of Richard Paul and Robert Ennis to provide a theoretical framework for the curriculum. As specified earlier, I will use Ennis's taxonomy of critical thinking as
it relates to the particular "dispositions" and "abilities" the curriculum is designed to develop.

In addition, I intend to focus on Richard Paul's "strong-sense" and "weak-sense" critical thinking as it relates to the development of an understanding of the writing process. I will also demonstrate the importance of developing the critical-thinking skills of self-reflection and self-regulation in the developing writer.

In chapter four I will present and analyze the writing portfolio model which gives focus to the curriculum. This discussion will be grounded in a review of how this curriculum is related to recent theory of writing instruction. I plan to draw on the work of many writing theorist, including Linda Flower, Peter Elbow, and Eleanor Rutz, Suzy Q. Groden and Vivian Zamel as their theories relate to the use of portfolio in developing students' competencies in writing.

This chapter will include a discussion of the general structure of this particular portfolio model. In addition, there will be a section-by-section analysis of the specific components within the portfolio. This discussion and analysis will demonstrate the relationship between the portfolio model and the cognitive psychology and critical-thinking theory discussed in chapters two and three.

Chapter five will discuss the implications for the use of this portfolio within the context of the broader
curriculum of the college. It will identify the benefits to students and faculty, of using the portfolio as an instructional and assessment tool. This chapter will also discuss possible ways that the portfolio process might be used in other English courses. In addition, there will also be a discussion of the implications of this portfolio for fostering writing across the curriculum.
CHAPTER II

ESTABLISHING THE COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter will discuss some of the recent cognitive psychology theories of writing. The primary emphasis of this discussion is to show how these theories inform the instructional strategies of the college composition course. In so doing, the first section of this chapter will outline the cognitive characteristics or habits of developing writers. This will be followed by a discussion of the characteristics of expert, or experienced, writers. The primary purpose of defining these traits is to demonstrate how the instructional strategies of the college composition course can be designed to foster the traits of expert in developing writers and, thereby, help developing writers come to a deeper understanding of their approach to writing and the creation of a written text.

As stated earlier one of the major goals of the freshman college composition class should be to increase students' metacognitive development of the process they use as they write. As students move towards a more conscious awareness of their writing, they will develop a deeper understanding of the complex process of writing and of their control of that process as they complete a written text. As Lev Vygotsky (1962) stated "written language demands conscious work
because its relationship to inner speech is different from that of oral speech" (p. 94). This "conscious work" is reflected in the deliberateness with which a writer must choose words to create sentences. In the process, the writer must adhere to the syntactical and grammatical conventions of the language. Writers must juggle these complex components as they retrieve their knowledge of written language from what they have committed to memory.

**Cognitive Processes of Developing Writers**

For developing writers, deliberate control of these complex processes is frequently confounded by what for them is the difficult transmogrification required in changing inner speech to written text. Developing writers often minimally recognize the differences between inner speech and written language. According to Vygotsky (1962) these differences are substantial:

- Inner speech is condensed abbreviated speech.
- Written speech is deployed to its fullest extent, more complete than oral speech. Inner speech is almost entirely predictive because the situation the subject of thought is always known to the thinker. Written speech, on the contrary, must explain the situation fully in order to be intelligible. The change from maximally compact inner speech to maximally detailed written speech requires what might be called deliberate semantics -- deliberate structure of the web of meaning (p. 100).

When faced with the complex task of committing words and ideas to the page, developing writers deploy a minimal
definition of the "web of meaning." For them, meaning is
often conveyed in terms of information and knowledge, not in
terms of thoughts and ideas. Furthermore, the information
and knowledge that the text of developing writers conveys is
often oriented towards the self, not the audience. This
self-orientation of the text towards the writer is also
evident by the tendency of developing writers to view writing
as a type of cataloging of information and of personal
experiences.

In this regard, developing writers view writing as a
"knowledge-telling" (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1985) -- a
"think-say" without a reflection process. "For students
using the knowledge-telling strategy, writing is mainly a
process of taking knowledge from memory and putting it into
words" (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1985, p. 16). In such an
approach writing is not a tool for thought but an "instrument
to transmit pre-existing knowledge" (Scardamalia & Bereiter,
1985, p. 16).

Developing writers are more likely to move towards a
fuller understanding of creating a written text if
instruction encourages students' reflection on the processes
they used to complete a written text. Samples of professional
writers may be helpful in identifying successful models to
emulate, but inexperienced writers tend to view such models
as distant and removed from their experiences:

Typical basic writing students find it almost impossible
to articulate anything about the values of characters
unlike themselves. In short, they have problems drawing inferences or forming concepts based on what they have read (Lunsford, 1979, p. 38).

Indeed, the distance between a developing writer and any master of the craft is often insurmountable because of developing writers' understanding of writing exclusively as a vehicle for conveying information about personal experience or for "knowledge-telling" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). Thus, developing writers rarely make a connection between the structure and content of their text and the structure and content of the text of "a master."

This inability to form connections between self-generated text and the text of others is also compounded by the manner in which developing writers read an existing text. According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), developing writers possess a limited range of mental representations of the text. Because they approach the generation of the text as a "knowledge telling" process, they also approach reading with this limited range of mental representation, and this locks them into immature reading strategies. At best, these immature reading strategies enable students to extract factual information from a written text; however, as suggested by Lunsford (1979), they have difficulty forming inferences and conclusion from what they have read: "typical basic writing students find it almost impossible to articulate anything about the values of characters unlike themselves" (p. 38). Thus, developing writers gain limited
insight into their own complex processes of generating written text from reading.

For these writers, developing representations of the text is further hampered by their limited knowledge of the subject and limited understanding of the genre, especially the genre of the essay. In addition, because they lack a "discourse schema," (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) a framework for interpreting and analyzing the information in the text, they are generally unable to store the information in long-term memory in a meaningful way and, consequently, unable to retrieve the information when needed for the "resource demanding" (Flower & Hayes, 1980) task of writing.

However, since student writing is generated from the students' own experiences, it has greater immediacy and relevance. With such text, students do not have to breach the gulf between themselves and the text of "masters." Indeed, since the students generated the text, its structure, content, and ideas can be more directly referenced to the cognitive processes the students employed as they created the text. The major aim for the composition teacher should be to encourage students to reflect on the procedure the students used to generate text and on evaluating the rhetorical integrity of the text once it has been produced. As Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) report, such reflection should be aimed at increasing the students' metacognitive knowledge of the complex process of writing. Without this metacognitive
knowledge, students remain dependent on the teacher "to tell them what to do and when to do it" (Englert, Rapahael, Fear, & Anderson, 1988, p. 19). Such metacognitive development may be aided by giving students greater access to text generated from their own cognitive processes. Students will develop greater access to their own cognitive processes if instruction emphasizes explicit general heuristics or prompts that foster the students' metacognitive development.

In addition, this metacognitive development should encourage students to use a "knowledge transforming" approach to writing rather than the "knowledge telling" approach that developing writers employ (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986). That is, developing writers tend to view writing as a linear process that does not involve exploration and revision. Developing writers create the text in a linear, or non-recursive, process. Revision exclusively involves editing to fix errors and not to review overall organization and thinking. In addition, the developing writer has problems:

- in thinking of what to say, in staying on topic, in producing an intelligible whole, in making choices appropriate to an audience not immediately present.
- At a deeper level there are problems of searching memory without external cues and executive problems of holding the various subprocesses of discourse together for extended periods" (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986, p. 16).
Cognitive Processes of Experienced Writers

In contrast, experienced writers use a more complex approach to writing. This complexity is marked by an understanding that writing is a non-linear process. The experienced writer actively reworks knowledge as it is used in writing. This "knowledge transforming" (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986) is marked by substantive changes as the writer redefining constraints and purpose while "finding the shape of the discourse" (Lindemann, 1987, p. 176). For developing writers, the movement from "knowledge telling" to "knowledge transforming" is a difficult process, because knowledge transforming involves parallel activity in two problem spaces, a content space and a rhetorical space, with interaction between the two spaces so that the results obtained in one space may be translated into problems to be solved in the other space (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p. 299).

Thus the crucial difference between "knowledge telling" and "knowledge transforming" lies in defining the problem and developing problem solving activities that lead to the reworking of knowledge to create the text. Indeed, as the work of Flower and Hayes (1977, 1980) reports, writing is a very "resource demanding" task for expert writers. For the expert writer, the problems of the writing task are defined by the writer and not by the nature of the assignment. The text may have been developed to meet an external need, but for the expert, the writing task is
self-defined in such a way that it becomes meaningful for the writer. This redefinition of the writing task in terms of the self creates a self-reference effect, and as Matlin (1994) points out, this has important ramifications for the levels of processing of new information and the recall of data stored in long-term memory. This self-reference of the writing task, encourages writers to "elaborate" strategies of generating text; and, consequently, they may be more likely to store these strategies in long-term memory and retrieve such information when faced with the demanding task of writing.

In addition to the redefinition of the writing task in terms of the self, expert writers display other types of cognitive activities that lead them to achieving their goal. Experts use a non-linear approach to writing. They view writing as a recursive process where meaning is "crafted and constructed" (Perl, 1983, p. 48). Once constructed the text can be checked and evaluated. Through this evaluation, writers can "execute self-regulatory mechanisms" (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987, p. 253) to control and direct their cognitive processes as they create and review text. This "self-regulation" in turn leads to self-discovery.

Expert writers also use complex methods to get at information stored in memory to generate text. They employ problem solving strategies to manage the writing process (Flower & Hayes, 1977). They use a heuristic search. In
In this context, "heuristic" is used to describe a strategy of problem solving that increases the probability of finding what one is looking for (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986) with reasonable expenditure of effort or reasonable demands on cognitive ability. These heuristics give the writer a range of alternatives to develop text content. "These heuristic are a kind of shorthand for cognitive operations. They give the writer self-conscious access to some of the thinking techniques that constitute 'inspiration'" (Flower & Hayes, 1977, p. 452).

Expert writers also possess "mental representations" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) of the text (chunks) that allow them to initiate different operations. These representations go beyond the surface and seem to include representations of detailed content, structure, or goal representation. For the expert, these representations are viewed as inter-related representations of the text the writer constructs.

Finally, the expert writer is able to "decenter" (Britton, Burgess, Martin, Mcleod, & Rosen, 1975) writing tasks in terms of the reader and not the writer. That is, as expert writers develop text, they do so with the reader's needs in mind. This is a difficult transformation because the writer engages in discourse with an audience that is not present. Indeed, the audience may often be remote or defined in abstract or general terms. However, the expert writer has
developed a language production system capable of creating text independently (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

**Helping Developing Writers Think Like Experts**

One of the major differences between developing writers and expert writers is the level of complexity with which the expert writer approaches the writing task. For experienced writers, representations of the text are varied and multifaceted; for developing writers, representations are at a lower level and are usually one dimensional. Experienced writers also develop interconnections among the representations of the text they construct. Developing writers rarely make such connections, and when they do, they make connections on a surface level (Scardamalia & Paris, 1985).

