

Conclusion

We opened this book with the idea that writing is never “just writing.” We said then and reiterate now that writing is simultaneously a means for people to learn, an expression of personal identity, and a way of signaling belonging. As writing instructors and program leaders ourselves, we have frequently been asked by faculty in other departments to provide “quick tips” that they can use to engage students in writing. But over the decades that the two of us have taught writing and worked with faculty to do the same, we’ve come to develop a framework and series of activities that help faculty fully explore their knowledge and their disciplinary communities of practice, then build writing activities that provide access and opportunity for students in those communities. This book represents those activities in written form, underscored by research and illustrated by the pedagogical activities of the many colleagues with whom we have worked over the years.

As you move forward to build your courses after working through the ideas in this book, we urge you to think about writing as the top level of a very deep well. That’s because often, writers look to writing as a strategy for learning and knowing (writing to learn, what you might think of as digging out the hole for the well), as well as a strategy for showing what they’ve learned (capping the well). This enables *access* to your field or discipline, providing students with ways to look at and practice with how knowledge is constructed there. But solely focusing on access overlooks the ways that accepted forms of constructed knowledge have been reified through the perspectives of those who are already disciplinary or field insiders. That’s why we’ve also asked you to consider where to provide *opportunity* as well, learning more about the identities and commitments of the writers with whom you’re working and making space for them in your courses.

The totality of this book—its chapters, reflective and classroom activities, the appendices, and even the research that underscores it—reflects the three commitments: 1) *teaching with writing* (writing to learn), 2) *teaching writing* (teaching students conventions or expectations of disciplinary genres), and 3) *teaching writers* (focusing on the writers in your classes). As we close this book, we invite you to bring together in one location the ideas you’ve developed as you’ve read the book in a single location, and consider the following questions:

1. How can you *use writing* as a means of explicitly considering the epistemologies in your discipline or field?
2. How can you *teach with writing*, helping writers learn about and practice with knowledge in your courses and field? What activities can help students see how knowledge is built through the conventions of written communication, and what activities will help them draw on that knowledge for their own writing?

3. How can you *teach writing*, providing opportunities for students to practice with conventions of knowledge-creating in your discipline, and understand how and why they are constructed as they are?

Teaching writing and teaching with writing are necessary for providing students *access* to your discipline or your course. The fourth question focuses on *opportunity*:

4. How will you *teach writers* in the course? What strategies from this book can help you develop empathetic knowledge, then design activities in your course or assignment to tap into their identities, commitments, and knowledges? When our teaching and research loads are high, it is easy to overlook this piece. However, because literacy and identity are co-constitutive (Descourtis et al., 2019), and embodied (Krzus-Shaw, 2019). Thus, if we want to invite students into our work, we must provide them opportunities to participate, not just regurgitate. Your students must find meaningful connections between the course material and their own priorities and interests.

Because writing—and teaching—and all forms of knowledge-making are social, we encourage you to invite your colleagues into the work of this book. Consider forming reading groups or learning communities, and working with your colleagues to think through courses, programs, majors, and high-stakes exams. Together, you can innovate deep learning experiences for your students, and enrich your field.