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Teaching/Writing – Winter/Spring 2013 (Full Issue)

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Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education is an independent peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, theory, and practice in the preparation, training, support, and continued education and professional development of teachers of writing at all developmental levels and educational contexts.

The journal is available at no-cost at <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wte>.

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Opening Editorial

Jonathan Bush and Erinn Bentley, Co-Editors

We are pleased to present our first peer-reviewed issue of *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*. When we began to think about this journal, growing out of our own scholarship and work with the Conference on English Education, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and the National Writing Project – and all the major study and advocacy groups for writing teacher education within all each – we envisioned a place where scholarship and research could be shared on a wide range of topics and issues of interest to those in writing teacher education and beyond. With this issue, we are continuing our journey of bringing forward ideas of writing pedagogy, teacher education, composition studies, and English education as they apply to issues of practice and theory. We are pleased with the range of articles in this issue -- research studies, discussions of pedagogy and practice, and personal reflections. We are also enthused by the ways they show the breadth of writing teacher education -- from English education through composition studies, and National Writing Project collaborations and more. We hope that this free scholarly resource continues to encourage publication, conversations, and collaboration and contributes to the academic ethos of the greater community of writing teacher education.

Since the publication of our inaugural issue last February, we have had over 1500 unique downloads of the journal. In the big scope of things, that isn't a huge number, but in the specialized academic world we live in, we think that's quite impressive – and a bit unexpected. We also have received over 40 unique submissions for publication. These articles have been submitted by a wide range of scholars and teachers of all levels and at different stages of their careers. We're excited to provide an outlet for these voices – some new and some established. We look forward to upcoming issues and our ability to provide continued venues for this community.

For us, an interesting aspect of this issue is just how much we both learned about the area that we study. We have both been active in this discipline for awhile, but, in these articles, and in the citations they have used, we have both found new things to add to our reading lists and idea archives. That's exciting to us. Taken as a whole, this entire set brings a much-needed conversation to the forefront. We are pleased to present these articles, encompassing formal research, pedagogical discussions, personal and professional reflections, and collaborative writing.

Beginning with “Negotiating Expectations: Preserving Theoretical Research-Based Writing Pedagogy in the Field,” Margaret Finders, Virginia Crank, and Erika Kramer present a cogent discussion of one of the key challenges of all teacher education – how to help new teachers stay true to their concepts of theory and practice when confronted with negative and atheoretical contexts. They offer an important investigation of this challenge and implications with value that goes far beyond writing teacher education.

In “Gatekeepers and Guides: Preparing Future Writing Teachers to Negotiate Standard Language Ideology,” Melinda McBee-Orzulak discusses writing teacher education within the context of language ideology. She shares the complexities of preparing future teachers to understand and take intellectual positions in standard language debates. Alison Bright then draws on concepts of teacher identity, alternate field experiences, and growth through practice in “Becoming Peer Tutors of Writing: Identity Development as a Mode of Preparation.” Her article reminds us of the importance of all experiences in the development of young teachers and how that identity can be encouraged through practice and reflection. In “Content Area Teachers as Teachers of Writing,” Angela Kohnen considers the importance of writing across the curriculum and how writing teacher education can encourage teachers in all disciplines to consider themselves as teachers of writing, a concept that becomes even more important in the age of the Common Core State Standards. In “Positioning Preservice Teachers as Writers and Researchers,” Jason Wirtz then reflects on his own teacher education and the mentors he encountered, both in person and in print, and then applies those lessons to his own students and how to approach their development as teachers, learners, writers, and researchers.

In “What are Preservice Teachers Taught about the Teaching of Writing,” Christine Tulley presents a detailed research study of methods courses in the State of Ohio and provides a strong framework for understanding trends and guiding practices in all writing methods classes. Jennifer Cook and Becky Caouette then present their work as they bring together high school teachers and university adjunct instructors for a professional development experience in “All Hands on Deck,” providing an outstanding example of cross-level collaboration. The final piece is “Collaboration: Talk. Trust. Write,” written collaboratively by Mark Letcher, Kristen Turner, Meredith Donovan, Cathy Fleischer, Jim Fredrickson, Nicole Sieben, Laraine Wallowitz, and Sarah Andrew-Vaughn. The authors, all teachers and English teacher educators, describe their collaborative process and provide models for professional collaboration across and within disciplines and developmental levels.

Finally, we want to thank our editorial board and all those colleagues and scholars who helped us review (and edit!) the articles in this issue. This is a grassroots effort and we appreciate all the support we get from all our colleagues. We look forward to putting together the next issue of *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education* and hope that we continue to provide a growing voice for scholarship in all aspects of teacher development, writing pedagogy, and literacy.

Negotiating Expectations: Preserving Theoretical Research-Based Writing Pedagogy in the Field

Margaret Finders, Virginia Crank, and Erika Kramer
The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

Preservice teachers entering their field experiences face challenges even when they are well prepared with course work in research-based writing pedagogy. Erika Kramer was one of those preservice teachers. She had completed a full semester course in writing pedagogy with Dr. Virginia Crank before beginning her Teaching and Learning English in the Secondary Schools course with Dr. Margaret Finders. The Teaching and Learning course included a required co-enrollment field experience that was supervised by faculty in the Education Department. At the end of the semester, we (Virginia and Margaret) asked to talk with Erika because she was especially adept at negotiating the competing expectations; while Dr. Finders asked her to teach writing rhetorically, her cooperating teacher wanted her to teach compound and complex sentence worksheets. Erika sat down across from us and remarked, “I was surprised when I first went into the field. I thought teachers would be teaching writing the way I was learning it.” Erika’s admission troubled us.

After conversations, the three of us decided to write together. Given the complexities of the field experience, we asked ourselves what can we do to help our preservice teachers hold to theoretical and pedagogical tools appropriate in the teaching of writing when they face a field context in which writing may be reduced to teaching a set of rules and prescriptions? Erika helped us to think about answers.

My cooperating teacher told me that I was to teach a lesson on simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences for my eighth grade field placement. Since I had to teach at least three lessons to fulfill my education requirements, my cooperating teacher suggested it could become a three-day unit in which I reviewed subordinating and coordinating conjunctions and then moved onto sentence types. She told me that I had to give the students a worksheet and a sheet of notes to be placed in a grammar section of their Language Arts Notebooks. Other than that, I was given a textbook with definitions and exercises in addition to a website which was designed by my cooperating teacher’s colleague at another school. Her end of the unit evaluation stated students would be required to write an eleven-sentence paragraph using at least one of each of the different sentence types. This paragraph was used throughout the entire eighth grade at the school and consisted of an introductory sentence, three sentences consisting of main points, two sentences to support each of the main points, and a concluding sentence.

My assignment for Dr. Finders’ class was to create a language study which would focus on an aspect of language or grammar and explore why it exists in the way that it does. Since I was already dealing with a grammar lesson, I figured it wouldn’t be too difficult to combine the two. I quickly learned this would not be the case. How do you make eighth graders care about sentence types? What importance do sentence types even have? I knew I had learned about sentence types at some point but I couldn’t remember a single thing about the lessons or how it affected me. And I knew that was the problem. If I couldn’t find a lesson meaningful as an educator, there was no way my students would ever remember it or learn it or find it meaningful.

Erika’s surprise with the expectations for her success in the field is disturbing. For new teachers, understanding what is expected of them in the context in which they work is essential for their success and for the success of their students. Yet we in higher education may tend to ignore or degrade the contexts which our preservice teachers enter as they begin their field experiences. We may simply say “don’t do it that way” if we talk about the context at all. We, most often, design our coursework around theoretical and pedagogical research-based writing pedagogy, ignoring the realities of the contexts into which they enter. It is important to note that each field’s context may be different: some preservice teachers may find a rigid environment while others find they have a cooperating teacher who provides a rhetorical approach to teaching writing; many may find themselves somewhere between. Most will have varied expectations throughout their field experiences through student teaching and into their first years of teaching. Erika and other preservice teachers like her must negotiate these competing expectations with or without the help of university teachers. We should not let them meet the field with surprise and without the tools needed to negotiate any nonalignment. Certainly there are many cooperating teachers who employ a theoretical research-based approach to writing pedagogy, and perhaps we have provided enough

support for those preservice teachers who work with them. But preservice teachers will likely face nonalignment in expectations at some time throughout their early years of teaching. In this article we will address how Erika, one preservice teacher, attempted to confront this nonalignment. Promoting a more complex view of writing in the school contexts can be quite a challenge and is one that we are attempting to meet as teacher educators. The purpose of this article is to share the complexities that Erika faced. More specifically, what we offer here is an account of her instructional approach as she attempted to teach writing meaningfully. And finally we will reflect on what might happen in a content pedagogy course to better prepare preservice teachers to meet the challenges and be better prepared to navigate any nonalignment in more pedagogically sound ways.

The Field Experience: What the Research Says

Those of us who work with preservice teachers from English Department settings most often have little or no say in the field placement of the preservice teachers. We teach the content courses and content specific pedagogy courses, but Offices of Field Experiences and Departments of Education, for the most part, determine the placement, oversee the experience, and evaluate the preservice teachers. Simply put, we have little or no say in either the quantity or the quality of the placement. Yet, as research shows, one of the greatest challenges that preservice teachers face has been the nonalignment often found between the theoretical and pedagogical strategies taught in university classrooms and those utilized in schools and classrooms (Gutiérrez and Vossoughi, 2009). If we as content specialists are not involved in helping preservice teachers to negotiate this nonalignment, then they are far more likely to resist their university experience and simply conform to the field experience setting.

Equally important is the fact that more field experiences will not necessarily lead to stronger teaching. Grossman (2010) notes that while the trend in American teacher education has been toward longer and earlier experiences in schools, “It does not necessarily follow that more experience is always better. Rather, the research suggests that the value of clinical experience depends at least as much on the quality of the experience as on the quantity. More time in a problematic setting is not necessarily better than less time in a high-functioning classroom with strong mentors” (3). Likewise Darling-Hammond (2006) writes, “the success of field placements in developing knowledge for productive practice depends on the expertise of cooperating teachers or other professionals at the site, their capacity to explain what they are doing and why, and the extent to which novices’ perceptions can be elicited, analyzed, and extended” (225).

Similarly, in a review of current research on the methods course and field experiences, Clift and Brady (2005) indicate that across-contexts tensions exist between expectations of the field and the methods course, and prospective teachers often remain resistant to theory and practice taught in the methods course. They note that the qualitative studies they reviewed reinforce the importance of providing support for learning and practice that includes theory as well as multiple opportunities to attempt desired practice and to ask questions about those attempts. They document a trend in the research that emphasizes the importance of planned, guided, and sustained interactions with learners within early field and student teaching settings. Reflecting on learning by working with individual or small groups can produce changes in preservice teachers’ ideas about teaching, learning and the competence of learners but only if the prospective teachers are engaged with teacher educators who support theory- and practice-based reflective analysis in relation to what was taught or advocated by the methods course (316). Thus, preservice teachers like Erika who face extended periods of time in problematic settings need support not surprise. Pedagogy cannot be left to cooperating teachers or Education faculty who may have little expertise in writing pedagogy.

Historically, content and pedagogy have been treated as separate and distinct entities. This pattern has been evident in the separation between content specialists and educators as each group typically operates within its own domain. Yet, it is only through pedagogical practices that require conversation, exploration, inquiry, and what Shulman calls “making the internal, external,” that learning occurs. Shulman (1986) introduced the phrase “pedagogical content knowledge” which includes a “deep” knowledge of the subject itself, and knowledge of the curriculum and pedagogy within that content. Content knowledge includes the “structure of knowledge”—the theories, principles, and concepts of a particular discipline. Especially important is content knowledge that deals with the teaching process, including the most useful forms of representing and communicating content and how students best learn the specific concepts and topics of a subject. This kind of understanding provides a foundation for pedagogical content knowledge that enables teachers to make ideas accessible to others (Shulman, 1987). Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, et. al. (2005) cites research in cognitive psychology which indicates that teaching expertise is developed within the various domains, rather than generically.

While field experiences are essential to the success of preservice teachers, the challenges are well documented in current research. More and longer field experiences may intensify the problems. The nonalignment between university courses and field experience may create resistance on the part of the preservice teacher. Without multiple opportunities to practice and ask questions with the guidance of mentors with pedagogical content knowledge, preservice teachers have no recourse but to draw on their own experience as learners or simply conform to the expectations of the cooperating teacher.

At our institution, preservice teachers spend extensive hours in field experiences. Schools are selected based on their proximity to campus, and cooperating teachers are selected by their building principals. Supervisors who most often have no content knowledge and no pedagogical content knowledge of writing guide and assess our preservice teachers. While this may appear bleak, it is the context in which we work.

While on our campus we have attempted to work across Departments to better prepare our preservice English teachers with pedagogical content knowledge, we face many roadblocks, roadblocks that seem to exist across many Institutions of Higher Education. While the roadblocks and collaborative opportunities are certainly important to examine in order to provide for stronger teacher education programs, this is not the focus of this article. Assuming that many face similar policies and institutional strongholds, we will address what might be done within the Department of English, specifically within content pedagogy courses.

Virginia and Margaret often have students at their office doors asking for help as they face head-on the nonalignment of what they are learning in the university classes and what they are asked to prepare to teach in their field work at local middle or high schools. “I taught an instructional sequence on argumentation and now the grading criteria that he gave me are all surface level features.” “She wants me to teach the parts of speech, what should I do?” Erika was one of those students.

Erika’s Experiences

I decided to focus on why sentence types are significant and attempted to relate it to everyday life. In creating the actual lesson, I did use the definitions from the textbook and printed a simple note sheet of definitions from the website. The students also played two different games from the website throughout the course of the unit. Since I had to create a worksheet, I tried to utilize a three-level study guide which I had learned about in my Education class. Students had to fill in parts of definitions, label sentences, and discuss different situations one might encounter different sentence types and why.

I knew worksheets would not cut it for this lesson because I had failed to learn grammar that way myself. As a student I had failed to connect the grammar concepts on the worksheet with how I used language in everyday life. Filling in the blank on a worksheet did not improve my writing or speaking skills; therefore, like many students, I considered it “busy work.” Realizing that my students would also consider the worksheets “busy work”, I tried to incorporate aspects of a language study so they could start talking about why we had to talk about sentence types. My attempt was to move away from labeling and introduce situations in which students might encounter different sentence types being used for different reasons.

In Dr. Crank’s class on teaching writing, I learned that grammar should be taught in the context of writing to make it more meaningful. Because my students were not writing anything, and only had experience writing eleven-sentence paragraphs-- which were utilized throughout the entire eighth grade and mimic the five paragraph essay while using fewer words-- as opposed to whole texts, I had to think of activities which would require them to write in order to apply what we had been talking about in class. My students engaged in sentence combining exercises, wrote their own sentences from scratch using the different sentence types, and participated in a warm-up writing activity which required them to write several sentences about their spring break while utilizing different sentence types. It became apparent, especially when I asked students to write their own sentences from scratch, that none of them were used to learning grammar through writing activities. Many students said it was “too hard” to write a compound-complex sentence without help, even though they had been completing them from sentence fragments in an earlier lesson. However, the fact that my students were struggling with the application of the grammar concepts alerted me that I needed to do some re-teaching. Had my students only been required to complete worksheets this need for re-teaching may not have been as apparent.

Though writing is a major context for grammar, I also wanted to present sentence types as bearing importance in spoken language; this led me to focus on power dynamics in both written and spoken language. To begin working in different contexts, I asked students to work in groups and pick one of three different scenarios and write a short script to be performed for the class. Each scenario presented characters with differing levels of power, for example, two athletes and a coach. Students were to use at least three of each of the sentence types and write a short explanation as to why they gave each type of sentence to each character. I had also hoped that this would be a good transition from my lessons into their pre-planned final assessment for the unit, which was writing an eleven-sentence paragraph using a variety of the sentence types.

It was rather difficult to turn this lesson into a language study without falling back on the “one day when you need to get a job, you have to be able to write like this” idea. For eighth graders a “real” job seems a million years away, so they needed something they could connect to now. Unfortunately, this cannot be taught by a worksheet. Though the worksheets did give the students practice, they were not enough to make the material stick. My attempt to incorporate an acting activity along with several writing activities seemed to make students more interested in the lessons, however I still had to re-teach the material twice and then return from my new placement to teach a review lesson, give a review worksheet, administer the quiz, and grade it. Many students showed a great improvement throughout the unit, but most of the quizzes were not passing scores, which suggested that a combination of the lapse of time between the unit and quiz and an emphasis on worksheets and isolated sentences during the review made it difficult for students to fully grasp the material in a meaningful way.

I think if students had been accustomed to learning the “why” behind grammar then it would have gone more smoothly. Because it was not my classroom, I had to abide by certain requirements like the emphasis on worksheets for practice and the eleven-sentence paragraph, which is to be expected as a clinical student. My attempt to come into the classroom and present the students with a completely different way to learn grammar was foreign, even though the methods behind it were backed up by research presented in both Dr. Finders’ and Dr. Crank’s classes. Not only was I not their real teacher, but I was not teaching the way their real teacher teaches.

Learning from Erika: Implications for the Teaching Writing Class

As a guest in the classroom, Erika faced many challenges. What her cooperating teacher said about her was important, very important. What her students thought about her was important, maybe more important than what her University professor had taught her. Yet she was courageous and vulnerable enough to attempt to teach writing rhetorically, something many of her peers were not. What made that happen and what can we learn from her? Talking with Erika about her experience led the three of us toward a few thoughts about how professors in content pedagogy classes can set students up to make the kinds of decisions Erika made.

First Erika’s personal experience as a learner led her to know that isolated worksheets did not help her to become a better writer. Even though many preservice English teachers were eager and successful students in their middle and secondary language arts classes, they can still tap into memories of their learning experiences to judge the kinds of learning activities which will and won’t be effective in the classroom. Virginia and Margaret, in fact, often hear students in the pedagogy classes expressing surprise at how the pedagogical practices and theories they’re studying make so much sense to them when compared to some of their actual experiences as students. We in our classes often have students write literacy autobiographies, but we can use that writing experience more fully if we guide them to mine those autobiographies in order to examine how they did learn to write well. And we need to juxtapose different autobiographies so they are not left to think there is only one way.

Much of what students reveal in their writing and talking about their own learning experiences is the reality that much discussion of writing in middle and secondary schools has been limited to a set of prescriptions: rules and labels that students simply must learn. Some of the cooperating teachers may have learned to teach writing this way. Asking their students to write for authentic purposes for authentic audiences may not be part of their teaching tool kits. Preservice teachers have often been resistant to teaching writing rhetorically in the school context (whether because of a level of uncertainty with this approach or the persistence of their own memories of learning to write) and this may have been supported by cooperating teachers who teach and test writing by asking students to recall those prescriptions. While Erika was attempting to teach grammar in context, many preservice teachers come into pedagogy courses with a fairly rigid and pessimistic sense of how and why grammar can be taught in the context of writing. They seem to fall into two camps: never teach any grammar or teach grammar in traditional, decontextualized skill-and-drill lessons. To get them thinking differently, Virginia asks them to read Patrick Hartwell’s “Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar” and Connie Weaver’s “Teaching Grammar in the Context of Writing.” They are challenged by the gulf between the knowledge and teaching recommendations in the texts and the experiences they have had as students or observed in field experiences. Erika’s exposure to these discussions helped her to question the expectations of her cooperating teacher and to seek ways to work with the prescriptions. Just as she did, we can encourage other preservice teachers to work with those prescriptions differently. Rather than ignoring them, we might, for example, work with them when students are writing for authentic purposes. Rather than simply discarding the parts of speech worksheets, for example, and risk offending one’s cooperating teacher, one might ask students to enrich their narrative writing with vivid descriptions.

