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Chapter 1:

Writing in the 21st Century

The American Public, as evidenced by the National Writing Project 2005 Survey, published by Beldin Russonello and Stewart concluded that the public wants writing to be taught to children early and frequently in schools across the United States. The survey also concluded that:

1. Reading, Math, and writing were considered most important to be mastered before high school graduation (2).
2. Americans believe that writing should be taught at a young age and across disciplines. Writing assignments are a necessary part of the high school curriculum (2).
3. Americans strongly believe that writing will enhance student academic performance on standardized tests. They also believe that writing is important for career advancement (2).

On a 2004 survey of 120 major American corporations, representatives from the business sector emphasized that people who could not communicate and write clearly will not be hired, and are not likely to be considered for promotion because these employees would not be able to keep their positions (3). They also stressed that writing is an entry level requirement for employment, and it is a fundamental skill in business (3). Two thirds of employees have writing responsibility whether it is writing reports or communicating through memorandums with colleagues.

In light of this evidence, the responsibility of preparing students to write and communicate clearly falls squarely on K-12 teachers in all disciplines, and at all levels. Teaching writing is no longer the sole responsibility of the english teacher or the composition teacher. Teachers, across the curriculum, are responsible for teaching and requiring students to write within the disciplines they teach. Teachers will need to develop writing assignments and projects, at the appropriate learning levels, that will engage and help students develop their communication and writing skills.