

Linking ITIP and the Writing Process

The recursive stages of the writing process can effectively be incorporated into the instructional sequence outlined in the ITIP model.

After conducting a series of writing-across-the-curriculum workshops, I was approached by a teacher who was dismayed about how she was going to integrate these new ideas into her own instructional approach. In particular, she wanted to know how her training in Instructional Theory Into Practice (ITIP) correlated with what she had learned about the writing process in my seminar.

Curriculum coordinators and staff development directors have also talked with me about this relationship in hopes of discovering ways to coordinate follow-up programs for staff trained in both models. In this article, I attempt to demonstrate that the research on effective instruction and methodology, as evidenced in ITIP and other paradigms, does not conflict with the writing process model. In fact, the two models complement each other, since both describe teacher behaviors that promote effective instruction and student behaviors that promote successful learning.

Model Overviews

ITIP. Hunter's (1976) theory of instruction on how people learn, commonly known as the UCLA model, is divided into the categories of Con-

tent, Teaching Behavior, and Learning Behavior. In his adaptation of this model, Stachowski¹ emphasized how teachers think and make decisions. Cummings (1980) has articulated this decision-making model into four teacher behaviors:

1. selecting an objective,
2. teaching to the objective,
3. monitoring and adjusting the classroom activities,
4. instituting the four key principles of learning:
 - a. reinforcement,
 - b. active participation,
 - c. retention,
 - d. motivation.

This model, commonly known as ITIP, contends that mastery of the four instructional skills listed above leads to the probability that high-quality learning will occur. In other words, if teachers know what they want to teach, make sure that they match the lesson's difficulty with the students' abilities, assess whether they need to reteach part or all of the lesson, and keep the students involved, the instruction will lead to student learning.

The Writing Process. As teachers execute a writing lesson, they initiate a set of student behaviors that Murray (1987) and Graves (1983) have de-

scribed as "the writing process." The model is composed of six stages:

1. exploring—strategies that help students discover topics and ideas,
2. shaping—activities that assist students to find a context and form for their writing,
3. drafting—the act of composing ideas,
4. sharing—ways for students to share topics, ideas, drafts, rewrites, and publications,
5. revising—opportunities that help students rethink and organize thoughts,
6. publishing—contexts that show off finished writing.

Different yet compatible. One of the major differences between the writing process and ITIP is their structure. The writing process is recursive, not sequential—that is, any stage in the process can precede or follow another stage. For example, a student can begin the writing process by *revising* a previously written paper, then proceed to *share* the revision with a friend who next helps the writer *explore* new ideas. Whereas the writing process is recursive, ITIP is a linear, sequential series of instructional decisions by which the teacher first selects an objective; second, teaches to it; and,

third, monitors and adjusts his or her behavior.

Proponents of each model feel that putting the two terms in tandem results in nothing more than a misleading oxymoron. Detractors say ITIP is prescriptive and mechanistic. Opponents of the writing process maintain it is too student-centered and laissez-faire. However, the writing process can complement the later steps of ITIP. That is "teaching to an objective" and "monitoring and adjusting" are in many instances recursive stages, since adjusting the lesson may include re-teaching all or part of a lesson in no particular order. Further, the principles of learning in the ITIP schema occur throughout a lesson—while it is taught and while it is monitored or retaught.

Although a different philosophy is involved in how the stages of each model are executed, the two are compatible in many respects. What follows is a detailed description of how the instructional skills described in the ITIP model can embody the recursive stages of the writing process. (Fig. 1 gives an overview of this relationship.)

Selecting an Objective

When choosing an objective, teachers are guided by two factors: level of difficulty and level of complexity. First, teachers need to diagnose whether a task is too demanding or too easy for the student. For example, a lesson that teaches addition might be too easy for a 4th grade student who already can divide and multiply. Second, teachers need to determine whether the level of complexity of a task is appropriate. The level of complexity refers to the level of thinking required of the student. According to Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, for example, a student who writes a propaganda ad for a particular political issue is thinking at a more complex level than the student who describes five propaganda techniques.

The process of creating an effective writing assignment mirrors these guidelines for selecting an appropriate objective. The writing teacher determines the developmental stage of a student's writing ability and provides

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writing opportunities that are not too difficult or easy. Fluency, the ability to get ideas on paper, is a suitable objective for beginning or immature writers. Clarity and precision are more difficult objectives and more appropriate for skilled or mature writers. Mofett (1986) has described a series of writing assignments that correspond to the levels of thinking. These activities range from inner-directed assignments like journals, memoirs, and autobiographies to assignments written for more general audiences, like family histories, fiction, and essays.