To facilitate these authentic “solutions,” we need to move those discussions about disconnects in theory and practice to the center of our University classrooms. Rather than simply saying, “don’t do it this way” we need to rethink and reenvision those prescriptions. If the gap between research-based teaching and the actuality of the English classroom becomes the central point of conversation in the content pedagogy class, preservice teachers will be able to practice negotiating the gap in a safe environment, where they can take risks that they might not feel comfortable taking in their preservice teaching or as new teachers. We suggest that presenting the preservice teachers with scenarios in which they hold varying levels of power (field experience student, student teacher, first-year teacher in small department, etc.) will allow them to think through the multiple ways to negotiate various expectations once they leave the safety of the content pedagogy classroom. A fairly typical scenario to introduce could be one just like Erika’s: “You (the preservice teacher) are asked by your cooperating teacher to create and teach a lesson about sentence types. Knowing from your studies that isolated instruction in grammar and sentence writing is ineffective, how would you develop an instructional sequence that meets the more prescriptivist expectations of your cooperating teacher without ignoring the research-supported best practices?” With that problem an explicit topic of discussion in the content pedagogy class rather than a one-on-one discussion initiated by an exceptional student, the professor can engage all of the students in the development of solutions and approaches. These discussions must turn away from criticism or complaints and toward compassionate, learner-centered explorations of pedagogy.

In addition to the difficulty of cooperating teachers having different ideas about what it means to teach writing, preservice teachers also face the challenge of creating assignments for students who come with little or no experience in writing. Another scenario, then, could include that situation: “You (preservice teacher) are asked by your cooperating teacher to create a lesson on the parts of speech for an 8th grade language arts class. Your students have had much experience and success with worksheets. Knowing that these students have had very little experience with or instruction in writing, how do you create a lesson that meets the expectations of your cooperating teacher while still representing the ways of learning writing that are supported by research?” This type of scenario give preservice teachers the opportunity to practice and then to ask questions and reflect on their attempts.

In addition to working individually and collaboratively through teacher-created scenarios, content pedagogy professors can approximate the challenge of these types of situations by placing limitations on the kinds of instructional sequences their students write for the course. Most content and content pedagogy courses provide students with a great deal of freedom when it comes to

designing the tasks and assignments they submit for evaluation; we allow students to choose what they would like to teach, and we have allowed them to situate those lessons in ideal classroom settings, paying little attention to the kinds of constraints that almost all secondary English teachers operate under. This freedom might actually be a disservice to our students; they may learn more if we create some artificial (or rather more realistic) constraints that they must work within when developing these practice sequences. We could, for example, write assignment prompts that include instructions like, “Design a three-stage instructional sequence for writing academic essays, keeping in mind that your fellow English teachers value and tend to teach the five-paragraph structure for writing. Develop a more research-supported instructional sequence that will not simply dismiss the kinds of writing your students might do if they have had or will have a different English teacher. Another task might ask preservice teachers to address the Common Core Standards in which sixth graders must be able to: “Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence: a) Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly; b) Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources” (42) at the same time that their department’s common 6th grade writing rubric includes these traits: 1. Strength of focus; 2. Organization; 3. Development; 4. Syntax/diction; 5. Conventions.

Scenes can be created to support learning how to negotiate constraints and shifting expectations from outside the Department. A task might address the kinds of constraints that in-service teachers who teach writing rhetorically may face from community complaints. One could create, for example, a role play scene in which the high school English Department members are meeting to address a parent’s concern that on multiple occasions, she noticed that the teacher had not circled and corrected all errors in her son’s essays, and in one case her son’s use of slang expressions such as “shred the gnar” were not removed before his snowboarding essay was published in the school’s sports essay collection. For another role play, one might create a scene in which a first year teacher who has been very pleased to be in a collaborative Department in which the teachers teach a lot of writing and teach writing for authentic purposes only to be evaluated by a new principal who expects more grammar drills. The scene could include the untenured teacher and her mentor planning a response to the principal’s evaluation that states, “While I have observed you twice and the classroom seems in control, I haven’t seen you teach any grammar and so I need to schedule a third visit. Make sure you are teaching grammar when I come back. I need to come in and observe you again because I want to see how you teach a straight grammar lesson.” In concert with this new more restrictive type of assignment prompt and role play scenes (or as an addendum to the more unconstrained assignment), content pedagogy professors can require students to write reflectively about how they were trying to negotiate the different expectations as they constructed their instructional sequences. If students know ahead of time they’re going to have to write about how their lessons demonstrate a negotiation of the various expectations (of the learners, the cooperating teacher, the methods professor), they can begin to develop the sort of “second-nature” comfort with these negotiations that more experienced teachers have.

It is important to note here that one of major influencing factors Erika cited in describing her ability to negotiate the disparate expectations on her was that she had taken a dedicated course on writing pedagogy, not just a one-semester, all-inclusive English methods course. Given the importance of a stronger emphasis on explicitly addressing the disconnects between research and practice, preservice teachers should be working through these scenarios and difficulties in multiple classes. An all-inclusive one-semester English pedagogy course simply has too much material to cover to allow the depth of discussion, research, and practice that preservice teachers need in writing instruction. Tremmel (2002) asserts, “it is not uncommon for prospective and beginning teachers – despite their best intentions and the best intentions of their professors – to go through an entire field experience sequence without ever becoming fully involved in the teaching of writing and without ever thinking of themselves as writing teachers” (9). Without such background, preservice and new teachers are ill-equipped to promote theoretical research-based pedagogy. Clearly, one can see from Erika’s narrative that she began her field placement with knowledge and strategies, experiences that she would not have had if she hadn’t entered the teaching and learning class with a full semester of writing pedagogy.

This multiple-course approach to writing pedagogy becomes especially important in light of two trends in English: 1) English Education students, like secondary English teachers in general, are overwhelmingly inclined to think of the best or most important or most enjoyable part of their jobs as the teaching of literature. Most undergraduate English departments continue to have a heavy emphasis on literature, which means that most of the teachers who graduated from these departments emphasize (because they have learned a lot about) literature in their classrooms. If writing instruction is only one-third of one course (the methods course), the pattern of English classes neglecting writing instruction in favor of literature (or subsuming writing instruction in literature) will continue. 2) The Common Core calls for more writing. It is explicit about the need to teach writing rhetorically, noting that “to be college- and career ready writers, students must take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately”(41). Equally important The Core calls for explicit attention for the need to the recursive process of writing, stating the need to “Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience” (46). We now have an ally to counteract preservice teachers who may see theory and research as ivory tower, as too idealistic, too out of touch with how things really are.

We know from over thirty years of research that teaching grammar in isolation does not support better writing, yet this practice remains strong in so many secondary school curricula. We know that preservice teachers often bring a vast personal history of learning to write through isolated rules and memorized prescriptions, and they often bring few models of how to do otherwise. No

amount of pedagogical coursework may counter the kind of bewilderment a preservice teacher might experience upon stumbling into the vast gap between their university preparation and the realities of the high school or middle school curricula: “I was surprised when I first went into the field.” It is hardly remarkable that preservice teachers resist their university learning when they enter the field if they have little or no explicit guidance in how to address the nonalignment. They have to step on one side or the other of the vast chasm. Some preservice teachers conform to the expectations of the field context. Others may alienate their cooperating teachers if they attempt to implement a theoretical model. Neither supports the preservice teacher’s professional development. We don’t expect our students to teach writing without support for learning and practice, we cannot expect them to navigate such vast gaps in competing expectations without similar pedagogical guidance.

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Gatekeepers and Guides: Preparing Writing Teachers to Negotiate Standard Language Ideology

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T/W

Writing teacher educators and educational linguists have grappled for some time with how to help teachers engage productively with language in classroom teaching, particularly as many teachers work with increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student populations.¹ This article shares results from a study of pre-service English teachers that has implications for how writing teacher education may benefit from a more explicit focus on language, specifically standard language ideology.

My hope is that this piece sheds further light on the implications of the side comments I've heard from pre-service teachers who encounter their first placements in diverse schools. My concern is that sometimes these well-meaning new teachers enter schools and correct their bi-dialectal students' oral or written language on the first day of class in their fervor to take on the role of "English" teacher. These new teachers express shock that students find their corrections to be offensive at worst, mystifying at best.

And while some novice and experienced English teachers take part in conversations about respecting student language and working with English language learners, these discussions raise questions of how to incorporate linguistic understandings into classroom practice, particularly writing instruction. Every year at NCTE's Annual Conference, I listen to educators and linguists discuss what teachers need to know about language (i.e. see NCTE Commission on Language, 2008), and the conversations often lead back to providing equitable, effective writing instruction for a range of students.

During the discussions, questions often are raised that reflect the existing gaps between linguistic scholarship and everyday practice: Do writing teachers already know linguistics on some intuitive level? What are the ideological implications of particular language about language or particular writing activities? How can writing teachers enact understandings of "Standard English," "academic English," and "formal English" within a frame of respecting student language?²

This study points to the ways that concepts like standards, correctness, standard English, and language appreciation matter for pre-service teachers, and how it may be crucial for us to understand how they struggle with these concepts in relation to writing instruction. As they enter the field, pre-service English teachers are positioned to be language authorities and often express anxieties and uncertainties about how to fulfill that role in relation to the teaching of writing. The traditional position of writing teachers as standard-bearers, or "gatekeepers," creates potential conflicting ideologies for pre-service teachers who are also taught about language variety and culturally relevant pedagogy during teacher education. These future teachers of writing, in many ways invested in standardization, take up linguistic understandings within the contexts of their own experiences of writing instruction, range of coursework and field-based practicum experiences, and language beliefs.³

This article focuses on interviews with seven undergraduate pre-service secondary English teachers during their initial semesters of teacher education. The interviews revealed standard language ideology, or ideologies about standard English and correctness. Close analysis of the pre-service teachers' language moves revealed ideological stances that are interlinked with their understandings of English teacher authority and beliefs about providing access for students.⁴ The study showed that understandings of language use, particularly traditional views of grammar,⁵ are often disconnected from understandings about how language works within classroom interactions or in writing instruction. Furthermore, the subject position of English teachers as standard-bearing language authority prevents some pre-service teachers from taking up new understandings that promote student learning.

Even teachers who espouse language appreciation may lack strategies or re-interpret strategies through pre-existing filters. For instance, the study shows how pre-service teachers' comments often rely on a commonsense belief about language acquisition

1 The population of teachers has become increasingly white, monolingual, female and middle class, and these teachers will teach an increasingly linguistically, culturally, and economically diverse group of students (see Melnick and Zeichner, 1998; Hollins and Guzman, 2006).

2 Even the language about language carries ideological implications. For instance, composition scholar Bethany Davila (2012) points us to the unearned privilege attributed to "standard" edited American English (SEAE).

3 The standardization of language is a process during which aspects of language use become selected, accepted, diffused geographically, maintained, and elaborated upon; they acquire prestige and are prescribed, codified, and maintained (Milroy and Milroy, 1991). English teachers have been placed traditionally in the role of codifiers.

4 I define stance as "methods, linguistic and other, by which interactants create and signal relationships with the propositions they give voice to and the people they interact with" (Johnstone, 2007, 137).

5 The traditional model of "grammar" in English language arts defines grammar as a distinct set of prescriptive rules to be learned.

even though participants were seeking to affirm student language. The interviews show how pre-service teachers' approaches to "access" for students may or may not align with linguistic understandings. While seeing themselves as language authorities, they are also trying to apply new understandings about accepting language variation and giving students access. Even as pre-service teachers talk about embracing language variation, they may revert to traditional practices of "teaching grammar," such as conflating oral and written language use (McBee Orzulak, 2012).

This article outlines ways that the pre-service teachers faced dilemmas related to beliefs about standard language and their positions as gatekeepers; it will explore implications for how additional subject positions for writing teachers, such as guide or language user, may help support stances that promote equitable writing instruction.

Standard Language Ideology and Subject Positions

Standard language ideology provides one frame for analyzing the underlying language beliefs that emerged in the interviews. As a type of language ideology salient in the schooling context,⁶ my analysis looks at *standard language ideology* or what Milroy (1999) defines as "the belief that there is one and only one correct spoken form of the language, modelled on a single correct written form" (174). Standard language ideology materializes as the norm of one unified standard to which other languages or dialects are "substandard" or "nonstandard." Instead of stigmatized features being seen as part of a language variety, just like standard varieties, these "nonstandard" features become defined in contrast to a perceived standard promoted by schooling or are generally seen as "substandard."

This frame calls our attention to how language beliefs are often invisible or commonsensical in nature. There is a general sense that we are all experts of our own and others' language. This "folk linguistic" view of language can obscure the need for expert understandings of language. Future English teachers, in particular, are not only language users but also are often good at "English" and writing, meaning that folk theories about language may be even more entrenched.

Standard language ideology may be particularly salient for teachers of writing at the secondary level due to socially reinforced views of English teachers as gatekeepers and prescriptivists. Pervasive beliefs can position language users in relation to one another according to Wortham (2001): "Drawing on ideologies that circulate widely in a society, particular speakers position themselves and others in characteristic ways. Consistent positioning over time can establish more enduring identities for individuals and groups" (256). Standard language ideology has implications for how English teachers are positioned as language authorities. Yet, increasingly in writing teacher education, new teachers also are positioned as needing to be equitable and culturally relevant.

In response to these multiple ways that pre-service teachers are positioned by standard language ideology, I use the concept of subject position to conceptualize the storylines that emerge when pre-service teachers manage multiple language understandings over time and across multiple contexts. *Subject positions* are created through ongoing discourses and these discourses' relationships to ways of thinking, or ideologies. In contrast to "roles," available subject positions are multiple, contradictory (Davies and Harré, 2001). For future English teachers, this contradictory view is useful for thinking about their multiple subject positions in relation to language use, English teaching, and writing instruction. Analysis of subject positions in the interviews included open coding of interviews, thematic analysis, and creation of new categories for thematic grouping. Appendix One provides a summary of salient subject positions that emerged during analysis.

Extending Past Research

The interpretive lens of standard language ideology offers writing teacher education ways to consider the positioning of multilingual writers and the privileging of standard English. This area of inquiry offers insights useful for all levels of writing instruction: by focusing on secondary English teachers, my work extends past work focused on in-service teachers (Godley, Carpenter, and Werner, 2007), college composition instructors (Davila, 2012), and elementary teachers (Laman and Van Sluys, 2008).

Furthermore, I draw on research that suggests that language beliefs have implications for the success of writing instruction at the secondary level. In a study of in-service English teachers, Julie Sweetland (2006) demonstrates how sociolinguistic training, acknowledging both attitudes and linguistic knowledge, enabled secondary teachers to develop more positive attitudes about student language practices and to use strategies of affirming linguistic diversity. The result was that these teachers taught students about language variation and dialect awareness in ways that improved students' writing and sense of self-efficacy. However, this study responded to the site-based needs of in-service teachers and was not focused on pre-service teacher preparation.

In "'I'll Speak in Proper Slang': Language Ideologies in a Daily Editing Activity," Amanda Godley, Brian Carpenter, and Cynthia Werner further show the ways in-service English teachers grapple with conflicts around celebrating student language and teaching "grammar." Their study found that even a well-meaning English teacher used commonsense understandings of language (such as correcting students' oral language) in ways that did not support students' writing, including the use of a daily editing exercise.

6 I use language ideology to refer to perceptions about language that perpetuate inequity by marginalizing non-dominant groups and promoting a dominant group's interests (Lippi-Green, 1997) and as a more neutral belief system that can function normatively: "an underlying, consensual belief system about the way language is and is supposed to be" (Wolfram, 1998, 109). In both neutral and critical views, language ideology can apply to unquestioned beliefs about an assumed, monolithic standard or beliefs about the relationships between written and oral language.

This study points to the ways that standard language ideology can blur oral and written language distinctions, stymieing even experienced teachers of writing who mean to be equitable.

I extend this work into the domain of undergraduate pre-service teacher education. Not only do pre-service English teachers have to grapple with beliefs from their K-12 learning, but they also have to consider new understandings from coursework compared to those in student teaching and other field placements. Pre-service teachers' understandings of writing instruction further interact with multiple contexts that can influence their language beliefs. As we know, field experiences can be a powerful source for understanding new concepts and ideas; knowledge learned in methods courses can conflict with field experiences, sending competing messages (see Clift and Brady, 2006). Research also shows that school policy can influence language attitudes more than certain kinds of coursework (Blake and Cutler, 2003). Furthermore, national and local standards expectations provide contexts for teacher beliefs. As Amy Carpenter Ford and Tracy Davis (2012) point to in "Integrating Standards: Considerations for Language and Writing," the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) ask teachers to acknowledge language variation in standard English in the writing and speaking of others and themselves. Although this inclusion offers an entry point for attending to language variation in the classroom, the phrase "standard English" also reifies a monolithic standard.

Study Design and Findings

Interviewees were members of a secondary English undergraduate cohort and were in their first two semesters of teacher education at a large Midwestern university at the time of the interviews. The cohort included ten members of which four female participants (Kate, Amy, Susan, Mary) and three male participants (Dan, Matt, Zack) participated in the study.⁷ All participants identify as native English speakers and as white, lower to upper middle class. Interview questions focused on how the pre-service teachers thought about language in the English language arts classroom, including standard English, stigmatized language varieties, and linguistic diversity. Participants also described their views of successful English teachers and the types of schools where they hope to work in the future. In most cases, the pre-service teachers had taken comparable coursework in English language before entering teacher education.⁸ As noted later, however, they filtered understandings from these courses through their existing experiences with and beliefs about language and English teaching.

I analyzed the interviews with the following question: *What ideological stances (about teaching English, standard English, and "correctness") are reflected in the language moves of pre-service English teachers?* In addition to the patterns of subject positions (see Appendix One), common patterns emerged in relation to the pre-service teachers' multiple subject positions. First, while most participants talked about appreciating language variety or creativity in some way, there also was a range of ways in which participants positioned themselves as gatekeepers and users of "nonstandard" English or other languages as a problem or limiting factor. Second, in contrast to a desire to support student access to language, conflation of oral and written language practices was common, especially as participants imagined approaches to teaching methods.

The sections that follow focus on the ways that standard language ideology manifested as participants explored multiple, often conflicting positions related to providing access, engaging with language authority, and expressing language appreciation. I provide an in-depth look at specific new teachers' language moves in order to help us better understand the ways that language beliefs, such as those supported by standard language ideology, might filter pre-service teachers' take up of linguistically-informed writing methods.

Gatekeeper and access provider?: Dilemmas of leveling the playing field

In all of the interviews, participants discussed the importance of providing students with access to standard English, yet dilemmas emerge in their descriptions of approaches to providing this access. The common shock of dealing with their first sets of student papers showcases the familiar thread in writing methods of helping new writing teachers manage their reactions and pre-existing beliefs about "good" writing.

Excerpt One:

Amy describes how it is important for English teachers to address "grammar" in order to level the playing field for students (see transcript conventions in Appendix Two):

⁷ All names used are pseudonyms.

⁸ Although participants took similar classes and even used the same books, I recognize that this does not mean that the instructors' approaches to language were similar.

