CONNECTING WRITING TO LEARN WITH THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS AND THE AASL STANDARDS FOR THE 21ST-CENTURY LEARNER

by

Maggie J. Jackson

An Abstract
of a research paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science and Information Services in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development University of Central Missouri

July, 2012
ABSTRACT

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Maggie J. Jackson

The Writing to Learn technique uses writing to engage students in the learning process. Both the Common Core State Standards and the American Association of School Librarians Standards for the 21st-Century Learner incorporate writing as an essential skill. The school librarian is trained to utilize all the standards to connect students to the skills needed for the K-12 classroom, workplace, and higher education. This paper explores how the school librarian positively impacts learning through the use of writing. Research of peer reviewed journals, articles, books, university pages, and Web sites were used to review the literature on the concept of Writing to Learn in relation to the classroom, the standards, and the school librarian. The research concluded that Writing to Learn is an effective technique to engage students in the learning process, but more research of Writing to Learn in relation to the standards and the school library is needed.
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APPROVED:

Advisor: Dr. Jenny Robins

Committee Member: Floyd Pentlin, Instructor

ACCEPTED:

Chair, Department of Education Leadership and Human Development: Dr. Pat Antrim

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Writing to Learn as a technique is used in the classroom to develop comprehension and improve retention (Marzano 83). When strategies are applied, Writing to Learn engages students in the learning process. Writing also develops within learners an understanding of language, how to think, and how to communicate with a variety of audiences. Instead of initially emphasizing the mechanics or the writing process, teachers applying the Writing to Learn technique in the classroom use writing to encourage students to think about what is being learned (Knipper and Duggan 462-463). The Writing to Learn technique is versatile and applicable across the content areas and can be applied to meet the standards. For instance, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner have listed writing as an important skill. However, neither standard indicates a specific technique to use when writing is applied in the classroom. As educational leaders, school librarians are trained to create instructional goals to meet the school’s expectations across the content areas (Oakleaf 64). Writing to Learn is a technique which the school librarian can connect to the CCSS and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner.

Research shows that Writing to Learn in K-12 is an effective technique to enhance learning. In a review of forty-eight research studies conducted by Robert L. Bangert-Drowns, Marlene M. Hurley, and Barbara Wilkinson, Writing to Learn was found to have a positive outcome in 75% of the studies. Plus when in use, the technique has the potential to move a student from the 50th percentile of academic achievement to the 58th percentile (42-43).
another study of a two and half year school wide literacy approach in which writing was promoted as an important skill, the state reading assessment rose from 12% to 54% (Fisher, Frey, and Lapp 387, 394). When a variety of Writing to Learn strategies are implemented student achievement is positively affected (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson 32). Each strategy provides an opportunity for students to explore what is being learned through a different technique. Through the use of strategies to implement the Writing to Learn technique students will be able to learn new concepts with deeper understanding. These strategies use a variety of techniques that help students focus on learning, increase inquiry, develop complex thinking, and discover areas of inadequate knowledge (Bazerman et al., “Writing to Learn” 60; McDermott 33). An understanding of how the strategies work helps the school librarian and classroom teacher implement writing as a learning tool in each of the content areas.

Studies and surveys reveal that the school librarian is a valued member in education. In Texas a survey of 1,509 students revealed that 97.9% of respondents felt the school library helped with learning. Another survey of 13,050 Ohio students showed that 75% felt the school librarian helped with writing skills. While in Delaware 79% of the 5,733 students surveyed also stated that writing was positively influenced by the school library. The students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the school librarian was supported in a study of 2.6 million students nationwide which showed a positive relationship between student performance and the school librarian’s direct instruction (Bleidt 68, 70, 76).

Studies have shown that student achievement is positively impacted when school librarians work directly with students. By connecting the CCSS and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner the school librarian and the K-12 teacher can collaboratively
incorporate Writing to Learn lessons in the classroom. Writing to Learn strategies are applicable across the content areas and can be connected to the standards. Plus Writing to Learn is a proven technique supported by studies. The school librarian is trained to use the standards to collaborate with K-12 teachers and to connect the resources necessary to support writing and student comprehension.

**Statement of the Problem**

Writing is considered a neglected “R” (K. Manzo). In 2005 the National Commission of Writing stated that this has resulted in a national crisis. Administrators surveyed from thirteen populous school districts stated that writing was not a priority for their middle schools (Lacina and Block 10-11). However, when incorporated the Common Core State Standards, applied by all educators, and the American Association of School Librarians *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*, generally applied by librarians, have placed an emphasis on writing. The school librarian can use Writing to Learn to connect the standards to lessons taught in the classroom. The strategies implemented in Writing to Learn enhance comprehension and are applicable across the content areas. However, misunderstandings exist about how the technique can be applied with students. Some concerns teachers have mentioned include the amount of time it will take to implement writing strategies and unfamiliarity with how the strategies would be used in the classroom (Baker et al.106). The school librarian is in the educational position to present how Writing to Learn can be incorporated across the curriculum by connecting writing to the standards used in the classroom.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the literature related to how the school librarian can impact student learning through the implementation of Writing to Learn. First a history of Writing to Learn was explored to build a foundation of how this technique has impacted learning in the past (Marzano 82). It was discovered that this form of writing does not initially emphasize the mechanics or writing process. Instead, writing is first used as a way to explore a concept (Bazerman et al., “Writing to Learn” 57). This exploration of content through writing connects students to concepts on a deeper level (Stover 21). Next, this study examined the objectives, goals, principles, and phases of the Writing to Learn technique. Examining how Writing to Learn is utilized in different educational environments revealed that this technique prepares K-12 students across the content areas and beyond the classroom (Marzano 82). An examination of how writing is promoted in the CCSS and the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner revealed that the Writing to Learn technique engages learners across the content areas to meet the writing goals and the standards. Last the impact the school librarian has on writing was also examined in several studies and surveys. The findings revealed a positive correlation between library instruction and student achievement. During this literature study, attention was paid to how Writing to Learn impacts student comprehension, how writing is connected to the standards, and how the school librarian can use strategies to impact the overall learning environment through the implementation of Writing to Learn.
Research Questions

The school librarian is an innovative and knowledgeable contributor to the learning environment (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, Empowering Learners 7). Guiding questions were used during the review of the literature in relation to how the school librarian can connect Writing to Learn to the Common Core State Standards and the American Association of School Librarians Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. These questions also focused the research process to examine how the Writing to Learn technique impacts learning.

1. What is Writing to Learn and how does it work?
2. How can Writing to Learn be connected to the Common Core State Standards and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner?
3. How can school librarians impact learning by connecting Writing to Learn to the standards?

Limitations of the Study

This research paper was limited by the time frame allowed to collect and organize the data needed to connect Writing to Learn to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. Another limiting factor was the lack of empirical evidence and peer reviewed articles connecting the school librarian or Writing to Learn to the CCSS and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. The latter limitation demonstrated a need for more research.
Excluded from this research paper was information about the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21). It was discovered during the research of 21st century skills that both the AASL and P21 have individually aligned their standards to the CCSS. However, the focus of this research paper was on how the school librarian connects Writing to Learn to the *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* and not on general 21st century skills. Since the P21 and the AASL are not directly aligned with each other and with the CCSS the research on P21 was not relevant.

Plus information linking Writing to Learn and the K-12 school librarian to higher education and the workplace was not included in this literature review. Research revealed that students benefit when the school librarian and higher education librarian collaborate to connect Writing to Learn and the standards to situations beyond the classroom. However, since a college or university is not locally accessible to every K-12 librarian this research was deemed irrelevant in the context of this paper. The information pertaining to how the K-12 librarian and the higher education librarian can collaborate to prepare students for life beyond K-12 would be more appropriate in a separate review.

**Definition of Terms**

- **ABC list**: A Writing to Learn strategy which the student uses to represent each letter in the alphabet by selecting significant words from a reading to describe the content of what was read (Knipper and Duggan 468).

- **American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner**: A set of standards developed to focus on the learner in relation to the skills needed throughout life (Am. Assn. of School Librarian, *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action* 5).
• Beethovians: A type of writer similar to the revisers as described below whose style spends a great deal of time revising and rewriting (Kieft, Rijlaardsdam, and van den Bergh 20).
• Biopoems: A Writing to Learn strategy which students use to write descriptive, historical poems that imply an action or thought (Knipper and Duggan 467-468).
• Common Core State Standards (CCSS): An initiative developed through the efforts of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers to create a set of standards that are to be used in conjunction with current state standards across the United States (“Common Core” 3).
• Expressive writing: The use of writing to explore and reflect on a topic (Bazerman et al., “Writing to Learn” 57).
• Five phases of Writing to Learn: Steps used to encode, revise, aggregate, and review information and create activities to build student comprehension (Marzano 82-83).
• Framed paragraph: A Writing to Learn reviewing and summarization strategy which students use a fill in the blank paragraph to complete sentences within the paragraph by placing appropriate words in each blank (Knipper and Duggan 466-467).
• Guided writing: A Writing to Learn reading preparation strategy which activates prior knowledge by encouraging students to brainstorm a reading topic in order for them to organize their thoughts (Knipper and Duggan 465; Lacina and Block 15).
• High self-monitors: A type of writer whose style controls how expressive their writing appears due to concerns about how others will view them (Kieft, Rijlaardsdam, and van den Bergh 18).
- **Information search process**: A four-phase research procedure recommended for use by librarians to teach research. The phases include: presearch, which introduces the topic; focus formulation and presentation planning, which encourages students to decide upon the focus of the assignment; collection and organization, which helps students discern relevant information; and the presentation and evaluation process, which allows students to share what they learned (Harada 93).

