

## Writing

After picking a topic, the next step is to consider the purpose, audience, genre and overall organization of the piece. Sometimes this does not become apparent until we've written a bit. Sometimes a few well placed questions is what we need. So teachers do not walk away once students start writing, but stay around, coaching the development of that first draft. Good writing teachers know that over-emphasizing conventions at this point stifles creativity and the desire to write.



Journaling Journaling helps students to write because they associate journals with the freedom to make their own choices away from the restrictions of writing conventions. Second language learners have used journals to transition themselves into their 2<sup>nd</sup> language (Garcia, 1999). Journals based on observations from natural life are called *logs*. Journals are not based on teacher-provided prompts and do not have to be written in the first person.

Graphic Organizers Graphic organizers are a powerful tool to familiarize students with text structure. Their use has to be scaffolded according to the student's level. Upper elementary level students can identify the structure in a text, then replicate this structure in their own writing, with a topic of their own choosing. For example, fourth graders reading a essay comparing and contrasting school lunches with junk food pick an organizer to go with this text, a t-chart. They fill it out, discuss it, and later use the same organizer, another t-chart, to organize a different comparison-contrast essay, only that they pick the topic.

Free Writing Free writing only encourages draft development when it is wholeheartedly embraced by the teacher and practiced often, at least once a week. Because the idea is to write anything that comes to our mind, it is important that these be private and that no correction take place. Some teachers collect the paper strips left under the paper cutter to use with free writing because they are less threatening than full blank pages. Others use post-its of an appropriate size, or notebooks. If you have them write on loose pieces of paper, have the students store those in their writing folder so that they can go back and re-read those pieces.