



The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: A KENTUCKY INNOVATION

House Bill 257 launches a set of innovations to create learning that is relevant and exciting for Kentucky students today and build upward mobility and thriving communities for Kentucky's shared future.

Writing across the curriculum, discussed here, is one of those innovations. Two others –vibrant learning experiences and local indicators of quality–are discussed in similar reports and supported by additional tools at prichardcommittee.org/vibrant.

HOW CAN WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM WORK FOR CURRENT LEARNERS?

In the arts, imagine students producing thoughtful plans for dance and theatre performances and for murals and sculptures with meaning for their communities. That's writing for that part of the curriculum. Similarly, reviews and posters and podcast scripts that interpret artistic work can be authentic written work created with important student choice on the art to be studied, products to be created (essay, review, poster, etc.) and audiences to be addressed.

In science, imagine students explaining a problem, testing out solutions, and using their data to argue for which solution best solves the problem in a practical way. That's skilled writing and skilled participation in problem solving. Scientific writing also classically includes creating a coherent record of experimentation, including connecting it to existing science and discussing their results.

In social studies, imagine students conducting responsible inquiry developing questions, investigating a topic, using the evidence they gather, and communicating conclusions. Those inquiry steps work in civics, economics, geography, and history, and they all invite thoughtful, relevant writing. Whether students are explaining past events or arguing for action steps on a current challenge, writing is a natural step in those fields.

Adding a caveat: the most important features of this writing will be purposeful communication, responsible information, and coherent organization. Spelling and capitalization and paragraph breaks will matter, but they should matter less than the disciplinary concepts and skills students are learning and putting to work.



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HOW CAN WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM WORK FOR KENTUCKY'S FUTURE?

To create upward mobility and thriving communities, Kentucky's rising generation must have durable skills that matter in every kind of work. Communication is one of those skills, and useful, relevant writing will build that communication.

The examples above show that writing can also be an effective tool for:

- Problem-solving
- Gathering, recording, and analyzing evidence gathered through hands-on work
- Finding, evaluating, and using information found online and through other sources
- Providing workable explanations and effective arguments based on what one has learned.
- Learning the value of persistence and teamwork for all kinds of undertakings.

IS WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM REQUIRED?

Yes. Every superintendent is to set policy that determines the writing program and publish that policy on the district's website. House Bill 257 eliminated writing from statewide assessments and added this new local obligation. The new legal wording, shown at the bottom of this page, reduces school council independence: SBDM policies will have to be consistent with their superintendent's writing program.

HOW CAN COMMUNITIES WORK TO MAKE WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM A SUCCESS?

Early on, they can be curious, asking superintendents and others how the new policy is being developed, and asking how they can help. Later, they can contribute to community-wide awareness of the changes, explaining the benefits and helping to sort out any misunderstandings. They can also contribute to shared problem-solving if any of the changes prove to be difficult for students, families, or teachers. There may also be opportunities to share knowledge and experience with young writers as they research topics for their writing and chances to provide an active audience for the work they produce.

LAW IN A BOX

House Bill 257 amended KRS 158.6453 to include the following rules:

(19) (a) The Kentucky Department of Education shall develop and distribute to all school districts guidelines for including an effective writing program across the content areas aligned to the academic standards. The department shall provide professional learning opportunities to support authentic and disciplinary-specific writing across the curriculum for superintendents, school-based decision making councils, principals, teachers, and teacher preparation programs.

(b) Each superintendent of a local school district shall adopt policies that determine the writing program for the local school district and ensure the writing program policy is published on the district's website. The writing program shall include disciplinary-specific writing across the curriculum and incorporate a variety of language resources, technological tools, and multiple opportunities for students to develop complex communication skills for a variety of purposes.