- **Inner speech**: A developmental stage described by Lev Vygotsky which students use as a self-regulation and reflection tool to focus, think through, and internalize what is being learned (Eggen and Kauchak 53-54).

- **Learning logs**: A Writing to Learn reading preparation strategy which encourages written reflection by activating prior knowledge on a topic (Knipper and Duggan 465; Lacina and Block 15).

- **Listen-stop-and-write**: A Writing to Learn reading preparation strategy which encourages students to listen while writing by taking two minutes of notes for every three minutes of lecture (Knipper and Duggan 466).

- **Low self-monitors**: A type of writer whose style produces new ideas during the writing process (Kieft, Rijlaardsdam, and van den Bergh 18).

- **Mechanics of writing**: The process of being aware of correct punctuation, grammar, and spelling when writing.

- **Metacognitive**: A Writing to Learn strategy which places an emphasis on self-reflection while writing in order to improve comprehension (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson 32).
Microtheme: A Writing to Learn reviewing and summarization strategy which allows students to summarize the key ideas of a lesson on individual note cards (Knipper and Duggan 466).

Mixed writers: A type of writer whose style is a mixture of the planners and the revisers as described below (Kieft, Rijlaardsdam, and van den Bergh 20).

Modeling: A writing mentorship program in which the school librarian or teacher demonstrates good writing skills to students.

Mozartians: A type of writer similar to the planners as described below whose style spends a great deal of time planning before writing (Kieft, Rijlaardsdam, and van den Bergh 20).

Multimodal writing: A type of writing which uses a variety of modes such as graphs, diagrams, charts, mathematical equations, and pictures along with text to provide a more comprehensive view of learning (McDermott 33).

Planners: A type of writer similar to the Mozartians as described above whose style uses the development of a clear plan before writing (Kieft, Rijlaardsdam, and van den Bergh 20).

Personal reflection: The use of writing to connect self to a topic.

Quick writes: A Writing to Learn reading preparation strategy which encourages students to create one minute papers based on teacher-directed questions in order to prepare students to think about upcoming lessons (Knipper and Duggan 465).
• Real-time text tools: Electronic writing tools such as Twitter and Google Drive, formally known as Google Docs, to promote collaborative writing opportunities (Lacina and Block 14-15).

• Revisers: A type of writer similar to the Beethovians as described above whose style uses numerous revisions to create content while writing (Kieft, Rijlaardsdam, and van den Bergh 20).

• Structured note-taking: A Writing to Learn reading preparation strategy which encourages students to take notes by writing the main ideas of a reading on the left side of the paper, writing the keywords on the right side of the paper, and a summary of the reading at the bottom of the paper (Knipper and Duggan 465; Lacina and Block 15).

• Text box: A Writing to Learn reviewing and summarization strategy which uses a reading guide that relates back to a paragraph, picture, or diagram that students use while taking notes (Knipper and Duggan 467).

• Three elements of learning: Encouraging students to use writing to learn by doing, learn through word descriptions, and to write in their own words (Ettzevoglou and McBride).

• Transactional informative writing: The unemotional public writings required in business to strictly communicate information (Bazerman et al., “History of the WAC Movement” 20-22).

• Word map: A Writing to Learn strategy which students use to answer three questions, “What is it?, What is it like?, and What are some examples?”, to link previous knowledge on a topic (Knipper and Duggan 468).
- Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC): The predecessor of Writing to Learn (Marzano 82). A movement which pushed for less formal classroom discussion, more expressive writing, and more writing opportunities (Bazerman et al., “History of the WAC Movement” 20-22).

- Writing to Learn: The use of writing to clarify thoughts and understandings (Bazerman et al., “Writing to Learn 57).

- Writing process: A writing design which uses brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing to engage students in learning by making cognitive meaning of what was being learned through the use of writing instruction (Elmborg, “Literacies” 68-69).

- Writing prompts: A Writing to Learn strategy which students use to create 1-2 short sentence answers to a question based on real-world problems (Papadopoulos et al. 73).
Research Design

During the research process the majority of articles used for this literature review were retrieved from the James C. Kirkpatrick’s Internet library databases at the University of Central Missouri (UCM). The library provides a ‘Central Search’ feature which was used to access the individual databases. Within the ‘Central Search’ feature, the research was refined to items with full text online and articles limited to scholarly publications, including peer-reviewed articles. This search was further limited to the following search terms: “Writing Across the Curriculum”, “Writing to Learn”, “Common Core Standards”, “American Association of School Librarians Standards for the 21st-Century Learner”, “AASL”, “library”, “school library AND Writing to Learn”, “school librarian AND Writing to Learn”, “school library AND standards”, “school librarian AND standards”, “librarian AND Writing to Learn”, “librarian AND writing”, “librarian AND standards”, and “librarian AND writing strategies”. The databases accessed included: Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, ProQuest Central, PsycARTICLES, and SAGE.

Many of the PDF documents pertaining to the school librarian and learning were obtained through Ms. Sheila Driemeyer, UCM instructor. Other PDF files were located after consulting Dr. Matthew M. Thomas, UCM professor and co-author of Content Area Literacy: A Framework for Reading-Based Instruction. The book co-authored by Dr. Thomas was also used during the research of this literature review. The recommendation from Dr. Thomas to search Google Books resulted in information about the connection between the Writing Across Curriculum movement and the Writing to Learn technique. This information led to a Google and Google Scholar search using the following search terms: “Writing to Learn”, “Writing Across the
Curriculum”, “Common Core Standards”, “school librarian AND writing”, and “school librarian AND writing AND standards”. In addition to the electronic resources, this literature review included information from print materials obtained through the American Library Association and the University of Central Missouri bookstore.

**Conclusion**

This study includes three chapters that focus on how the school librarian can connect the Writing to Learn technique to the Common Core State Standards and the American Association of School Librarians *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*. The first chapter includes a discussion about the importance of the Writing to Learn technique in relation to the standards and the school librarian. The first chapter also includes information pertaining to the steps on how the research was conducted. A review of the literature including empirical information is presented in the second chapter. The last chapter explores the questions which guided the literature review. The final chapter also examines the need for additional information on the school librarian in relation to the Writing to Learn technique and the standards. The literature review ends with a comprehensive list of references used during the research to explore how the school librarian impacts learning through the use of writing.
Chapter 2
Review of the Literature

This paper will explore the Writing to Learn technique and how it can be used to help the School Librarian connect the Common Core State Standards with the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) *Standards for the 21st Century Learner*. The research examines five perspectives of Writing to Learn. The first section describes Writing to Learn. In addition, an exploration of the history of Writing to Learn in correlation to the Writing Across the Curriculum Movement will be examined. The Writing to Learn objectives and phases will be explored to develop understanding of how this writing technique differs from traditional writing practices. Plus, studies concerning the types of writers’ as well as styles of writing will be presented in correlation with how students learn through writing. In the second section, this paper will connect Writing to Learn to the Common Core State Standards and the AASL *Standards for the 21st Century Learner*. Training school librarians to utilize the standards will also be briefly examined. In the third section, research is presented on Writing to Learn as a tool used to address standards across the content areas. The effects this technique has on student learning are also examined in the third section. The fourth section of this paper will explore the strategies used to implement the Writing to Learn technique. In the last section, this paper will explore the responsibility for teaching writing skills and how the school librarian can use Writing to Learn. A look into the future of librarianship in relation to Writing to Learn will also be examined, as will collaboration with teachers to help students become engaged learners (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, *Empowering Learners* 20-21).
A Brief Explanation of Writing to Learn

Writing helps students learn with deeper understanding and improves retention. Because of this impact, the act of writing practiced in all subject areas can be beneficial (Marzano 82). However, merely learning how to write is not the same as Writing to Learn. When students learn how to write the emphasis is usually placed on the mechanics or the process of writing. Instead, of emphasizing the mechanics and the writing process, teachers that implement the Writing to Learn technique emphasize writing as a learning tool. Since the end product is not always the aim of Writing to Learn, the mechanics for this type of writing are not emphasized in the beginning. Instead, the focus is on helping the student become engaged in thinking about the lesson. It is also this process of writing that will stimulate passive learners to become active learners as they put their thoughts and observations into written words. Eventually through the use of teacher modeling, good writing examples, and constructive feedback, students develop the writing skills necessary to learn across all content areas (Knipper and Duggan 463).

