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Over the past several years, TCU has developed a number of procedures to help students engage in the composing process. Students keep journals, discuss topics in collaborative thinking groups, and present drafts to peer response groups to stimulate their thinking processes and refine their ability to articulate to others their ideas, perceptions, and feelings.

There are strong theoretical reasons for asking students to do this sort of work. But in order to improve our basic understanding of what we are asking students to do, and to help them make full use of these procedures, we must have some way of describing and assessing the work students do when they write in journals or take part in small group discussions. Since one goal of these procedures is to help students through the topics they are writing about, we need some way to describe the thinking that is reflected in students' work. And we also need some way to describe the interpersonal strategies students use when they work in groups.

The means of describing thinking can be synthesized from current work on thinking (work that includes rhetorical theory, cognitive psychology, and critical thinking). Six principal concepts have proven useful: Selecting and encoding; creating and acknowledging dissonance; considering alternatives; seeing relationships; drawing on prior knowledge; and using metacognition.

For analysis of interaction, the theory of Carl Rogers and the interaction process analysis of Robert Bales provide useful definitions of listening, one of the key factors in successful group interaction. Specifically, it can be useful to determine whether students are doing such things as: avoiding interruptions, paraphrasing or reiterating others' comments; responding to others' questions, comments or requests; inviting information or opinions from others; developing

others' statements; and dealing effectively with disagreement.

These definitions of *thinking* and *listening* have proven useful in working with students in grades 2-12 in the Fort Worth Writing across the Curriculum project. They enable teachers of math, social studies, science, and English to understand ways students currently negotiate the composing process. They also help teachers determine what students need to do in order to improve their work, and then plan classroom activities to help bring about these improvements. These assessments of the writing process make it considerably easier to assess and to help improve students' written products.