As described above, experienced writers use complex processes to develop text. They redefine the writing task in terms of themselves. Thus, they establish the level of complexity for the writing assignment, and in the process of the redefinition, they establish a definition of their imagined audience. Experienced writers evaluate text as it is created. As they do so, they execute self-regulatory strategies to monitor and evaluate their cognitive processes (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986). Experienced writers use problem-solving strategies to develop solutions to constraints of the text as they elaborate those constraints.
In so doing, they develop more options for solutions and a text that is more deeply integrated. In employing problem-solving strategies, experienced writers establish goals and operators (Flower & Hayes, 1980) that allow them to progress towards the completion of an integrated text. For example, experienced writers might establish a goal of creating an interesting introduction to an essay by starting with an relevant anecdote. The goal is relatively specific and attainable by a sequence of operations.

Instruction of developing writers should reinforce those traits that experienced writers bring to bear on the writing assignment. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) suggest the technique of "procedural facilitation" as one technique for reinforcing traits of experienced writers in the novice. This technique consists of routines and external aids to help the developing writer process the more abstract and demanding tasks of writing. Through repetition of these external aids, developing writers begin to adopt strategies that enable them to develop a more integrated text. For developing writers, a deeper understanding of the aspects of writing discussed below is crucial if they are to move from a "knowledge telling" to "knowledge transforming" approach to writing.
Writing for an imagined audience.

As stated above, developing writers have difficulty imagining an audience because the audience is not present. Unlike a speaker who has a sense of audience because the listener is present and reacts to the speaker, the writer must imagine the unseen audience. According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), inexperienced writers lack the ability to evaluate their text because the process they use to write lacks the "feedback capabilities" necessary for "evaluation". In spoken discourse the speaker relies on the audience for cues to evaluate the discourse. In written discourse, since the audience is not present, no such cues for "evaluation" and "self-regulation" are available. Writers must generate their own "feedback", and inexperienced writers are incapable of doing so.

For developing writers the difficulty arises in changing inner speech to written text:

Writing is also speech without an interlocutor, addressed to an absent or imaginary person or to no one in particular. ... The changing motives of the interlocutors determine at every moment the turn oral speech will take. It does not have to be consciously directed ... The motives for writing are more abstract, more intellectualized, further removed from the immediate needs. In written speech, we are obliged to create the situation, to represent it to ourselves. This demands detachment from the actual situation. (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 99)

For developing writers, the difficulty in imagining an audience that is not present is frequently confounded by the
nature of the writing task. According to James Britton et al (1975), most school assignments do not encourage a development of a sense of audience because the assignment is not rooted in a real writing situation. This has important ramifications for the depth of connections that developing writers make with the text. If developing writers feel that the writing task is remote, they lack the skills to form connections with the topic. Consequently, this encourages the student to look to the assignment for "constraints" and "cues" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

For developing writers, this is particularly critical because most assignments do not give explicit cues of the audience. The assumption is that the writer brings this knowledge to the task. However, if for the developing writer the assignment is not rooted in a real world experience, students will likely be unable to connect the assignment to a particular audience. This inability to form connections with an imagined audience encourages the developing writer to process the concept of audience on a superficial level. Since they are unable to imagine the audience, they are unable to "elaborate" the constraints that the audience might impose on the text. As Matlin (1994) outlines, the degree of elaboration has important consequences for the levels of processing of information. For developing writers, surface elaboration leads to disconnected solutions to problems presented in the writing task. That is, if the students
envision the audience for a writing assignment or task in isolation, they are unable to form meaningful connections between the audience for a writing assignment and other elements of their lives. In turn, this will mostly likely lead to processing the concept of audience in a one-dimensional way, and they will be less likely to integrate the experience in a meaningful way as they create the text, and, indeed, any future text they create. This lack of integration also increases the likelihood that developing writers will be unaware of how an audience that is not present may have influence their rhetorical choices and the shape of their discourse.

Indeed, when developing writers are faced with an assignment that is not rooted in a real writing situation, they tend to become the audience for the text they are creating. That is, they become unable to "decenter" and they develop what Linda Flower (1979) calls "writer-based prose". Since they are writer and audience, their texts are centered on themselves, not on an imagined audience.

The ability to "decenter" and create "reader-based prose" (Flower, 1979) is significant because the writer must fulfill the needs of the reader. In her theory of "projective structuring," Sondra Perl (1983) also stresses the importance of the writer "decentering" from the text and determining their readers' needs in order to craft the text so that it is intelligible to others. For Flower and Hayes
(1977), it is important to establish a heuristic for encouraging "reader-based prose". Essentially, this heuristic recommends that a paper be set up around a problem or a solution it intends to offer. However, it is also important that the writing task be rooted in a real-world setting so that developing writers may "elaborate" how a familiar audience may have influenced their choices in creating the text.

**Evaluating texts.**

According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), "learning to act as a reader of one's own text and learning to overcome the saliency of what one has already written appear to be major steps in developing a language production system that can operate flexibly with feedback from its own output" (pp. 56-57). This inability to evaluate what one has written is also reflected in Linda Flower's (1979) description of the "writer-based" prose of inexperienced writers. One of the difficulties in evaluating the written text is that it has an immediacy for the writer. The text exists, it has been "crafted and constructed" (Perl, 1983) by the writer. Consequently, it has a "saliency" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) that limits the writer's ability to evaluate how the text will be understood by the reader. Because the writer knows what the text should say, the inexperienced writer often wrongly assumes that the text does say what was
intended. Inexperienced writers are prone to make this assumption because as they read, they fill in the "gaps" in the text with the words, sentences, or ideas they intended to say. According to Hayes and Flower (1987) "writers knowledge of their own texts makes it difficult for them to detect faults in those texts" (p. 26). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) also describe this phenomenon. Since inexperienced writers know what the text means they cannot imagine anyone failing to understand what they intended.

Writing as problem solving.

The work of Flower and Hayes (1977) has described the process of writing as a method of problem solving. "In studying writing as problem solving we have attempted first to describe some of the basic heuristic procedures which underlying (sic) writing, and then to translate these heuristics into teachable techniques" (p. 450). In this context heuristics are a rule of thumb, an alternative to using trial and error. As stated in Matlin (1994) heuristics are a useful method of getting to a goal. For Flower and Hayes (1977), heuristics are a "codification of a useful technique or cognitive skill" (p. 450). In the context of writing, heuristics are methods of increasing an awareness of the process and subprocesses that may take place unconsciously. Since heuristics open up these processes, they allow for the possibility of making a rational choice.
and increasing the probability of finding the solution that will lead to the goal of completing a written text.

For much of their work, Flower and Hayes (1977, 1980) used oral-report protocol. These protocols have found that developing writers have three major heuristics for writing: "prescription", "inspiration", and "writer's block" (a strategy for not writing). Inexperienced writers have very limited strategies to employ when they encounter writer's block. The advantage of heuristics is that they give the writer a number of strategies to employ to overcome writer's block and achieve their goal. In the composition course, the repetition of strategies to generate texts should encourage "codification of . . . a cognitive skill." This codification is further promoted by encouraging students to reflect on the cognitive processes they brought to bear on completing a written text.

For Flower and Hayes (1977), this heuristic strategy has three parts: planning, generating ideas in words, constructing meaning for an audience. Planning is an important part of the strategy for problem solving and especially for writing. For Flower and Hayes, planning involves setting up a "goal" and finding "operators" to achieve the goal. The goal is especially significant because it establishes a direction and allows for the identification of various subgoals which become the operators that lead to the primary goal. For Flower and Hayes, brainstorming is the
primary heuristic for generating ideas. It is a kind of "goal-directed play" that attempts to tap the writer's intuition. Peter Elbow (1994) advocates freewriting as a means of generating ideas through "first order thinking [which] is intuitive and creative and does not strive for conscious direction or control" (p. 25). This too is a kind of "goal-directed play." Linda Flower (1985) also suggests a strategy called "WIRMI - what I really mean is . . . " and switching from the internal voice of prose to the external voice of speech by saying aloud "what I really mean to say is. . . ." Also for Linda Flower, the idea of "satisficing" is important in accepting an imperfect draft rather than working to create a perfect text. Related to brainstorming is the Flower and Hayes (1977) suggestion for "treeing," or branching ideas into subcategories. Matlin (1994) also suggests this as a useful technique for problem solving in general.

Conclusion

Because of recent research on the cognitive process that impact the creation of the written text, we are just beginning to understand the complex processes of the writer's mind. Much of what we do know has lead to a greater understanding of how the skill involved in writing develops as an individual matures. What was once thought to be a simple process of transferring spoken language to written
text has proven to be a complex and, in many ways, ethereal process. Because of the elusiveness of many components of writing, developing writers in particular face many challenges as they strive to establish a foothold that will allow them to move towards a fuller understanding of their own cognitive processes as they develop a written text. Because thought and word are so closely connected, inextricably interwoven with this understanding is an increased awareness of how critical thinking and the application of critical thinking strategies impact the integrity of the text. The next chapter will discuss how some of the strategies of critical thinking inform instruction in the college composition course.
CHAPTER III
ESTABLISHING A CRITICAL THINKING FRAMEWORK

Introduction

As stated in the opening chapter, one of the immediate goals of the college composition course is to give students the ability and skill to participate in the discourse of the academy. In many ways, this is the course that lays the foundation for the language skills that will empower students as they complete their academic requirements towards a college degree.

However, if students are to be truly empowered through their use of language, they must also develop the ability to apply critical thinking skills and dispositions as they engage a written text. Since, as was discussed in the previous chapters, thought and language are closely interwoven, for students to be truly empowered through their use of language, they must develop the skill in evaluating the ideas that their language expresses. Because the college composition course is one of the main bridges across which students must travel to become successful participants in the discourse of the academy, the college composition curriculum must also emphasize the importance of thinking and reflecting on one’s thinking in the process of engaging a written text.

The ability to reflect on one’s thinking is important because one of the underlying assumptions of the college
curriculum is that as students complete their requirements towards a degree, they will develop the ability to function autonomously in the academic culture of the institution as their thinking skills improve. Since "good thinking is a prerequisite for good citizenship," (Nickerson, 1987, p. 31) ultimately, this skill will allow students to become good citizens and participate in a meaningful way in the discourse of the greater society.

The ability to function autonomously is directly related to the degree to which students apply critical thinking skills to the writing task. It is not just enough for students to learn to mechanically apply techniques that may characterize good writing, they must also learn the skill of evaluating the ideas and the knowledge that their language conveys. As Richard Paul (1993) states, "knowledge exists in the minds that have comprehended and justified it through thought" (p. 540). Consequently, instruction in the college composition course should foster the students' ability to reflect on the written text so that they can "comprehend" and "justify" their use of language as an accurate expression of their thoughts.

Conceptions of Critical Thinking and Composition

What is critical thinking? As the term is used today, it is defined variously among experts. However, because of the close interconnection between thought and language
virtually all conceptions of critical thinking have important implications for instruction in the college composition curriculum. However, because the primary emphasis of this work is on the cognitive and affective components of instruction in writing composition, this discussion will focus on the works of Robert Ennis and Richard Paul as they relate to teaching writing. The following discussion will outline critical thinking dispositions and abilities as defined by Robert Ennis and frame of reference and strong-sense critical thinking as defined by Richard Paul.