When used correctly, Writing to Learn helps students focus on learning. Through the practice of writing, students discover areas of inadequate knowledge (McDermott 33). In How Writing Shapes Thinking by Langer and Applebee, there was an indication that writing contributed to learning more than simply studying or reading. The inclusion of various writing activities for different types of information help students focus, and analytical writing increases inquiry and complex thinking (Bazerman et al., “Writing to Learn” 60).

To understand how Writing to Learn developed, an understanding of the history of the technique will be explored. Next, this section will explore the objectives of the Writing to Learn movement in relation to higher education as well as how this affects teacher education. Then the
phases of the Writing to Learn technique will be explored. Last, research into writers’ styles, types, and personalities will provide insight for educators to determine how to use Writing to Learn with students.

**A Brief History of Writing to Learn**

The essence of Writing to Learn were first attributed to a saying by author E.M. Forster, when observation revealed that writing helps clarify thoughts and understandings. However, the pedagogical theories of Writing to Learn (Bazerman et al., “Writing to Learn” 57) are connected with the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement. British educational reformer, James Britten, is credited with introducing the WAC concept to America (Marzano 82) in 1966 during a Dartmouth Seminar. Over the next decade, British education underwent several studies, which Britten helped commission, to investigate English teaching needs in secondary and college situations. Studies determined that there was a need for less formal classroom discussion, more expressive writing, more collaboration between teachers and students, and more writing opportunities in all classes (Bazerman et al., “History of the WAC Movement” 20-22). Britton included a theory in the study, *Development of Writing Abilities* (Ettzevoglou and McBride), that children develop writing skills by moving from expressive and poetic personal writing forms to the transactional informative forms of writing found in the workplace. These transactional informative forms of writing included the unemotional public writings required in business to strictly communicate information. Britton found that school children’s writing concentrated mostly on the transactional form of writing which led to fewer opportunities for students to develop the type of individualistic writing skills found in the expressive form. The British studies of writing resonated with American educators (Bazerman et al., “History of the WAC
Writing to Learn 17

Movement” 20-22). It was the expressive writing category of Britton’s theory which gave pedagogical meaning to the Writing to Learn approach. Expressive writing encourages students to take an idea and use written words to explore and reflect. The act of thinking through writing helps students see what is being spoken as well as what is being thought. This process also closely resembles Vygostsky’s developmental stage of “inner speech” (Bazerman et al., “Writing to Learn” 57). During this development stage when new concepts are presented students use the self-regulation and reflection tool, “inner speech”, to focus, think through, and internalize what is being learned (Eggen and Kauchak 53-54).

James Britton was not the only reformer working on the Writing to Learn approach during its early development. Other publications such as The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders by Janet Eming examined the think-aloud procedures of students. The publication discussed that writing was an important process to learning. In addition to this study, there was also the “Writing as a Mode of Learning” article written by Eming which explored the educational meaning of writing presented by Jerome Bruner and Jean Piaget (Bazerman et al., “Writing to Learn” 58) in correlation to the three elements of learning: enactive or learning by doing; iconic, which is learning through word descriptions; and symbolic, which is allowing students to write in their own words what is learned (Ettzevoglou and McBride).

Writing to Learn objectives, goals, and principles help guide librarians and educators to understand the underlying ideas of how to connect this technique to the classroom and beyond. Although Writing to Learn practices can be commonly found at the college level (Ackerman 340), writing is still considered a “neglected R” (K. Manzo). Initially, studies between the 1970s and 1980s on writing lacked rigorous hypothesis-testing (Ackerman 360; qtd. in Bangert-
Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson 31). The studies also did not explain why writing was beneficial to learning or how writing could be assessed. Studies conducted starting in the late 1980s did examine writing techniques to determine how they benefited learning, how to incorporate writing in lessons, and how to assess writing for learning (qtd. in Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson 31). In forty-eight Writing to Learn studies reviewed by Robert L. Bangert-Drowns, Marlene M. Hurley, and Barbara Wilkinson in 2004, it was found that 75% of the studies indicated that Writing to Learn resulted in a positive outcome for students. Based on the review of the studies, students working in the 50th percentile that receive Writing to Learn technique interventions have the potential to move into the 58th percentile of academic performance (42-43).

**Objectives of Writing to Learn**

Writing to Learn objectives and techniques are found on several university Web sites. At the University of Connecticut, the objectives of the Writing to Learn approach include; to promote abstract thought, to understand the value of the writing process and product, and to encourage student activities which promote ownership and accountability (Ettzvoglou and McBride). At Purdue University, the objectives of the Writing to Learn activities include the paraphrasing and summarization of source ideas, evaluation of a variety of sources, composing ideas from several sources, and creating annotated bibliographies (“The First Year”). Another example is Stetson University’s pedagogical objectives which consist of helping students to read carefully, understand the material, encourage critical thinking about a lesson, organize and present thoughts comprehensibly, assist in the mastery of the text within a discipline, and finally reinforce learned skills (“Goals”).
Within universities, Writing to Learn teacher education instruction has suggested principles for developing classroom assignments. These include helping teachers understand how to create lessons that encourage students to weave knowledge, skills, and tasks. Writing to Learn principles also help teachers foster within students an understanding of personal values in relation to societal values, encourage new teachers to authoritatively use a variety of reading materials with students to develop comprehension, and help teachers role play so they can gain a better understanding of student learning and background. Lastly, Writing to Learn principles encourage reflection upon major assignment objectives to ensure comprehension and synthesis (Stover 20-21, 23). Some programs such as the National Writing Project encourage K-12 teachers to collaborate and work together within Writing to Learn workshops. A teacher who has participated in training and then took what was learned back to the classroom, found that students’ comprehension was impacted because the process of Writing to Learn deepened understanding (K. Manzo).

However, most school districts are more concerned about the type of writing needed to pass the standardized tests. This causes schools to enforce writing which is dominated by correctness of form and does not connect students to writing as a way to communicate (Lacina and Block 13). In 2005 the National Commission of Writing stated that there was a national crisis which resulted in writing being considered the neglected “R”. During an anonymous online survey with administrators, from thirteen of the seventeen most populous school districts that completed the survey, most reported that writing was not a priority for their middle schools. Of the thirteen districts, 75% reported that a majority of their teachers instruct students to learn process writing and sentence combining, which teaches the creation of complex sentences. Plus
the district administrators reported that 72.7% of students do not write more proficiently than previous generations (Lacina and Block 11-12). The most important course of action in the last decade for 50% of the districts was the implementation of technology, and 50% stated that their future plans included an increase in writing across the content areas. These writing programs would engage students and teachers in online writing conversations and encourage students to use writing as a way to explore learning. One district administrator stated that it was critical for writing across the subjects first be in place at the elementary level, then to expand the writing programs to the secondary level (13). The survey concluded that writing proficiency will increase when policymakers and national educational leaders focus on writing across the content areas as a national initiative (16).

**Phases of Writing to Learn**

The Writing to Learn approach contains five phases which increase comprehension. Instructors use the phases to create activities that will increase student comprehension and understanding within a lesson. Each phase is an important element in building a foundation of learning through the Writing to Learn process. Phase I requires students to write summaries of their initial understanding of content. Since these are rough drafts, emphasis is not placed on punctuation, spelling, or grammar. Also, in order to improve understanding, students are encouraged to include graphics or sketches (Marzano 82), known as multimodal writing (McDermott 33), related to their initial understandings. Multimodal writing uses different combinations of writing modes such as graphs, diagrams, charts, mathematical equations, and pictures along with text to provide a more comprehensive view of learning (McDermott 33). Since Writing to Learn activities encourage students to clarify understanding by using their own
written words (32) the use of multimodal writing helps students benefit from the multiple experiences (36). This phase is especially beneficial for students in the primary grades as well as those whose first language is not English.