1 "I think um after being in my Practicum (yeah) looking at how the
2 students write (okay) um is very surprising # we my practicum
3 partner and I # wanted to actually go out and make a lesson about
4 gram:mar and how you form a paper because I was surprised at the
5 junior and senior level # how many mistakes were being made, and
6 that's one thing I would like to change # if I can um is just try to sit
7 down with them and go over some basics that they might have
8 miss::ed (umhuh) from earlier grades and (uhuh) try and set the uh
9 playing field level, and try to make sure that everyone has a good
10 idea of what they're doing in writing. I guess is one thing I would
11 change."

Amy's emphasis on the number of "mistakes," and her need to respond to these mistakes as a writing teacher, shows an internalization of the gatekeeper discourse for English teachers. Later in the interview, Amy talks about working with standards as being like a "game you have to play" which could be seen as an extension of her metaphor here of leveling the playing field.

Excerpt Two:

Amy describes her strategy for teaching students standard English for a standardized test context:

1 "um first I think speaking in that, and then going into writing it
2 (okay) because I think if you change the way you speak first of:f
3 um that will change your writing and I hate to say that, I'm not
4 trying to [laughing tone] change everybody's way of speaking but
5 just from the standardized test standpoint, I guess you can't really
6 get around it. So um I guess I would just try and make sure that
7 everyone has the right idea, of what it is an:d to make sure they're
8 using the proper words (okay) um and at least kind of give a
9 disclaimer and say [laughing] that "you know this is just for
10 English lang:uage learning, and, you know when you go home
11 speak whatever[ac] you want I'm not trying to chan:ge who you
12 are, or anything like that but just for the *standardized test basis*"

Relying on commonsense understandings of standard language, Amy's language moves express her belief that "proper words" take on "the" unified form dictated by standardized tests and that students can learn this first through spoken English. Amy remains unaware that the spoken standard shifts more than the written version advocated by standardized tests and style manuals; there are important distinctions between written and spoken standard English (Cheshire, 1999). In lines 1 and 2, standard language ideology emerges in the belief that changing speech equals changing writing. This conflation ignores the differences between written and oral language acquisition. However, her response is unsurprising due to the pervasiveness of a commonsense belief in standard language ideology—a belief that a single "correct" form of spoken English exists and is based on a one "correct" form of written English (Milroy, 1999).

Similarly, Matt reverts to an oral correction model of parroting back student language in standard English, a strategy that reveals similar ideologies about oral transfer of language: "I don't think I would ever chastise somebody for not using standard English"... "I can say, 'Right so what you're saying is?' and repeat it in standard English? I guess." Other studies have revealed that this strategy undermines effective classroom interactions and does not contribute to learning (see Godley et al.). This view of oral language ignores how the constant creativity of communication means that "absolute standardisation of a spoken language is never achieved" (Milroy and Milroy 22). Yet, when Amy uses "it" in lines 1 and 6, she implies a belief in a standard as one unified "proper" form to be learned. This belief is confirmed with "the right idea" in line 6, which echoes Amy's earlier desire to make sure all students know "the" grammar rules so that the playing field is level for all students.

Amy grapples with the dilemma of providing access to the "right idea" of standard language or "proper words" and yet not asking students to change their home languages. Amy doesn't want to change "who" students are and sees her role as encouraging students to learn English for the standardized test context. Amy takes on a subject position of English teacher as someone who provides "access" and "makes sure" all students ("everyone") use proper language or have the "right" idea. However, this idea of access rubs against Amy's sense of herself as a gatekeeper, creating a dilemma that she attempts to mediate. Amy uses a laughing tone to mediate her statements of authority. She tries to express openness to home language as she says, "this is just for *English* language learning" (lines 9-10), while still partitioning it outside of the school context.

Rosina Lippi-Green's (1997) discussion of "appropriacy" arguments in *English with an Accent* points to the dilemmic nature

of this position: “the message remains the same, and typically schizophrenic: appreciate and respect the languages of peripheral communities, but keep them in their place” (109). In fact, “you can’t speak like that here” is a recognizable form of standard language ideology that subordinates “home” language use. The most extreme option is ignoring the sense that students from various language or language variety backgrounds have a place in an English language arts classroom, a position that disinvites and partitions students based on perceived language and ability (Yoon, 2008; Siegel, 2006).

Beyond zero tolerance: The dilemmas of language authority and deficit thinking

In composition studies, the emphasis on students’ right to their own language points to a consensus that zero tolerance for language variation is not an acceptable goal for writing instruction (Scott, Straker and Katz, 2009). However, the language moves in the interviews trouble the idea that moving teachers beyond a zero tolerance approach means that deficit thinking has disappeared or that their teaching approaches reflect new philosophies of language appreciation.

While teacher educators Arnetha Ball and Rashidah Muhammad (2003) conclude that coursework in language variation might change ingrained attitudes like “zero tolerance” in response to stigmatized language varieties, my interviews complicate this as a sufficient goal for writing teacher education. Myths pervasive amongst teachers in Ball and Muhammad’s teacher education course mirror those of most of my interviewees: 1) “there is a uniform standard English that has been reduced to a set of consistent rules,” 2) “that these ‘correct’ consistent rules should be followed by all American English speakers,” and 3) “this mythical standard English must be safeguarded by everyone connected with its use, particularly classroom teachers” (Ball and Muhammad 77).

Unpacking such myths requires engaging with less obvious intolerance and unexamined language understandings. Research shows that unchallenged myths about language deficiency—and assumptions about what students can and cannot do based on those myths—can influence teachers who will teach in high-need areas but have little experience in those communities (Bauer and Trudgill, 1998; Valencia and Solórzano, 2004). Myths of verbal deprivation have historically led to attempts to fix students’ “deficits” rather than recognizing the systematicity of stigmatized varieties of English (Labov, 1967).

As a case in point, Kate’s stances in her interview reveal the ways that standard language ideology intersects with anxieties about fulfilling the subject position of a language authority, or writing instructor who knows all rules needed to correct student writing.

1 “I think the grammar thing I just need to do for my own benefit just so
2 like I feel like I am giving right instructions. I took a class [Modern
3 English] first semester here that I thought was that but it wasn’t... It was
4 more linguistics than I thought it was going to be, so I thought I was kind
5 of like checking one off the list there, and it didn’t happen. So just I think
6 that going through things and being able to say, ‘Yes, that’s supposed to be
7 there. No, that’s supposed to be there. That’s wrong.’ I think that’s really
8 important, you know.” [Kate talks about how what she learned wouldn’t
9 help her respond as a writing teacher to students’ papers, and she explains
10 what she thinks would help.]
11 “I think about language, just the absolute standards, absolute rules.
12 Just not having to look it up every time to be sure that I’m right. Just have
13 them really in my brain so that it is has a sense of authority almost. And
14 because I know I have so many grammar mistakes all the time, and it’s
15 just, you know, to have that absolute certainty when you are instructing
16 other people.”

In this excerpt, Kate takes a more traditional view of English teachers as the standard-bearers for one right way to use written language. Her focus on “right instructions” in grammar (line 2) and knowing “absolute rules” (line 11) is aligned with her view of a standard-bearing English teacher. The concept of a rigid written standard develops due to standard language ideology that “encourages prescription in language, dedicated to the principle that there must be one, and only one, correct way of using a linguistic item” (Milroy and Milroy 52). This “public *consciousness* of the standard” means that “people *believe* that there is a ‘right’ way of using English, although they do not necessarily use the ‘correct’ forms in their own speech” (Milroy and Milroy 30). With her belief in the one right way, Kate’s need for absolute rules means that her class in linguistics did not help her with grammar “mistakes,” something which she feels disappointed about not being able to check off her list.

Although a goal of writing teacher education is certainly to improve the confidence of new teachers of writing, Kate’s rigid beliefs may not support her ongoing learning as a future teacher. On the other hand, other participants’ responses point to the potentially more productive position of teacher as a guide. For example, Mary did not express the same anxiety as Kate; she took the same course but described her plans to use the book as a resource rather than feeling like she needed to internalize a right answer. Similarly, Susan rejected the view of a single “right” answer; she describes herself guiding students through multiple varieties and

even redefining what is “correct” while providing access to standard English. Positioning herself as a teacher who is a guide to language varieties and what is “considered right,” Susan uses her own language learning experiences and discussions of power during coursework to frame her future teaching approach.

However, even Susan labels her own language as “very lazy English”—“I don’t speak grammatically correct; I need to work on being a good example.” This stance seems to conflict with her other stance that questions language authority and reveals how pervasive standard language ideology remains even in the language moves of a pre-service teacher who articulates fairly complex linguistic understandings. This example reveals the rooted nature of expectations around English teachers’ identities as language users even though Susan’s other language moves avoid casting her future students’ language as deficient.

Susan’s subject position as guide through varieties seems to be predicated on her appreciation of language varieties. Conversely, Kate imagines that she won’t have to deal with linguistic diversity and describes language varieties as an obstacle. This theme emerged in other interviews—even with participants who talked about appreciating student language. They described working with English language learners or African American English speakers as a “difficulty,” “challenge,” “problem,” or “harder.” Some participants imagined that these students should or would be the domain of another department or school.

Such deficit beliefs about language variation can filter how pre-service teachers interpret writing methods introduced in coursework. As a case in point, in Kate’s discussion of what she calls a “codeswitching” example from a Composition Methods class she was taking, she outlines a contrastive analysis approach presented in an article from class. She describes how when the author’s students used “incorrect slang,” the teacher/author translated their words into standard English. As Kate describes the contrastive analysis approach, her language moves reveal a deficit model of student language rather than a recognition of the systematicity of stigmatized varieties of English. This ideology is linked historically to beliefs about verbal deprivation. Specifically, history shows how understandings of a standard have been linked to race or ethnicity in the U.S. (Milroy). Evaluations about language often are connected to beliefs about intelligence, morality, and social identities, and Kate’s description of the class activity reveals that she still uses a deficit model to frame certain student language practices. Furthermore, Kate confides that “I don’t really think that I think that it’s all English” as she talks about language varieties related to race. Her beliefs influence her take up of methods; what is useful here may be the ways her language moves reveal such beliefs in a way that could be interrogated in a writing methods course if standard language ideology were explored explicitly.

Participants’ understandings of themselves as language users provide another possible entry point for unpacking standard language ideology. While Mary also describes language difference as a challenge, she adopts linguistic understandings about language varieties and differences between written and spoken language:

“It might be harder as a teacher to like work with speakers of African American English, like since it’s kind of different, it’s like not so formal... I don’t speak African American English but the way I speak isn’t the way I would write... so I don’t think there’s like one right or wrong.”

Mary uses her understanding of her own written and oral language to contextualize her approach to language variety. However, by describing African American English (which she has an awareness of as a separate language variety with a title) as less “formal,” Mary still represents common beliefs about vernacular varieties as always informal.

Even though Kate, Mary, Susan, and others do not describe zero tolerance approaches to language varieties, their language moves reveal their shifting stances in relation to standard language ideology. These stances have implications for how they see themselves and their students. In order to attend to the underlying, complex beliefs of pre-service teachers, writing teacher education might address possible positions of the writing teacher as gatekeeper as well as language user and guide to standard English(es).

Everyone is an expert: The dilemmas of folk linguistics and language appreciation

Although many participants spoke overtly about language appreciation, their approaches to language variation reveal inabilities to operationalize linguistic principles as future writing teachers. Even though interviewees could describe ways they might use mini-lessons to teach prescriptive grammar, many struggled with imagining specific ways they might work with English language learners, new technology-based registers, and other areas of language variation as part of their teaching repertoires.

For instance, Dan, who like Kate imagined working in a homogenous white middle class school, espoused an equitable view of language with an emphasis on bridging to “standard English,” but he could not name clear strategies for approaching this in the classroom beyond his own “intuition.”

We must take into consideration that Dan and the other pre-service teachers interviewed were in their initial semesters of teacher education. On the other hand, ideologies about who can be an expert on language also may influence the ways pre-service teachers engage with language understandings in relation to writing instruction. Certainly, teachers can begin to see language patterns and develop techniques to support their students’ writing without learning exact linguistic terms. On the other hand, the language moves of the pre-service teachers may lead us to interrogate assumptions about what level of linguistic understandings are available through tacit understandings.

As a case in point, some interviewees reflect a language user as expert model in some of their comments. Zack assumes that he will be able to translate language varieties for students without specific preparation: “I might just have to read it and kind of interpret it on a case by case basis.” This may be partly due to his sense of expertise with standard English, as he claims standard English as his perspective; “way I would teach.”⁹ Additionally, Zack dismisses linguistic understandings as extraneous and claims that he would just brush up on “grammar rules” if he were teaching a lesson about “grammar.” He transfers authority to the current prescriptive grammar guide without seeing how other linguistic principles could help him teach his students. Zack’s unexamined language understandings may lead him to miss key ways that these “rules” need to be analyzed in terms of language change and varieties in his particular classroom.

Similarly, Matt espouses appreciation for language varieties, but he plans to only “actively” teach standard English and provide access to a “preferred type of English.” Yet, he imagines “styleshifting” with students, including using “AAVE” if he encounters speakers in his classroom. Matt’s confidence in his ability to shift readily into African American English may reveal that he does not see AAE as a code that requires systematic learning. This stance also ignores the social implications connected to using language varieties.

According to Irvine and Gal (2000), stances like Matt and Zack’s may function as *erasure* of specific linguistic codes by assuming that ability to command those varieties could be intuited or appropriated easily rather requiring teachers to learn rule governed systems or consult linguistic resources. We can see how dilemmas emerge for these pre-service teachers who pay lip service to language appreciation, yet whose imagined approaches as writing teachers may reveal limiting standard language ideology.

Implications: Engaging Pre-service Writing Teachers with Standard Language Ideology

Implications from the study include the need for writing teacher education to focus on the relationship between ideologies and enactment of specific methods. The study suggests that attention to the subject positions of writing teachers might help pre-service teachers think through dilemmas they may face in the complex intersections between non/dominant discourses around language in schools and writing instruction. Standard language ideology provides a lens for naming common dilemmas or aspects of the dilemma.

As Leah Zuidema (2011) discusses in “Contentious Conversations,” part of being an English teacher historically has included engaging with dilemmas and debates, specifically ongoing debates about grammar and writing approaches. The importance of engaging in these conversations persists, as ignoring standard language ideology can mean that new teachers succumb to inequitable methods due to powerful myths about language and writing instruction that they may face in the field. In a follow-up study that tracked a different group of new English teachers into classroom practice, findings showed participants’ need for affirmation and ongoing access to resources related to language dilemmas in writing instruction (McBee Orzulak, 2011).¹⁰

New teachers may take solace in understanding how other teachers manage such dilemmas and the reality that some dilemmas may not be resolved. Understanding larger conversations about “correctness” and language variety could provide new teachers with choices for responding to issues of language authority and teaching their students how to negotiate shifting understandings of standard English. Conversely, a lack of awareness of how language works in relation to circulating ideologies could limit their responses due to adherence to traditional approaches or commonsense beliefs.

In particular, I suggest that future writing teachers need to critique traditional, monolithic understandings of standard English even as they learn to understand language patterns in student writing. In writing methods courses, models of experienced teachers might demonstrate possibilities for teachers of writing to work alongside students in inquiry-based learning about language while admitting the possibilities for not knowing every grammatical term in order to be a “good” teacher of writing. Writing teacher educators might provide resources or models of experienced teachers who work with student language, supporting access to new uses and varieties while rejecting authoritative or language maven positions (McBee Orzulak, 2012). A text like David Brown’s (2009) *In Other Words* can be used to spark conversation about the ideologies related to specific writing methods used to teach academic writing. Or, an article like “Analyzing the Writing of English Language Learners” by Mary Schleppegrell and Ann Go (2007) can be used to help new teachers analyze what English language learners are able to do grammatically in their writing. An activity like this one can help new writing teachers note the ideologies inherent in their initial deficit reactions to a non-native English writer’s text (i.e. correcting all errors based on their native intuition) versus using a student’s text in order to learn more about its linguistic patterns.

The pre-service teachers’ language moves in the study may help us consider ways to help future teachers critique and manage the ideological, dilemmic nature of language understandings in writing instruction. Their interviews raise questions for writing teacher education and research: Which stances might help pre-service teachers understand how language works contextually and interactionally in writing classroom settings? How might writing methods curricula help pre-service teachers engage critically with standardized testing and implicit language beliefs in ways that help them to be agentive in a variety of contexts? What is the best means for engaging pre-service teachers with critical language understandings, particularly how to deal with the dilemmas they face

⁹ Language users like Zack who make claims about these preferred forms often contradict their reports in their actual usage (Milroy and Milroy).

¹⁰ This later study further affirmed the ways that positions taken up by English teachers have implications for equitable instruction: Multiple positive positions of students and teachers emerged, such as students as knowledgeable and teachers as equitable, student-centered, or appreciative. Other less generative positions also emerged, such as students as deficient; teachers as authoritative, racist, or all-knowing.

as they simultaneously seek to respect student language and provide access to standard English? Whatever the answers, the study suggests that we need to move beyond simply fostering language appreciation or preventing a zero tolerance approach; instead we should move towards promoting sustainable positions for equitable writing instruction.

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Appendix One

Subject Positions in Interviews:

English language arts teacher as

Authority, standard bearer

- Teacher disseminates fixed content; gatekeeper of one correct way
- Oral language correction leads to standard written English
- Teacher has responsibility to "level the playing field" through grammar

Guide, supporter of mutual understanding

- Teacher guides through multiple varieties while providing access
- Teacher works with what is "considered right"
- Teacher teaches students not content

Language user

- Teacher only teaches and/or uses standard English
- Teacher models appropriate language with own language use
- Teacher is a style-shifter or multiple language user
- Teacher language is imperfect, needs improvement

Appendix Two

Transcript Conventions:

() Brackets show overlap

= latching

Italics show emphasis

Period or comma shows falling intonation

Question mark shows rising intonation

shows pause of less than a second

(1.6) shows pause of more than a second

: drawn out speech

[ac] accelerated speech

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Becoming Peer Tutors of Writing: Identity Development as a Mode of Preparation

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Writing teacher education typically focuses on preparing pre-service English teachers for work in K-12 classrooms. Preparation programs directed at teacher candidates presuppose two important factors: one, participants in a writing teacher education program plan on becoming teachers after they graduate; and two, participants have a desire to attend these programs because they will be able to implement the program's content in their own classrooms. However, at the university level, there is a sub-set of writing instructors and support staff, including graduate teaching assistants of composition and undergraduate peer writing tutors, who do not plan on becoming writing teachers, and who may not be fully vested in participating in any type of preparation program. For example, graduate students in English may be required to teach composition courses as part of their graduate curriculum, while undergraduate students may seek positions as writing tutors in order to work on campus. Moreover, the motivation for participation in preparation programs may vary greatly within this subset, as some participants may attend only those professional development opportunities that are mandated by a supervising body, while others may choose to attend all available modes of preparation. Taking a closer look at the various modes by which these instructors and tutors were "prepared" (e.g. programs or workshops and related curricula) allows those of us who primarily identify as teachers of writing to reflect on the values and philosophy that guide our composition pedagogy as we attempt to prepare participants from varied ages, disciplines, and career goals in writing education programs.