According to Robert Ennis's (1987) "Taxonomy of Critical Thinking Dispositions and Abilities," critical thinking is "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 10). In his book *Critical Thinking: How to Prepare Students for a Rapidly Changing World*, Richard Paul (1993) defines critical thinking as

1. Disciplined, self-directed thinking which exemplifies the perfection of thinking appropriate to a particular mode or domain of thinking. 2. Thinking that displays mastery of intellectual skills and abilities. 3. The art of thinking about your thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, or more defensible (p. 526).

Although there is considerable overlap in the Ennis and Paul definitions, there are also distinctions that indicate subtle differences in the concept of what critical thinking is. While the Ennis definition focuses on dispositions and abilities associated with critical thinking, Paul's
definition is considerably broader. Like Ennis, Paul recognizes the importance of intellectual abilities and skills. In addition, Paul frequently uses the word "virtues" to describe dispositions, or habits of personality or character. These virtues are traits such as "intellectual integrity, intellectual humility, fairmindedness, intellectual empathy, and intellectual courage" (Paul, 1993, p. 21).

However, Paul (1993) also places his definition in the context of specific domains:

Thinking varies in accordance with the purpose and issue. Critical thinkers learn to discipline their thinking to take into account the nature of the issue or the domain. We see this most clearly when we consider issues and thinking in different academic subject areas (p. 528).

In addition, Paul's (1993) definition also includes a metacognitive component: "Higher-order thinking involves self-regulation of the thinking process. We do not recognize higher-order thinking in an individual when someone else 'calls the plays' at every step" (p. 282). For Paul (1993), this "self-regulation" requires that critical thinkers question their own "framework of thought" (p. 550) on the most fundamental level, this requires thinkers to evaluate their assumptions and the process of reasoning they bring to bear on the problem-solving task. Although these two elements are not directly stated in Ennis's basic definitions, they are included as subsets of his discussion of critical thinking dispositions and abilities. For
example, Ennis (1987) recognizes the importance of "background knowledge" for effective critical thinking. He also acknowledges the importance of "identifying assumptions" and evaluating the inferences and pre-existing knowledge that one brings to the problem-solving task.

**Ennis's Conception of Critical Thinking**

As the title of his taxonomy states, for Robert Ennis, the two important factors for critical thinking are "dispositions" and "abilities". By dispositions, Ennis means habits of character and personality or "... attitudes and inclinations. You might also call them virtues." One of the fundamental dispositions is "to care about 'getting it right' or, more broadly, to care about coming up with the best, most unbiased answer that you feasibly can in the circumstances." (Ennis, 1996, p. xviii). Ultimately the disposition of "caring to get it right" is essential because "getting it right" is essential once it has been decided "what to believe or do."

In addition to this fundamental disposition, Ennis (1996) views two other dispositions as basic to good critical thinking:

Another is the disposition to care to be honest and clear about what is written, thought, and said. If you do not care about getting things clear, then your thinking might well be unfocused and confused, leading nowhere. A third is the disposition to care about the worth and dignity of every person.
If you do not care about this, then you might be a dangerous person (p. xviii).

According to Ennis (1987, 1996), the three primary dispositions have interrelated dispositions. These other dispositions are indicators that an individual is bringing the primary dispositions to the thinking task. In "caring to get it right", it is important to seek alternatives. This involves questioning conclusions, examining alternative hypotheses, and exploring alternative plans. "Caring to get it right" also means being disposed to considering questions, ideas, or conclusions from other points of view. The presence of these interrelated dispositions enhance the likelihood that a position will be established or a decision will be reached that is the right one, and that this decision or position will be justified by the information that was used to reach it.

Similarly, for Ennis, the primary disposition of "honesty" has several inter-related dispositions. Central to the disposition of honesty is to "[b]e clear about the intended meaning of what is said, written, or otherwise communicated, seeking as much precision as the situation requires" (Ennis, 1996, p. 9). If the "intended meaning" of a position is not clearly represented, then it is likely that the thinking that supports this position is unclear or poorly supported. Also central to the disposition of honesty is to be disposed to finding reasons that clarify the position. This disposition also requires an openness to ideas and
reasons that may refute one's basic beliefs. In order to maintain such openness, one should also be disposed to being 'reflectively aware of one's own basic beliefs' (Ennis, 1996, p. 9).

For Ennis, the third primary disposition is to "[c]are about the dignity and worth of every person" (Ennis, 1996, p. 317). This disposition also has several inter-related dispositions. It requires a sensitivity to the views and feelings of others. It requires that we care about the humanity of others. However, by definition

[The disposition, . . . to care about the dignity and work of others, is not required of critical thinking . . . , but in order that it be humane. I call it a correlative disposition, by which I mean that, although this definition is not part of the definition of critical thinking, it is desirable for all critical thinkers to have it and the lack of it makes the critical thinking less valuable, or perhaps of no value at all (Ennis, 1996, p. 9].

Critical thinking abilities according to Ennis.

In addition to the dispositions of character discussed above, for Ennis, thinking abilities or skills are important elements of critical thinking:

The basic areas of critical thinking are clarity, basis, inference, and intention . . . . These basic areas make intuitive sense. We want to be clear about what is going on. We want to have reasonable basis for judgment. We want the interaction with other people to be sensible . . . . And we want the disposition to be operative. (Ennis, 1987, pp. 16 - 17).

As we will see in the following discussion, these abilities are not discrete. There is a considerable inter-relationship
of one to the other. In addition, the abilities are interconnected with the dispositions of character that foster and develop the abilities.

Clarification of ideas is an important ability in expressing and interpreting ideas. In speaking and writing it is important that the words convey the ideas that were intended. In interpreting the words of others, it is important that the inferences drawn and the conclusions reached are intended and unambiguous.

Ennis (1987, 1996) recommends several strategies to help achieve clarity. "The first principal of clarification is focusing on a question" (1987, p. 17). This focus may require looking beyond the apparent question and determining or defining the central issue or question at stake. By virtue of focusing on the main issue, one can clarify the central concerns surrounding that issue, thus, leading to a clear or deeper understanding of the thesis or hypothesis and a broader understanding of the issues at stake.

Another important critical thinking ability is to recognize the basis on which ideas have been developed or conclusions have been reached. It is essential to determine the credibility of the sources upon which the idea is based. In order to do so, one must ascertain the sources' knowledge on the subject, their interest in the outcome of the issue at hand, their agreement with their peers on the issue at hand, and, finally, their reputation.
One's pre-existing knowledge is also important in determining the basis of an idea. This pre-existing knowledge may come from observation or from conclusions or inferences that have already been reached.

These inferences are important because they form the basis upon which one's knowledge and value structures have evolved. According to Ennis (1987) there are three interrelated categories of inferences: "deductive inference, inductive inference, and inference to value judgment" (p. 20). A deductive inference is one that is found after determining if something logically follows from premises that are assumed to be true. Inductive inferences are generalizations that are based on observation or experience that provide a probable explanation for a particular set of circumstances or a particular situation. An inference to value judgment is the complex web of social and moral values that are determined by the context of the situation. Since these inferences are based on judgments of value by the individual and the various communities within which the individual acts, they are often strongly held and often indistinguishable from fact. For example, in a highly contentious moral issue like the current debate over the legality of abortion, participants have determined their position on the issue through a complex web of social and moral values; they generally hold fast to their position; and they are often unable to distinguish between fact and an
inference to value judgment when determining what to do or say. Recognizing such inferences is important because they form much of the framework for the pre-existing knowledge critical thinkers bring to the problem-solving task.

According to Ennis (1987), in order for individuals to engage in "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 10), it is important that they recognize that much of what they know is based on such inferences and that in order to be reasonable and reflective in deciding what "to believe or do," they must develop the thinking dispositions and abilities that are essential for effective critical thinking.

Richard Paul's Conception of Critical Thinking

For Richard Paul (1993), the importance of "[c]ritical thinking is based on two assumptions: First, that the quality of our thinking affects the quality of our lives, and second, that everyone can learn to improve the quality of his or her thinking" (p. 20). Paul's view of the direct connection between critical thinking and the quality of life reflects a fundamental principle of critical thinking. In this regard, the quality of life is affected by multiple levels of overlap that individuals' lives have with the greater communities in which they participate: "Rich reasoning really is . . . [realizing] that we reason from a point of view, within a frame of reference, and with a
worldview in the background" (Paul, 1994, p. 180). Indeed for Paul (1994), these multiple levels of overlap present somewhat of a paradox because

Critical thinking, at least as I conceive it, is defined in the strong sense as inescapably connected with discovering both that one thinks within 'systems' and that one continually needs to strive to transcend any given 'system' in which one is presently thinking" (p. 182).

This ability to "recognize" and "transcend" the system within which one is thinking requires the individual be able to think independently. For Paul (1993) "... the most fundamental disposition necessary for all higher-order thinking [is] the drive, disposition, or will to think independently" (p. 284).

However, in Paul's conception (1993) thinking independently is not solely the ultimate goal of critical thinking. One's thinking must be tempered by "intellectual virtues" that will lead to action that is morally right. Such "virtues" can be fostered by "[a]ctively [developing] traits such as intellectual integrity, intellectual empathy, and intellectual courage" (p. 21).

For Paul, these "virtues" are the equivalent of critical thinking dispositions, or traits, of character, and are fundamental to the "open minded, truth-seeking, critical thinker". These traits are not discrete, but are interdependent: the development of one trait influences the development of others. In addition, since they are traits of mind and character, they cannot be imposed upon the person
but must be acknowledged, accepted and fostered by the individual so that they are developed from within rather than imposed from without. Any instruction aimed at developing critical thinking skills should foster the awareness of these traits within the individual and encourage their application to thinking and problem solving. Indeed, such instruction should foster the habitual application of these "virtues" to problem solving if it is truly aimed at developing critical thinking in the "strong sense." Selective application based on one's biases or one's sympathies can not be considered a virtue. That is, one is either virtuous all of the time or not at all. Anything less is not critical thinking in the "strong sense".

Weak-sense critical thinking.

For Paul, one of the pitfalls of instruction aimed at developing students' critical thinking skills and abilities is the assumption that critical thinking can be learned by instruction in "... a battery of skills which can be mastered more or less one-by-one without giving serious attention to self-deception, background logic, and multi-categorical ethical issues" (p. 385). Such instruction fosters critical thinking in the weak sense where students do not question their "ego-centric and sociocentric biases." In fact, Paul contends that such instruction poses real dangers because students become more skilled at justifying their
biases rather than more skilled at evaluating them. This leads to a kind of sophistry where students use their thinking skill to attack opposing viewpoints and to defend their own.

In addition, for Paul critical thinking in the weak sense is characterized by exclusively applying "monological thinking" (Paul 1993) to find a solution to a problem. Although some simple problems might be solved by "monological thinking" (for example, how many sentences are there in this paragraph?), more complex problems require an ability to seek solutions from multiple frames of reference. Moreover, many problems have a "conceptual messiness" (Paul, 1993). They are often interwoven with other problems and their solution often contain implicit moral and ethical dimensions.