During Phase II, students partner up and compare their initial summations for similarities and inconsistencies. Any differences are reviewed for missed content or examined for errors in comprehension. All differences and confusion are resolved before the next phase is introduced. In Phase III, students create a revised version of their initial summarization. At this point, students are encouraged to improve upon any punctuation, spelling, and grammar mistakes found in the rough draft. The first three phases of the Writing to Learn approach are called the R-C-R cycle (record-compare-revise); as new related material is presented within a lesson, students work through the first three phases repeatedly. The R-C-R cycle is repeated each time a new concept is presented in the lesson. It is feasible for students to write several summaries about different concepts within the same lesson. Once it is determined that the students have worked through all the concepts in a lesson, they move onto Phase IV. It is at this point that students combine all the R-C-R cycled summarizations to create a more comprehensive paper. During this phase, students also choose a generalization to defend and present as part of a class presentation or discussion. Lastly, Phase V requires students to review and share their comprehensive summarizations. It is also during this phase that the teacher reviews the lesson with the students. The overall goal of the five phases of the Writing to Learn approach is to help students effectively encode, revise, aggregate, and review information (Marzano 82-83).
Types of Writers and Understanding Styles

A study conducted in Amsterdam discussed how writing behavior impacts student understanding within the Writing to Learn approach. An understanding of how writers think can help the librarian understand how to approach Writing to Learn techniques with each student. Writers were classified as planners, revisers, and mixed writers. The planners develop a clear plan before writing, and thus they also produce fewer drafts. They make content decisions before starting the writing process. Revisers are students who create a lot of revisions and use those revisions to help develop content understanding. Then there are students who are considered mixed writers. These students think about the content before beginning the writing process, but then systematically change the content during each revision.

Another study based on online self-reporting found three types of writers. The first two types of writers were similar to the previous study mentioned. Similar to the planners, the first group of students made content decisions before beginning the writing process, and much like the revisers the second group spent a large amount of time copying and revising their work. However, the third group, called the non-stop writers or doers, wrote with little planning or revision. These writers were different from the mixed writers who turned in a completed assignment. The non-stop writers simply translated what they read and wrote notes as the final product (Kieft, Rijlaardsdam, and van den Bergh 20).

Personality also determines how students approach writing assignments. To determine personality dimensions which affect writers and their styles, another study conducted by Galbraith discovered two types of writers. The first were high self-monitors. These writers were very concerned about how others would view them, and thus they controlled how expressive...
their writing appeared. They also produced more new ideas during the planning phase of writing. The second group was the low self-monitors. These students were direct in their writing, and their production of new ideas occurred while writing. Based on this study, Galbraith concluded that some writers benefited from planning while others benefited from simply producing (qtd. in Kieft, Rijlaardsdam, and van den Bergh 18).

Another study which examined the production of poetry determined that there were two types of writers. Similar to the planners, this study found that the Mozartians, executors, wrote similar to the way engineers work. These writers spent a great deal of time planning before writing. Also, similar to the revisers, the Beethovians, discoverers, worked through the writing process much as a sculptor would create art. These writers spent a lot of time rewriting and revising and used writing as a way of thinking through the content (20).

Overall, it was determined that there were two distinct dimensions of writers. The first were those who plan before they begin writing. The second were those who use the rewriting and revision process often (19-20). It was also determined that 85% of students who used one style of writing continue with this predominant form 63-71% of the time during written essays. This led the researchers to determine that students benefit from a variety of writing assignments during the learning process (20).

**Connecting Writing to Learn to the Standards**

The Writing to Learn process has been used as a pedagogical strategy for decades; however, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* are each fairly new in the pedagogical realm. Through teacher training, these standards can be used with Writing to Learn
strategies and applied across the content areas. Writing to Learn is an effective technique for students of all ages in a variety of settings. However, some teachers feel that more training is needed. For instance high school teachers trained to teach language arts, science, and social studies do not feel that college teacher training courses within their content areas put enough emphasis on writing instruction (Kiuhara, Hawken, and Graham 153-154). It was suggested by The National Commission on Writing that higher educational institutions place more emphasis on preparing teachers in K-12 to teach writing (Kiuhara, Hawken, and Graham 153-154). This emphasis on how writing enhances learning is important when implementing Writing to Learn strategies. For example when culturally diverse groups of students are taken into consideration there may be a psychology to writing that will help teachers consider the cognitive and social aspects of writing tasks. For students of different cultural backgrounds writing is perceived differently. The cultural values of students affect self-expression and introspection. These differences affect the way students approach writing during the learning process (Ackerman 361-362). Grade level, the amount of writing time, and metacognitive prompts provide other aspects which affects student learning during Writing to Learn interventions. The K-12 review conducted by Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson found that Writing to Learn using metacognitive self-reflection writing strategies improved kindergarten students’ ability to formulate better questions and better comprehend stories (32). The use of the Writing to Learn technique to enhance learning was supported by research in all grades except 6-8. The authors of the review indicated that several factors influence the effectiveness of Writing to Learn in the
middle grades including the developmental issues that occur as students transition from childhood to adulthood, and writing is more subject-specific which affects the way students learn while writing. Instead, the studies showed that students performed better in the middle grades when writing was used conventionally (49-50).

As of 2008, the US Department of Education spent three billion dollars to help K-12 teachers become trained in writing skills that would enhance classroom effectiveness. However, despite this training, writing is still considered a neglected “R” (K. Manzo). Part of the problem stems from educators’ attitudes toward writing in relation to their students. Michael Moore, a middle school teacher concerned about his student’s struggles with writing, mentioned that the writing process overemphasized writing mechanics. He also noted that when students were instructed to write for an assignment the students were often treated as subordinates. He suggested that teachers need to think of students as writers. In addition, when teachers think of themselves as writers in the classroom they become co-writers with students. Through the process of viewing students as writers, the teacher can focus less on the process of writing and more on the process of learning while writing (Moore 36). School librarians who view themselves as writers also become co-writers with teachers and students. For example, students view the school librarian as an equal writing contributor to classroom learning when a blog is used by students, teachers, and the school librarian to collaboratively interact and explore information (Lamb and Johnson 43; Starkman 22).

One reason Writing to Learn may not be used in more classrooms is due to the amount of paperwork which results from writing assignments. Many teachers feel overwhelmed by the overemphasis on writing mechanics (Knipper and Duggan 463). Michael Moore stated that he
never looked past the spelling or use of punctuation in his students’ writing until he attended a writing class. During the training, he felt frustrated and feared that others would ridicule his writing. Moore was concerned that his writing would be judged as inferior. At that point, he began to empathize with his students (Moore 34-35). With the Writing to Learn approach, teachers can dismiss the daunting task of grading every paper since writing is sometimes used to explore new concepts. Plus reluctant writers are not intimidated by the prospect of always writing a final product.

One element of Writing to Learn is that not every paper written by students needs to be graded. Instead, the emphasis of Writing to Learn is to use writing as a tool which is less linear and more passionate (Manzo, Manzo, and Thomas 244-247). This less linear emphasis is found in the first two phases of the Writing to Learn technique when students write summaries of the initial content and compare summaries within a peer setting. However, starting in phase three students do begin implementing a mechanical value to writing by correcting punctuation, grammar, and spelling mistakes. This continued value in the mechanics of writing is found in phase four and five when the summaries are combined to create a comprehensive paper (Marzano 82-83).

Educational psychologists have studied the difference between relevant writing practices and irrelevant writing practices. Psychologists found that the use of writing to enhance learning works when writing supports the topic being studied. When writing to enhance learning is relevant and extensive in the learning environment it works because it enriches thinking by encouraging the writer to think about the topic, audience, and use of language (Ackerman 358-359).
The idea of using Writing to Learn as a tool is promoted by the National Writing Project, a congressionally authorized program located in Berkeley at the University of California. The National Writing Project emphasizes the use of Writing to Learn among K-12 teachers. Similar to Michael Moore’s experience, this program encourages classroom teachers across content areas to teach and support other classroom teachers to use writing as a tool. The reason for this emphasis on support is because of college expectations across the nation (K. Manzo). Higher education instructors stated that half of high school graduates are not prepared for writing at the college level (Kiuhara, Hawken, and Graham 136). Retired executive director of the National Writing Project, Richard Sterling, stated that when students enter college they are expected to “demonstrate a high-level writing ability” (K. Manzo). Students were supposed to learn these skills while they were in high school.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) use of writing across the K-12 curriculum provides an opportunity for Writing to Learn to become a technique to connect writing to the CCSS. The CCSS were developed through the efforts of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The CCSS are used in conjunction with current state standards across the United States. The emphasis of the CCSS is on language arts, mathematics, and connecting language arts with social studies and science by grounding all subjects in literacy. Throughout the CCSS initiative, reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language are the key components to preparing students for college and career. These key components also prepare students to think globally (Loertscher and Marcoux 8-9).
As of July 2012, the CCSS had been adopted by 45 states and three territories (“In the States.”). This emphasis of connecting language arts, which encompasses the use of writing across all subjects, lends an advantage to educators who use the Writing to Learn techniques.

