

# Essay

Writing and reading are inextricably connected, and being able to do both moves the individual towards literacy. To write is to read, and to read is to write ... **WR-RW**. As a teacher, I immerse my students in project-based activities via technology applications that require cognitive and creative thought to improve writing and reading skills.

One way (example) to do this is to have students make photographs of a theme-related nature, and then write about them. This is called literacy through photography (LTP) ... a tried and true methodology of critical analysis of imagery to invoke thought and written expression. The students post their visual/textual work via a blog so they can then read and respond (comment) to each other's "product". Examples of this can be seen at:

<http://houstonwyckoff.blogspot.com/>

I not only have students use the LTP approach, but also take control of the learning process as they pursue assignments that cross over into core-subject areas. They take control via hardware/software for greater understanding and retention of content. Challenge through engagement is the key to students' interest, and enthusiasm for the educational process to move them towards literacy.

Other ways (examples) to do this follow:

This past December, we all know what happened in Newtown, Connecticut. Since I have students go to news websites like Yahoo, CNN, Reuters, etc. to read the news ... "see what's happening in the world" ... they were online at Yahoo when news stories began to appear about the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Throughout the day (December 14), they read the news updates, and we had many discussions in the classroom. The next, natural thing to do was to have them translate their thoughts about the shooting as "letters of condolence" to be sent, or in this case, posted as a web page so the Mayor (First Selectman) of Newtown (others) could read their heartfelt responses: "Dear NEWTOWN":

<http://tomrchambers.com/newtown.html>

Students then used Microsoft Publisher to produce informational (PSA) brochures about "Gun Violence in Schools". This required a great deal of research ... reading ... on the Internet as they honed their publishing skills to produce this publication:

[http://tomrchambers.com/gv\\_bro\\_8.html](http://tomrchambers.com/gv_bro_8.html)

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) ... one of my school's affiliations ... conducts campaign initiatives for students to respond regarding social issues. I had students use Microsoft Word to write advocacy essays about "Homelessness". Again, this required a great deal of research ... reading ... on the Internet as they created a "student voice" via their writing for NCLR:

[http://tomrchambers.com/adv\\_home.html](http://tomrchambers.com/adv_home.html)

As mentioned previously regarding LTP, students traveled with the Houston Audubon Society to four different sites in Houston to make photographs, and take notes in their journals re: vocabulary as it relates to Early Texas/Houston History (Grade 7 Texas History) and nature (Grade 7 Science). The students wrote about their photographs in Microsoft Word for posting on the blog. As you peruse the following web page (link), notice in the images that students are reading and writing in a real-world context: [http://tomrchambers.com/vocab\\_8\\_HAS\\_ft.html](http://tomrchambers.com/vocab_8_HAS_ft.html)

Of course, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 are pertinent fodder for students to research and respond to. For the Eleventh Anniversary of this tragic event, students wrote compositions in Microsoft Word to pay their respect. Again, this required a great deal of research ... reading ... on the Internet. Several of the compositions were read at a special ceremony. Most of the students were only one or two year(s) of age when this tragic event took place. This classroom exercise created a greater awareness within these young minds/hearts of a monumental human tragedy in American history:

[http://tomrchambers.com/911\\_7\\_12-13.html](http://tomrchambers.com/911_7_12-13.html)

Students were asked to explore their past up to now via a resume outline to begin to prepare for entry into high school as freshmen. During the process, there was a realization that their participation in and contributions to the educational process along with various achievements and accomplishments over the past eight or nine years had merit and meaning for the future as they prepared to enter high school. When they sat before their resume outlines getting ready to transfer their information over to a more formal resume format via a Word template, there was a sense of awe, pride and self-worth as they went over ... read ... their resume:

[http://tomrchambers.com/8\\_resumes\\_11-12.html](http://tomrchambers.com/8_resumes_11-12.html)

The aforementioned is the “tip of the iceberg”, and numerous, other student projects that address literacy can be accessed at:

[http://tomrchambers.com/RYSS\\_TCCC.html](http://tomrchambers.com/RYSS_TCCC.html)

Criteria evidenced over a six-year period at the above link.

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