Finally, critical thinking in the weak sense is reasoning that does not apply the element of empathy to the thinking task. That is, in order to think effectively within multiple frames of reference, it is not only important to be sensitive to other points of view but also necessary to be able to place oneself in those different frames of reference. Only through such empathetic connection with other viewpoints can one truly develop an understanding of the emotional and intellectual dimensions of an alternate frame of reference.

Consequently, as stated above, any instruction aimed at fostering critical thinking should be aimed at encouraging an increased self-awareness of the factors that impact one's
thinking. Developing this self-awareness is fundamental to acquiring the "virtues" that Paul considers essential to avoid the pitfalls of critical thinking in the weak sense.

**Strong-sense critical thinking.**

This self-awareness is essential to understanding critical thinking in what Paul (1993, 1994) calls the "strong sense." Critical thinking in the strong sense is, as stated above, an awareness "that one thinks within a 'system' and that one needs to continually strive to transcend any given 'system' in which one is thinking" (1994, p. 182). As defined by Paul (1994), there are three basic systems within which one may think: An individual point of view, a particular frame of reference, and a broader worldview. In teaching strong-sense critical thinking it is important for "... students [to] explicate, understand, and critique their own deepest prejudices, biases, and misconceptions, thereby allowing students to discover and contest their own egocentric and sociocentric tendencies" (Paul, 1987, p. 149). Developing an awareness of such tendencies, or biases, is important because their presence can create defects in the thinking or problem-solving process:

Such biases exist most profoundly in areas of their [students] identities and vested interests. Their identities and interests are linked in turn to their unarticulated worldviews. One's unarticulated worldview represents the person that one is (the view implicit in the principles which guide one's actions). One's articulated worldview
represents the person that one thinks one is (the
view implicit in the principle used to justify

Thus, for Paul (1993) there are two fundamental worldviews
that overlap each other: "One implicit in our activity and
engagements, another implicit in how we describe our
behavior" (p. 386).

Recognition of these two worldviews is fundamental to
Paul’s (1993) conception of critical thinking in the strong
sense:

Critical thinkers are not defined by the
worldview(s) they hold, but by the way in which
they hold it (them), by their awareness of
radically different worldviews and by a common
discovery that they, like everyone else, are at
times capable of not only being wrong but also of
thinking irrationally, narrowly, unclearly,
imprecisely, superficially, irrelevantly, and
inconsistently. They share a real commitment to
monitor their thinking to minimize these
pathologies of thought (p. 183).

Such “pathologies of thought” are also a consequence of
one’s egocentricity and sociocentricity. Egocentricity is the
tendency to view the world in relationship to oneself;
sociocentricity is the tendency to view the world in
relationship to the social groups that one considers oneself
to be a member of (Paul, 1993). Thus, because of such
egocentricity “we tend to think that the beliefs and values
we hold are better than the beliefs and values of others”
(Paul, 1993, p. 370); or because of sociocentricity, the
beliefs and values of the groups we belong to are better than
the beliefs and values of the groups we do not belong to.
Such tendencies can lead to "pathologies of thought" because "[the] tendency to think egocentrically and sociocentrically, then influences the judgments we form regarding 'us' and 'them', as we tend to assess the people and groups we like by different standards than those we dislike" (p. 372).

Critical thinking in the strong sense recognizes that this egocentricity and sociocentricity influences the way we arrive at judgments. Strong-sense critical thinking strives to transcend such biases by bringing the critical thinking "skills," "abilities" and "virtues" to the thinking process as one strives to become more rational.

The Role of Knowledge

Traditionally, education has emphasized instruction in course content as a means of developing rationality. The assumption of this method of instruction is that as students acquire the content knowledge, they would also acquire the skill to reason so that they would effectively understand, synthesize, and apply that knowledge. In the extreme, this approach to instruction does not emphasize thinking skills, because it views knowledge and thinking as inseparable, in fact, as one and the same thing. No doubt there is a close inter-relationship between the two. "On the one hand, thinking is essential to the acquisition of knowledge, and, on the other, knowledge is essential to thinking" (Nickerson, Perkins, Smith, 1985, p. 49). In such a view,
the two, although perhaps not inseparable, are distinct activities. Consequently, instruction in the classroom should also foster students' ability to apply good thinking skills to their pre-existing knowledge as they apply what they already know towards learning and synthesizing new information and acquiring new knowledge.

In other words, if students are to acquire good thinking skills in the classroom, explicit attention will have to be given to that objective; it is not likely to be realized spontaneously or as an incidental consequence of attempts to accomplish other goals (Nickerson, 1987, p. 29).

In this approach to education, in-class instruction emphasizes the need to provide students the thinking skills and dispositions of character and personality that will lead them to "higher-order activities [such] as reasoning, creative thinking, and problem solving" (Nickerson et al., 1985, p. 48).

This is becoming one of the stated goals of education, and as a result, the curricula of many colleges are increasingly requiring the inclusion of instruction in critical thinking as an academic priority of the institution. Some institutions have required successful completion of a course in critical thinking as a prerequisite for graduation; others have required the inclusion of critical thinking skills and disposition as stated objectives on course syllabi. Since, as discussed in previous chapters, thought and language are so closely intertwined, this institutional
priority has directly impacted the curriculum of the college composition course.
In teaching writing, "[w]e ask our students to focus on the most ordinary of their skills, the skills of using language and thinking . . . . qualities that they know so well that the conscious effort to recognize them is extremely demanding" (Goldberg, 1983, p. 36). For the teacher, one of the major difficulties of teaching writing is fostering an awareness of what the students implicitly know about writing and thinking so that this knowledge becomes explicit. For the students, one of the greatest difficulties is tracing the development of their thoughts as expressed in language so that what they know becomes more explicit. "And encouraging students to make their own knowledge explicit helps make the knowledge available to be used consciously" (Kutz et al., 1993, p.149).

However, the traditional way of teaching writing to incoming college students has not focused on "what the students know so well" but has emphasized instruction in rhetorical modes of expression as a means of modeling good writing. In this approach to teaching writing, students read successful samples of essays in a particular mode and then use that essay as a model from which to develop their own writing. This method of instruction attempts to take
advantage of the close connection between reading and writing. It assumes that when students read good writing they will recognize its elements and be able to transfer the skill and technique of the expert writer to their own texts. While this method of instruction may work for writers who have a fairly good understanding of their own ability and of their writing process, it is less likely to work for developing writers or non-traditional students who may lack this understanding. Berthoff (1978) points out the weakness of such an approach:

The traditional way of teaching composition was to set a certain theme or topic and require students to compose in the manner of a master stylist whose essay on the same topic had been painstakingly analyzed. . . . The trouble was that the topics were generally banal or 'irrelevant' and the distance between the student writer and Francis Bacon or Thomas Carlyle was often felt as a shameful fact (p. 233).

In addition to the irrelevancy of the topics, developing writers find it difficult to make connections to such texts because they lack integrated "mental representations" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) of the text. For them, at best, such text are interpreted on the surface.

Writing instruction that uses reading in rhetorical modes to model good writing also presupposes a particular type of freshman that is becoming more the exception than the rule. As discussed in previous chapters, because of the changing dynamics of college and the college composition course, the classroom is more likely to be composed of non-traditional students or traditional students with poorly
developed writing skills. Developing writers and non-traditional students are more likely to recognize the elements of good writing and incorporate the skill and techniques of a good writer into their writing repertoire if instruction is primarily focused on student-generated writing, not the writing of successful professionals. Such instruction will assist students in developing a greater awareness of their own writing and of the writing processes they use to develop their ideas.

**Locating the Portfolio in the Writing Curriculum**

Developing a student-writing portfolio is one way of focusing instruction on student writing. Such a portfolio creates the opportunity for students to see the relevance of their work in English composition and to trace the development of their thinking as they worked to create a written text.

Additionally, focusing instruction on student-generated writing will encourage students to feel a greater sense of self-worth and an opportunity to actively participate in the discourse of the academic community. As Elbow (1990) stated, "when we assume that writing is always in response to reading and lectures, we tend to keep students from breaking out of the passive stance for school and learning" (p. 184). This "passive stance" encou...
meaningfully engaging in and, therefore, contributing to the shape of the discourse of their academic community. For Paul (1993), active engagement is the foundation upon which critical thinking is built. Kutz et al. (1993) also emphasize the importance of students actively participating in the academic community:

To become participants in an academic community requires engagement in the life of that community. It is not learning specific truths or ideas but developing a sense of their [students'] own self worth as thinkers. Students have to care about their the ideas in the community and to feel that they can question and challenge the ideas of the academy (p. 81).

In order to question the academy, students must develop confidence in their ability to express their ideas in writing. However, "[o]ne of the deepest educational mysteries for many freshmen is what distinguishes good writing from bad . . . to them it is all subjective" (Erickson & Strommer, 1991, p. 202). Unraveling the mystery of writing is also compounded because "writing obliterates most of its traces" (Martin, 1986, p. 48); and, as discussed earlier, it is "speech without an interlocutor" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 99). The writing portfolio is one method of instruction that can help to overcome these barriers to instruction and learning by giving the student the ability to follow the traces of their thoughts and become more sensitive to shaping the text to meet the needs of their audience.

Because the portfolio asks students to review, evaluate, and compile a selection of their writing over a designated
period, in this case a semester's work, it helps students to trace their thoughts and to evaluate their rhetorical choices as they worked to create texts to express those thoughts in writing. As Vygotsky (1978) stated "[a]ny psychological process, whether the development of thought or voluntary behavior is a process undergoing changes right before our very eyes . . . under certain conditions it becomes possible to trace this development" (p. 61). Because the portfolio requires students to review their work over a period of time, it creates the conditions that provide an opportunity for students to follow the traces of their thoughts as they developed the text. This is significant because "as students learn to reflect on their practices, they will become more self-aware, more independent and strong as readers and writers" (Elbow, 1990, p. 51).

For the student, a student-writing portfolio also helps to unravel the mystery of writing because it provides a conceptual framework from which the student can evaluate writing. In this case the conceptual framework is the "self," a powerful way of referencing and organizing information. That is, because the texts were created by the students, the ideas and rhetorical choices have a greater immediacy and relevance for the students, and, consequently, those texts provide a frame of reference so that "they [students] can relate new information to that which they already possess" (Sternglass, 1983, p. 155). Without this
frame of reference, students are less likely to retain and apply what they have learned because they have no means of organizing the information for later retrieval. They will merely acquire what Perkins (1987) refers to as "disconnected knowledge" (p. 62), that is, information not related to pre-existing features that makes it meaningful.

Finally, because the nature of the portfolio and the work required to complete the portfolio is grounded in writing workshops, peer review, and teacher conferences, it helps to make explicit for the student that writing takes place within a context of audience and purpose. For developing writers, this work is important because peer review and teacher conferences not only helps students overcome the saliency of the text (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) but also creates an interlocutor that provides immediate feedback on the clarity and effectiveness of the text. A significant advantage of such work is that it provides an opportunity for students to switch from conversation to writing and from writing to conversation. This is a critical advantage because students generally have greater competence and confidence in their ability to express their ideas in conversation. Consequently, switching from writing to conversation often helps to make explicit difficulties or gaps contained within the written text that would otherwise be "filled in" (Flower & Hayes, 1977). Conversely, switching from conversation to writing often
helps to facilitate the creation of the written text because students generally find it easier to express their ideas orally and then transfer them to writing.