The CCSS do not detail which techniques educators will include in the curriculum. The CCSS focus is on the final results of learning not on the method in which that learning takes place. Nor does the CCSS directly focus on how K-12 teachers will teach any particular skill. Instead, the CCSS provides a base of what is considered foundational knowledge within a skill set. In addition, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association which led the current CCSS acknowledges that the standards do not encompass everything a student will learn in order to be successful in college and career. Thus the standards are intended to complement current programs (“Common Core” 4). The CCSS are however, designed to meet the expectations of college and career, apply high-order thinking skills to the content areas, build upon current state standards, develop skills based on examples from other countries in order to help students compete globally, be clear and concise, and use evidence correctly (“About the Standards”). When students have met all outcomes of the CCSS, they are expected to have mastered reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language. This mastery can be demonstrated by their ability to work independently, have a wide knowledge base, adjust communicative skills to a variety of audiences and situations, demonstrate discernment of information, write authoritatively and honestly, navigate and use technology and digital media, and appreciate differences in people within the classroom and workplace (“Common Core” 3). It is because of the versatility of the CCSS that some educators feel that the CCSS will eventually take precedence over other standards in current use.
A set of standards school librarians use are the 2007 American Association of School Librarians (AASL) *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*. The AASL standards were developed to focus on the learner in relation to the skills needed throughout life (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action 5*). The AASL standards use the common beliefs that students need to inquire, think critically, gain knowledge, draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, create new knowledge, share knowledge, participate ethically and productively as members of a democratic society, and to pursue personal and aesthetic growth. Within each of the common beliefs, there are strands of learning (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, *Empowering Learners 14*). Within each of these strands, there are individual indicators of how students show competency (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action 6*). The overall goal of the *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* is to help school librarians encourage students to view reading and writing as important life-long skills. Plus the school librarian uses the standards as a guide to encourage students to become independent learners, use multiple learning tools ethically, understand how to use technology for learning, access the resources of the library equitably, understand how to use multiple literacies, learn how to discern and use information, and collaborate and share what is learned. These skills are taught while the school librarian also encourages students to feel comfortable in the library (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*). Writing is an important element of the *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*. In the textural form of literacy students use reading, writing, analysis,
Writing to Learn approach (record, compare, revise, combine, and review) use writing as a tool to help students encode, revise, aggregate, and review information (Marzano 83).

There are similarities between the CCSS and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. Each of the standards use writing as a core element of learning. For example, evaluating the writing portion of the CCSS to the AASL Standards in the Crosswalk of the Common Core Standards and the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner document, reveals that 32 AASL indicators correspond with 161 CCSS writing standards (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, Crosswalk 1-22). Teaching students how to locate, evaluate, and use information is an important part of education (Elmborg, “Information Literacy” 72), and by using these writing standards, the school librarian creates instructional goals to meet the school’s expectations in the content areas (Oakleaf 64).

**Writing to Learn within the Content Areas**

With the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner and the CCSS emphasizing the use of writing, Writing to Learn is a technique that bridges the standards to the content areas. Learning through the use of writing is underused (Manzo, Manzo, and Thompson 244). One reason stems from the emphasis on the writing process (Knipper and Duggan 462) as well as the emphasis on the mechanics of writing which creates a view that this skill is an isolated and sterile process which is only concerned about the rules. However, teachers who currently use the Writing to Learn technique view writing as a part of the learning process in which students demonstrate knowledge. Using Writing to Learn activities across the curriculum puts the focus
on what it means to be a writer (Elmborg, “Information Literacy” 73). It is through the use of writing that learners discover language, how they think, and how to communicate with a variety of audiences. This is accomplished by using writing to recall, clarify, and question the information being read (Knipper and Duggan 462). The act of writing helps develop comprehension through the process of thinking. When thinking is separated from the writing process then thinking has also been eliminated from the curriculum (Elmborg, “Information Literacy” 70). Writing to Learn helps students develop the thinking skills that are needed in high school, college, as well as the communication skills required for the work place. This is why Writing to Learn techniques are important throughout all the content areas. The techniques require 100% participation via the interaction with text to create deeper thought processes which are not developed from simply reading. Plus, teachers discover what their students understand. Writing develops mastery of content (Knipper and Duggan 462) and demonstrates knowledge (Elmborg, “Information Literacy” 70). Writing to Learn has been used in hundreds of studies and in a majority of the studies the technique showed to be an effective tool for learning. For example in the review by Banger-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson found 46 relevant documents concerning metacognition (self-reflection) and writing.

In a separate study which lasted two and half years to determine the effectiveness of a school wide literacy approach at a high school with over 2,000 students in which 93% were Latino, African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native American; 60% qualified for free lunch; 40% were homeless; and 23% were considered disabled, it was determined based on final achievement scores that a content literacy approach to education was effective. Researchers worked with the school principal to provide a school wide literacy program in which ongoing
professional development was implemented to teach computer skills, reading, vocabulary enhancement, and writing across the curriculum strategies to improve student learning. Based on the monitored data, midcourse corrections were conducted when necessary. At the onset of the study, 12% of the students were proficient on the state reading assessment and the graduation rate was 67% (Fisher, Frey, and Lapp 387). Teachers were originally only interested in implementing a school wide literacy program if it provided an opportunity to meet state assessment requirements (388), and many of the vice principals did not support the changes (395). However, after a conference with the teachers, 82% agreed to participate in the six phase study. In phase one, the researchers identified the goals of essential reading and writing habits that are transferrable between classes and beneficial to students who later would attend college (388). A technique such as Writing to Learn emphasizes the use of writing as a tool to enhance learning. Students who use writing as a way to understand content in one area develop learning skills that can be used in other content areas (Klein and Rose 438). In phase two, the researchers identified specific interventions using solid evidence-based procedures that were used across all the content areas. The educational interventions focused on encouraging the writing skills students would use in the classroom and during adulthood and college (Fisher, Frey, and Lapp 388-390).

Writing to Learn was used at the onset of the study because students did very little writing. Using the Writing to Learn techniques, students were encouraged to write daily. Teachers were instructed to use the process to check for understanding and not to grade based on spelling, grammar, or mechanics. Instead, the Writing to Learn approach was implemented as a thinking tool (389). In phase three, the researchers collected data from state achievement tests as
well as common formative assessments, monitored instructional implementation, conducted classroom observations, and stayed in contact with the principal about the study (390). During phase four, the data collected were revealed during weekly meetings. It was discovered during the fourth month that implementation was not progressing well due to teachers’ lack of implementation and teacher turn over. The study was modified twice to support the 36 new teachers after the first year and the 19 new teachers after the second year. A behavior specialist was also introduced to address student misconduct (391-393). The effects of the study were considered during phase five and it was discovered the Writing to Learn technique was time consuming, but easy to implement (393-394). During the last phase the results of the study were reviewed. Within six months of implementation, 21% of the students showed proficiency on the state reading assessment, two years later 47% were proficient, two and half years later 54% were proficient, and the graduation rate rose from 67% to 73%. It was also observed that students were carrying around books, reading more often, and library usage increased (394).

The use of Writing to Learn is applicable across the content areas. When students use Writing to Learn techniques within the content areas, they learn how to develop ideas by transforming resources through selection, connection, and organization (Klein and Rose 438). Students also develop the skills to understand how to use available resources (434). Since students are prone to view knowledge as something provided to them by authority figures, they intrinsically see low value in the connection between writing to achievement (455). It then becomes important to teach students how to create written explanations about a topic within each content area (435) so they will internalize the strategies provided and learn through the writing process (453).
During the late 1980s; 1990s, research was conducted by the National Council of Teachers for Mathematics, the National Curriculum for England and Wales, and the National Statement on Mathematics for Australian Schools which revealed that using mathematics as a communication tool needed to be developed (Ntenza 322). The study concentrated on countries which primarily used English to write. As a multilingual society, Africa was included in this study on mathematics and writing to reveal the communicative relationship between writing and mathematical skills (321). During this study it was discovered that writing in South African math classes was infrequent (332-333), and that there were few teachers within the UK, US, or Australia who used any writing techniques while teaching math (323-326). When writing techniques were used in the United States, 74% of the teachers instructed students to copy and transcribe information, 23% of the teachers never introduced writing, 13% reported that they implemented creative writing techniques, and 10% conducted weekly writing activities. Out of the teachers that did implement writing techniques, 77% instructed students to write only for the teacher, 26% instructed students to share writing with other students, and 23% instructed students in prewriting activities. Researchers were surprised that writing story problems was seldom used. It was discovered that most math teachers do not see a correlation between writing and mathematics (324).

Part of the issue of implementing writing techniques across the content areas and why writing is being neglected is that K-12 teachers have concerns about Writing to Learn. The six concerns listed by science teachers included; planning time constraints, coordinating writing activities within the content area, activities that required additional energy and time, interruptions from holiday and test days, not feeling comfortable with writing, being concerned about
assessment, and students objections to the Writing to Learn technique due to a lack of familiarity (Baker et al. 106). However, despite these concerns some science teachers have implemented Writing to Learn strategies to help students develop their understanding of science concepts (105). By collaborating with writing teachers who model the writing required within lab work, observation journals, analytical and reflective essays, and drawings, students understand how the final product will look (107).