Next, the teacher determines the complexity level of the writing by linking the level of thinking to the purpose of the assignment. For example, an exercise that asks students to describe an automobile is less complex than an assignment that requires the student to compare two cars or to classify cars into particular categories. (Indeed, students often find assignments that would be ranked as complex according to Bloom's taxonomy, like evaluation and synthesis, easier to complete than less complex assignments like definition and summarization.) Elementary and secondary students who select their own topics will often choose a variety of formats and purposes that result in levels of thinking that surpass teacher expectations.

Teaching to an Objective

After selecting an objective and stating it in the form of a writing assignment, the teacher analyzes the lesson and determines the teacher and student behaviors that are most likely to engage the student in learning. In most classrooms, common teacher behaviors include explaining, questioning, directing, modeling, and creating activities. For example, if the teacher's objective is for students to write about a self-selected topic, a relevant teacher behavior is to model writing a personal narrative about a topic of personal interest. A nonrelevant teacher behavior is to lecture about the history of writing or demonstrate how to diagram a sentence.

The teacher also determines behaviors that will assist students in reaching a selected objective. Student behaviors range from taking notes to creating class newspapers. In the example just noted, a student might cluster a self-selected topic like fishing and then write a poem, personal narrative, or want ad on this topic. A nonrelevant student behavior might include writing a research paper on the use of metaphor in the novels of Hawthorne. As activities are selected during this stage of the instructional process, teachers of writing can initiate the writing process.

Exploring—encouraging. Let's assume that the teacher's objective is for students to write a paper that describes some procedure or process. In teaching to this objective, the teacher analyzes the task and constructs activities that will lead students through the writing process. During the first stage, "exploring," students might brainstorm ideas in small groups, cluster ideas individually, or fill out prepared prewriting sheets that ask specific kinds of questions about the task.

During this stage, the teacher might choose to model a brainstorming or clustering activity with the entire class or to ask questions about the suitability of the chosen topic. In general, the teacher encourages students to find topics they know something about or have some interest in. One teacher behavior that is not helpful—that is

even counterproductive—is asking the students to compose without first allowing them to explore and choose various topics. Calkins (1986) at the elementary level and Atwell (1987) at the middle school level have demonstrated the advantages for students in selecting their own writing topics. Romano (1987) also has suggested ways to assist high school students in their topic selection and idea development.

Shaping—modeling. A second set of student behaviors that leads to effective writing is shaping. During this stage, students put their ideas into a format that best fits the writing objective. For example, if the assignment is to write a statement of complaint about a broken toy or product, a business letter is an appropriate format because it dictates a language and style different from what is suitable in a personal communication or a product report. Thus, “shaping” provides a context for students to organize their thoughts.

Teachers can help students by providing examples of obvious formats and appropriate shapes. At the elementary level, teachers can help students write more easily in that shape by reading patterned pieces of literature like *The Important Book* and *Brown Bear Brown Bear*. At the secondary level, teachers can model more elaborate forms like product reports, manuals, and media scripts. A nonrelevant teacher behavior during this stage is to ask students to write in

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the same format time after time. Judy (1980) encourages high school teachers to branch out from traditional essay, research paper, and exam formats to real-world formats. To help them do so, he has provided teachers with an array of writing shapes, including want ads, posters, brochures, and sermons. Another alternative is to allow students to self-select their topics and choose a workable format.

Composing—questioning. The most obvious student behavior for a writing assignment is the actual act of composing. Yet, in the recent past, textbooks and curriculum guides have asked students to complete irrelevant activities like diagramming, which does not teach to the objective of writing. “The study of traditional school grammar (i.e., the definition of parts of speech, the parsing of sentences, etc.) has no effect on raising the quality of student writing,” writes Hillocks (1984, p. 160).

Another behavior that is irrelevant to drafting is completing sentence exercises rather than drafting entire pieces. In the past, teachers labored under the misconception that writing was a series of sequential skills that had to be learned and mastered in proper order—first sentences, then paragraphs, and so forth. Kirby and Liner (1981) have demonstrated that the opposite is actually true. A whole piece of writing is far more important than the sum of its parts. Students evolve into skillful, precise writers by writing whole pieces that provide contextual clues for more accurate decisions about mechanics, usage, and logic. “By fragmenting instruction and drilling on one part at a time,” write Kirby and Liner, “we kill motivation and destroy the very process we’re trying to develop” (p. 3).