As evidenced in the literature, the preparation of undergraduate peer tutors for work in university writing centers regularly includes a focus on roles tutors should avoid adopting in the tutorial (Trimbur, 1987; Thonus, 2003). New tutors are discouraged from adopting an evaluative role of editor or assessor, and instead to become what Harris (1992) observed as "hybrid[s], somewhere between a peer and a teacher, who cannot lean too much one way or the other" (380). However, by focusing on the transitory roles that tutors should or should not play in a tutorial, tutors are prevented from conceptualizing what it actually means to be a tutor, and consequently the identity they must construct to become one.

If peer tutors fail to develop a tutor identity during their preparation programs, they may instead rely on playing roles that are not appropriate for the space of the tutorial. Introducing the K-12 concept of teacher identity to the preparation of undergraduate peer tutors of writing may provide new tutors with the tools necessary to develop tutor identities. Using data collected through case studies of first-time tutors, I argue that when preparation programs focus on aspects of teacher identity, new tutors are better prepared to assume the professional identity of a writing tutor and less likely to play roles that are not conducive to the philosophy of writing centers. In other words, participants will see themselves as tutors beyond the constraints of the tutorial.

Theoretical Context

Preparation programs are most effective when they are developed on a local level, using available resources to meet the specific needs of the local population (Smith and Bath, 2004). Depending on the available resources (for example, time, money, and staff) at that level, tutor preparation may rely heavily on the large body of "training" literature. Training literature typically consists of tutor manuals, which articulate the practical aspects of tutoring, and anthologies of foundational articles in the writing center discourse. Tutor manuals (or handbooks) outline and/or promote tutor behaviors that are reflective of the "best practices" of tutoring writing. In the present study, the best practices for tutoring composition at the college level reflect a social constructivist philosophy in which the student is placed at the center of the learning experience, and that are consistent with the larger writing center discourse (Murphy, 1994; Hobson, 1992). However, these best practices are not always explicitly couched in the relevant theoretical underpinnings.

For example, in chapter three of the *Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, "Inside the Tutoring Session," Ryan and Zimmerelli (2005) encourage their readers to utilize four specific behaviors in order to effectively begin a tutorial and establish rapport with a tutee: "introduce yourself," "sit side-by-side," "give the student control of the paper," and "keep resources and tools nearby" (18). These suggestions are consistent with the best practices of tutoring in the writing center community. However, if these types of behaviors are promoted in a preparation mode that does not include a focus on developing a tutor identity, tutors may be left with a set of prescribed actions, and without a complex understanding of how to employ them when they encounter situations or experiences outside of those discussed in their training manuals. As noted above, this may force the tutors to play the role of tutor during a tutorial, rather than to actually develop the identity of a writing tutor.

The distinction between the two terms, "identity" and "role," lies in the level of awareness an individual maintains over identifiable behavioral characteristics. The characteristics of one's identity are an unconscious representation of his/her natural behaviors. In contrast, the identifiable characteristics of a role are consciously constructed and typically employed temporarily. While an identity

reflects an individual's complete commitment to a set of characteristics, a role reflects a lower level of commitment to them. This is why an individual can be said to be "playing a role," and not "playing an identity." Identity construction is facilitated through exposure to the models (Wortham, 2006) and discourse (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006) of an identity. With this dual exposure, individuals can choose to construct a specific identity by making decisions that reflect the characteristics of the larger identity model.

A deeper understanding of the concept of teacher identity may assist writing center directors in promoting the construction of tutor identities amongst the participants of their preparation programs. Research from K-12 teacher education programs suggests preparation programs would greatly benefit from an additional focus on developing a tutor identity within the course of the preparation program (Alsup, 2006; Danielewicz, 2001). Teacher identity research in teacher education programs indicates that participants who are prepared to assume the program-appropriate identity will have a strong affiliation to their positions and more effective pedagogical practices (Alsup, 2006; Danielewicz, 2001; McKinney et al., 2008).

Without exposure to relevant tutor identity models or discourse, participants in a tutor preparation program may rely on exposure to past "performances" (Goffman, 1959), or roles, which can be inappropriate for tutoring in university writing centers. Reliance on inappropriate identity models regularly occurs in the preparation of K-12 teacher candidates (Britzman, 1991), because the average individual spends over 12 years reflecting on teacher identity models. However, instead of an over-familiarity with tutor identities, participants in a tutor preparation program may not be familiar with the most basic tutor identity model because they have not been exposed to one in their educational histories. A participant in a tutor preparation program could potentially rely on the more culturally pervasive, authoritative teacher identity framework, instead of developing a relevant tutor identity.

In addition to exposing a new tutor to appropriate models and discourse of a tutor identity within the preparation module, writing center directors can include relevant results from teacher identity research, and also highlight several stable identifiable behavior characteristics of a teacher who possesses a strong sense of teacher identity. This is not to say that writing center directors should promote a singular identity within a preparation mode. On the contrary, effective tutor identities are those that are based on the strengths of each participant, and which meet the specific needs of the student population for whom they are tutoring. However, I believe that if new tutors are able to develop several of the stable, unconscious behavior characteristics of a strong teacher identity, they will be better prepared to translate these behaviors into the construction their own tutor identity.

From a meta-analysis of teacher identity research, I isolated four key identity characteristics that regularly appeared in descriptions of teachers with strongly developed teacher identities. These four traits function as the stable characteristics of a basic teacher (and tutor) identity model in the context of this study. That is, a person with a teacher identity has 1) pedagogical and content knowledge of a discipline (Shulman, 1986), 2) flexibility (Borich, 1999; Bullough, Crow, and Knowles, 1999), 3) community membership (Tickle, 1999; Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin, 1999), and 4) regular engagement with reflective practices (Danielewicz, 2001; Alsup, 2006; Hammerness et al., 2005). If tutors are given opportunities to foster these characteristics as key aspects of their tutor identities, they may be more effective in their tutoring practices and better able to reflect the best practices of the writing center discourse community.

Research Methods

To investigate the potential effects of teacher identity concepts in undergraduate writing center tutors, I observed two types of tutor preparation programs at a large, public PhD-granting institution in the West: a one-day workshop lead by members of the writing tutorial services on campus and Writing 60, a tutor preparation course offered by the university Writing Program. The one-day workshop was presented by the Campus Resource Center (CRC). The CRC is a resource that offers tutoring in a variety of disciplines across campus. I observed a daylong workshop for writing tutors, both new and returning, who were hired to work the Writing Lab. The workshop was led by a senior CRC staff member and presented a wide range of both procedural and content knowledge regarding the process of tutoring writing. Additionally, I observed the tutor preparation course, Writing 60. The course was offered independently from Writing Lab preparation. The course met four hours a week for a ten-week academic quarter. A veteran writing instructor instructed this course.

The workshop presented tutors (both returning and newly hired) critical procedural information regarding the logistics of tutoring for the CRC (e.g. tutoring locations, tracking hours worked, submitting timesheets, etc.), as well as pedagogical information concerning the process of tutoring writing in the CRC. This information was presented through a PowerPoint Presentation and later through hands-on activities. The workshop leader noted: "We...have them do a lot of role-playing and writing and discussing about strategies and what works and what doesn't. Tutors give their fellow tutors lots of great suggestions for how to ask questions, how to respond as an educated reader rather than a proofreader."

The content of the preparation course was more complex than that of the workshop's, due not only to the course's significantly longer exposure to the tutors, but also because it focused solely on pedagogical information. The course contained no logistical information about tutoring for the CRC, as it was not affiliated with that body. The curriculum focused on both the practical and theoretical issues of tutoring writing, as well as the development of the tutors' own writing abilities. The instructor of the course required her students to engage in tutoring behaviors and regular metacognitive reflections on the course materials and activities. Her course began by with examining the students' pre-existing knowledge, and then moved into instruction regarding theories and practices of peer tutoring.

Four undergraduate peer tutors functioned as the primary participants of this study. Two tutors participated in both the workshop and the course, while the other two tutors only attended the workshop. All four participants were upper division, undergraduate students

at the time of the study. Annie and Suzie were trained in the course and the workshop, while Melissa and Robert were trained solely by the CRC Writing Lab workshop. All of the participants qualified as new tutors in the Writing Lab and had not previously tutored in a formal setting at the university. I observed each participant tutoring on two separate occasions. Each observation lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. Within a week of each observation, I interviewed each tutor about the observed tutorial. I interviewed each of the participants twice, once at the beginning and again at the end of the academic quarter.

Each of the undergraduate tutors self-selected to participate in this study; they do not represent a random stratified sample of participants, so they do not represent a replicable percentage of the entire population in each case. However, case study methodology does not rely on random stratified samples because it is not concerned with producing statistically significant results. Instead, the participants function as data sources for the entire preparatory cases themselves. This is not a direct comparison of the two preparation programs, but rather a telling of stories about how identities can or cannot (or in some cases to what degree) be developed in these programs.

Results

The first pass through the data showed that the four tutors observed in this study provided student writers with adequate support in the CRC Writing Lab. As novice tutors, they showed evidence of developing the most basic characteristics of a writing tutor identity: the tutors were friendly to the tutees; they discussed the tutees' drafts; and they offered the tutees suggestions for improving the drafts. However, additional passes through the data revealed that the tutors prepared by both the workshop and the course provided tutees more effective tutorial support. The distinction between the type of support offered by these tutors (Annie and Suzie) and those tutors prepared by the workshop alone (Melissa and Richard) is due, in part, to Annie and Suzie's participation in a preparation course that regularly provided opportunities and resources to develop more complex, stronger tutor identities. And while each of the four tutors exhibited evidence of areas for improvement in their tutoring practices, when the results of this study are presented in a heuristic of the four teacher identity traits outlined above, it is clear that Annie and Suzie began to develop stronger tutor identities than Melissa and Richard.

Content Knowledge/Behaviors Consistent with Preparation

Melissa and Robert (prepared by the CRC workshop) both displayed evidence that they possessed sufficient composition content knowledge for work as peer tutors of writing, but they did not display tutoring behaviors that were consistent with the goals of the preparation workshop as articulated by the workshop leader. While neither tutor displayed evidence of exceptional mastery in composition, they did regularly rely on resources to provide their tutees with masterful support. The manner in which these tutors enacted this support, however, was not always reflective of the behaviors of an effective tutor as defined by the workshop leader. Instead of co-constructing knowledge with their tutees by learning a grammar concept in a handbook together, both tutors encouraged tutees to consult the handbook on their own, and to "go over [the draft for grammar] again" before turning in their final drafts.

In the observed tutorials, Melissa and Robert demonstrated a familiarity with the traditional best practices of peer-to-peer writing tutorials, as modeled for them through the tutoring demonstrations and a "practical tips" handout in the preparation workshop. For example, each tutor opened the tutorial with behaviors designed to establish a level of rapport that would facilitate a tutee-centered tutorial. By doing so, the tutors were also mindful to balance the tutee's concerns for the draft with their own perceived concerns for the draft. For example, after Robert asked a tutee, "What do you want help on?" the tutee outlined spelling and verb tense as her main concerns. Then, he negotiated an agenda with the tutee after acknowledging her concern on sentence-level concerns: "While we're going through it, if we see any content or anything like that, do you want my help?" This type of tutee-centered congeniality was consistent with the tutoring behaviors modeled in the tutoring demonstrations at the preparation workshop.

Melissa also displayed evidence of familiarity with the types of tutee-centered behaviors that had been modeled at the workshop. As she worked to determine an agenda with one of her regular tutees, she took steps to engage in behaviors that were consistent with the workshop leader's definition of an effective tutor as "kind." Instead of asking her tutee, "What do you want to work on today?" Melissa opened her tutorial by asking the tutee, "So, how's it going?" This question led to a discussion about busy class schedules and a difficult anthropology course with which Melissa was familiar. When asked to reflect on the effects of allowing time for off topic discussion, Melissa reported that it worked to build a relationship with her tutees. Melissa consciously engaged her tutee in a conversation that was not related to her paper, as a means to demonstrate an additional aspect of Melissa's tutor identity, that of academic mentor. Melissa's conception of an academic mentor as part of a tutor identity was consistent with the workshop leader's goal that her tutors see themselves as "peer mentors."

However, Melissa and Robert's tutor identities were not consistent with the goals of the preparation program because they only employed weak, or surface-level, understanding of the preferred tutoring behaviors in the Writing Lab. For example, in an observed tutorial Robert faced challenges establishing rapport with his tutee. The tutee was not completely clear on the topic of her draft, and she also displayed evidence of not possessing a strong understanding of the source material. Robert's attempts to establish an agenda repeatedly failed because the tutee had such a limited understanding of her topic. He became frustrated by her weak stance towards possible topics, and his failed attempts to facilitate any strong connections between the tutee and the course content. Robert's reaction to his tutee's behaviors was not consistent with the characteristics of an effective tutor as "patient" as defined by the workshop leader.

Robert's tutorial behaviors reflected an incomplete understanding of the practices of an effective writing tutor as modeled by the workshop leader in the preparation workshop. For example, one of the policies of the Writing Lab was to "not edit" student papers,

and the tutoring behaviors modeled in the tutoring demonstrations and handout advocated addressing higher order concerns before lower order concerns. However, after Robert and his tutee agreed to focus primarily on grammar during a tutorial, he added that he would only comment on content "if [he] [saw] something." Robert later demonstrated he was unable to follow through with his commitment. After highlighting several grammatical errors, Robert suddenly reminded the tutee that he does not "edit papers," and that she "is going to have to go through this paper again before turning it in." It was evident from this interaction that Robert had a conflicted understanding of a tutor identity. He evoked the policy of not editing papers, which had been outlined in the preparation workshop, only after negotiating an agenda and partially discussing the tutee's draft.

Melissa also displayed a weak understanding of the effective tutoring behaviors modeled in the workshop. Instead of employing traditional best practices of peer-to-peer tutorials that call for a student-centered approach, Melissa primarily relied upon her previous experience as a college-level writer as a strategy in tutorials. She noted that her tutorial strategies consist of, "just thinking on my feet." Instead of consistently working with tutees to develop their own ideas, Melissa offered her tutees suggestions based on how she would handle the situations herself, which limited the possible courses of action on which the tutee could embark. For example, after giving her tutee several lengthy suggestions about how she could arrange her thesis statement, Melissa explained to her tutee how she arranged her own thesis statements: "I can tell you the way I like to do it." Melissa offered her methodology for constructing a thesis as a model for her tutee. However, as a tutoring behavior, suggesting one's own practice as a model can have potentially limiting effects. If the tutee is unclear on the tutor's peer-based identity, he/she may leave the tutorial convinced that the tutor's way is the only correct method.

In my observations (noted below) of Annie and Suzie, the tutors demonstrated more highly effective tutor behavior. These tutors, prepared by the ten-week course, regularly displayed evidence of mastery in composition. They answered tutees' questions with their own knowledge, or consulted relevant resources. However, a key difference in the display of mastery in composition emerged between the two groups of tutors in the present case. Instead of focusing on presenting tutees with correct information (which was often the case in Melissa and Robert's tutorials), Annie and Suzie regularly attempted to co-construct knowledge by facilitating knowledge building, rather than disseminating knowledge to their tutees which was consistent with the models employed in the preparation course.

Annie and Suzie overwhelmingly engaged in tutor behaviors reflective of the goals of the preparation course. The data suggest that both Annie and Suzie had a strong understanding of appropriate tutoring behaviors. For example, Annie and Suzie displayed evidence of tutor behaviors consistent with the goals of the preparation course by establishing student-centered agendas that did not privilege sentence-level concerns over global concerns. In a drop-in tutorial with a regular tutee, Suzie validated the tutee's request to focus on grammar errors: "Oh, definitely [we can look for grammar errors]. Let's make sure that the topic is right, but keep an eye out for grammar errors." Suzie did not dismiss the tutee's grammatical concerns by reminding her that the Writing Lab did not solely focus on improving errors, but instead folded the tutee's concerns into a larger agenda focused on making sure the "topic is right."

Suzie was aware of the limitations of her authority over the tutee within the space of the tutorial. This was in direct opposition to Robert's behavior in a similar situation, where he demanded the tutee independently address grammatical issues. This awareness also allowed her to continually focus on the goals of student need, which reflected her philosophy, and identity, as a tutor. Because Suzie did not view herself as an authority in grammar, she developed a tutoring technique to share the authority in the session. She explained: "I just repeat the [grammar] question back to them because I want them to think about it. I do not want to just be the god of knowledge... Maybe they know it better than I do." Suzie continually worked to co-construct knowledge with her tutee.

Annie also took steps in her tutorials to avoid becoming an influential authority figure, which was a goal of the preparation course. She repeatedly centered the focus of the tutorial on the needs and wants of the tutee. Annie also prevented herself from developing too much authority over the tutee in her tutoring practice by asking the tutee a significant number of questions, rather than providing the tutee with a significant number of answers. For example, when Annie and her tutee brainstormed possible ideas for the tutee's paper, she became increasingly aware of how her position could potentially abuse authority: "I had an idea of what [the paper topic could be] about, [but] I was trying to think how to get her to figure that out for herself without making it my idea." This behavior allowed Annie to assume a position of a positive reflector, rather than one of authority. Annie demonstrated that the primary goal of the tutorial was to place the tutee in a position of authority, in order to empower the tutee as a writer.

Flexibility

Robert and Melissa showed no significant evidence of flexibility in their tutorials. On the contrary, both tutors showed significant evidence of inflexibility. Flexibility was not an explicit goal of the preparation program, but the workshop leader did isolate the ability to support tutees through the writing process with multiple "tools" as a goal of the preparation program. The tutors displayed an inability to conceive of multiple approaches to the tutoring process.

At one point in an observed tutorial, Robert interrupted the tutee as she read her draft, in order to remind her that she should not use "I think," in her paper. As an alternative, Robert asked the tutee to explain why she believed in what she had written. When asked to explain his rationale for highlighting the use of "I think," Robert did not display strong evidence of fully understanding of his tutoring practices. He explained that his rationale in directing his tutee not to use "I think" in her draft stemmed from his own experience as a college writer. His preoccupation with removing "I think" from the tutee's draft conflicted with his often-repeated comment in this tutorial that the tutee did not appear to know what she "[thought] at all." Robert clung to his own stylistic preferences in student writing as a best practice because he did not provide evidence of possessing multiple "tools" to approach the tutorial process.

Similarly, Melissa displayed an inflexible understanding of academic prose, which also prevented her from providing her tutees with multiple tools for creatively developing their assignments. Because of her inflexibility, she modeled academic language to her tutees more than any other tutor in the present study. In an interaction between Melissa and her tutee, she suggested persuasive language to her tutee, who was struggling with the guidelines of not using the word “I.” Melissa attempted to convince her tutee that there were many ways of circumventing this restriction: “So, what you are really saying inside is, ‘I think this is right,’ but since you can’t say ‘I’ you say something like ‘It is important that blah, blah, blah.’ Or that ‘Ash is correct when he says blah, blah, blah.’” In this exchange, Melissa, as a college senior, modeled academic language that her tutee, as a freshman, will be responsible for mastering in her college career. However, Melissa really only modeled one type of discourse in a way that left no space for viable alternatives, such as encouraging the tutee to couch her analysis of the text within a larger on-going conversation.

