Methods that Support Community Literacy

CLC projects are rooted in cognitive and rhetorical theory and in research on how writers become effective problem solvers. At the CLC, we are engaged in inquiry about the ways in which community writers adapt and use these methods.

Collaborative Planning

Effective writers engage in rhetorical planning, thinking carefully about the purpose of their writing and the effects they want it to have. They consider how a reader will respond, and they ponder alternative ways to present information persuasively. Developed at the National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy, collaborative planning is now being adapted for classroom teaching and as a way to structure problem solving in businesses and grassroots community groups. The method asks a supportive partner to prompt a writer to select information carefully and to think strategically through issues of purpose, audience, and writing conventions. Through explicit discussion, collaborative planning makes these decisions and negotiations "visible" so that writers can see themselves as thinkers.

Rivaling

Rivaling is a form of inquiry that challenges a writer to recognize and assess alternative positions on an issue. Through role playing and evaluating the response of other stakeholders, writers develop a broader, more informed perspective that prepares them to argue effective or to produce creative solutions that consider not one, but many viewpoints.

Revising for an Audience

At the CLC, idea expression is only the first step towards community action. We teach writers to identify and analyze the audiences they addresss. Writers test drafts on readers to solicit suggestions for revision and are encouraged to learn and adapt language, writing styles, and conventions. Writers at the CLC are committed to inventing an intercultural discourse – "hybrid texts" that can incorporate street talk with the language of policy, story-telling with the voice of formal analysis. Revision creates opportunities in which people from different backgrounds can pool knowledge and share expertise. The results? Texts with wide rhetorical power and reach.