As the students compose, teachers encourage them by asking questions about their writing to clarify their thoughts. Another productive teaching behavior during this stage is for the teacher to write. As children see an adult actually composing, they begin to perceive the teacher not just as an evaluator of writing but as a practitioner as well.

Editing groups can assist individuals who lack skills to self-correct their own spelling, punctuation, and format errors.

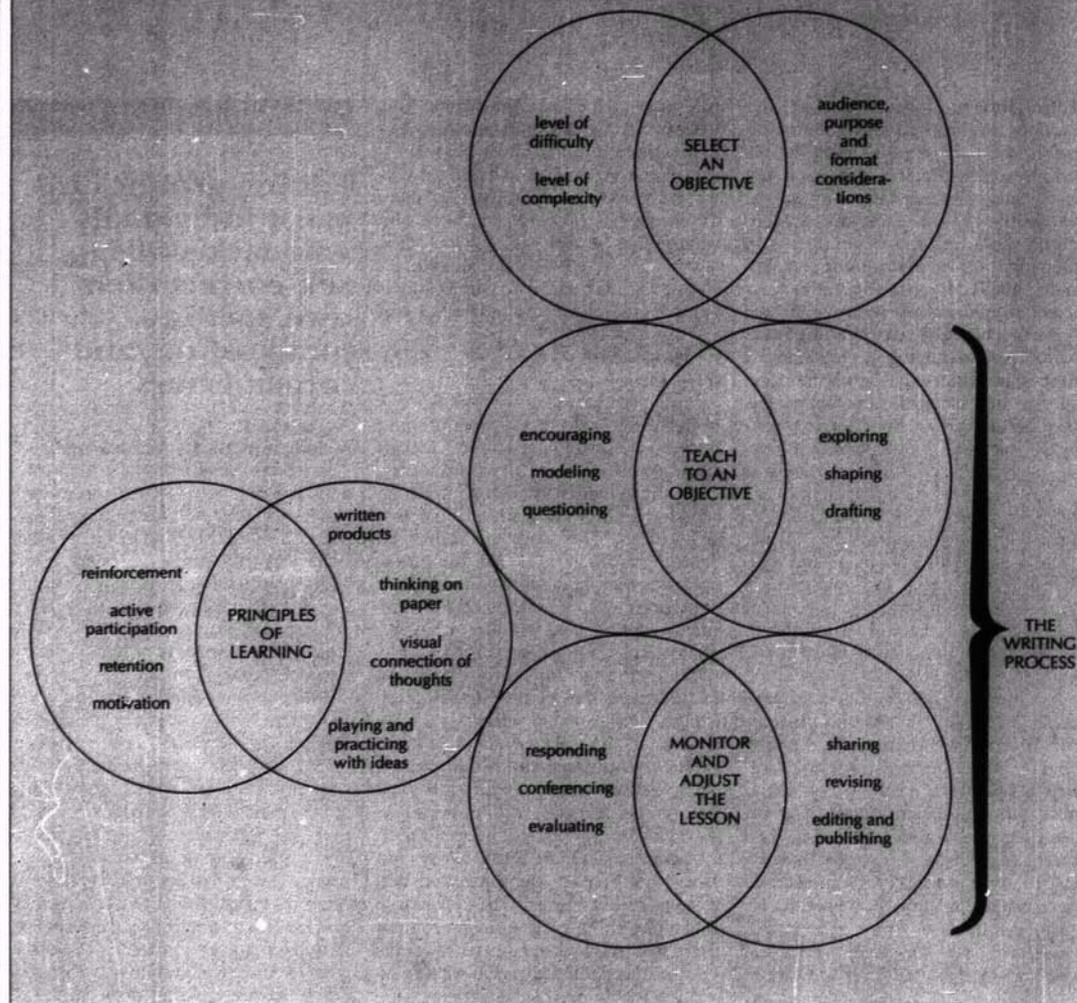
Monitoring and Adjusting

The instructional skills of monitoring and adjusting help the teacher observe and assess whether learning is taking place. The teacher first elicits student behaviors that can be observed, interprets whether the student is completing the desired task, and then takes appropriate action. The next three stages of the writing process encompass these procedures.