Because of their exposure to multiple models of tutor identities in the preparation course, Annie and Suzie did not employ one specific approach to the tutoring process (as opposed to Melissa and Robert who required their tutees to read each draft out loud while they made comments). For example, in a challenging tutorial Suzie allowed the tutee to dictate the terms of the tutorial. Suzie had trouble establishing a high level of rapport with this tutee who appeared reticent to participate in the tutorial. Unusually, the tutee’s draft was entirely in a bulleted list format, yet Suzie did not let the tutee’s attitude or uniquely organized draft influence the productivity of the tutorial. When Suzie asked the tutee to take out some scratch paper and summarize her argument, the tutee chose to engage in the work without Suzie’s assistance, which was not what she had anticipated. Even though Suzie laid the groundwork for an activity to collectively clarify the tutee’s main argument, the tutee chose to engage in this activity alone. Suzie allowed the tutee the space to develop her ideas as she saw fit and did not require her to interact in a specific manner. Because of the unusual format of the tutee’s draft, Suzie was unable to establish rapport through her typical behaviors. Instead, she relied on asking questions as a means to effectively communicate with the tutee. Her flexibility in this tutorial demonstrated that Suzie was clearly committed to working with the tutee to foster an effective learning environment in whatever manner that was most meaningful to the tutee. The tutee expressed gratitude for Suzie’s assistance, and was visibly reassured when Suzie congratulated her for bringing in her draft well before the due date.

Annie regularly displayed evidence of flexibility in her tutorials in her tutoring behaviors and choice of activities. For example, Annie was the only tutor in this case who showed evidence of purposely not engaging the tutee in a continual conversation. While discussing the “interesting” aspects of Stanley Milgram’s famous experiment with a tutee, Annie chose not to comment on the tutee’s suggestions. Instead, Annie responded to each suggestion with variations on the question, “What is interesting about that?” Then, the tutee sat silently and actually considered the validity of her suggestion. Annie’s response reflected her flexible approach to tutoring; she later explained that she was not silent to punish the tutee, but rather to allow her the time and space to develop her critical thinking skills.

Similarly, Annie was the only tutor to employ directed freewriting as a method of focusing, which again demonstrated her flexible approach to the work done in a tutorial. The Writing 60 instructor identified freewriting as a technique to employ in challenging tutorials, and regularly modeled it for the students by engaging in the practice in almost every course meeting. After Annie and her tutee discussed possible aspects of Milgram’s experiment that the tutee could develop into an argument, Annie asked the tutee to freewrite for the last five minutes of the tutorial. Annie explained that she regularly asked her tutees to freewrite for several different reasons. It ensures the tutee “walks away with something written and tangible to go back to because, you know, the hardest part for a tutee in any session is remembering what you said.” Annie’s flexibility in the tutorial reflected her well-developed tutor identity and her strong commitment to student learning.

Engagement with Reflective Practices

Participation in the present study gave Melissa an opportunity to reflect on her practices. She observed: “at our last interview, all of the questions you asked really made me reflect a lot...[about] what I had gained from the [one-day workshop] training and how I had just improvised.” Melissa’s observation indicated that reflecting on her preparation allowed her to delineate between the information she acquired in the workshop and her own instincts which she regularly relied on. As in the other areas of tutor identity development, Melissa failed to fully engage in what Danielewicz (2001) would call “reflexive” behavior. Melissa took time to think about her work in the Writing Lab in order to observe how far she had come, rather than complicating her practice as a means to improve it.

Participation in the present study also gave Annie and Suzie opportunities to reflect on their tutoring behaviors. In their second interviews, both tutors indicated that their participation in the study had given them the opportunity to reflect on their work as writing tutors, in the same way they reflected on their assignments in the preparation course. Annie and Suzie engaged in extensive self-reflective practices in the preparation course, which modeled this type of behavior as a key practice of a writing tutor. Therefore, both tutors regularly engaged in reflective activity because it was part of their tutor identities. For example, Suzie regularly reflected on her tutorials as a means to further improve her tutoring practices which was a technique modeled in the Writing 60 course. Suzie believed that learning reflective processes was one of most effective outcomes of the Writing 60 course. However, I would argue that learning these skills was one of the most significant aspects of Suzie’s development as a writing tutor. Because she had the ability to reflect on her methods, and the flexibility to employ alternative practices, Suzie was well prepared to meet the needs of even the most challenging tutees.

Community

Melissa was the only tutor in the present study who specifically mentioned community building as an important outcome of her preparation program, one of the workshop leader’s goals. Melissa stated that one of the most helpful aspects of the preparation workshop was, “knowing that we are a community and we are supported.” Melissa believed that community membership was an integral component in developing her understanding of tutoring: she saw herself as a peer tutor in a community of tutors. However, Melissa did not demonstrate any evidence that she felt part of a larger discourse community of peer tutors. And while this was not a desired outcome of the CRC preparation program, exposure to discourse is necessary in the development of strong identities. Melissa’s belief in her membership to a localized community of tutors may have influenced her ability to develop a slightly stronger tutor identity than Robert who showed no evidence of membership in a local community of tutors or a larger field of discourse.

Although neither Suzie nor Annie displayed overt evidence of possessing membership in the community of CRC tutors, both tutors indicated that they felt affiliations with the larger discourse community of peer tutors. In their interviews, both Annie and Suzie regularly referenced the course materials in the language of the discourse community. Again, even though neither tutor made outright declarations as such, both tutors functioned as members of a local and national community of tutors. Their exposure to multiple methodologies of tutoring, as well as writing center and educational discourses allowed Annie and Suzie to develop their identities as tutors within a community.

Discussion

The data from this study suggest that the writing tutors prepared by the workshop had not yet begun to develop their professional tutor identities, while the tutors prepared by both the workshop and the class were beginning to develop more complex tutor identities. As novice tutors, all four had clear areas for improvement in their practice, but Annie and Suzie displayed more evidence of beginning to develop strong tutor identities. And while Melissa and Robert offered their tutees acceptable tutorial support, they did not offer data to suggest that they had started conceptualizing their identities as tutors. The format of the two preparation programs played a significant factor in these results, as the tutors prepared by the course had considerably more exposure to tutoring models and to the discourse of the writing center community. However, these data do not suggest that a workshop preparation program would be unable to address the four identity characteristics in its curriculum. Other institutions include a strong focus on developing tutor identities in condensed preparation programs.

The curriculum of the CRC preparation workshop did not give its participants the necessary tools to develop the effective tutor identity outlined by the workshop leader. A major factor preventing the development of a tutor identity was the limitation of time. Thus, while the workshop presented the participants with a model of effective and ineffective tutoring behaviors, it did not provide them with multiple identity models, nor the time and space to reflect on them. Similarly, the participants were given a brief glimpse into the discourse of tutoring in the “Practical Tips” hand out, but they were not given sufficient time to engage with this discourse, or given any indication that it was just a very small part of a larger academic community. More importantly, the curriculum did not provide the participants with opportunities to engage in any kind of reflective practices, which prevented the participants from locating their identity within the larger field. Without multiple identity models and exposure to discourse, or the ability to reflect on their identity development as tutors, the tutors prepared only by the preparation workshop failed to develop tutor identities consistent with the goals of the program.

The two tutors prepared by the Writing 60 course as well as the one-day workshop, Annie and Suzie, developed stronger tutor identities due in large part to the curriculum of the course. Because of the numerous models of tutoring behavior and identities, as well as the introduction to the discourse of the writing center community, Annie and Suzie were well prepared to develop tutor identities consistent with those articulated by the Writing 60 instructor. The focus on metacognitive practices in the course allowed Suzie and Annie to construct self-reflective narratives in the writing center discourse that facilitated their development as writing tutors. Because the participants in the preparation course had ample exposure to multiple models of tutor identities and relevant discourses, as well as significant opportunities to metacognitively reflect on their practices, the tutors prepared by both the workshop and the course developed appropriate tutor identities.

Implications

As with all case study research, there are limitations to the implications of this study. The data reported here are not representative of all writing tutor preparation programs; however, they tell an important story about the benefits of engaging tutors in identity development. Moreover, this study highlights how four undergraduate peer tutors of writing at the same institution were presented with varied opportunities for developing a tutor identity in their preparation programs. Writing center directors can utilize this information as they create their own tutor education program, in whatever format available to them, in order to consider the types of tutor identities they would like their tutors to develop. Additionally, this research can work to reconsider the “training” of undergraduate writing center tutors as tutor education or professional development. This distinction may help new tutors conceptualize the importance of the work in which they are about to engage. Similarly, because there is not a significant body of research regarding writing preparation programs for non-K-12-teachers, these stories highlight the need for all writing program administrators to consider the motivation and goals of the participants in their preparation programs, as well as to present them with multiple identity models and the discourse of the profession within the guise of a balanced praxis.

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Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education

Content Area Teachers as Teachers of Writing



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Despite movements to increase writing across the curriculum, at the high school level writing instruction is primarily the domain of the English Language Arts (ELA) teacher. However, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) may change this. The standards, which had been adopted by 45 states as of this writing, include literacy standards for social studies/history, science, and technical subjects that specifically call on teachers in these areas¹ to address discipline-specific reading and writing skills at the middle and high school grade levels (National Governors Association). As states move toward implementing these standards, teachers from all departments will be asked to become "teachers of writing."

But are these teachers prepared to meet this challenge? And how can pre-service and in-service teachers in the content areas be supported to effectively incorporate writing into their classes? Drawing on work with high school science teachers, this article seeks to address these issues and offer suggestions for those working with writing teachers across the disciplines.

Relevant Literature

In their analysis of existing data, including data gathered as part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Applebee and Langer found that "many students are not writing a great deal for any of their academic subjects, including English, and most are not writing at any length" (ii). They date this problem to the 1990s and the standards movement with its increased emphasis on reading and math, often at the expense of writing. While some states included questions which required written answers as part of the tests mandated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, Applebee and Langer suggest that "these may be shifting attention away from a broad program of writing instruction toward a much narrower focus on how to best answer particular types of test questions" (ii). In their national survey of high school social studies, language arts, and science teachers, Kiuahara, Graham, and Hawken found that most writing assignments asked for students to report information without analysis or interpretation; like Applebee and Langer, Kiuahara, Graham, and Hawken point out that "efforts to improve writing are virtually nonexistent in the school reform efforts in the United States" (136), particularly reforms mandated by NCLB. The lack of time spent on writing in American schools prompted The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges to title their 2003 report *The Neglected "R": The Need for a Writing Revolution*. However, although states have yet to begin standardizing testing over the Common Core State Standards, the standards may provoke change (if not a revolution); they appear to call for more complex writing tasks across the curriculum.

Yet teachers who have spent decades ignoring writing entirely or focusing only on writing test answers may not feel comfortable assigning or assessing other kinds of writing. In the field of science education, nearly 60% of teachers surveyed believed they were not prepared to teach writing (Kiuahara, Graham, and Hawken). These teachers, self-identified as non-experts in the field of writing instruction, may share some qualities with non-expert writers. In the 1980s several studies were undertaken to compare expert and non-expert writers; researchers concluded that novice writers tended to overlook writing problems that experts recognize (Hayes et al.) and defined revision as fixing problems at the word or sentence level (e.g. Bridwell; Faigley and Witte; Sommers). Likewise, a study comparing high school science teachers' responses to student writing in the genre of science journalism to responses by a professional journalist found that the teachers focused on grammatical and typographical errors while the professional editor looked at a wide range of content- and genre-related issues (Kohnen).

The fact that content-area teachers are unprepared to teach writing should come as no surprise. Required coursework in writing pedagogy is the exception, not the norm, for pre-service content-area teachers at most colleges of education, with some colleges reporting that this topic is covered in a more general literacy course, in a methods course, or only for English or social studies majors (Totten). Once they begin service, content-area teachers may find themselves facing writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) mandates in their schools with little in the way of professional development or training to help them enact these initiatives. As a policy brief from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) addressing the anticipated demand for more reading and writing across the curriculum (RAWAC) programs in response to CCSS argued, "if RAWAC is going to be incorporated into classes beyond ELA, teachers' views of RAWAC need to change, and schools will need to undertake significant programs of professional development" (The James R. Squire Office of Policy Research in the English Language Arts 16). This article reports on one such program.

¹ The fact that these literacy standards were included in the same document as the English Language Arts standards (and that the content-area literacy standards for grades K-5 were included as part of the ELA standards) did cause confusion, with some content-area teachers assuming that this meant disciplinary reading and writing was now part of the English Language Arts curriculum. However, the intent of the Common Core Standards is to include writing across content areas.

Science Teachers and Writing

In 2008, the National Science Foundation began funding a grant entitled “Science Literacy through Science Journalism,” or SciJourn. The purpose of the project was to introduce teachers and their students to the concepts of science journalism in order to improve student science literacy² (see Saul et al. and Polman et al. for more information). Teachers³ self-selected to participate in a summer professional development institute, modeled in part after the National Writing Project’s summer institute, where they worked under the direction of an experienced science journalist and editor to propose, research, and write science articles intended for a teenage audience. After several rounds of revision, many of the teachers’ articles were published in the grants’ newsmagazine (*SciJourn* and www.scijournal.org). As part of the professional development, teachers were also working with program directors to think about how science journalism activities could be incorporated into their courses. Back in the classroom, many of their students wrote and revised science news articles, with a small percentage of these articles also appearing in the publication.

Initial Challenges. I became involved in the SciJourn project in 2009, first as a participating teacher (I was one of two ELA teachers in the pilot professional development institute) and later as a research assistant. My research involved exploring how science teachers came to incorporate writing into their classes, yet I quickly ran into a problem: I didn’t speak the same language as science teachers. I went into my work knowing that science teachers would have a technical vocabulary and a set of discipline-specific teaching concerns that I would have to learn, but I hadn’t anticipated how discipline-specific (and ELA-centric) my own language was. Even my research’s most basic word, “writing,” meant something different to me than it did to the science teachers with whom I was working. Science teachers used the word “topic” to refer to curricular concepts; I used the word to mean a narrow “topic” suitable for a news article. Many of the science teachers called science journalism “creative writing”; after puzzling over this, I concluded that “creative” was any kind of writing where students had choice and interest—and where the format was not strictly predetermined as in a lab report or a five-paragraph essay. At one point, I began keeping a list of words that we seemed to use differently. Other terms that made the list included “peer workshop;” “content;” and “revision.”

In response to these challenges, I decided to collect information from the science teachers about their experiences with writing and responding to writing prior to involvement with the grant. I began with focus groups held during a professional development workshop with twenty-two science teachers present. The focus groups addressed these questions: (1) prior to SciJourn, what experiences did you have talking about writing and responding to writing?; (2) prior to SciJourn, how did you approach assessing the writing assignments that you gave? where did you get your ideas about how to assess/respond to writing?; (3) how have your ideas about responding to writing changed since you got involved with SciJourn? These sessions were audiotaped; I transcribed each and coded the transcripts, beginning with open coding followed by axial coding (Merriam). The two main categories that emerged from the transcripts were (1) types of writing teachers assigned and (2) teacher responses to that writing. Because the focus groups were short and did not offer equal opportunity for all teachers to respond, I distributed a follow up survey with more specific questions about the frequency and kinds of writing assignments as well as questions designed to understand teachers’ feelings about these assignments.

This small data set confirmed much of the research cited earlier in this article. Although the teachers reported assigning slightly more writing than the literature suggests, most of this writing did not seem likely to provoke analysis or interpretation. The single most common assignment, given once a month or more by 20 of the 22 teachers surveyed, was “vocabulary/key terms,” where students were required to write out definitions of vocabulary words from their textbook⁴. Other popular assignments included lab reports, answers to questions at the end of the chapter, and summaries of reading. During the focus groups, many of the teachers referenced school-wide mandates or initiatives as influencing the writing they assigned; the teachers attributed these policies to the pressures of standardized testing or other school accreditation issues. As the literature suggests, the kinds of writing mandated tended to be formulaic; teachers were taught to help students create “constructed response” answers that began with a rephrasing of the question or to write five-paragraph essays in timed environments. The teachers also described these policies as temporary; they came and went with changes in administration or changes in educational fads. No teacher spoke of a mandate or initiative in positive terms.

The teachers’ negativity about writing extended beyond mandates or initiatives. In survey questions designed to understand teachers’ attitudes about writing and writing response, most science teachers surveyed confirmed earlier research: they had little training in how to teach and respond to student writing (see table 1). Although some did claim to feel comfortable assigning writing, most of the teachers surveyed appeared to see writing as means of assessing specific content information. In the focus groups, teachers described themselves as looking for right or wrong answers; one teacher put it this way: “I just went through and said these are the pieces of information I’m looking for and boom, boom, boom, that was it.” The literature on writing in the disciplines often

² The definition of science literacy is a contested one (see Roberts for a discussion of the issue); SciJourn defined “science literacy” as the skills students will need to deal with the science-related issues and decisions they will face fifteen years after high school graduation.

³ Of the 45 classroom teachers who participated in one of the three summer institutes, 35 were high school science teachers; four were high school ELA/journalism teachers; three were middle school science teachers; one was a high school agriculture teacher; one was a high school psychology teacher; and one was a middle school ELA teacher. Teachers came from 28 different schools, representing a diverse range of contexts (including public, private, urban, suburban, and rural).

⁴ During the focus groups, I realized that many of the science teachers were defining a “writing assignment” as any assignment that asked students to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and therefore my survey included such options as “answers to textbook questions” and “vocabulary/key terms.” The Kihara et al. survey took a similarly broad view of “writing,” while the Applebee and Langer study only included paragraph or longer types of assignments.

differentiates between two goals, “writing to learn” and “learning to write in the disciplines,” but participating science teachers were not using writing for either purpose. “Writing to improve test scores” and “writing to demonstrate factual knowledge” would be more accurate labels. The science teachers did not find this satisfactory—they described writing in their classes with words like “tedious” and “horrific”—and many signed up for the SciJourn project specifically to address this situation.

Table 1
Science Teachers and Writing/Writing Response

Before SciJourn...	Yes	No
1. I could grade my writing assignments by looking for specific pieces of content information	21	1
2. I found the writing I assigned to be enjoyable to read	4	17
3. I felt comfortable assigning and responding to writing	7	13
4. I had training in how to TEACH writing	1	20
5. I had training in how to ASSESS/RESPOND TO writing (if yes, please explain below)	2	18

Note: For unknown reasons, not all teachers responded to all survey items.

Writing and Responding in Content-Centered Ways. Perhaps the most important difference between SciJourn and other writing initiatives the science teachers had been involved with was that SciJourn was actually *not* a writing initiative. Instead, the grant helped science teachers think about ways to use writing to meet a different goal, improving student science literacy. In some ways, the project moved science teachers toward a “writing to learn” approach; students were asked to write in the genre of science news so that they could *learn* the skills of a science journalist, skills like identifying relevant science topics, finding credible sources of information, and putting new information into context. During the professional development institute, the science teachers first became convinced of the importance of these skills and then saw the connection between the skills and writing. However, the project also involved an authentic publication opportunity that some teachers chose to emphasize in their classroom implementation; students who pursued publication actively were also “learning to write” in the genre of science news. As I saw it, in the SciJourn project “writing to learn” and “learning to write” became intertwined because of the specific genre in use. Learning to write like a science journalist also meant writing to learn, both about the topic and about the skills of science journalism.

Yet this may not have happened if the teachers had not been supported in their efforts to teach and respond to student science news articles. Although all of the science teachers were familiar with science journalism and many described themselves as avid readers of science news, none of them had looked at the genre closely prior to their work with the grant. According to the teachers, producing their own science news article during the professional development was a key experience; in this way, the grant followed the National Writing Project’s philosophy that teachers of writing must be writers themselves. Yet, however important producing the first draft was, it was only the first step of the experience. The teachers worked with a professional science journalist and completed several revisions based on authentic feedback from an expert. Their learning of the genre was pushed beyond the superficial; they had to work with the genre deeply in order to meet publication standards. As teachers moved into classroom implementation, many drew heavily on the complete process of their own experience, particularly revision, in their work with students.

