

W I C O R

W: Writing is a cornerstone of the language arts classroom and the key element of this book. The focus in *The Write Path English Language Arts: Informing Ourselves and Others Through Writing and Speaking* includes “writing to learn” activities, process writing, and timed writing. As an extension of critical thinking, writing is seen as a pivotal skill and tool in AVID. Numerous strategies presented here will enable students to master the necessary skills for success in writing and speaking to prepare them for the college campus and the workforce.

I: Inquiry is the foundation upon which all progress is born. It is “the question” that moves the learner to action, whether that be an explicit question or a set of implicit questions that drive the process of working through ideas to a solution. Questioning the text and questioning what is seen, heard, or discussed are at the heart of the language arts classroom, as is the learners’ questioning of their own thinking or learning, making the implicit questions more “visible” in the process. Inquiry is inherent in the acts of creating a visual or written piece, or formulating an oral, physical, or musical response. The key is for teachers to establish an environment where it is safe for students to engage in authentic inquiry, where wondering, questioning, and hypothesizing are fostered, and where students recognize how to push each other’s thinking to higher levels.

To understand what it means to move to higher levels of cognition, AVID uses **Arthur Costa’s Levels of Thinking**. Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy is also a point of reference and can be used just as well, but students seem to find Costa’s hierarchy easier to remember (three tiers vs. Bloom’s six tiers). Costa’s levels can be described as:

Level 1: Input:

This is the level at which we find, gather, identify, and recall information; it requires us to think literally.

Level 2: Processing:

This is the level at which we make sense of information, using what we know from our sources to make connections and create relationships; it requires us to think analytically and inferentially.

Level 3: Output:

This is the level at which we apply information and try it out in new situations; it requires us to think creatively, evaluatively, and hypothetically.

See Appendix B: Inquiry and Critical Thinking for a more extensive listing of terms to define each level, to see sample questions to promote each level of thinking, and for suggestions about how to teach Costa’s Levels of Thinking.

C: Collaboration in AVID is about working with others toward common goals and tapping into that mammalian side of the brain discussed earlier to increase motivation and attention to rigor. The strategies in this book demonstrate how to use collaboration to help students learn the language arts content. For collaboration to be truly effective, teachers have to structure such activities to maximize engagement and accountability. See Appendix A: Structuring Collaboration.

O: Organization includes the ability to organize and manage “stuff” and the ability to organize and manage learning and self. In the language arts classroom, teachers can teach/reinforce explicit organizational skills by helping students find systems for recording homework and organizing their materials in a binder, in their backpack, and online. Our primary focus, however, is teaching/reinforcing the more implicit organizational skills that help students see how their brains work, how they make sense of and organize information, how they apply specific strategies and monitor their outcomes and how they take control of their learning. Included in the strategies throughout this book are opportunities for students to think strategically and metacognitively—to understand the steps involved in a task and to think about their thinking and processes. These take the form of written or verbal reflections, learning logs, and journals. Students are regularly asked to debrief experiences, so they understand the learning process, what they have learned, and what skills they have acquired, and so they can identify where they might apply that learning or those skills again.

R: Reading is the primary focus of *The Write Path English Language Arts: Exploring Texts with Strategic Reading*, and the goal is to help students

read for meaning versus reading for identification. To develop the necessary college readiness skills, students have to practice close and critical reading, and teachers have to model and teach the skills using the Critical Reading Process.