A few notes on writing-to-learn and a useful strategy

1) Writing to learn is not the free-flow of ideas where we follow associations – uncontrolled

2) Writing to learn is what we do when we prepare to teach – we write and actively construct knowledge.

3) When we write we transform ideas – fill holes, gaps and identify problems and misunderstandings

4) Writing produces a level of understanding that speech does not …a record of our thoughts

5) Writing-to-learn focuses on developing concepts and not focus on stylistic writing

A Write-to-Learn Strategy

A useful practice for using writing to develop concepts in any discipline is the SEE-I method developed by the Foundation for Critical Thinking. It stands for **S**tate, **E**laborate, **E**xemplify, and Illustrate. SEE-I is actually a disciplined practice of paraphrasing. In their book, *How to Write a Paragraph: The Art of Substantive Writing[1]*, authors Richard Paul and Linda Elder suggests four SEE-I questions that can easily be employed as a writing-to-learn task.

1. Could you *state* your basic point in one simple sentence? (state key idea using own words)

2. Could you **elaborate** your basic point in one simple sentence? (explain thesis sentence in greater detail…if we cannot elaborate our key idea, then we have not yet connected its meaning to other concepts that we understand)

3. Could you give me an **example** of your point from your experience? (If we cannot connect what we have elaborated with concrete situations in the real world, then the concept lacks meaning to us.)

4. Could you give me an **illustration**, analogy or metaphor to help me see what you mean? (Metaphor, analogy, picture, diagram, or drawing).

1. Richard Paul and Linda Elder. *The Thinker's Guide to how to Write a Paragraph:The Art of Substantive Writing*. (Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2006).