The effective critical thinking skills that are developed using the Writing to Learn strategies (106) are transferrable between the content areas (107). However, it was discovered that writing strategies were rarely used in science classes due to concerns that the process was too time consuming for teachers. Science teachers, specifically in which text-based programs and commercially prepared materials were the mainstay, felt their schedules could not accommodate the additional writing tasks (106). Similar concerns about implementing Writing to Learn strategies are found across other content areas, such as mathematics (Ntenza 338). One solution to these time constraint concerns can be addressed if teachers initially asked for more planning time to prepare for writing instruction strategies. Once Writing to Learn practices are in place, it has been found that they do not take any additional time. Instead, Writing to Learn encourages inquiry-based activities, and students are more motivated and involved in the learning process (Baker et al. 106). Successful implementation of Writing to Learn in the classroom is contingent on students practicing the technique throughout their educational experience (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson 52; Baker et al. 106). Overall, K-12 teachers agreed that students need many opportunities to write within the content areas to help them develop the necessary skills to think critically (Baker et al. 106).
Writing to Learn Strategies

Strategies within Writing to Learn help teachers and school librarians implement the technique in the classroom. The strategies in Writing to Learn also provide opportunities for the school librarian to connect learning in the classroom to the Common Core State Standards, and the AASL *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*. Studies examining strategies used within Writing to Learn have found that the length of writing has an effect on student ability to effectively learn. Personal reflection or connecting self to a topic through the use of writing positively impacts comprehension. Plus, the collaborative use of technology has the potential to motivate students to write. Writing strategies using reading preparation, reviewing, summarization, and connecting students to real world applications also contribute to learning.

Writing is an essential element to learning. The Common Core State Standards initiative noted that students who use writing to demonstrate understanding and support opinions develop skills which will prepare them for college and career (“Common Core” 41). In the *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action* writing is indicated as a communication skill to convey understanding (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action* 101). When Writing to Learn is not used it is primarily due to misunderstandings about how the technique works. Writing to Learn strategies enhance learning (Stover 20), but this enhancement is contingent on the strategies teachers use in the classroom (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson 53). For example, student learning is positively affected and academically improved when a variety of writing strategies are implemented by the classroom
teacher (32). However, it was also noted that lengthy writing strategies resulted in smaller positive results due to a developing lack of motivation in students and the loss of instructional content time in the classroom (50).

A review conducted by Klein indicated that connecting writing to literature was an effective way to implement Writing to Learn. One study showed that learning benefited when eleventh grade high school students used both personal modes and impersonal modes of writing. Personal modes of writing encourages the use of feelings to respond to a topic while impersonal modes of writing uses only the evidence found within the text (Kieft, Rijlaarsdam, and van den Bergh 18-19). In another study which reviewed literature related to metacognition conducted by Bangert-Drows, Hurley, and Wilkinson, it was noted that student writing which reflected upon content in relation to understanding and emotion resulted in positive outcomes (Bangert-Drows, Hurley, and Wilkinson 47). For example, when tenth graders were instructed to personally reflect upon literature the students used more descriptive statements in their writing. Plus, when ninth graders were asked to write a summary to elaborate, clarify, and comment on the literature studied for the year, the students showed better comprehension over students who were traditionally tested for comprehension. In the studies, Writing to Learn was an effective technique in helping students' comprehend literature (Kieft, Rijlaarsdam, and van den Bergh 19).

Students using writing to reflect upon a topic will build an emotional connection with what is being learned. According to the National Council of Teachers of English Commission on Composition, writing is a powerful tool which helps the writer learn about self as well as the world (Stover 21). The use of reflective writing has been used in professional development and is a beneficial strategy to teachers as well as students. This is because reflective writing helps
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develop perspective and understanding of human behavior on a personal level. Learning involves emotional elements and the more profound the connection of the emotion to the learning experience, the deeper that learning will become rooted (Bolton 752).

Understanding the importance of writing is also developed for students who have an opportunity to visually and auditorily connect writing to learning. An example of visual and auditory connections occurs when students visit or view a prerecorded screening of an author speaking about the writing process. Additional writing techniques encourage students to develop peer response groups through the implementation of collaborative writing opportunities such as a class wiki or blog page. Other tools include the use of real-time text tools such as Twitter and Google Drive, formally known as Google Docs, to promote collaborative opportunities. These strategies provide an opportunity for students to post writing drafts, final writing products, and share ideas with other writers. This type of interaction with technology that students are already familiar with has the potential to motivate students to write (Lacina and Block 14-15). Writing using technology is also one of the skills (2.1.6) listed in the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner and in the Common Core State Standards initiative for all K-12 grades.

In a research survey of US middle school administrators concerning writing strategies to prepare students to become 21st century writers, it was found that students will only become better performers when writing becomes as important as reading. With the overall access to technology for the majority of students and teachers, most of those surveyed agreed that the use of technology could enhance writing (Lacina and Block 16). During the survey 50% of thirteen administrators from large school districts across the US documented the use of writing instruction and technology implementation as a way to improve writing skills. The
administrators indicated that additional professional development was implemented so teachers could use technology in the classroom. Writing through the integration of technology across the content areas was another action taken by some of the districts. Plus, students were encouraged to create first drafts electronically on a computer (13). The addition of writing collaboratively through the use of technology tools also help students progress (Loertscher, “Does Technology” 49).

Other techniques that encourage writing include reading preparation strategies for content area writing. These strategies are guided writing, learning logs, structured note-taking, listen-stop-and-write, and quick writes. Guided writing activates prior knowledge by encouraging students to brainstorm a reading topic in order for them to organize their thoughts into a final writing product. Learning logs encourage written reflection by activating prior knowledge on a topic. Structured note-taking encourages students to take notes by writing the main ideas of a reading on the left side of the paper, writing the keywords on the right side of the paper, and a summary of the reading at the bottom of the paper (Knipper and Duggan 465; Lacina and Block 15). Listen-stop-and-write allows students to take two minutes worth of notes for every three minutes of lecture. This strategy encourages students to listen while writing (Knipper and Duggan 466). Another strategy called quick writes encourages students to create one minute papers based on teacher-directed questions. Quick writes provide students with an opportunity to think about an upcoming lesson (465).
Encouragement of reviewing and summarization strategies can also be used with Writing to Learn. Strategies which encourage review and summarization skills include text boxes, framed paragraphs, and microthemes. A text box is a strategy which uses a boxed reading guide that students use to take notes. Each text box relates back to a paragraph, picture, or diagram. Framed paragraphs provide an opportunity for the K-12 teacher to use a fill in the blank paragraph in which students then complete the sentences within the paragraph by placing appropriate words in each blank. The text box and framed paragraph strategies are scaffolding techniques which teachers use with students who are timid about writing. Microthemes allow students to summarize the key ideas of a lesson on individual note cards. Students who have used microthemes commented that the technique demonstrated that the length of writing is not as important as the content. Microthemes have been successfully applied in content areas across the curriculum throughout K-12 as well as higher education (Knipper and Duggan 466-467). For example, college level psychology students scored equivalent to students attending an honors course when microthemes were introduced in a non-honors class (Stewart, Myers, and Culley 48).

Lastly, creative Writing to Learn strategies proved beneficial. The strategies were implemented through biopoems, word maps, ABC lists, and writing prompts. Biopoems are descriptive, historical poems that imply an action or thought. Word maps used three questions, “What is it?, What is it like?, and What are some examples?”, to help students link previous knowledge to the topic. Students used the ABC list to inventory 26 words from the text by using
one word that represented each letter in the alphabet (Knipper and Duggan 467-468). Writing prompts were short 1-2 sentence answers to a question based on real-world problems (Papadopoulos et al. 73).