The student-writing portfolio presented here is one component in the overall teaching strategy for teaching composition. However, when the portfolio is made an integral part of student assessment, it can become a powerful strategy in helping students to understand that writing is a recursive process that explores, discovers, analyzes, evaluates, and selects words, sentences, and ideas. Through the activities of compiling a portfolio for assessment, students will increase their awareness that writing takes place within a context of writer, audience, and purpose. Thus, it enhances students' sensitivity to the fact that their reasoning takes place within what Paul (1993) would refer to as a particular "frame of reference." In addition, because the development of the student portfolio requires students to review their own writing, this activity encourages the students to reflect on and evaluate their written text, and such activity fosters learning: "learning involves the making of meaning and reflecting back on this process of making meaning" (Elbow, 1990, p. 18).

A more detailed discussion of the portfolio will follow, but essentially to complete the portfolio, students review their writing for the semester, compile a representative selection of writing samples, and attach a written analysis
of each piece of writing. The writing samples and the analyses are submitted for evaluation and assessment as a component of the students' grade for the composition course. The portfolio is submitted at the end of the semester, identified by the student's social security number to increase anonymity and minimize bias. To further minimize bias in assessment, each portfolio is subsequently assessed by a writing instructor or instructors other than the instructor of the student's composition class. To encourage the student to seriously consider the process, the portfolio should be weighted as a significant component of the student's final grade for the course.

As you can see from the Model for the Writing Portfolio and the accompanying Portfolio Grading Sheet articulated in Appendix A, this portfolio is built on two components: a student writing sample and attached "letter" of analysis of the writing sample. The first component consists of four samples of student writing, each chosen to demonstrate specific elements of the student's writing, for example: writing as a recursive process, revising previously graded work, writing in the disciplines, and applying elements of good writing. The second component consists of a series of "letters" requiring students to explain, analyze, evaluate, and revise their own writing. A basic assumption of this model is that asking students to write about their own writing is a metacognitive activity, and that this activity
will encourage students to internalize the key components of writing as they work to solve the problems they encounter while completing the portfolio. "What we loosely call 'problem solving' is at the heart of all studies, and it is becoming clear that writing promotes a self-consciousness about the endeavor that enables students to understand rather than just repeat by rote formulaic responses" (Mills-Court & Amarin, 1991, p. 104). The model also reflects Paul's (1993) belief "that the process of education is the process of each student gathering, analyzing, synthesizing, applying, and assessing information for him or herself" (p. 277). Because students are asked to make explicit their own knowledge, the resulting internalization of the fundamentally abstract components of writing is likely to increase the students' awareness of their own writing and to provide them with the skill to continually assess and develop their ability.

In-Class Instruction

Since the portfolio is a significant component of the composition class, much of the in-class instruction and activities should be designed to help the students understand and develop the fundamental concepts of writing. Although lecture and discussion may be used to introduce basic concepts and techniques, the primary activity in class should be centered on writing. Since it is important for students to trace the development of their text, much of the class
activity should reinforce writing as a recursive process of prewriting, writing, and rewriting. The advent of word processing has made such instruction more feasible, and has helped students realize that "[t]he composing process starts and stops and starts again; it goes in circles; it spirals" (Berthoff, 1978, p. 211). Emphasizing writing as a recursive process can be further enhanced by providing a safe environment for students to review, evaluate, and comment on the writing of their peers.

To illustrate how in-class instruction on a specific writing activity might proceed, let us follow the steps of one assignment, an analytical essay, from beginning to completion. Since writing an analytical essay is a relatively complex task, this would typically be assigned at approximately the beginning of the second quarter of the semester.

The first step in the process is for the instructor to introduce the assignment. At this point, it is important for the instructor to make clear what is expected. In order to increase the students' understanding of an analytical essay and to give the students a sense of how they will be evaluated, the instructor should hand out an assignment sheet. This assignment sheet establishes definite deadlines for specific phases of the assignment. It clearly describes what the instructor expects and, consequently, how the piece will be evaluated. After an explanation of the assignment,
the instructor should ask students to come to the next class prepared to discuss one or two topics suitable for a written analysis.

The goal of the next class is to encourage students to develop a more focused sense of what they are going to write about and how they might go about writing about their chosen topic. The class might begin by asking students to volunteer to discuss a topic they have prepared. The instructor should then moderate a class discussion on the appropriateness of the topic and how the student might develop it as an analytical essay. As part of this discussion, the instructor should model brainstorming, outlining, and developing a thesis. After a review of two or three topics, the instructor should ask each student to choose a potential topic and to brainstorm or freewrite facts, opinions, feelings, and ideas related to that topic. The goal of this activity is to explore details, ideas, and points of view related to the topic by using what Elbow (1994) calls “first-order thinking” (p. 25).

After the students have completed their brainstorm, the instructor should ask the students to work in groups of three or four to discuss the output of this work. The purpose of this activity is multi-faceted. As discussed earlier, it provides an opportunity for the students to get feedback from an audience and to switch from conversation to writing. An additional significant benefit of this essentially supportive
group activity is that it creates an environment conducive to collaborative learning. Through this activity, students recognize that their peers may have a different frame of reference and that they are a potential resource for the completion of the assignment. This relatively non-threatening activity also helps to create empathy among the students and prepares them for the potentially more threatening aspects of peer review that will follow.

However, the immediate tangible result of this activity is that it gives students the opportunity to re-evaluate their ideas in the context of peer discussion. In addition, this peer discussion will utilize the frame of reference of the other members of the group, and, consequently, lead the students to a more complete understanding of their ideas. The instructor should end this class by answering any questions and by asking students to comment on the assignment and the in-class activity.

Students should come to the next class with a working draft. The primary activity of this class is peer review, discussion, evaluation, and re-writing. In order to guide students through the peer review process, students should be given a Peer Review Sheet such as the one in Appendix B. This sheet should help students evaluate components of the essay that are relevant to the specific assignment. The Review Sheet is also an important tool for providing the reader and the writer access to the essay by establishing a
context in which to discuss it. The immediate objective of this activity is to provide a context for the students to get feedback on their ideas and increase their sensitivity to how their frame of reference may have influenced their thinking. In addition to the immediate purpose of providing feedback, this activity also provides the writer with an opportunity to re-evaluate their writing and analyze it in response to the reader’s comments. Obviously this activity further reinforces the concept of writing for an audience. However, switching from the role of writer to audience also creates an empathetic response among the students and according to Gallo (1994) "[e]mpathy fosters critical and creative thinking" (p. 44) because "it broadens it [the emotional response]" (p. 46). Consequently, the students’ emotional responses to the text in their role as the audience during peer review become an important element in leading to understanding of their own text. Once again, the instructor should end this class by asking students to comment on what they learned about writing from this in-class activity.

Depending on the ability of the class, the instructor may ask for a second draft or a final draft as the next assignment. However, before the final draft is completed, the instructor should discuss the essay with the student. This can either be done in private conference with the student or in class while the in-class activities described above are taking place. For the students, this discussion
with the instructor is an important component in validating their work towards completing of the assignment. It is also another opportunity to provide an additional frame of reference and to increase the students' awareness of writing for an audience. Additionally, this is important because ultimately this audience, composition instructors, will be the evaluators of the student's portfolio.

Before the final draft is due, the instructor should pass out a Cover Sheet for the essay as indicated in Appendix B. As you can see, this cover sheet is designed to encourage students to think objectively about their writing. It encourages them to identify what they have learned, what they found difficult, and what they would like to improve. In a very concrete way, it asks students to analyze, evaluate, and comment on their own writing.

The final step in the process is to ask for a reading of the final paper by the student who read the first draft. This re-reading should emphasize a positive evaluation of the student's final copy. The instructor should give verbal instruction to the readers asking them to write a letter to the writer explaining how the final copy is an improvement on the earlier draft(s). It is important that the instructor frame this evaluation in a positive way to enhance the cooperative learning environment of the writing classroom and to build a community of writers that will be better prepared to complete the next, more complex, writing assignment.
Essentially, this is the model for all assignments. It is based on the belief that student writers benefit from knowing how they think and compose and from reviewing and evaluating their own strategies. As they engage in these activities throughout the semester, they will develop the skills and dispositions they will need to complete the more complex task of compiling their portfolios.

Analysis of the Writing Portfolio

As discussed in the Overview of the Writing Portfolio above, the student portfolio is built upon the two pillars of student writing and subsequent student-written "letters" of analysis of their writing. This process requires that the student apply critical thinking skills and dispositions in order to successfully complete the portfolio. It asks students to examine the frame of reference which shaped their writing (Paul, 1993). It asks students to seek out alternative hypotheses and explore alternative plans (Ennis, 1987, 1996). It asks students to examine the basis or assumptions on which their ideas have developed (Ennis, 1987, Paul, 1993). However, the primary goal of the portfolio is for the students to learn how to evaluate their own writing with an increased degree of skill and objectivity and, subsequently, to continue to apply this skill and objectivity to improving their writing once they have left the composition class. In order to achieve this basic goal, the
four sections of the portfolio are designed to lead the student towards the achievement of specific objectives. As illustrated in the following discussion, each piece in the portfolio is deliberately chosen to reinforce the students' understanding of some key concepts of the writing process. For the sake of brevity and to aid with clarity, this discussion will be presented in four sections to correspond with the four basic elements in the portfolio as outlined in Appendix A. Each section of this discussion will show the relationship of the students' selection of their writing and the students' letter about their writing to critical thinking.

Section one.

This piece demonstrates the students' understanding of writing as a recursive process. As with all of the pieces in the portfolio, this piece requires that students review, evaluate, and select pieces from their writing history to meet specific requirements. The requirements for this piece are that the students understand that writing is a process of prewriting, writing, and re-writing. Completion of this piece requires students to maintain complete records of their progress in writing a particular piece. As they review their work throughout the semester, they are likely to notice how their individual writing evolves from idea to brainstorm to final copy. Students compile all prewriting, drafts, and
other related material that contributed to the completion of
the final draft of the essay. All of this is attached to the
final graded paper of the essay and submitted as the first
piece in the portfolio.

The cover letter that accompanies this piece is an
explanation. In order to complete this explanation, students
are asked to examine and evaluate their progress towards
completing the final draft. Using specific quotes and
references to their attached work, they must trace the
development of their text from concept to completion. This
requires students to consider how this individual text has
evolved and to reconsider their rhetorical choices in light
of what worked and what didn't work as they expected. The
key component of this letter is that students must trace the
development of a text and interpret their own actions.

"Student writers can benefit from knowing how they think and
compose and from reviewing and evaluating their own
strategies" (Martin, 1986, pp. 48,49). The explanation and
interpretation required to complete this piece, in a very
fundamental way, asks students to evaluate their own
thinking. In other words, as they evaluate their progress
towards completion of a specific assignment, they are, in a
very real sense, examining the thought processes they used at
each step of the assignment. Such an evaluation of one's own
thinking is a fundamental element of critical thinking. In
this context the self-evaluation applies to writing for
composition, but it encourages the student to use the same type of self-evaluation for writing in another context.