Sharing—responding. In the sharing stage, the teacher establishes teacher conferences, peer conferences, and feedback groups so that students have an avenue for talking about their ideas. Activities such as these are very different from the teachers’ written comments, which “bleed” over a paper in red pencil. Students often disregard these remarks as they quickly flip to the end of the paper in search of a grade. Another disadvantage of written comments is that students do not have an opportunity to explain their writing decisions. The teacher has no assurance that students understand, let alone read, written comments. Proper sharing strategies help the writer clarify, expand, and revise his or her ideas so that a dialogue develops between the reader and the writer.

Revising—conferencing. As teachers “observe” a piece of writing by listening to the student talk about it, they interpret whether the student is progressing. They ask questions or visually show the student how his or her writing is approaching the stated objective, helping the student to re-see and rethink ideas. In fact, a successful

Fig. 1. ITIP Writing Process Model
The Integration of Instructional Skills and the Stages of the Writing Process



conference allows students themselves to monitor and adjust their papers. As teachers nudge and question, students observe their own writing, interpret it, and decide on alternative courses of action. For example, after listening to a reader's response, a student might decide that her paper's introduction is weak. As the student reworks the beginning by writing several different leads, she learns to become self-critical.

In contrast, students who merely correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation mistakes during this stage

have side-stepped rethinking and jumped ahead to editing, which is the first part of publishing.

Publishing—evaluating. The act of publishing shows students that their writing is worthwhile. Just as piano recitals and pee-wee football games showcase the musical and athletic skills of children, publishing a piece of writing puts the ideas and efforts of writers in a context for a more general public. Before their works are published, however, the students must edit or proofread them. This can be done individually or in groups. Editing

groups can assist individuals who lack skills to self-correct their own spelling, punctuation, and format errors.

The final aspect of publishing takes place when the polished work is typed on paper, bound in a book, hung in the hallway, printed in a collection, or taped on the refrigerator. Publication allows other audiences besides the teacher to evaluate, learn, enjoy, and make judgments about a writer's ideas and feelings. Teachers who do not publish writing deprive students of the fulfillment and pride that accompanies hard work and persistence.

Principles of Learning

When teachers incorporate the writing process as they teach, monitor, and adjust a lesson, they invariably institute the four key principles of learning. The recursive nature of the writing process demands that these four principles are present to some degree in every stage.

Reinforcement. Reinforcement makes the learner more persistent and what is learned more resistant to forgetting. In the writing classroom, the writing process reinforces student learning in two specific ways:

1. Since it provides approval from "significant others," especially classmates, a published piece of writing is a tangible and social reinforcement. It elicits real smiley faces rather than just plastic stickers and rubber stamp tokens.

2. The act of composing and revising is an activity reinforcement. Students who finish an assignment early can revise a previously written draft, choose a new topic, or read and respond to the work of another student.

Active participation. According to Bloom (1976), the amount of active participation a student displays is an excellent index for predicting how much that student learns. In fact, Bloom asserts that more students will achieve at higher levels as the result of active participation, whether it be overt or covert.

The advantage of the writing process is that it demands physical or overt participation in the actual composing of a piece of writing. This, in turn, forces students to mull over their own thoughts (covert participation) with only self-imposed interruptions—it allows them "think time." In addition, students participate by conferencing with the teacher, sharing with their peers, and publishing their final piece.

Retention and transfer. The act of writing, especially when students self-select their topics or find assignments purposeful, is one of the best ways to retain information. As Parker and Goodkin (1987, p. 37) have discussed at length, the actual act of

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composing leads to real understanding, since writing visually connects and relates ideas so transfer can occur. It forces students to verbalize their inner language, their private thinking. Perhaps this is why memory experts consider writing the most effective device for remembering information (Jacobson 1986).

Motivation. Several factors contribute to motivation, including our success at a particular task, our knowledge of our performance, our desire to complete the task, and our interest in and reasons for doing it in the first place. Since exploratory or expressive writing activities are nonjudgmental, writing allows students to be successful. They are positively reinforced just for putting ideas on paper without the fear that the writing is mechanically incorrect.

Once students realize that every piece of writing does not have to be perfect, that they have time to practice and play with ideas, that they can make mistakes, the completion of a writing task is more likely. When students know that a classmate, a parent, or a community member will read their writing for a purpose, the reasons for writing become real and practical.

A Common Language

ITIP and the writing process are valuable tools for effective instruction. With a better understanding of how

these two models relate, staff development and curriculum specialists can assist teachers by coordinating support group sessions and follow-up training using the language common to both. □

¹From workshop materials developed at Seattle Pacific University, July 1980.

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