During a study on computer science majors it was found that students who were prompted to write using writing prompts had better recall (Papadopoulos et al. 76). The study included three experimental groups. The first group only read information on a case study, were immediately tested on what was learned, and then interviewed concerning the overall impression of the study. The second group was prompted to write an answer to each question posed in the same case study, tested a week later, and then interviewed. The third group was instructed to only think about the questions posed in the case study, tested a week later, and then interviewed (78). The amount of time it took the second group to write was longer than the amount of time it took for a participant to think about a topic which indicated that the additional time was spent processing information. This conclusion was based on the scores of the three groups. The group which did not receive any question prompts did poorly. The group which only thought about the questions resulted in comparable scores as the unprompted group. The group prompted to write an answer to each question out performed both the unprompted and the thinking groups during the post test (82-83). It was noted that the overuse of writing prompts during the study was tedious. The outcome of the study encouraged future web-based learning environments to monitor the amount of writing instruction in order to not overload students with too much tedious writing (86). Writing to Learn advocates state that writing prompts help enhance the cognitive process (75), and the use of prompts in a web-based environment is beneficial (85).
It was acknowledged that modes besides print serve to increase learning (Klein and Rose 433) and different types of writing tasks initiate different types of cognitive processes (Papadopoulos et al. 75). An example of combining different writing modes is that of multimodal writing. The unconventional approach Writing to Learn takes, such as not initially concentrating on the mechanics of writing and using writing to enhance learning, can be applied to a variety of writing modes. Multimodal writing techniques use the insertion of different modes of communication which are not necessarily text based such as graphs, diagrams, charts, mathematical equations, and pictures (McDermott 33). Multimodal writing techniques are beneficial for struggling writers who have difficulty with verbal expression. As an example, in a high school science class, atom structures were explained and compared by the use of text and an illustration of the periodic table within the article. The students created a multimodal article when the picture of the periodic table was included to support the text discussion. Multimodal writing is successful because students are currently familiar with multimodal forms of expression via everyday encounters with the Internet. Since student achievement is not solely based on writing skills, the use of multiple modes of communication can build cognitive connections. Students also express their scientific knowledge more comfortably using illustrations. Plus, scientists in working environments use multimodal information, and this technique can connect students to real world applications within the science classroom. The use of multimodal writing techniques prevents students from hiding behind vocabulary words. It can lead students to view tasks as more challenging and as activities similar to what is viewed and accomplished outside of school (36). Overall, the introduction of writing activities through a variety of strategies such as this helps focus attention and improve student comprehension (Thomas 104).
Writing to Learn in the School Library

The Writing to Learn technique is fluid enough to be used across the content areas. Since the Common Core State Standards as well as the AASL *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* incorporate writing across the content areas, this lends an opportunity for educators to use Writing to Learn as a learning technique. This section will discuss who is responsible to teach writing and demonstrate why the school librarian plays an important part in working directly with the content area teachers. Plus, this section will explore how the school librarian impacts writing through modeling, critical thinking skills and information literacy, and by offering encouragement to students as they write.

**The Responsibility to Teach Writing**

When teachers are taught using Writing to Learn techniques, they understand how to implement similar techniques in classrooms. Considering that Writing to Learn can be applied across the content areas, the question then becomes who is responsible for implementing the technique. In reality, the instructional use of writing is the responsibility of all educators (Herrington 380). In forty-eight studies, 75% of those studies revealed positive results when Writing to Learn was implemented in K-12 school settings with varying grade levels, subjects, writing assignments, and writing durations (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson 36; 42).

All educators collaboratively working to implement Writing to Learn strategies across the content areas is important. According to Heather Wolpert-Gawron, a California middle school teacher and 2004 California teacher of the year, the English language arts teacher can collaboratively work with other content educators to meet the writing section of the Common Core State Standards (Wolpert-Gawron). Content area teachers understand that literacy skills are
a requirement, and even though the science and social studies teachers were not trained in the same skills as the language arts instructors, reading specialists, or librarians, they know that all subject areas require more skill than just doing an activity or knowing facts (Knipper and Duggan 462).

Writing to Learn techniques promote the metacognitive and inquiry skills needed in content learning. When these skills are established, the learning is exciting (Baker et al. 107). Librarians can contribute to the teaching of different approaches to research and promote critical thinking skills through instruction in information literacy (Elmborg, “Information Literacy” 75). Librarians understand the importance of teaching information literacy across the curriculum to promote critical thinking (Elmborg, “Information Literacy” 70). Presenting critical thinking through the use of Writing to Learn strategies would encourage information literacy and provide the librarian with an opportunity to promote research, information, and writing skills across the curriculum (73).

How School Librarians Impact Writing and Learning

Writing to Learn involves both writing and reading to enhance learning. Literacy is considered an essential skill (Achterman 81), and the librarian enriches reading and writing opportunities (Whelan 48). When the school librarian understands the reading and writing process and is considered a leader and expert in literacy, the school staff recognizes the librarian’s value and as a result visits to the library increase (Achterman 76, 78). The Standards for the 21st-Century Learner demonstrate how librarians address multiple literacies including textual literacy, which encourages students to read, write, analyze, and evaluate literature and documents (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, Empowering Learners 24). School librarians are
trained to utilize all the standards to develop goals which will comprehensively meet learning expectations as well as information literacy skills (Oakleaf 64). Plus, school librarians improve student achievement in writing. According to Lance and Loertscher, a study in over twenty states covering 2.6 million students showed a direct correlation between how students perform and the level of funding, staffing, collection size and range, and direct instruction provided within the school library (qtd. in Bleidt 68). In a study conducted by Shirley A. Bleidt, Ed.D covering 1,509 middle school students in rural Texas, students were asked to gauge their perceptions of the usefulness of their school libraries. The survey found that 54% of students indicated the library staff helped improve their writing. While there was a 97.9% positive response about how the school library helped with learning (68, 76). A student survey conducted in thirty-nine Ohio schools revealed that of the 13,050 students surveyed 75% felt their school librarian helped improve writing skills (qtd. in Bleidt 70). Another survey of 5,733 seventh through eleventh grade students conducted in thirteen Delaware schools indicated that 79% of the students felt their writing benefited because of school librarian (71). Plus in the Fisher, Frey, and Lapp study about the implementation of a school wide content literacy plan based on Writing to Learn revealed an increase in school library usage by students (394).

Writing is a skill which is taught in order to help students develop critical thinking and language skills. Librarians in the past have worked across the content areas to help students understand the writing process. Over the past 34 years, higher education training for writing instruction and library instruction were developed differently. English departments concentrated on developing writing programs. Library programs did not concentrate on composition or rhetoric. As Writing Across the Curriculum, the predecessor of Writing to Learn, became
mainstreamed, library instruction was only beginning to focus on information literacy. The concentration on library and research skills such as information literacy also encompassed writing skills. Both writing instruction and library information literacy instruction teach literacy skills. With the push to use writing across the curriculum and the increased interest in research skills, library instruction adapted. As library instruction increased, librarians incrementally and reflectively matched incorporating writing into information literacy with that of writing instruction (Elmborg, “Information Literacy” 69). For example, Kuhlthau is well known in library circles for explaining the research process (task initiation, topic selection, prefocus exploration, focus formulation, information collection, and search closure) which engaged students in the learning process to connect cognitive meaning to what was being researched. This was similar to the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing) which was used in writing instruction. The writing process placed the focus of learning on the student to make cognitive meaning of what was being studied by utilizing writing as the strategy. Both focused on process and engaging students in learning (Elmborg, “Literacies” 68-69).

One way librarians partner in learning with students (75) is by developing writing mentorship or modeling programs for students. Through mentorship the librarian maintains writing skills, stays updated on writing models, helps students with resource selection, and establishes a positive relationship with students. Wanda Adams Jaquith stated that as a school library media specialist, her primary role no longer entails only selecting books for the collection or assisting in research. Instead, her role also includes that of writing mentor (Jacquith 42-43). It is a long process to help students write well and it requires modeling, instruction, practice, and
feedback. Modeling is an important strategy because the solitary use of direct instruction does not work well in writing instruction (Baker et al. 107). By intertwining the writing process with classroom collaboration, the librarian can build appropriate assignments with teachers (Jacquith 43-44).

Writing to Learn encourages the instructor to model thinking and writing procedures. This form of modeling is also found within the information search process used by school librarians. A study conducted in Hawaii between two elementary schools used journaling techniques to examine how students understood the information search process in the school library. The school librarian in the study learned that modeling was important, students needed to understand a learning strategy before beginning a new writing strategy, and reflection required practice and feedback. During the study the classroom teacher and librarian collaborated to teach students the four phases of the information search process: presearch, which introduces the topic; focus formulation and presentation planning, which encourages students to decide upon the focus of the assignment; collection and organization, which helps students discern relevant information; and the presentation and evaluation process, which allows students to share what is learned. In order to provide classes with opportunities to use the library, a flexible library schedule was established. The results of the study revealed that students understood the information search process. Journaling helped the librarian and classroom instructor better understand each student’s learning, and the process created a sense of community between students and instructors (Harada 103). Throughout this and other studies discussed in this paper,
Writing to Learn was demonstrated as a technique which encourages students to use writing to explore what is being learned. Also, when the school librarian connects Writing to Learn with the standards students systematically demonstrate comprehension through the use of writing.