Section two.

The second piece in the portfolio is an analysis of a writing sample that the students believe to be their strongest piece for the semester. The objective of this piece is to encourage students to examine the quality of their writing. Once again, this piece encourages students to evaluate one piece of writing in relation to all of the writing they have completed for the course and in relationship to what they know about good writing. This activity is intended to foster in students a recognition of what distinguishes good and bad writing. In a more concrete way it requires that students recognize strengths and weaknesses in their own writing.

This recognition is further developed in the letter that accompanies this piece. In this letter, students are asked to persuade the evaluator that this piece does represent the student's best work. In addition to asking students to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, this letter requires students to formulate an argument. The student must design this argument to meet the expectations of a familiar audience, in this case an unknown writing instructor. Some of the objectives of this letter are to increase the student's sensitivity to writing for an audience and
encourage a recognition of the element of persuasion in all writing. As with Section One, this section of the portfolio requires that students evaluate their ideas. However, this section requires students to take the evaluation one step further by analyzing their writing and developing an argument that supports their analysis. Lunsford (1979) asserts the importance of working with analysis in order to move developing writers from writing in a narrative mode. This is important because for developing writers such narrative writing becomes "writer-based prose" (Flower, 1979), and, consequently it is not sensitive to the needs and expectations of the reader.

Section three.

The objectives of this piece are to further develop the idea of writing for an audience and to encourage students to recognize how the skills learned in composition class can be transferred to other writing situations. This piece requires students to select and evaluate a sample of their writing from a course in their major area of study. The piece should be representative of the type of writing in the students chosen field. Selection of this piece will require that the student evaluate their "professional" writing in the context of key concepts presented in composition class. The emphasis on this piece is for the students to examine content and to
consider or reconsider that content in the light of their audience and their purpose.

The letter for this piece reinforces these objectives by asking the students to examine content in relationship to the discourse of a specific field of study. In this letter, the students must identify their purpose in writing and define the type of audience that would understand the topic and purpose and be interested in reading their paper. The objective here is to encourage a recognition of the close inter-relationship of purpose, audience, and content. In addition, students should recognize how their purpose and audience shape the content. They will indicate an awareness of this understanding by pointing to specific vocabulary, elements of style, and specific ideas that are relevant to their audience and purpose, and are typical of the discourse in the discipline. The aim of this section is to overcome what Perkins (1987) refers to as the "principle risk" (p. 63) of instruction offered in one context but does not transfer to another, hence, leading students to acquire discrete and disconnected pieces of information.

In the process of completing this section, students should recognize the direct transferability of the skills discussed in composition class, a subject that students frequently approach with indifference, to a course in their major, presumably a subject they approach with enthusiasm. An additional aim of this piece is to show students the
interconnectedness of different disciplines and that as Vygotsky (1963) stated, "all the basic school subjects act as formal discipline, each facilitating the learning of the other" (p. 102).

Section four.

This section consists of an early piece of writing by the student, preferably one that was completed outside of the composition class. In this particular portfolio model, the instructor returns a Writing Sample that the student completed for placement into the appropriate course in English. There is typically a distance of about six months between the time the student wrote this piece and when it is returned for evaluation and inclusion in the portfolio. Because the primary intention of this section of the portfolio is to encourage the students to objectively evaluate their writing, it is important that there should be a considerable time distance between the initial writing and the evaluation for the portfolio. One of the purposes of this piece is to encourage the students to recognize that they, as writers, are in a constant state of evolution: the writer who wrote the piece six months ago is a different writer from the one evaluating it today. This piece is a way for students to recognize themselves as writers of an earlier text and to evaluate the effectiveness of that self as a writer of a structured piece of writing, written for a
specific purpose. It provides what Paul (1993) would call an opportunity to recognize that "we must reason within some point of view or frame of reference" (p, 155). Because of the distance between the initial writing of the text and its evaluation, the text is less "salient" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), and students will generally approach this task of their writing with an increased objectivity since there is little of their current selves invested in this sample of their writing.

The letter for this piece tries to capitalize on this distance by asking students to analyze this sample of their writing as an expression of their thinking. The ultimate goal of this analysis is to ask students to develop a plan for rewriting this piece. Students do not re-write the piece, but they should explain how they would improve it if given an opportunity. Essentially, this letter becomes a critique of the student's early writing and, consequently, a critique of the student's early way of thinking.

Summary

Writing and thinking are closely inter-related activities. Since student writing cannot be improved without improving the thinking skills from which it evolves, this writing portfolio attempts to improve that thinking by asking students to think metacognitively and engage their own writing. This is the underlying premise on which the
portfolio is built, and it explains the two-tiered approach to the portfolio: student writing and "letters" about that writing.

In the process of completing the portfolio, students are asked to review, evaluate, analyze, interpret, critique, and select the content, form, and ideas that they have chosen to shape their discourse. The process, the students' ideas, and their writings are an intimate reflection of the student's self-identity in the academic community of the school, of their identity in the professional community of their major, and of their identity in the greater community of society. Recognizing the dynamics of these different selves is a fundamental aspect of critical thinking. Understanding these dynamics is essential to fostering self-awareness and to participating in meaningful written discourse within the students chosen communities:

If our efforts to teach concepts of language structure are successful, however, some unanticipated learning can develop. That is, if our students do truly learn what we teach, they can learn more than the skill of writing; they can gain insights into their own minds (Goldberg, 1983, p. 37).
In addition to the difficulties of teaching writing to incoming students discussed in previous chapters, writing instruction at the particular institution where this portfolio model was adopted was hampered by two factors: one inside the English department, the other outside the department. Inside the English department, the composition curriculum had become fragmented into different approaches based on different philosophies of the best way to teach students how to write. Outside of the English department, the faculty in the disciplines tended to view writing instruction in isolation. That is, to many of them, writing was generally viewed as something students learned in English classes and not necessarily in courses in the disciplines.

One reason the approach to writing was fragmented was because although all writing instructors would have agreed that the overall goal of the composition course was to improve students' writing so that they could be successful in their college and professional careers, there were considerable differences among faculty on how best to achieve that goal. The syllabi of different writing instructors generally emphasized one of three approaches to instruction: exploring writer's voice through personal narratives and
journal writing, modeling good writing through instruction in the rhetorical modes, or developing analytical skills through writing persuasive and analytical essays. Although all syllabi stated the same course description and objectives, in time, members of the faculty had developed an individualized approach, adapting the course so that they could teach to strengths by employing what worked best for them yet still meet the diverse needs of their students. Over the years, instruction had begun to vary sufficiently enough so that it could be argued that one instructor's class was substantially different from another's.

At the end of each academic year, the department would make several attempts to develop a more focused and unified curriculum. However, such attempts were generally met with an unwillingness to standardize the curriculum so that every instructor used the same text, required the same type of writing assignments, and employed the same strategy for instruction. Consequently, the curriculum was adjusted in minor ways that made superficial attempts at addressing the different approaches to instruction in the composition class. After years of making such minor adjustments to course content, it was decided to employ a fundamentally different approach to instruction and assessment.
Portfolio Assessment and Curriculum Development

Within the English department, portfolio assessment was introduced as a vehicle to encourage students to reflect on the body of writing they had produced while they were students in freshman composition and as a vehicle to give shape and focus to the composition curriculum. Initially, portfolio assessment was introduced as an experiment on a small scale—just three sections participating--; however, it was generally expected that the portfolio would become a central component in all composition classes. With a uniform portfolio model as a central component in the composition course, all students would share in the common experience of developing a portfolio to fulfill the requirements of the course and submitting their portfolios for assessment by an instructor unknown to them. Such an assessment tool would provide a commonality to the curriculum and at the same time allow instructors to individualize the course to teach to their strengths and fulfill the varied needs of their students. Because instructors evaluated portfolios from other classes, portfolio assessment also provided a shared experience among the writing faculty. That is, it created a meaningful concrete context within which to discuss the objectives for the course, and it provided the opportunity to develop agreed upon criteria for what constituted good freshman writing in an academically diverse
community. However, in many unexpected ways, portfolio assessment lead to a transformation of the curriculum and resulted in distinct benefits for students, faculty and the institution. This transformation, in turn, had significant ramifications for the general curriculum of the college.

One other significant factor that encouraged the adoption of portfolio assessment was grade inflation. As in many institutions of higher education, the English department was genuinely concerned about the number of students receiving high grades. Although not too many students received grades of "A" or "A-", a relatively large number were receiving grades of "B" and that especially ambiguous grade "B-". The department was concerned that such grades were not an accurate reflection of students' writing ability.

Perhaps this grade inflation was partially due to the nature of teaching writing. Most instructors believed that an effective instructor must walk a fine line between criticism and support of the students' ideas and clarity of expression whenever student writing is evaluated. That is, especially for developing writers, the instructor must be sensitive to nurturing the students' ability while providing guided criticism of the students' work. The difficulty of maintaining this balance is further compounded by the diversity of skills in the writing classroom and the subjectivity of writing. It was felt that what was needed to address this difficulty was some method of assessment that
would provide a degree of objectivity to the evaluation process. This degree of objectivity was achieved by requiring that students submit their portfolio anonymously, identified by social security number only, and that the portfolio be evaluated by an instructor(s) other than the one the student had in class.

Finally, the discussion about instruction, assessment, and grade inflation among the English faculty was taking place within an academic community with the stated goal of fostering writing across the curriculum. Student writing was perceived to be at such a nadir that it was generally accepted that writing skills needed to be reinforced at every opportunity. However, although other faculty members were generally sympathetic towards instructors who taught English composition, when faculty complained that "our students can't write a simple sentence never mind a complete paper," the subtext of the comment was that the English department had the sole responsibility to teach students how to write.

In the face of this ostensible institutional contradiction, appearing to encourage writing across the curriculum and believing that writing instruction was the exclusive domain of the English instructor, the English department came to view portfolio assessment as an opportunity to bring about a cultural change in the institutional attitude towards the importance of writing.
In redefining the nature of freshman writing and its teaching, we found ourselves more and more seeing writing not as a tool with which to support the curriculum but as a means to transforming that curriculum and our students' relationship to it and the academic community (p. 82).

As with most shifts in institutional culture, this change in attitude would be subtle and gradual. However, it was believed that making the portfolio a very visible college-wide requirement for successful completion of freshman composition would increase the institutional sensitivity to writing across the curriculum in general and writing in the disciplines in particular.

**Benefits to Students**

There were many expected and unexpected benefits of portfolio assessment to the students. The idealistic goal for institutionalizing portfolio assessment was to foster the creation of a community of writers among the students. Because all students enrolled in English composition worked on the completion of their portfolio during the last three weeks of the semester, it was hoped that this would create an environment where students began to share their experiences of developing their portfolio. The strategy was to foster the feeling of a shared experience by encouraging students to seek advice from their writing instructor, their fellow students, and other faculty members who might have insight into the writing process.
students in composition, their instructors in their major, and other academic resources within the institution.

