



Common Writing Assignment (CWA)

Professional Development Session
shared by the
Science Department
January, 2009



- Welcome & Introductions
- Think, pair, share about writing
- CWA: What is it and why do it?
- Writing in science
- Student writing samples and rubrics
- Feedback to students
- Planning for implementation
- Reporting data
- Closing

Welcome and Introductions

Please share the following:

- name
- school
- position
- grade level





Think, Pair, Share

Take a moment to jot down the following:

- What are the different types of writing that you have encountered or used in your classroom?
- What challenges do you face in having students write in class?



CWA: What Are They?

CWA is a district-wide initiative in which

- students communicate in writing their analytical thinking (grades 4-12).
- assignments are taught and graded by [science] teachers.
- writing is scored using a common rubric.
- data will inform instruction.



The CWA in Science is

- To be completed in grades 4-8 by **all** students.
- A multi-draft writing assignment.
- Related to the BPS Science Course Descriptions and aligned with MA Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework.



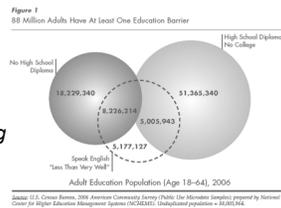
What it is **NOT!**

- ⊗ On-demand writing samples
- ⊗ Written assignments given without teacher instruction, support, and feedback
- ⊗ Solely a homework assignment
- ⊗ Solely an in-class assignment



Why do this?

- *Seventy percent of students in grades 4-12 are low-achieving writers.* (Persky et al., 2003)
- *Every school day, more than 7,000 students drop out of high school.* (Pinkus, 2006)
- *Over half of adults scoring at the lowest literacy levels are dropouts, and almost a quarter of these persons are high school graduates.* (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005)



The Future for Our Students??

A survey of 120 major American corporations employing nearly eight million people concludes that in today's workplace, writing is a 'threshold skill' for hiring and promotion among salaried (i.e., professional) employees.... Writing is a ticket to professional opportunity, while poorly written job applications are a figurative kiss of death.

-- National Commission on Writing, 2004



Why in Science?



These assignments

- encourage collaboration between content area and ELA teachers.
- prepare students with the requisite writing skills to become college-ready and empower students to see themselves as successful, capable writers.
- provide data to inform science instruction.

These assignments



- create a culture of equity in all schools by ensuring that all students have access to high quality assignments supported by rigorous instruction given district-wide expectations for quality writing.
- increase time and intensity of content area writing instruction, making explicit the expectations for literacy in the content areas to both teachers and students.



Writing in Science

- “But we *already* do this...”

- A (re)NEW(ed) emphasis:
Scientific explanation

Claims

Evidence

Reasoning



BPS Writing Samples and



- Review rubric for assessing the CWA
- Individual assessment of writing samples
- Small group discussion
- Whole group discussion



	4 - Advanced	3 - Proficient	2 - Needs Improvement	1 - Warning
Scientific Claim Score: ____				
Evidence and Science Reasoning Score: ____				
Idea Development and Organization Score: ____				
Conventions Score: ____				
TOTAL: ____ /16 = ____ %	<small>* Check this box if student did not submit a paper or if one submitted was substantially and identically plagiarized. In this case, the student should receive a zero.</small>			

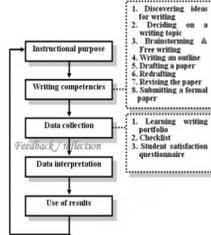
Feedback Qualities and Attributes

- Timely: the sooner the better
- Intimate and Individual
- Empowering
- Manageable
- Feedback should open doors, not close them.



Implementation

- Find out who the Literacy Facilitator is and garner support.
- Talk with classroom teachers, ELA teacher(s) and/or the Literacy coach to build understanding.
- Discuss the Writer's Workshop model and the process that students are already using to complete multi-draft work.



Implementation

- Develop an implementation plan for the CWA with the classroom/ELA teacher(s). Work out details of assigning and carrying out the work.
- Score the writing using the common rubric as team - science, ELA and Literacy - if possible.



A “how-to” suggestion...

- ✓ Explain the assignment.
- ✓ Have students pre-write: notebooks, lab sheets, resource books, web, CD, FOSS site, concept maps, etc.
- ✓ Assign the draft
- ✓ Provide high quality feedback (teacher, peer-edit, conference, written)
- ✓ Collect and score the Final Paper



Reporting the Data

- Details are posted on MyBPS on the Science Page. Please see the document titled - "CWA Data Collection Memo - April 3, 2009" for information.
- Materials due to Literacy Facilitators on or before May 29th.
- All materials due to the Science Department on or before June 5th.



Strengthening Literacy Skills Improves Science Learning...

Learning how to read and write in science is an important part of literacy, and it can help students understand and



retain key science content.

(NSTA, 2008; NRC, 1996; Saul, 2004; Shanahan, 2004)
