**Provisional & Readable Writing Tools for Assessment and Instruction**

**Perini, M. and Silver, H.F. (2012). The core six: Essential strategies for achieving excellence with the common core. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development (ASCD).**

Quickwrites and Learning Logs are ideal formative assessment tools, giving instructors insight into what students know and where they are in the process of making meaning of course content. These approaches are categorized as **provisional writing:** brief, frequent writing that supports learning. Typically, students write spontaneously for two to five minutes to generate, clarify, or extend ideas or to react to important content.

Quickwrites and Learning Logs can be used to

* capture learner interest
* draw out prior knowledge
* review and check understanding of content
* provoke thinking
* spur reflection

Spelling and grammar are rarely assessed at the provisional level; usually, the only assessment criterion is that students actually do the writing, although you can indicate the number of ideas or answers that learners need to generate and check to see whether all have come up with the required number.

**You can prompt students to write before, during, and after (BDA) instructional segments to meet a variety of instructional purposes, including:**

1. **Engaging student interest in the learning to come. For example, “**Do we need assessments? What would your course or program be like without them?
2. **Activating students’ prior knowledge. For example,** “What comes to mind when you hear the term ‘assessment’?”
3. **Checking for understanding. For example**, “What are two main categories of assessment? Briefly describe each.”
4. **Spurring creative thinking. For example,** “If you could add any aspect to how you currently assess students what would it be?
5. **Fostering analysis and critical thinking. For example,** “How are formative and summative assessment different? What do they have in common?”
6. **Encouraging students to make personal connections to the content. For example, “**Did you like creating and using assessments? Give three reasons why or why not.”
7. **Helping students reflect on their learning. For example,** “What aspects of assessment are

clear to you? What are you still unclear about?”

As often as possible, have students share their responses in pairs or small groups. Group members should look for similarities and differences in their responses, help one another refine and synthesize ideas, or generate additional ideas. To take advantage of the formative assessment opportunity by listening in as the groups talk. Adjust instruction according to what you learn. Connect students’ written and group responses to a larger classroom discussion in which you survey students’ ideas, record them on the board, and explore them further.

**Readable Writing:**

**Readable writing requires learners to clarify their thoughts and develop an organizational structure for their ideas. Readable writing is intended for an audience—usually the instructor, who uses it to assess students’ depth of understanding and ability to construct soundly reasoned responses. The assessment criterion is tied to the organizational pattern required by the assignment prompt (arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives, or comparison, analysis, and description). Mechanics like grammar and spelling are less important than accuracy and organization of main ideas and supporting details and the quality of student thinking. This is called “readable writing” for a reason: it should make sense and be easy to understand.**

**A Powerful Readable Writing Tool: The Writing Frame.** Some students struggle with on-demand writing tasks because they have a hard time seeing the overall structure of the writing they are being asked to produce. As a result, their writing lacks focus, moving from one idea to the next without a sense of how the parts fit together to form a whole. A Writing Frame is a simple visual organizer to help students see the structure of a good essay and plan out its beginning, middle, and end. The frame can be easily adapted to fit the three text types: argument, informative/ explanatory, and narrative.

**An example writing frame for argument writing.** Using an organizer can help learner recognize gaps in their thinking and organization. This approach helps learners and instructors to look quantitatively at how they have organized their information and to see areas that are under-represented or too detailed and in need of re-organization (Werner-Burke, N. in Borgese, Heyler, & Romano (2012).

Restate your position and make a conclusion as to what action should be taken next on the issue.