

Teachers Registration Board of South Australia RESEARCH DIGEST

2007/1

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The Teachers Registration Board of South Australia has commissioned the Australian Council for Educational Research to prepare this series of electronic research digests.

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This Research Digest is available in PDF versions on the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia website at: www.trb.sa.edu.au

Introducing the Research Digest

This Research Digest is the first in a series of periodic digests to be produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) for the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia. The digests will be delivered to all registered teachers in SA in an accessible format.

Each digest will focus on a single topical issue, and will provide a review of major messages from research on the issue. A key feature of the digests will be an emphasis on what the research means for teachers and teaching. Over the course of several editions, a wide range of issues will be covered, so that teachers from different areas of schooling will find topics of particular relevance to their needs.

Research Digest Number 1

The research tells us that writing-to-learn strategies can be used by any teacher, in all subject areas, and at all levels of schooling.

This edition of the Research Digest summarises key research studies that provide evidence of the potential of writing-to-learn approaches in improving student learning in a range of subject areas. The research tells us that writing-to-learn strategies can be used by any teacher, in all subject areas, and at all levels of schooling. Throughout the digest there are descriptions of a range of writing-to-learn strategies that demonstrate possibilities for classroom practice.

This research digest is based on searches of a number of databases and bibliographic resources, including the Australian Education Index,

ERIC, Education Research Complete, British Education Index and Scopus.

The first section presents an overview of research on how students learn from writing. This is followed by a selection of effective writing-to-learn strategies described in the research. A short section is focused on some studies of how writing influences learning in different curriculum areas, and the final section draws on some recent research on writing-to-learn in science. Practical, research-based classroom strategies are highlighted. Some useful websites are listed, and a full reference list is provided.

Writing to learn

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The first edition of the *Research Digest* draws on research evidence to provide some answers to some important questions:

- ▶ How does writing contribute to students' learning?
- ▶ Are critical thinking skills developed when students use writing as a mode of learning in different curriculum areas?
- ▶ What does research tell us about the connections between writing and students' learning?

genres of different disciplines. Writing in school is valued as an important means of demonstrating what has been learnt, and students demonstrate their learning in many different kinds of written assignments, across the curriculum.

Research shows that writing also plays a key role in learning, and that writing to learn is not the same thing as writing to communicate, or to demonstrate learning. Writing helps students to make connections between

Learning to write and learning to read are key goals for all students in the first years at school.

Throughout the years of schooling students learn to communicate effectively in writing, for many different purposes and audiences. Learning to write and learning to read are key goals for all students in the first years at school.

From Years K-12, writing is a significant component of the curriculum. Writing plays a central role in all areas of learning, and students learn to write appropriately in the

what they read, view and hear, and what they think and understand. Writing to learn provides a significant tool that strengthens reading comprehension, and enables students to reflect on and question information and ideas. Writing-to-learn strategies help students to become more active learners. ■