It would be naive to say that this objective was completely achieved, but the process and the conditions of completing the portfolio did enhance the students' sensitivity to the fact that writing takes place within a discourse community, and that this particular discourse community was the community of the "academy." Many students did in fact seek advice from a variety of sources within the academic community: fellow students, peer tutors, writing instructors, and instructors in the disciplines. As the deadline for submission neared, students worked together to refine and complete their work.

This commonality of the experience of sharing their thoughts and ideas as they worked on their portfolios is significant because in order to complete the portfolio, students needed to discuss some of the fundamentally important components of writing. That is, when students got together and shared their work, they were in a very real and specific way discussing important issues about writing in general and within this particular academic community. In order to complete their work, they needed to reflect not only on their writing, but to discuss fundamental issues of writer's voice, of writing to analyze, of writing to persuade, and of writing for a particular audience. In this
limited context, perhaps, a community of writers was actually achieved.

Another benefit to the student was that the portfolio was a way of clarifying the goals and objectives for the class. In a course like writing, where students have a poorly defined sense of what they need to do to be successful, the portfolio was a way of clarifying at least one fundamentally key component of the class. Because the portfolio has clearly defined guidelines and objectives, students could develop concrete steps that would help them to answer the more abstract elements of what constitutes good writing.

An additional benefit of the portfolio was that the work required to prepare students to complete the portfolio and the nature of the process of completing the portfolio forced the locus of the class to shift from the instructor to the student. Since the portfolio was centered on reflection on student writing and since it was a central component of the class, it necessitated that class discussions and analyses of student work be focused on the work that the students had produced.

This point is also significant because the very nature of moving the emphasis of the class to the writing of the students elevated the status of that work in the eyes of the students. This added an element of seriousness and a deeper understanding to the students' reflection, analysis, and
comprehension of their approach to writing and their use of language.

Students' comments on portfolio assessment.

For many of the students, this level of seriousness was created because as they worked on their portfolio, they developed the intrinsic motivation to complete the portfolio to the best of their ability. Subsequent student evaluations of the portfolio process, suggested that for some students the extrinsic motivation of achieving good grades had become less of a factor for them in evaluating their writing and that intrinsic motivation had developed. One such comment was typical: "The portfolio process was very useful to me. It was a good chance to analyze my writing where as (sic) before I just looked at the grade." Another student commented that "I am able to see how much I have progressed as a writer and I see a definite change in my motives -- from writing to impress the teacher to writing to express me."

Comments by other students suggest that the portfolio helped to change other dispositions about writing. For some students the portfolio process gave them greater motivation, self-awareness, and confidence in their ability to create a written text. Some students' comments that were typical of this change in attitude were, "I realize that I'm a creature of habit and all of my essays are written with the same process as well as realizing that my strengths and weaknesses
are in the same places in every paper." Another student's comment, though imprecise, reflected a dramatic change for this particular student when he stated that "it gives you great confidence in yourself that I have finished this portfolio." Such comments suggest that the portfolio was a meaningful experience that changed students' attitudes and that they will bring this deeper motivation, awareness, and feeling of confidence as they work to create written text in other discourse communities.

In addition to a change in attitude towards writing, students repeatedly cited that the portfolio process had given them valuable insights into improving their skill of writing, especially the skills of self-reflection, self- assessment, and self-correction. Some of these comments reinforce the importance of group work and peer review in developing the portfolio. "It has shown me what to look for when editing someone else's writing and also what I should be looking at in my own paper." For some, there were insights into process, 'I've become more aware of what I'm doing while I'm writing an essay' was typical of the type of insight students reported. Other students reported a greater understanding of the need to reflect and evaluate their own work. One student commented that the most difficult aspect of completing the portfolio was "honestly, evaluating my work. Everyone likes to think that their work is good and needs no improvement." Another student stated that
"evaluating gave me a chance to keep rereading my paper and helped me to see where it didn't sound right or make any sense." Such comments indicate a greater willingness and open mindedness by the students to evaluate and self-correct their writing and a deeper understanding of their use of language as they worked to create a text.

Since the writing that comprised the portfolio was generated by the students, their insights into rhetorical techniques and methods that worked and didn't work became realizations, or little epiphanies, that had an immediate and direct connection to the students' experiences in creating the text. Consequently, for many students, this understanding was more likely to become internalized and become part of the students' rhetorical repertoire as they create text in future discourse communities.

Benefits to Writing Faculty

For the writing faculty, as for the students, there were many expected and unexpected benefits of portfolio assessment once it was adopted as a college-wide requirement. Perhaps the greatest benefit, as stated above, was that it helped to frame the discourse of what should be taught in English composition, how it should be taught, and how it should be evaluated. Because the portfolio was submitted at the end of the term, it became a kind of summation for the students' experiences in composition. As such, it was
critical for the faculty to determine what should be the key elements of that experience. That is, what did the faculty want the students to learn? Since the portfolio was a substantial element of the students' final grade, it was important that these expectations be clearly defined for the students. In order for this to happen, the faculty had to clearly articulate their individual expectations and develop some agreed upon components. No doubt many discussions of this nature had taken place in the past, but because the portfolio was a concrete requirement, it helped to set the purpose and parameters of the discussion.

This framing of the discourse was also important in terms of establishing criteria for evaluating the portfolio. If faculty members were going to hand over their students' work for evaluation by someone else, there would have to be a great deal of trust that the criteria for evaluation were clearly defined and interpreted. Achieving this end would clearly entail ongoing discussions of what constituted a superior or an inferior portfolio. As faculty discussed the various components of the portfolio, it became clearer that even though different faculty members may have had different approaches to instruction, they all shared some fundamental similarities in their goals for their students. What began to emerge in the discussion about assessment was the similarity of points of view of how student writing should be evaluated. As a consequence of this, rather than becoming
contentious, developing assessment criteria became a process that reinforced the bond of collegiality among the faculty.

This collegiality was enhanced because as much as the portfolio was a common requirement for students it was also a common requirement for faculty. This point is important because one of the unexpected benefits of the portfolio was that it broke through the feeling of isolation felt by many instructors who were teaching writing. As indicated by the discussion above, because the portfolio helped to shape the discourse about teaching composition, it encouraged faculty to share their experiences of what teaching techniques worked and didn't work for them. This feeling of collegiality was enhanced by the confidence that handing over students' work for evaluation by another faculty member expressed. This set the stage for the substantive sharing of teaching experiences.

Finally, the commonality of the experience of evaluating portfolios from other classes, helped to remove some of the self-doubt that instructors often feel and to reinforce and clarify that writing instructors were, in fact, making progress in improving student writing. This is not an insignificant point when faced with the day-to-day frustration of working with student writing. Improvements are often marginal, elusive, and incremental; and instruction may not have an immediate effect on improving the students' ability to clearly express their ideas. Because the
portfolio is a compilation of the students' work over an extended time, improvements in student writing that were incremental often became more apparent, and this led to a greater sense of purpose and feeling of accomplishment among the instructors who taught composition.

Benefits to the Institution

As stated earlier, one of the reasons for introducing portfolio assessment was to bring about an institutional change in attitude toward the importance of writing in general and writing across the curriculum in particular. Although the need to increase the institutional sensitivity to the importance of writing and to improve student writing was readily acknowledged among all stakeholders within the institution, there was little agreement on how to do so. Previous attempts at developing writing across the curriculum had met with little success primarily because such attempts were implemented sporadically and in isolation. All of the stakeholders agreed that the goal of improving student writing was important, but for faculty outside of the English department, teaching writing was a daunting task and the concept of writing across the curriculum was ethereal at best. In addition, the ambiguity of how best to move the institution forward was further compounded by the lack of a clearly defined and articulated approach among writing
instructors on how best to improve and assess student writing.

Perhaps the immediate benefit to the institution of implementing portfolio assessment was that it provided a fulcrum around which the discussions about writing could revolve. Whereas other attempts at improving student writing were isolated and sporadic, portfolio assessment was integrated into the curriculum, and, once it was accepted, the perception was that it became institutionalized and permanent. This integration and permanency of the portfolio as a requirement for successful completion of freshman composition helped to move forward the discussion of improving student writing.

As stated above, one obvious way that discussion moved forward was the emergence of a consensus among writing faculty which lead to a more clearly articulated agreement of how best to improve and assess student writing. As this agreement evolved and as the portfolio moved towards institutionalization, the syllabi of all writing courses began to share more elements in common. Before portfolio assessment, syllabi for the freshman composition may have shared the same course description and the same objectives but may have had little else in common. As the portfolio became incorporated into the curriculum, the syllabi of different instructors began to share some similar activities and assignments. One immediate benefit to the institution
was that it lead to uniformity of the curriculum for freshman composition that had not been achieved with other strategies.

The uniformity of the curriculum led in turn to the presentation of a united front among writing instructors to the general college community. Because the portfolio was a clearly defined and highly visible instructional tool, it led to a clearer cultural perception of the importance of fostering and encouraging student writing. The ambiguity with which the general faculty had approached writing across the curriculum gave way to a more clearly defined sense of how writing could be incorporated into the syllabi of different courses. Now when faculty members complained "that our students can't write a simple sentence never mind a complete paper," it became more difficult to suggest that the instructors in the English department were solely to blame for this condition, and a greater number of faculty were willing to acknowledge and accept the importance of their role in improving student writing.

The incorporation of writing assignments in courses in the disciplines was also encouraged because one of the components in the portfolio asks students to reflect on a piece of writing in their discipline. The intention of including this piece was to encourage the students to transfer some of the principles of composition to writing in the disciplines. However, one additional, and perhaps unforeseen consequence, was that it encouraged students to
discuss writing with faculty in the disciplines. This in turn has lead to a bottom up approach to increasing faculty sensitivity to the importance of writing across the curriculum.

Because the requirements for the portfolio are clearly articulated, an additional benefit to the institution is that it has more clearly defined the expectations for what constitutes success in freshman composition. Although this clearer definition is important for all students, it is especially important for those students with marginal academic and language skills. In many ways, the increase in the numbers of this type of student was one of the motivating factors for initially implementing the portfolio.

By accepting these academically at risk students, the institution has tacitly acknowledged that the students are capable of completing their requirements as they work towards their degree. Consequently, it has a moral obligation to assist students to fulfill their academic requirements. Considerable institutional resources have been allocated to fulfill this tacit obligation. Funding is provided for an Academic Resource Center, faculty tutors, peer tutors, and other academic services to support students with marginal skills. Because the portfolio guidelines and expectations are a clearly articulated institutional requirement, the portfolio has provided a focal point and an opportunity to provide these support services to the students that the
resources were designed to serve. As a consequence, the number of students who seek out and use these resources to complete the course work for freshman composition has increased. This has led to a more efficient delivery of the services and, more importantly, has helped to identify students who are not only at risk in composition but also likely to be at risk in other academic areas. Thus, it has provided an opportunity for the institution to intervene and fulfill its commitment to these students.

