A recent guest comment is used as a vehicle to discuss the process of "writing to learn". In this context we discuss how writing can help students make the transition from their own models of the world to the viewpoints taught in the introductory physics course. Writing can also be used to get upper year students to focus on the conceptual underpinning of the course.
Writing-to-learn refers to a family of instructional design models that postulate positive effects of pedagogical scenarios that engage learners in writing activities. Writing-to-learn is also known as the writing across the curriculum movement (WAC) movement, in particular in science teaching. According to Keys, WAC was inspired by Britton's (1970) work. As of 2010, writing-to-learn is still an active field of research and this article needs some upgrading, e.g. see the Discussion page for some Writing to learn as a learning principle was first discussed by Emig (1997) and Britton et al. (1975). Varieties and examples of writing to learn activities can be found in Comer, Clark, & Canelas (2014). • Assessment: Essay • Cognitive Tools: Asynchronous social learning: document based • Cognitive Tools: Planning/outlining. • Robust Technology: Collaborative writing space