Once in the classroom, the teachers had several other resources to draw upon. In addition to being available for classroom support, members of the project worked on creating tools for the teachers’ classroom use. The SciJourn Standards⁵ were the most important product that grew out of this work. The authors of these standards sought to highlight the qualities of science journalism that were important to classrooms focused on student science literacy and ask that student articles: 1) are about local, narrow, focused, timely, and/or unique science topics; 2) use information from relevant, credible sources; 3) are based on multiple, credible sources; 4) contextualize information; and 5) are factually accurate and forefront information (see www.teach4scijournal.org and Saul et. al for elaborated descriptions of these standards). The standards do not capture every aspect of high-quality science journalism—in fact, they say little about writing and nothing about grammar—but all of the issues identified in the standards are familiar and important to science journalists. In short, the SciJourn standards articulate an educationally-relevant subset of the authentic standards of science journalism.

⁵ The SciJourn standards were developed over a period of years using an iterative process. The original version, developed in conversation with Alan Newman, Laura Pearce, Wendy Saul, Nancy Singer and Eric Turley, were first offered in 2010. The most current version of the standards is available at www.teach4scijournal.org.

Beyond the standards themselves, SciJourn team members developed additional standards-related resources to help the teachers apply the standards to their work with students. The standards were never designed to be handed wholesale to students; a related “student-friendly” set of standards was written that “translated” each standard into simplified questions teachers and students could pose to one another about science journalism. Questions included “who says?” to be asked after each assertion in a science news article, followed by “why should I trust them?” Laura Pearce, the grant’s classroom implementation coach developed the SAFI (science article filtering instrument) which was designed to help teachers and students prioritize problems in science news articles; the worksheet included a section of most egregious concerns—like plagiarism or outright lies—that would result in the article needing to be completely redone, followed concerns related to the SciJourn standards. Inspired by the online tool “calibrated peer review” (<http://cpr.molsci.ucla.edu/>), we wrote questions based on the SciJourn standards and identified student sample articles for teachers to use to “calibrate” themselves and their students to what constituted a “high quality,” “medium quality,” and “low quality” example of student science journalism. We annotated articles that were published in our newsmagazine to illustrate what the SciJourn standards looked like in writing. Notably, we did not create rubrics based on the SciJourn standards; like Maja Wilson, we found rubrics in classroom contexts to create more concerns and questions than they solved.

In response to this, many teachers changed their practice, some significantly. Teachers who had always found themselves “correcting” student writing—either by circling grammatical errors or by marking specific content information as right or wrong—now had guiding principles to use when approaching student work. In professional development conversations, one teacher discussed how the SAFI enabled her to stop marking grammatical errors; another said that these tools helped her read her students’ writing through to completion before making any suggestions. One teacher provided us with all of her comments on her students’ writing; we saw her addressing a range of genre- and content-specific issues including asking for more sources of information and pushing her students to make the science in their stories more clear and explicit.

Asking their students to write in the genre of science news was a radical step for many of these teachers; yet without the SciJourn standards and the related tools, the assignment may not have been very different from any other. The standards, and the language that the teachers developed to talk about the standards with their students, gave the teachers a way to look at student writing that was meaningful: meaningful to the teachers’ goals for the class, meaningful to the students’ deeper learning, and meaningful to the genre itself.

Beyond the SciJourn Project: Lessons Learned

As schools work to move writing and writing instruction beyond the ELA classroom, the SciJourn project offers several lessons. First, it is important to recognize that many content-area teachers do not have significant training in writing pedagogy and, as a result, are using writing in potentially counterproductive ways. Discussions about what is actually occurring in classrooms—including conversations that clarify the most essential terms like “writing assignment”—are an important first step. After years of standardized-testing-inspired writing mandates, teachers are bound to be wary of another attempt to incorporate more writing, particularly if the approach does not take into account discipline-specific priorities for student learning. Content-area teachers are overburdened with their own curricular objectives; when they are asked to assign and respond to more “writing” in a generic way, many feel as if they have just been required to take on the ELA department’s job as well. Empowering pre-service and in-service teachers to design their own discipline-specific writing assignments can help alleviate this concern. Exposing them to new genres—and requiring that they become writers of these genres themselves before they try to assign them to their students—can provide inspiration. As teachers design these assignments, they must also work to create tools to help them avoid falling into the “error correction” trap and instead enable them to stay focused on the important features of the assignment. In our assessment, these tools cannot be “generic”—they must be specific to the discipline and the genre.

All of these suggestions take time and expertise. If writing is truly to play an essential role across the curriculum, pre-service teachers in all disciplines need more guidance. Once in the field, teachers need time to collaborate both with their disciplinary colleagues to brainstorm and design assignments and across disciplines to learn from one another. School districts need to provide professional development opportunities which look at writing as something more than test preparation. The Common Core State Standards movement may provide an opportunity for dramatic change in the field of writing instruction, but teachers, schools, and colleges of education have to enact that change before CCSS fades away like so many reform movements before it.

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Positioning Preservice Teachers as Writers and Researchers

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In reading the inaugural issue of *Teaching/Writing* I knew that I wanted to write about the methods, theories, and practices of teaching pedagogy classes for preservice teachers of writing. In reflecting on how I organize my own preservice writing courses my thoughts began to coalesce quite organically around a few lessons learned from Wendy Bishop and Diane Holt-Reynolds. In this essay, which is as much a story of personal experience as it is a theoretical and practical excursion into the preservice writing classroom, I will offer several theoretical approaches toward the teaching of writing learned from these two women followed by three assignments I use in my preservice writing classroom that I feel best articulate these pedagogical approaches.

Wendy Bishop

I discovered the writings of Wendy Bishop shortly after her death in 2003. Bishop was a revered teacher/writer working to bring together the traditions of composition and creative writing. She died at the early age of 50 from leukemia, leaving behind an impressively large and impassioned body of work. To read Wendy Bishop is to feel her presence rise from the page. Rather than use academic language and conventions to construct and defend a façade of objectivity and authority, she chose to get close to her readers with earnest inquires and truthful admissions into her writing and teaching life. Bishop's writing and teaching life continues to serve as inspiration to others as most recently evidenced by the edited collection *Composing Ourselves as Writer-Teacher-Writers: Starting with Wendy Bishop* with contributions from several teacher/writers indebted to her work. The most important lesson I learned from Wendy Bishop is that teachers of writing should be writers themselves. The following quote from Bishop articulating this stance is a long one but I believe worth sharing in its entirety:

...throughout their graduate education, prospective teachers should be trained as writers, composing extensively and gaining an introduction to the many discourses of English studies (and when feasible to the discourses of fields outside English). While doing this they should receive help and encouragement. Teachers shouldn't need to apologize for having a writing strength or a weakness ("I'm never going to be a poet"; "I can't write a critical essay to save my life"; "I don't think of myself as a [creative] writer"; "I write, but I guess the type of writing I do isn't creative") as long as they are willing to explore writing in the same manner and along the same dimensions that I'm suggesting for first-year college writers: as a complex human endeavor, requiring practice and analysis, involving beliefs and emotions, resulting in failure and success. Teachers don't have to profess writing but they should experience it, and that experience, as any graduate of National Writing Project training will attest, is life-changing. It's possible, I guess, to teach writing without ever having felt like a writer, but shouldn't we insist that it be otherwise? (234, *Teaching Lives*).

This is a core value of the preservice writing classroom that strikes me as rather self-evident, nonetheless I am consistently surprised at how few future teachers of writing (or teachers of writing for that matter) consider themselves writers. The way Bishop defines "writer" here is important too—it's not a definition moored to publication or primary occupation but rather, a felt experience of what it's like to invent, build, revise, and share in the human experience through writing.

A second lesson learned from Bishop is to make explicit connections between the experiences of accomplished writers and writing research. "In our classrooms," Bishop writes, "the results of writing research should be welcome beside the testimonial of expert (and/or famous) writers" (234). This idea that testimonials from expert writers can serve as research data and springboard to pedagogy has dramatically impacted my research trajectory and subsequent approach to teaching writing. For several years I have been interviewing accomplished teacher/writers to further understand writerly invention—one of Aristotle's five canons of rhetoric encompassing the ways we originate ideas with language. These interviews with accomplished writers have also informed my pedagogy and I will be drawing from these interviews within this essay to help illustrate a few of my ideas about the preservice writing classroom.

Diane Holt-Reynolds

Diane Holt-Reynolds was my methods instructor when I was first learning to become an English teacher as an undergraduate. The only weakness in her teaching was she invested too much time and emotion in us—her students. Our development as teachers was paramount: essays were handed back the class session immediately following the due date accompanied by a full page of single-spaced commentary, she was reprimanded for spending dramatically more time teaching than on her own scholarship, and she had difficulty giving our class over to other instructors. Diane Holt-Reynolds died unexpectedly as well in 2003, the same year as Wendy Bishop. I recall what learning of her death signified for me—that none of us were safe if someone as ferocious as Diane could pass

away with such abruptness.

Holt-Reynolds was the first to challenge my assumption that subject matter expertise and teaching were correlated. She drilled into us the idea that teaching was a skill all on its own, requiring study and experience that our Literature courses, unfortunately, did not provide. In her article aptly titled, "Good Readers, Good Teachers?" she shares the case example of Mary, an undergraduate student enrolled in an English education program. "What is striking here," she writes, "is that Mary knew so much about how to read, how to interpret, how to think about text, that she could use the skills she valued to her own reading advantage, and yet she offered none of that expertise as a valuable trait for a literature teacher" (42). Holt-Reynolds concludes, "unidentified, unclaimed, and untapped subject matter expertise has little power. It lies dormant and useless in a classroom" (45). The point that being a good reader does not make one a good teacher of reading parallels the point I wish to make: good writers do not translate *ipso facto* into good teachers of writing.

Productive Reductionism: Praxis for the Preservice Writing Classroom

Teaching necessitates decisions. I recall a meeting with Diane Holt-Reynolds that took place fifteen years ago during my student teaching that illustrates this point. I had been talking myself into circles for several minutes, thinking aloud through the several different strategies I could employ in my classroom the next morning. "In the end you must make a decision," she said. "Teaching, like brain surgery, requires action." Having incubated in a humanities tradition that valued perpetual reflection and self-analysis for four years, the realization that teaching required action and finality of thought was liberating as I was empowered to cut through my own Gordian knot and begin preparing for tomorrow's chosen lesson rather than continue vacillating between tomorrow's possibilities. Gerald Graff's challenge, "Dare to be reductive" (40), is this essential pedagogical move that takes us from theory to practice (i.e., praxis). So let us revisit the theoretical concepts covered thus far as precursor to sharing some of the assignments I've created to help articulate these concepts to preservice writing teachers. These theoretical concepts include: teachers of writing should be writers themselves; testimonials from accomplished teacher/writers are valuable texts in the preservice writing classroom; and subject matter expertise and teacher expertise are discreet skill sets. While numerous assignments can stem from these theoretical concepts, I will outline three that I use in my preservice writing classroom: *Digital Poetry*, *Qualitative Interview Study*, and *Embedded Research*.

Digital Poetry. The preservice writing classroom is defined in large part by its transitory nature—one foot planted firmly in graduate or undergraduate studies while the other foot reaches tentatively toward teaching high school or first-year composition. Offering a clinically rich, hybrid experience helps facilitate this transition from student to teacher. As an example, I've partnered my preservice writing courses with first-year writing classrooms and, most recently, high school classrooms. What does this partnering look like? In its latest incarnation my graduate students partnered with a high school classroom around a digital poetry project. The graduate students completed this project first—an original poem coordinated with sound, image, and text by way of a movie-making program. After the graduate students had completed their own digital poems they helped the high school students write drafts of their poems and then later met with them for a one-day workshop to help digitize these poems. We then held a final celebratory "premiere party" in which we showed the films the high school students had created to an audience of family and friends. An immediate benefit of this collaboration was an increased engagement with instructional objectives. For the preservice writing teachers authentic adolescent audiences lead to greater motivation in the form of time and commitment. As one graduate student attests, "Every response I wrote, I knew the students were going to see them...they knew that they were coming from a group of graduate students. I needed to make sure that what I wrote helped them." This type of hybrid experience helps to facilitate a paradigmatic shift away from the "island-thinking" of being a student and toward the teacher-thinking of being concerned with the development of others.

Clinically rich, hybrid experiences also enhance the writing skills of both the preservice writing teachers and the adolescent writers. This "simultaneous renewal" (Goodlad 23) takes shape as the preservice writing teachers experiment and learn how to effectively respond to adolescent writers and as the adolescents increase the complexity of their writing based on the feedback they receive. A comment made by an adolescent student illustrates simultaneous renewal at work: "They're using their skills to help us and then we're like also needing the help. It's like a back and forth situation." And a comment from a preservice writing teacher: "It was like 'I'm learning from you and you're learning from me.'"

The link between creating a clinically rich, hybrid experience for preservice writing teachers and the lessons shared earlier from Wendy Bishop and Diane Holt-Reynolds are plentiful. Perhaps the most clear connection is the lesson from Holt-Reynolds that subject matter expertise and teaching expertise are discreet skill sets. I have had success in getting preservice writing teachers to experientially understand that their subject matter expertise isn't much help to their teaching unless they are willing to unpack and begin to understand their own writing habits, rituals, and strategies and then translate these skills effectively to an adolescent audience. As an example, when the preservice writing teachers in my courses first respond to adolescent writers they most often speak in a language that is distant and at times altogether inaccessible to the adolescents. They routinely begin with statements such as, "watch for subject-verb-agreement," "avoid cliché," and "perhaps a stronger metaphor here?" Fortunately they learn to cater their comments to the adolescent writers more effectively by maintaining a significant back-and-forth correspondence over the course of a writing assignment.

Qualitative Interview Study. When I first began teaching preservice writing courses I was hesitant to make strong ties between curricular design and my own research agenda centering around qualitative interview analyses of accomplished writers.

Recently, however, I have decided to make this connection more explicit by positioning preservice writing teachers as researchers. In an qualitative interview assignment I ask my students to interview two or more writers whom they admire. The types of questions I want my students to grapple with and come to answer include: (1) What is your rationale for interviewing these people? What makes them strong writers in your eyes? (2) Why have you asked these questions? What are you trying to understand? (3) What are the major insights learned from your interviews? (4) What are some links between your interview data and course readings you've done? (5) What are the links to teaching? How do you plan to pass along what you've learned to your students?

This assignment works at the nexus of the lessons learned from Wendy Bishop and Diane Holt-Reynolds. Drawing from Bishop, having students conduct their own interview study privileges the testimonial knowledge of writers. Again drawing from Bishop, positioning preservice writing teachers as active researchers provides greater ownership over the subsequent writing event, helping to promote the experience of being a researcher/writer/teacher. In line with the call from Holt-Reynolds to make explicit the knowledge of teaching, having preservice writing teachers conduct their own research and then graph the knowledge attained onto teaching makes explicit the need for an ongoing, self-directed inquiry model to facilitate one's pedagogical development.

Additionally, this assignment asks preservice writing teachers to self-identify the type of writers they are motivated to learn more about, a move which promotes a personal vantage point. Such personal investment helps to sustain interest and involvement over the life of the project and can ultimately exemplify the importance of deliberately infusing personal investment within writing and teaching. Such personal, intrinsic motivation is what sustains good writing and teaching. In my own interviews with writers I have come across this sentiment time and again. James Gee writes "because it's fun." Deborah Brandt calls writing her "favorite state of being." Mike Rose shares that "it has given me an identity" and "this way to touch the world, to engage the world, to fiddled around in the world in way that can give pleasure both to me and to other people." In interviewing accomplished writers or writers whom they admire, preservice teachers of writing invariably discover the importance of cultivating an intrinsically rewarding, positive atmosphere around writing instruction within their own classrooms.

Embedded Research. A way to cross the line effectively between academic and creative writing is to purposefully juxtapose genres representative of each. As an example, I have my students complete a writing assignment in which they use the knowledge attained from a recently composed research paper to inform a short story. Juxtaposing genre is an effective means to highlight the notion of genre itself—the fact that genre carries with it values actively shaping the writing and the writer. In juxtaposing genre—in this case the research paper and the short story—preservice writing teachers come to understand how genre acts upon and subsequently produces different texts even as the content knowledge infusing each genre is held constant.

This is a move taken directly from Wendy Bishop's playbook. Bishop knew well the power of crossing the line between academic and creative writing, arguing, "we may want to eliminate the line altogether" (221). There are several avenues of thought related to this notion of crossing the line between academic and creative writing that I wish to develop, the first being that in my interviews with accomplished teacher/writers an emergent theme was the persistent move from strict genre convention toward more creative organizational structures. Generally, early careers were marked by strict adherence to traditional academic genre conventions while later years were marked by more creative and personal organizational approaches. Julie Lindquist, for example, says that she has come to rely on academic genre conventions "less and less I think because most of what I write is sort of lyrical and narrative and personal. I tend to do that with most things because I think that it works best; it's the way I can feel most inventive and most effective." James Gee speaks at length to this idea as he recounts his personal history as a writer:

I've been two different types of academic writers in my career. I started my career as a theoretical linguist in a straight discipline and then I moved to a thing like education which is really not a discipline but a field. In a straight discipline like linguistics, what you write is very ritualistic in the sense that there's a format for how you do it and you pretty much can't deviate from it which is true of a thing like physics or disciplines like sociology. In fields, since it's not defined by one strict discipline, the recipe you follow is less strict. The other thing is that as I've gotten older I've gotten a wider audience and written more for that wider audience which allows me more chance for creativity.

Lindquist and Gee view such crossing of the line between academic and creative writing as a natural progression of their development as writers. Nancy Sommers speaks to this same trajectory. After moving from academic genres to creative non-fiction and essays she says, "I didn't want to go back. I was not going to go back to the straightforward, dry academic essay." The reverse trajectory is certainly possible as well. My own writing background, for example, lies in fiction writing which, of course, carries its own genre expectations. I have since moved from fiction toward more academic, non-fiction writing. The point I wish to make is the preservice writing classroom should embrace an enlivened view of what constitutes appropriate genres by "crossing the line" as Bishop urges.

The students I most encounter in preservice writing classrooms are adept at reading and writing responses to a text. They can write about a text through a Marxist, Deconstructionist, or Feminist lens and pick out themes and illustrate said themes with quotations pulled from the text. It is not a stretch for them to apply these same principals to composition readers such as Victor Villanueva's *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*. It may be new content but it's the same game: read the text for main ideas and then summarize these main ideas in writing using paraphrase and quotations. It is entirely different, however, when I ask students to use the research they've done to inform a short-story. Practicing writing that is not about showcasing reading ability is something many of them have not done for

several years and it's a challenge students both welcome and fear. Sondra Perl shares her related experiences with crossing the line between academic and creative writing: "They know how to analyze literature but now you're asking them to write a short story or a narrative, a personal narrative, which they've not done before. All of a sudden they're reading short stories not as literary critics but from the eyes and the point of view of a writer." For Perl, a benefit of having writing teachers work within the creative genres is this adoption of "the point of view of a writer," a much different and less familiar perspective than that of the literary critic.