Connecting the writing core values of the Common Core State Standards and the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner to the Writing to Learn technique presents an opportunity for the school librarian to promote writing across the content areas. Writing to Learn is a complex activity which requires partnership of people as well as the inclusion of a variety of resources (Klein and Rose 456). The Common Core State Standards encourages students to write persuasively, with explanation, reflection, and with creativity ("Common Core" 5). The Standards for the 21st-Century Learner encourages the librarian to address multiple literacies including textual literacy (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, Empowering Learners 24). The school librarian is an important member of the school who is innovative, knowledgeable, and contributes to the learning environment (Am. Assn. of School Librarians, Empowering Learners 7). Writing to Learn is a technique that the school librarian can use to connect the writing skills promoted in the CCSS and the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner across all the content areas.
Chapter 3: Conclusion and Recommendations

Writing is considered one of the “3 R’s” of education. Recently the National Commission of Writing stated that writing as an essential skill has fallen into neglect. However, with the emphasis of language skills being promoted by the new standards, that derelict is in the process of changing. An emphasis on writing is found within the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. Neither of the standards indicates a specific curriculum or technique to engage students in the writing process. Writing to Learn is a technique which emphasizes the use of writing to engage students in the learning process. Strategies developed to implement Writing to Learn encourage students to scaffold new concepts with deeper understanding. This technique stemmed from the Writing Across the Curriculum movement and is applicable across all content areas.

With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards within much of the United States, writing techniques such as Writing to Learn are methods which provide opportunities to connect writing to the standards. Combining Writing to Learn’s versatility and the school librarian’s training to connect lessons to the standards enriches learning opportunities for students. However, questions arise about how to connect the Writing to Learn techniques to the Common Core State Standards and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner as well as how the school librarian can use Writing to Learn to become a writing leader. These questions
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include: What is Writing to Learn? How can Writing to Learn be connected to the Common Core State Standards and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner? How can school librarians impact learning by connecting Writing to Learn to the standards?

Writing to Learn

A brief history about Writing to Learn provides a foundation of how this technique connects to student learning. Writing to Learn is an offshoot of the Writing Across the Curriculum movement of the 1960s. The actual concept of Writing to Learn is attributed to E. M. Forster who observed that writing clarifies thought. This clarity builds deeper understanding and improves retention. The process of Writing to Learn is not the same as learning to write. When students are learning how to write, the importance of mechanics and the writing process is emphasized. However, when students Write to Learn, the importance of thinking about what is observed and learned, and connecting that learning to previous knowledge is emphasized. Studies have found that a writer’s behavior and personality has an impact on the Writing to Learn approach. Overall, the studies discovered that students were divided between two main types of writers, writers who plan before writing and writers that rewrite and revise often. This knowledge leads to an understanding of how to approach Writing to Learn with each student.

Pedagogically, Writing to Learn is built on objectives, goals, and principals which are used in the classroom, but were developed in the college and the workplace. These connections are found on college Web sites such as the University of Connecticut, Purdue University, and Stetson University. Each encourages the use of Writing to Learn techniques to prepare students for classes and the workforce. Writing to Learn also fosters an understanding of personal
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values, encourages the use of a variety of reading materials, and provides opportunities for reflection. These Writing to Learn objectives, goals, and principles are woven into the five phases of Writing to Learn to provide an opportunity for teachers to increase comprehension.

The five phases of Writing to Learn provide a model of implementation within the classroom which increases comprehension. The overall goal of the five phases is to help students effectively encode, revise, aggregate, and review information. The first three phases are called the R-C-R cycle because students repeat the review, compare, and revise phases. This repetition builds a foundation of knowledge on the topic being learned. In phases four and five students put R-C-R summaries together into a final product. Upon completion of the five phases students understand how to make personal connections to what is being learned. This use of writing to explore and reflect upon ideas provides a visual quality to the thinking process and resembles Vygostsky’s developmental stage of “inner speech”. An example of this is found with multimodal writing, a Writing to Learn strategy which uses graphs, diagrams, charts, mathematical equations, pictures, and real-time text tools such as Twitter and Google Drive, formally known as Google Docs, to connect students to modes of familiar literacy used in and outside of the K-12 classroom.

Writing to Learn enriches thinking by encouraging the writer to think about the topic, audience, and use of language. These enrichments match some of the goals presented on college Web sites. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were designed to prepare students for college and the workforce. The AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner have been aligned to work with the CCSS. Writing to Learn is a technique that bridges the language arts emphasis of the CCSS and the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner to the classroom and beyond.
Connecting Writing to Learn to the Standards

Writing is encouraged by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner as a core element of learning to be used across the K-12 curriculum. Writing to Learn is applicable across the content areas and lends an advantage to teachers who use this technique in conjunction with the CCSS and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. The strategies in Writing to Learn encourage the use of a variety of writing techniques which researchers have determined are beneficial to students. The AASL document, Crosswalk of the Common Core Standards and the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, reveals that 32 AASL indicators correspond with 161 CCSS writing standards.

Strategies have been developed within Writing to Learn which aid in implementing the technique. Many of the strategies are applicable across the content areas in K-12 and higher education. These strategies help students focus on learning, increase inquiry, develop complex thinking, and discover areas of inadequate knowledge. Teachers currently using Writing to Learn view the use of writing as a part of the learning process which demonstrates student comprehension. Studies found that when Writing to Learn strategies were implemented, student recall was improved and the technique contributed to learning. A research survey found that students perform better when writing was considered equally important as reading.

To prepare students for higher education and the workforce, an emphasis on writing is important within teacher training. The US Department of Education has spent three billion dollars on programs to help K-12 teachers become trained in writing skills. In addition to this effort, the National Commission on Writing recommended that higher educational institutions emphasize writing techniques for K-12 teachers across the content areas. The National Writing
Project’s former executive director stated that colleges expect high school students to already have high-level writing abilities before being admitted to higher educational institutions.

Writing to Learn is a technique that incorporates the writing skills listed in the CCSS and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner which have been designed and aligned to prepare K-12 students for higher education and the workforce.

**School Librarians Use of Writing to Learn to Impact Comprehension**

It is the responsibility of all educators to teach writing to students. Connecting Writing to Learn to the Common Core State Standards and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner is applicable across the content areas. In addition to meeting the standards, the school librarian is also trained to address multiple literacies including textual literacy. One of the skills encouraged within textual literacy listed by the AASL is writing. When writing is used as a learning tool, learners discover language, how to communicate with a variety of audiences, and develop a better understanding of the thinking process.

Writing is a communication tool and Writing to Learn activities put the focus on what it means to be a writer. Research studies have found that writing also effectively increases scores on standardized tests. For example, when Writing to Learn was implemented in a two-and-half year school wide literacy approach, the school’s test scores rose from 12% to 54%. Plus it was observed that students carried books and used the library more often, also demonstrating that the school library and librarian contributed to this improvement. Another example from a review of forty-eight Writing to Learn studies reviewed by Robert L. Bangert-Drowns, Marlene M. Hurley, and Barbara Wilkinson, showed that 75% of the studies indicated that Writing to Learn resulted in a positive outcome for students.
As a literacy expert the school librarian is an educational leader. Students agree that the school librarian is an asset to the school and improves student achievement in writing. In an Ohio study reviewed by Bleidt, 75% of students felt that the school librarian helped improve writing skills. Another survey conducted in Delaware schools revealed that 79% of the students surveyed felt their writing benefited because of the school library. In Texas 97.9% of students surveyed stated that their librarian benefited their educational experience.

Teaching students to write well is a long process which requires modeling, instruction, practice, and feedback. One way school librarians demonstrate writing leadership is through mentorship (modeling). When school librarians become writing mentors with students, learning is a mutual activity. Writing to Learn encourages modeling of thinking processes and writing procedures with students. Modeling is important because the solitary use of direct instruction does not work well in writing instruction. The school librarian meets the school’s instructional goals when writing standards are connected across the content areas. Collaborating with K-12 teachers to model writing builds assignments that will meet the learning needs of the student body.

Content area teachers understand the importance of literacy skills. Students benefit when the school librarian and classroom teachers collaboratively work to present a variety of writing strategies. Writing to Learn promotes the metacognitive and inquiry skills needed within the content areas. Collaborating with K-12 teachers and students by connecting the standards to the skills Writing to Learn supports, the school librarian is seen as an important member of the school and contributor to the overall learning environment.
Conclusions and Recommendations

The Common Core State Standards and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner are each fairly new sets of standards. Through the Common Core State Standards students are encouraged to write persuasively, with explanation, reflection, and with creativity. The school librarian is encouraged to use the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner to address multiple literacies with students. To demonstrate how the standards are aligned, the AASL created the Crosswalk of the Common Core Standards and the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner document. Writing is an important element in both sets of standards and Writing to Learn is a technique that bridges the standards across the content areas. Studies have shown that Writing to Learn strategies are effective in K-12 classrooms and higher education. The technique is used as a writing and thinking tool that helps students focus on learning.

Little data exists concerning how the school librarian uses writing to meet the standards. Reasons for this could include a lack of emphasis on writing in teacher and librarian training, and a lack of understanding about how the technique works. Additional studies connecting the school librarian’s use of Writing to Learn to the Common Core State Standards and the AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner would provide more insight to the effectiveness of this technique.
References