Finally, the mission of the institution includes the statement that the institution is a "a community of learners." In a very concrete way the portfolio helps the institution achieve this mission. As described above, the nature of the work required to complete the portfolio encourages students to share their experiences with other students, with a variety of faculty members, and with staff members in academic support services. The portfolio does in a very real sense foster an awareness that the individual students' writing is part of the discourse of the greater academic discourse of the institution. This heightened awareness is not only significant for the students but also significant for all members of the institution who help to shape the principles and values for this particular "community of learners."
Implications for the General Curriculum

Perhaps the greatest implication for the general curriculum is that portfolio assessment has encouraged students to reflect on their writing as an expression of their thoughts and ideas. It would be facile to say that the portfolio has lead to a dramatic improvement in student writing, although at its best portfolio assessment has done so. However, what is more noticeable is that even at its worst, that is, where there seems to be little improvement in student writing, portfolio assessment has at least lead to a greater understanding by those students of the strengths and weaknesses of their writing and the obstacles they face as they struggle to create a text. By doing so, it has given those students some of the skills they will need to continually assess and improve their text as they express their ideas in writing.

Because the portfolio helped to focus and shape the discussion of the importance of student writing within the institution, one immediate consequence of this is that more resources have been allocated to improve student writing. After years of discussion, funds were allocated to create a computer writing lab dedicated to instruction in composition. Fifty-percent of class time for all composition courses is now spent in the writing lab. Working in the lab has provided a greater opportunity for students to share their
writing and for students to review, evaluate, modify, and
develop their writing as they work to complete a written
text. Perhaps the broader implication of the use of the
computer writing lab for the general curriculum is that this
is a highly visible application of computers to what was
generally perceived as a non-technical and purely academic
subject. As the ways in which technology can be
constructively applied to the classroom, this application of
computers to teach writing may encourage future uses of
computers in courses that are generally perceived as non-
technical.

However, one immediate way that the success of the
portfolio has effected the curriculum is that it has
encouraged the application of similar techniques in other
classes. One natural progression of its application from
English Composition has been into Introduction to Literature,
the second English requirement for all students. Although
students are not required to complete a portfolio as part of
this course, instructors who teach the course have begun to
incorporate several teaching strategies that were initially
introduced as instructional strategies in composition. In
Introduction to Literature, there is now a greater emphasis
on group activities that encourage students to share their
responses to the literature under study. Students are also
asked to review and comment on the written work of their
fellow students and their own written output as they work
toward completing the literary analyses that are a requirement for the course. As the institution moves forward and adopts more literature courses into the curriculum, there is a heightened sensitivity among English faculty of the importance of encouraging students to reflect upon their emotional, verbal, and written responses to the literature they encounter.

Similar techniques have been adopted in Business Communication, essentially another writing course. In this course students are required to maintain a correspondence file containing all of their written output for the semester. At the end of the semester, they are asked to review and write a written evaluation of the work they have completed for the course. Although this evaluation is not as structured as the work students complete for the portfolio, the activity is essentially the same.

Finally, because of the more focused discussion about the importance of improving student writing through encouraging writing across the curriculum, as course syllabi are presented before the curriculum committee, one standard question of members of the committee has been the amount and type of writing that the course requires. Because all proposed courses and significant course changes must come before this committee for approval, this heightened awareness has important implications for all future course offerings. Should the sensitivity of committee members to the importance
of student writing continue, more and more courses will contain a significant writing component as syllabi are cycled through this committee for review and approval, and as this happens, the institution will truly achieve writing across the curriculum.

The ultimate goal, however, is not merely to achieve writing across the curriculum but to give students a deeper understanding of the processes they bring to the creation of their written text and by so doing give them greater access to their thinking. During an historical period when information and ideas are often transitory, frequently contradictory, and generally overwhelming, achieving this goal seems more urgent than ever. Providing students with the dispositions and skills they will need to evaluate their transactions with the written text they encounter and create is important in making them successful members of the academy. It is important in allowing them to shape and challenge the discourse of their academic community. However, it is essential in providing them the thinking skills they will need to become good citizens and participate in a meaningful and productive way in the discourse of the greater society. This is one of the stated goals of education, and the composition class has become more pivotal than ever in achieving this goal.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A
MODEL OF THE STUDENT WRITING PORTFOLIO

This description is distributed to students at the beginning of the semester.

The student portfolio is a selection of your work to demonstrate your understanding of the elements of writing. The primary purpose of the portfolio is to help you better understand your own writing as you become a more effective writer. The student writing portfolio contains two important components: a sample of your writing and your written analysis of that sample. Completion of the portfolio is an important element in successfully fulfilling the requirements of College Composition.

Contents and Format
Your portfolio should contain four samples of your writing to meet the criteria discussed below. In addition, each sample should be accompanied by a cover letter which evaluates, analyzes, and explains your writing sample in light of these criteria. You must decide which samples of your writing to include in your portfolio. Your decision and your explanation of your decision will be important factors in evaluation.

Formatting and presenting your work will also be an important element of the portfolio. Your portfolio should be
submitted in a double pocket folder (available in the bookstore). Your name should not appear on any piece in the portfolio. Your portfolio will be identified by a title sheet which will contain your social security number. When you assemble the portfolio, it should contain the following pieces in the following order:

1. Cover Sheet
2. Table of Contents
3. Cover Letter for first piece
4. First Writing Sample and Accompanying Material
5. Cover Letter for Second piece
6. Second Writing Sample
7. Cover Letter for Third Piece
8. Third writing Sample
9. Cover letter for Fourth Writing Sample
10. Fourth Writing Sample

Each of the cover letters should be set up like a business letter, dated in the upper left corner and addressed to dear evaluator.

**Evaluation**

Your portfolio will be read and evaluated by an instructor(s) other than the one you had for Composition. You will receive a separate sheet which will explain the components of this evaluation. In order to help ensure a fair evaluation, all portfolios are submitted anonymously and read be an impartial instructor.
Selection of Writing Samples

Each of the four writing samples that you select should be chosen to illustrate your understanding and analysis of the following criteria:

The first sample should demonstrate your understanding that writing is a recursive process. This section should include all of your work to complete one essay. Consequently, it should include prewriting, peer review responses, drafts, and final graded paper.

The second sample is a selection of what you believe to be your strongest piece of writing for the semester. This section will explain why this is your best piece and identify specific strengths of the essay you have selected.

The third sample is a selection of a piece of writing that you have written for a course in your major. In this section, you should explain how this piece is representative of the type of writing in your chosen field. You should explain an awareness of how the topic and audience influenced the style. You should identify why this is good writing by pointing to specific elements of style and vocabulary related to your field of study.

The fourth sample in your portfolio is a reevaluation of the writing sample you completed for placement when you entered college. In this section, you should critique your writing sample by pointing to specific strengths and
weaknesses. You should also develop and discuss a plan to rewrite and improve this piece.

**COVER LETTER FORMAT**

There are four cover letters in the portfolio, one for each writing sample. The cover letter is to be written in the form of a letter, and the letter is to be in the form of an essay. Each letter will have your social security number and the date in the upper right hand corner. The letter will be addressed to **Dear Evaluator**. The cover letter will have the appearance of a standard formal letter.

The text of the cover letter should be organized into an introduction, body, and conclusion, just like an essay. Each letter represents your knowledge and explanation of various aspects of writing you have mastered this semester.

**Cover letter one:**

The first cover letter for your first sample of writing is an explanation which shows that you understand that writing is a recursive process. You must explain, by identifying specific examples, how you progressed through the various stages of writing to the final draft of a particular piece. You must explain all the components of the process you used and include specific evidence of that process. Your discussion in this letter should reveal to the evaluator that you
understand that writing is a recursive process that employs prewriting, writing, revising, and editing.

Cover letter two:
The second cover letter for your second sample of writing is a persuasive letter in which you persuade the evaluator that this second sample is your strongest piece by identifying and explaining each strength that you find in the piece. In order to do this, you must show how each of these strengths has improved your writing.

Cover letter three:
The third cover letter is an analysis of the type of writing that is representative of your chosen field of study. This letter should describe the type of audience the piece is designed to reach. This description should include how your piece meets the expectations of that audience, how the specific language that you used is related to the field, and how your paper achieves its intended purpose.

Cover letter four:
The fourth cover letter is an analysis of an earlier sample of your writing. The letter should provide a step-by-step explanation of how you would proceed with a rewrite of this sample if you were given the opportunity. In this step-by-step analysis, you evaluate your original sample and demonstrate exactly how you would rewrite it, starting from the beginning proceeding to the conclusion.
## PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT SHEET

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### COVER LETTER I:
Analyze your recursive process

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- **Sentence Structure**: 2
- **Punctuation**: 1
- **Usage**: 1

### ORGANIZATION:
- **Introduction/conclusion**: 2
- **Thesis**: 2
- **Paragraph Unity**: 3

### CONTENT:
- Explain your recursive process: **2**
- Discuss which part of the process you found most valuable: **2**
- Demonstrate significant changes you made in overall organization & paragraph structure: **4**
- Explain why you made those changes: **4**

### Possible Points

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<td>Clearly define audience for this piece</td>
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<td>Explain the purpose of this piece</td>
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<td>Point to specific language usage or stylistic choices that are specific to the field &amp; audience of this piece</td>
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Discuss what changes you would make in your entrance essay.

**MECHANICS:**
- Spelling: 1
- Sentence Structure: 1
- Punctuation: 1
- Usage: 1

**ORGANIZATION:**
- Intro/Conclusion: 2
- Thesis: 2
- Topic Sentences: 2
- Paragraph Unity: 2

**CONTENT:**
- Point to specific strengths & weaknesses in the piece: 4
- Develop an overall plan for revision. Be specific about what changes you would make to the piece: 4
- Discuss how this analysis reflects your development as a writer: 4

**POSSIBLE TOTAL PORTFOLIO POINTS**

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<th>Possible Points</th>
<th>Student Total</th>
<th>Teacher Total</th>
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**FINAL PORTFOLIO POINTS STUDENT TOTAL:**

110
APPENDIX B
SAMPLE PEER REVIEW SHEET

Peer Review Sheet/Analysis Paper Date:

Writer:

Reader:

Before you answer any of these questions, please read your partner's essay twice. While you read the piece, make notes on the paper or write down questions that spring to mind as you are reading it. Remember, you are looking at content, organization, and style.

CONTENT
1. Write down in one sentence what you believe to be the thesis presented in the essay.

2. Cite the major generalizations that support the thesis. Give at least two facts or examples mentioned for each of these generalizations.
3. Can you think of any additional generalizations, examples, or facts that support the thesis?

4. Are there any parts of the essay that you think or unclear? Why? Can you make a suggestion for improving the clarity of those sections?

5. What questions does this essay raise for you? Are there any specific ideas with which you strongly agree or disagree?

6. After reading this essay, is there anything else about the subject that you would like to know more about?
SAMPLE COVER SHEET FOR ANALYTICAL ESSAY

I have made a copy of my paper
I have included all the necessary work for this essay

1. How did the writing of this paper differ from the writing of Essay One?

2. What were some of the difficulties you faced in the writing of this paper?

3. Overall, was the writing of this paper more/less difficult than writing of the first essay? How? Why?

4. What have you learned about your writing and writing in general from your work on this essay?

5. Identify what you believe to be major strengths and weaknesses of this paper.

6. How would you change this paper if you were given an opportunity to rewrite it?