Final Thoughts

Wendy Bishop and Diane Holt-Reynolds continually inform my preservice writing classrooms because they taught me that teachers of writing should be writers themselves, that testimonials from writers should help shape the preservice writing classroom, and that knowing your subject matter and being able to teach it are two different things. The three assignments presented in this essay—*Digital Poetry*, *Qualitative Interview Study*, and *Embedded Research*—seek to articulate these theoretical ideas by way of practical assignments. It is my hope that these theoretical underpinnings and subsequent assignments move readers to view their own preservice writing classrooms in new light.

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What are Preservice Teachers Taught About the Teaching of Writing: A Survey of Ohio's Undergraduate Writing Methods Courses

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As writing teacher education emerges as a growing area of study, one of the richest areas for exploring our methods and history is the undergraduate writing methods course. In a 1977 landmark essay, Richard Gebhardt distilled the key features of an effective undergraduate writing methods course (WMC), asserting secondary writing teachers should be taught “the *structure and history of the English language*,” “a solid understanding of *rhetoric*,” “some *theoretical framework* with which to sort through the ideas, methodologies and conflicting claims,” and “*reliable, productive methods* to help students learn to write” (emphasis Gebhardt’s) (134-135, 137). To integrate practice and theory further, Gebhardt also called for students of writing methods to write “*about the teaching of writing*” (emphasis Gebhardt’s) (139), understanding writing as a germane process teachers must participate in to understand student needs. For the successful writing teacher, pedagogical methods and theoretical training are equally inseparable parts of effective writing teacher education.

Though only 24.6% of English departments offered courses in the teaching of writing to preservice teachers since the late 1970s (Werner, Thompson, and Rothchild 208), there has been a rapid increase within the past 30 years. This increase can be likely attributed to factors such as the increase of faculty available to teach such courses as well as the growing presence of rhetoric and composition as a field. More likely, in today’s age of accountability, English teachers are increasingly held responsible for students’ (lack of) writing skills (National Commission on Writing, 2003; Sheils, 1975). Though alarmist calls for better preparation of writing teachers have persisted from 1923 (Breck) and were encapsulated in the famed “Why Johnny Can’t Write” (Sheils, 1975), more recent correlations have shown that teacher credentials and training affect student performance (see Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor, 2007; Kennedy, 1998). Researchers “[conceptualize] the ‘writing crisis’ essentially as a methodological problem... a problem in the teaching methods used by teachers vis a vis writing” (Parker 19). In one study, the National Commission on Writing (2003) specifically calls for a WMC within college English departments as a remedy to poor student writing, arguing “successful completion of such a course in writing theory and practice” should be required for licensure. Without the background the WMC provides, the Commission surmises, “No matter how hard they work, these instructors, lacking any understanding of what good writing is or looks like, are often ill-equipped to teach it” (23). George Hillocks found practicing writing teachers are often unaware of effective writing pedagogy techniques, and because teacher education programs have largely failed to convey these, there is a “poor showing of American students on various writing assessments” (75). As these representative studies illustrate, the assumption has persisted that teacher training in writing methods affects the quality of student writing. The addition of a specific course within the English department designed to provide expertise in the subject of writing pedagogy and theory, and the hiring of rhetoric and composition PhDs (i.e. “the experts”) to teach it, is the logical response by undergraduate teacher preparation programs. Within my home state of Ohio over 64% of all four-year institutions now offer at least one undergraduate WMC within secondary teacher education programs (see Appendix A). In an effort to provide a broad picture of the WMC as a course of growing importance within the English curriculum, I surveyed all WMC instructors about their qualifications, content, activities, and strengths and challenges of the course in an effort to provide a broad picture of the WMC within writing teacher education.

Survey responses reveal that today’s undergraduate WMC is taught by experienced rhetoric and composition faculty, who make a concerted effort to link composition theory with practical strategies for teaching writing under challenging conditions. These findings from survey results span across teacher education programs at liberal arts colleges, private institutions, and public universities. At the same time, repeated studies (McCann et al., 2005; Naylor and Malcomson, 2001; Smith, 1969) suggest that new writing teachers ultimately have difficulty transferring theoretical and pedagogical information gleaned in the WMC to new teaching contexts. Using survey responses as evidence, I suggest this disconnect stems from two related challenges inherent in the design of the WMC. One, the WMC often lacks opportunities for concept development because theory and practice, though taught, aren’t necessarily integrated. Two, underlying disciplinary tensions between theory and practice within the field of rhetoric and composition and within English studies as a whole hinder conceptual development. Rather than using the WMC as a vehicle to present a cohesive introduction to writing studies, I advocate using disciplinary tensions to open conversation spaces for preservice teachers and to build on existing strengths of the WMC.

Methodology

To determine who is teaching the undergraduate writing methods course and what content is covered, I surveyed all undergraduate writing methods course instructors within the state of Ohio. Ohio is an appropriate site of study for several reasons. One, nearly 73% of all Ohio four-year institutions offer teacher licensure programs and of these, the majority (66.6%) offer at least one undergraduate writing methods course (See Appendix A for a complete list). These institutions are of a wide variety, consisting of state schools, private schools, liberal arts colleges, and religious schools. This scope lends itself to a broad picture of how the writing methods course is taught across institutions. Two, Ohio has fairly rigorous accreditation standards within the area of teaching writing, making it more likely that statewide teacher preparation programs pay particular attention to how writing methods are taught. Ohio NCTE accreditation specifically asks programs preparing teachers for preservice candidates to “Explain and apply, as writers, important models, theories, and techniques of effective written discourse and describe the implications of these theories for practice” (NCTE 26). If theoretical and pedagogical knowledge is deemed necessary by field experts, Ohio, at least according to the *Neglected ‘R’* report, is potentially doing something pedagogically sound by offering the course to the majority of its traditionally trained preservice teachers. The survey then, is an instrument designed to look at the WMC from a variety of teacher preparation programs taught across a single state in a state-supportive environment. More broadly, the survey offers initial insight to where and how this course fits in with the emerging discipline of writing teacher education.

Participants and survey distribution, development, and limitations

All Ohio WMC instructors teaching at four-year baccalaureate granting institutions were sent a link to an electronic survey embedded within an introductory email about the purpose of the study. I purposely chose an electronic survey format due to ease of transmission, low cost, and high response rate (see Schuldt and Totten, 1994; Thach, 1995) to obtain the broadest sample possible from a variety of institutions. The survey consisted of nine closed-ended response choices (some permitting respondents to “check all that apply”) and an optional, open-ended final comment box. Survey respondents could choose to identify themselves or remain anonymous. The survey was designed to be concise to encourage completion upon initial opening, as well as to focus on initial, broad instructor impressions of the undergraduate WMC.

To find institutions offering an undergraduate WMC for preservice teachers, I reviewed each institution’s online course catalog and schedule of classes to find 1) if a teacher training program in secondary/middle English education was offered 2) if an undergraduate writing methods course for preservice teachers was offered and 3) contact information for the instructor(s) on record for these courses. To determine what courses counted as “writing methods” courses, I surveyed course catalog descriptions to find courses that taught composition theory and/or writing pedagogy for preservice teachers seeking to teach grades 4-12. I examined both the course titles and their descriptions to guard against misleading titles, and all courses had to connect content to the teaching of writing to be considered a WMC. After establishing a list of schools offering undergraduate writing methods courses, I searched for instructor contact information and found information for 38 instructors teaching 30 courses. In eight cases two different instructors taught the course depending on semester, and in two cases no instructor contact information could be found. I emailed an electronic survey to instructors with available contact information a link to a 10 question electronic survey. After the 38 surveys were sent, two surveys were returned due to the instructor no longer teaching at the school. In all, 17 faculty from 17 different institutions completed the survey. Faculty respondents hailed roughly equally from four-year public institutions (6), four-year private universities (6), and liberal arts colleges (5). This represents a 44.7% response rate to the survey.

The survey (see Appendix B) asked instructors about their credentials, the primary focus of the course, and types of assignments given to support this focus. In addition, WMC instructors were asked to comment on the presence of historically cited strengths and weaknesses within their specific courses noted in the previous section. Though WMC instructors historically agree on some fundamental areas of study for the class illustrated by Gebhardt (see also Larson 1969), the survey also examined whether writing methods courses within Ohio provided similar levels of emphasis as well as overall trends with course design.

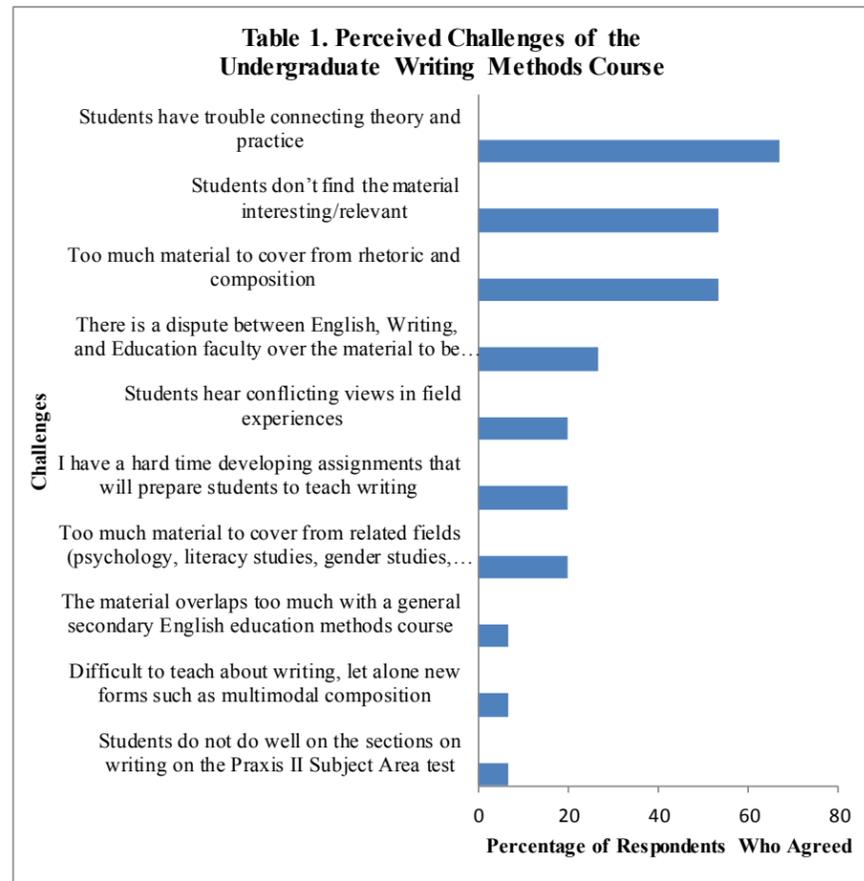
As with any survey, limitations exist as to what conclusions can be drawn from participant responses. For example, I don’t attempt in any way to evaluate the quality of *individual* undergraduate writing methods courses. Moreover, because the focus of the survey was on *instructor* feedback about the WMC, the survey does not describe whether preservice teachers felt the writing methods course improved teaching, the trickle-down effect of the course on the writing skills of secondary students, or how that improvement is linked to the design of the WMC, though certainly these projects can build on the results uncovered here. What survey results do provide is an initial pedagogical overview of what traditionally trained, preservice teachers are taught (and not taught) within an undergraduate WMC across a variety of institutions, the credentials of those providing such instruction, course strengths, and the challenges blocking effective teaching of the WMC. Because writing methods course instructors provide a first “professional” look at the discipline of composition studies for the majority of traditionally prepared preservice teachers in Ohio, they ultimately present a particular meaning of how writing should be taught, assessed, and theorized to future teachers within the course.

Results

Responses revealed several trends about instructor expertise. First, experienced, qualified instructors teach the undergraduate WMC within the state of Ohio. Of those who responded, 64.7% hold PhDs in Rhetoric and Composition and nearly 59% are at associate professor rank or higher. Moreover, over 94% of all respondents have a PhD in some area of English (64.7% Rhetoric and Composition; 29.1% other English fields). In addition, a significant portion have some additional practical training with the teaching of writing—nearly 30% hold a middle or secondary teaching license in English Language arts and over a third (35.3%) are past or current directors of the writing program.

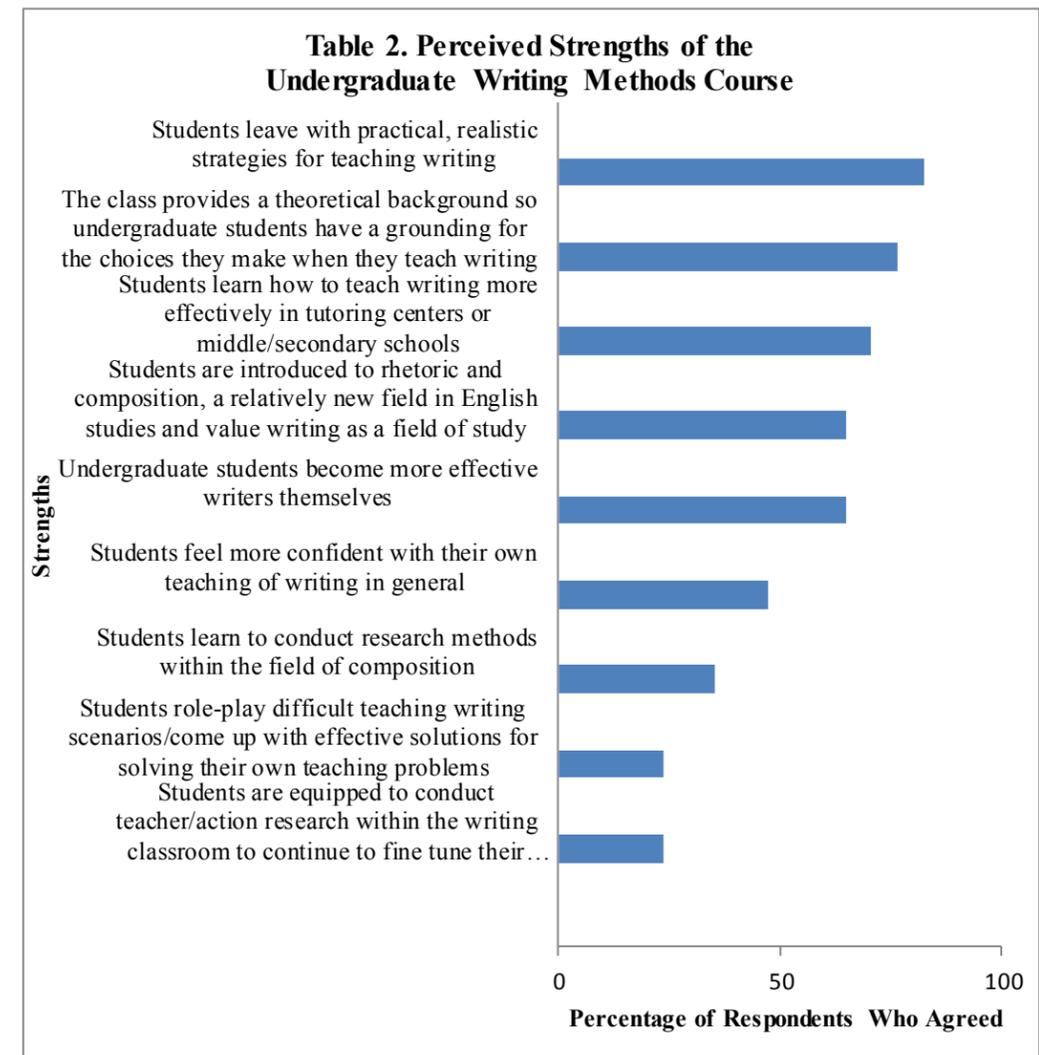
As a group, instructors agree with Gebhardt’s 1977 assessment of the most necessary course components. This congruity would suggest that as a whole, WMC instructors attempt to provide the blend of theoretical instruction and reliable productive teaching methods that Gebhardt called for, and this may be a direct result of having experienced faculty teach the course. Nearly 64.7% cite a blend between theories from rhetoric and composition and practical application as the dual primary emphases for the course, while only 11.8% each cite grammar or a focus on the teacher’s own writing process as the main focus (though 52.9% do get supplementary instruction in grammar, which Gebhardt also deems essential). In addition, 82.4% agree that preservice teachers must write and be aware of their own writing processes to support secondary writers most effectively.

Paradoxically, despite a concerted effort to balance theoretical and practical instruction, 66.7% cited “students have trouble connecting theory and practice” as the number one challenge for the WMC. Two additional, and potentially linked, problems stood out as potential challenges to an effective WMC. Over 53% noted that “Students don’t find the material interesting /relevant” and an equal number found that the course curriculum was overstuffed due to “Too much material to cover from rhetoric and composition.” In addition to the wide range of composition specific topics covered, one quarter of respondents suggest that territorial disputes between education and English departments over what material to cover in the course often affect course content, and 20% note that topics from other related fields such as psychology further crowd the curriculum. Still, in comparison to these three top cited problems of theory/practice integration, lack of student interest, and overstuffed agenda, other issues were cited by less than a third of faculty as significant challenges (see Table 1).



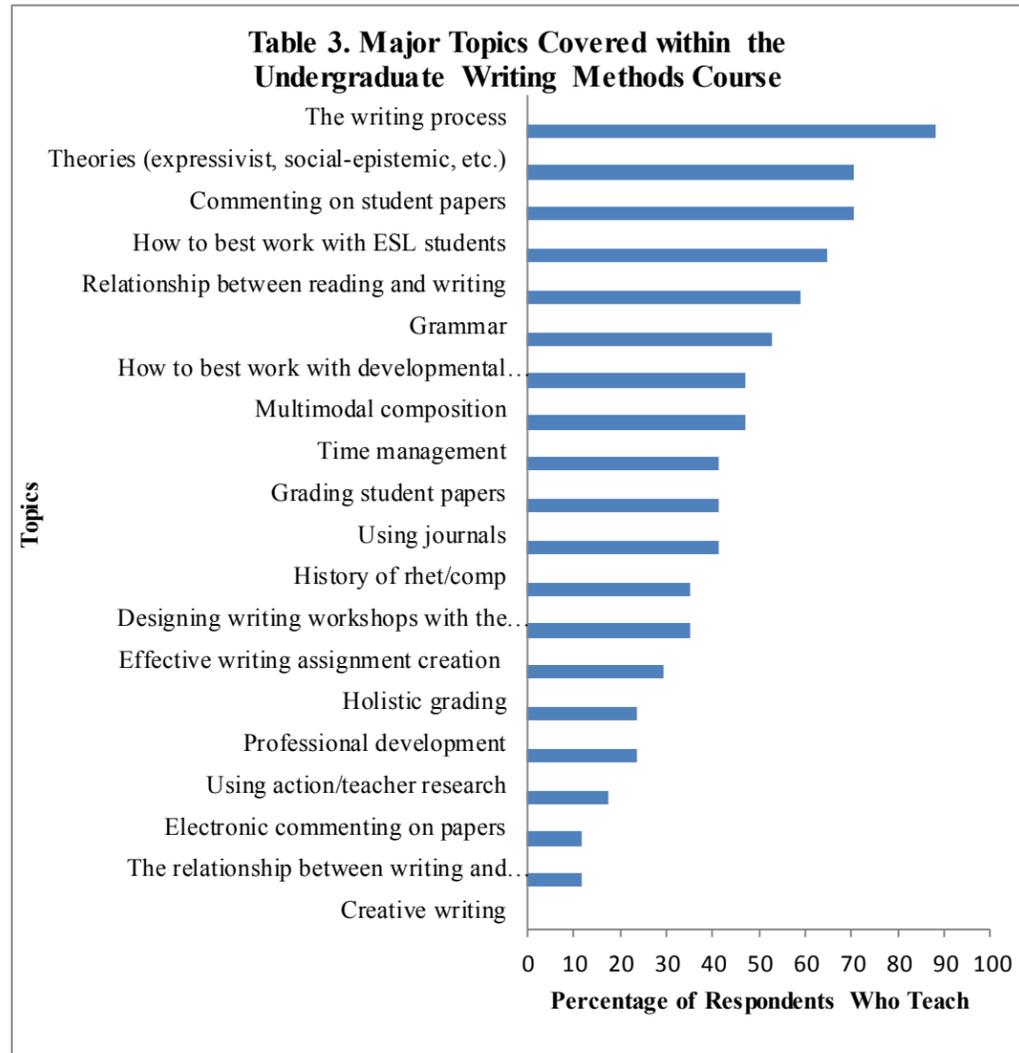
Despite these pressures, instructors remained positive about the overall usefulness of the WMC. Unlike the distinct agreement on the three most pressing challenges, a variety of course strengths were cited by the majority (see Table 2). Over 82% claimed “Students leave with practical, realistic strategies for teaching writing” as the most significant strength of the class, followed closely by 76.5% who felt “the class provides a theoretical background so undergraduate students have a grounding for the choices they make when they teach writing.” Regardless of concerns over the *connections* made between theory and practice by students in the WMC and in affiliated experiences, these results signal writing teacher educators feel that students leave with adequate knowledge of both areas even if connections are imperfect. Over 70% felt that the WMC also prepared students for current and future field experiences including preservice teaching or tutoring.

Finally, despite concerns over student disinterest in the material, 64.7% of WMC instructors noted that that the WMC remains valuable because “students are introduced to rhetoric and composition, a relatively new field in English studies and value writing as a field of study” and “Undergraduate students become more effective writers themselves” as a result of taking the course. In other words, the knowledge of writing as a field of study and not an ancillary activity to the study of literature or general education courses provided clear value for preservice teachers, according to these writing teacher educators.



Though many WMCs differ in topic coverage (see Table 3), commonalities do exist across courses. The majority of WMC instructors teach the writing process (88.2%), commenting strategies for student papers (70.6%), and major composition theories such as expressivism and cognitivism (70.6%). In addition, 64.7% offer instruction as to how best to work with ESL students, recognizing that today’s secondary teachers work within increasingly globalized contexts. There was also agreement about useful class activities.

the most popular activities used to cover material included class discussion (100%), observation of personal writing practices (82.4%), research papers (70.6%), journals (58.8%), and field experiences (58.8%). Perhaps due to the 82.4% of English education majors populating the course, activities within the undergraduate WMC also offer some focus on the types of teaching of writing activities needed for work in secondary schools. These include application of WMC material in field experiences (58.8% of all writing methods courses in Ohio do this) and development of a writing-focused lesson plan (47.1%).



Discussion

Overall, survey results illustrate an interesting paradox within the undergraduate WMC that can be distilled here: despite the fact that the most knowledgeable teach both the theoretical and practical aspects of writing instruction, and feel students leave with theoretical knowledge of and practical strategies for teaching writing, preservice teachers continue to have trouble making sense of the theory and practice relationship both within the WMC and within later professional contexts that follow. In this section, I unpack the various threads of this contradiction to illustrate current configurations of the WMC face two distinct challenges.

Robert Tremmel makes the case that rhetoric and composition as a field experiences “unevenness, ambivalence, and lack of commitment connected to writing teacher education” (9). However, within the state of Ohio, undergraduate WMC instructors appear to be a stable, well-trained and insightful group. Survey results suggest that the majority are teaching the course because they have been appropriately trained in rhetoric and composition. Confirming findings by Baker et al. that many writing teacher educators have firsthand knowledge of the challenges preservice writing teachers face, survey results indicate a significant portion also has middle or secondary teaching experience in the schools, making them, in theory, ideal candidates for providing writing methods instruction.

And because more than a third has experience as writing program directors, they are likely familiar with transitional issues between secondary and college level writing and can share such experiences with WMC students who later teach in college preparatory classrooms. In sum, Ohio preservice teachers are learning from the most educated, a group well-versed in the challenges of teaching writing and perhaps best able to prepare them to teach it. This is promising.

Also promising is the dedication of WMC instructors to balance theoretical and practical instruction. Although the field of rhetoric and composition has recently “boomed” by demonstrating that it has what it takes to fit in with its disciplinary siblings: a growing body of scholarly research and publications, graduate programs, national conferences, journals, and book series,” as Sheri Stenberg notes, “our scholarship is often, explicitly or implicitly tied to the classroom” (34-35). Survey results confirm this dual emphasis; the overwhelming majority of WMC instructors cite theory and practice as the primary, inseparable focuses of the course since both are considered essential to writing studies (see North, 1987; Parker, 1982; Ruth, 1986). This emphasis on pedagogy informed through theory is also evidenced by the top two strengths cited: students leave the course with practical strategies for teaching writing as well as the theoretical grounding behind these writing strategies to understand (ideally) why the strategies work. Activities cited by the majority of instructors support this mix of theoretical and practical instruction as students explore theory through research papers but also apply teaching methods within field experiences and in-class activities such as commenting on student papers. These strengths indicate that a solid knowledge base is currently in place and lab type activities are available for students to practice the various skills to teach writing prior to entering the field.

Though this strong framework offers the possibility of praxis, WMC instructors remain concerned that students understand the interdependent *relationship* between theory and practice and are prepared to use practice to fine tune theory and vice versa. Survey findings offer initial insight to two possibilities where the connection may falter: 1) the WMC generally lacks opportunities for concept development and 2) by trying to present rhetoric and composition as a coherent field of study, the course works against rhetoric and composition’s fluid nature. Both challenges may hinder the possibility that preservice teachers transfer information learned to secondary contexts.

Challenge #1: Lack of opportunities for concept development

Peter Smagorinsky, Leslie Susan Cook, and Tara Star Johnson argue that teacher education courses in general suffer from a lack of understanding of how theory and practice work together. Though theory and practice are interdependent, they are often categorized as hierarchical, with theoretical knowledge valued over practical lore, or as separate, even oppositional, domains. Instead of positing this simplistic dichotomy, they argue teacher educators should strive to teach concepts because “one’s development of an approach to teaching stands in dialectical relation to one’s development of a conception of teaching” (1401). As defined by Vygotsky, concepts develop from generalizable, abstract knowledge (i.e. theories) but “require interplay” with practice in the field to reinforce and refine this knowledge (Smagorinsky, Cook, and Johnson, 1399). A need for conceptual development may be particularly acute within the WMC, as it borders the fields of English education and rhetoric and composition more generally. Despite a common interest in training writing teachers, and a shared history of marginalization by English departments (Bush 27), the WMC often serves as site of territorial marking rather than a bridge between English and education areas. The disciplines of English education and rhetoric and composition are sometimes presented as at odds over the design of the WMC, divided along a theory-practice split “with EE most often associated with ‘practice’ (hands-on work) and RC with ‘theory’ (intellectual work)” (Alsop 31). Survey results suggest a course such as the WMC may experience a breakdown in concept development because concepts are not taught from one perspective or even one field and often contradict. This is a common problem for teacher education courses, as Smagorinsky et al. note that various stakeholders emphasize different goals and methods of practice (1411).

Survey results suggest that it is possible that the theory/practice relationship is difficult for WMC instructors to teach because a true “relationship” is not fully established through existing class activities. While nearly 60% of WMCs offer a field experience where preservice teachers can apply theories learned in class, other types of integrated activities are used far less often. Instead, over 70% of WMC assign a research paper and more than a third assign quizzes and exams. These may be efficient methods of studying how well preservice teachers learn the broad base of material but these practices are problematic because “pedagogy is conflated with ‘teaching’—understood as the set of practices by which we transmit our knowledge” despite the fact that “pedagogy cannot be finished; we cannot ‘finally’ learn to teach” (Stenberg xviii).

In general, opportunities for bringing fieldwork back to discuss theory and vice versa to establish conceptual development are somewhat uneven. For instance, only 29.4% of WMC instructors require case studies and less than a quarter (23.5%) ask students to role play, though research confirms that these two activities help preservice teachers articulate theory-practice relationships (see Johannessen and McCann 2002; Rose and Finders 1998), particularly when field experiences are not available. Even fewer WMC instructors (17.6%) require an action research project, yet research repeatedly shows when one is required students are better able to see how theory and practice inform each other (Kutz 69). Projects grounded in action research force students to explore why a teaching strategy works through reading about it, testing it, developing a theory based on it, and placing this theory within other existing theories. Foregrounding an interdependent relationship through fieldwork, case study, and role-play help students make sense of course readings and the daily practicalities of teaching writing work together. Development of concepts requires the give and

take between theory and practice because “formal, abstracted knowledge of a concept enables one to reapply it to a new situation” increasing the likelihood of transfer (Smagornisky et al. 1403).

Lack of opportunities for concept development might also explain why students struggle to see theoretical material as relevant to daily concerns within the writing classroom, even though preservice demand more practical strategies earlier in coursework as they take on tasks once reserved for the student teaching experience only (Alsup and Bernard-Donals, 2002; Johnston, 1994). The WMC is the ideal location to address these concerns because the “What do I do on Monday?” question is a primary concern for new teachers (Alsup and Bernard-Donals 2002) and students often have a natural interest in the material. Yet preservice teachers may quickly lose interest when the WMC emphasizes coverage over a broad base of material. Hillocks (2009) notes that as part of understanding a concept testing and application are essential, noting “If a teacher does not know how to use any given approach, especially a complex one, it is likely to fail in terms of student learning. No question.” (26). While application activities are used in current WMCs, they are not used evenly. Therefore, when preservice teachers graduate, some have more developed conceptual knowledge than others.

Challenge #2: Current WMC designs don’t embrace the fluidity of rhetoric and composition as a discipline leading to fragmentation

Survey results suggest that though WMC instructors agree on teaching writing processes and theory for instruction, there is a lack of agreement on what other knowledge is essential for teaching writing effectively. I argue that this lack of a clear curriculum actually is a reflection of current disciplinary tensions in the larger field of rhetoric and composition. The field has long struggled to establish a disciplinary identity within English studies as a past history of “anti-theory” composition teachers (Sommers 46) competes against the present pressure of increased professionalism as a field (Dobrin, 1997; North, 1987). Moreover, as Jonathan Bush argues, the subfield of writing teacher education reflects tensions within rhetoric and composition and between rhetoric and composition and English education (342). Understandably, WMC instructors have trouble introducing the field of writing to preservice teachers when there has yet to be an agreement over key concepts and practices. Students learn about concepts such as freewriting at the same time they learn about holistic scoring, leaving them understandably confused as to benefits and drawbacks of each and how and why both or neither might be used within the schools where they teach. Smagorinsky et al. (2003) suggest that “the development of concepts involves growing into a culture’s values and practices, with the culture in turn growing and changing as its practitioners contribute their understanding of its concepts” (1403). If rhetoric and composition is still growing as a field (culture), then the unclear relationship between theory and practice in the WMC is not just a struggle, but an accurate representation of, and introduction to, the field of writing theory and pedagogy. It is not surprising that the undergraduate WMC is a site of disciplinary struggle with preservice teachers caught in the crosshairs and the effects to streamline the WMC into a coherent conversation repeatedly collide with disciplinary debates.

Survey results suggest that we *do* have some of the tools to work at concept development (and thus concept refinement) within the current WMC even as the field of writing struggles with disciplinary boundaries. For example, Dan Royer and Roger Giles present composition as a “living history” where theories become popular, get modified, and/or fall out of favor. Using a counterbalance approach, they introduce students to specific tensions within the field of composition studies through a pared down list of landmark works and invite students to write about these tensions using specific samples of student writing for analysis and develop personal theories from this combination. This approach allows WMC students to “think of the subject of composition as an evolving history of competing ideas about literacy and learning and not as a catalog of methods and approaches that can be chosen from a bookshelf” (Royer and Giles 115). Working to develop a conversation about theory and practice allows students to use application activities such as field experiences more effectively and talk over their findings with others. Preservice writing teachers can ask “How does theory X explain what I saw in the field today?” as well as “How does what I saw in the field confirm, deny, and/alter theory X?” This type of approach seems to deliberately counteract any attempt at coverage and makes learning a social activity among practitioners. When social practice happens, “practice contributes to learning and thus to concept development, working in dialectical relations with the principles that bring order and unity to concepts” (Smagorinsky et al. 1406).

Another possibility for WMC instructors is to develop more action research projects within the course so students research a particular pedagogical strategy and the theory behind it simultaneously. I currently require an action research project within the WMC where students attempt to solve a writing challenge such as how to comment effectively on papers with a volunteer student from a first-year writing course. The WMC student reads several theories about a particular issue (for example, journaling or paragraph develop) tries a strategy with a first-year writing student and then rewrites a fine-tuned “personal” theory of teaching using this approach based on actual findings. One useful resource that I use to develop this line of thinking is Ann Blakeslee and Cathy Fleischer’s *Becoming a Writing Researcher* (2007) as it guides students through both the theoretical and pedagogical steps necessary to develop writing-focused action research projects. WMC students already come to class with theories about how to best teach writing (Parker 18). Integrating more action research opportunities within the WMC could build on this natural interest and candidates’ early theories of teaching writing through confirming the idea that practicing writing teachers are writing researchers who actively

contribute to and refine the field of writing studies. This strategy might be useful for Ohio WMCs in particular as the majority already require research papers as well as have field experiences. The combination could be modified to teach the thinking strategies of action research that successful teachers already use (see Argyris and Schön, 1981; Kutz, 1992).

A third possibility might work with Robert Scholes’ recent call to teach textuality versus a narrowly defined rhetoric- or literature-based curriculum and work to incorporate WMC course material over the span of several courses. He argues that all English teachers share the “responsibility to teach all the aspects of textuality — the production, consumption, and history of texts in English” (239). If textuality is used as the link between the fields of writing and literature, rhetoric and composition and English education, etc. then the WMC might offer opportunities for preservice teachers to explore what elements go into producing both traditional print-based and emerging digital texts, to find commonalities of effective communication, and to develop pedagogical approaches based on these commonalities. One method for doing this could be to consider essays by writing theorists as texts that share many elements with literary pieces to aid in both comprehension of the theory as well as to develop a broader understanding of how writing theorists function as writers. Bill Green (2010) does an excellent job of modeling how this approach might work in his recent textual analysis of James Moffett.

Concluding Thoughts

Anne Gere and Daniel Berebitsky point out that teacher expertise is the single most important attribute of successful English teachers. Survey results confirm the majority of traditionally prepared preservice teachers in Ohio do gain some initial “expertise” in the teaching of writing. However, the picture of what this expertise looks like is mixed as students have theoretical and practical knowledge of teaching writing but lack instruction in thinking strategies and activities to help them integrate and interrogate writing instruction from both angles. As a result, the WMC may be less effective in training future writing teachers because, when the pieces don’t connect, under pressure, novice teachers often return to models they remember experiencing as students—even after completing teacher preparation programs (see Kutz and Roskelly, 1991; Smagorinsky, 2010). This contributes to a cycle where the course likely has little to no effect on the teaching of writing within secondary schools despite calls for additional teacher training. Smagorinsky et al. point out the teaching of concept development is especially challenging in teacher education programs when approaches may not be presented evenly across courses, when courses can be taken in varying sequences, and the lack of correlation between university teaching and realities of schools. Even when the same concepts are taught, meanings differ, and thus preservice teachers tend to “[gravitate] toward the prevailing norms held by the schools in which they taught in their first jobs” (1403).

Ultimately, theory and practice must be developed as interrelated concepts for the WMC to have any real effect. It is not enough to cover theories and to provide some hands-on opportunities for practice unless both areas are explicitly linked. The best solutions, Robert Parker argues, “aim primarily at assisting teachers in re-theorizing writing instruction, and in changing their methods in the light of this re-theorizing, may end up having more fundamental and permanent effects” (120). To develop concepts as fluid, instructors must be prepared to recognize that composition “is a field that tends to resist unifying notions” (Bush 342).

WMC instructors *do* recognize the inherent paradox of attempting to neatly dovetail theory and practice within a sixteen week course when the disciplinary identity is in flux. As one respondent surmised, “I struggle to neatly package theories and pedagogies of teaching writing (that often contradict each other!) into a coherent ‘take this with you when you graduate’ message. I just don’t think it can be done within composition studies.” Other respondents noted that though composition theory anthologies sort landmark essays into categories such as “expressivism” or “assessment”, the essays within the sections contradict each other leaving new teachers understandably confused as to the “right” way to teach writing rather than viewing their writing teacher education as a space where they can contribute to the conversation.

Joe Hardin suggests, “the theory/praxis split may be particularly embedded in rhetoric and composition precisely because both theory and practice are so much a part of how the field identifies itself” (36). Smagorinsky et al. reimagine the theory and practice relationship as not so much as split but as fluid as the boundaries between both rely on each other for meaning (1432). Therefore, rather than trying to present rhetoric and composition as a coherent discipline worthy of study similar to literature, it might be worth making the pedagogical and theoretical gaps the focus of the WMC. The most competent writing teachers already adapt teaching practices to changing teaching conditions and new research (Argyris and Schön, 1981; Kutz, 1992). They live with the contradictions inherent in secondary writing instruction, working to improve what they can by adjusting practice based on theory and theory based on practice, in one classroom at a time. Rethinking what we already do in the WMC means inviting new writing teachers to see themselves as part of the ongoing negotiation within the field of teaching writing.

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About the Author

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All Hands on Deck: Bringing Together High School Teachers and Adjunct Instructors for Professional Development in the Teaching of Writing

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For the past eight years, Jenn has worked at Rhode Island College (RIC), as a joint appointment in the English and Educational Studies Departments as an English teacher educator and as a First Year Writing (FYW) instructor. She is also the Director of the Rhode Island Writing Project (RIWP), Rhode Island's only affiliate of the National Writing Project. For the past three years, Becky has worked as the Director of Writing, an administrative challenge for anyone but surely even more of a challenge for a new professor just out of a doctoral program. We are among the small group of "new hires" in our department and are among an even smaller group of faculty who have devoted our careers—both in research and practice—to the teaching of writing. Out of a shared passion for writing and the teaching of writing, and out of what we might call a necessity for collaboration, we began to talk about how our programs—the College's First Year Writing Program and the RI Writing Project—might support each other. After all, just as Becky is constantly challenged by the daunting task of building community, developing practice, and maintaining a cohesive program when between 80-90% of her instructors are adjunct faculty, Jenn is feeling continuously challenged as the director of an organization that has lost its federal funding and that is seeking ways to bolster its affiliation with the host institution. We are each in charge of writing programs on the RIC campus, and in an effort to grow our programs and to collaborate, we created and co-facilitated the first ever "One-Day Summer Invitational Institute for Adjunct Faculty of First Year Writing at Rhode Island College" in June 2012. Nine Rhode Island College adjuncts participated in the day, as did three high school English teachers and the two of us, college English professors.

This is our story, a story that we are presenting here as a vision of what is possible if we start to act collaboratively across the traditional academic silos that keep us separate from one another, isolated in our practice, and unaware of what has come before (or what comes after) our instruction of the students in front of us. This article is not intended to be prescriptive or reductive, as it is primarily a report of how we collaborated to address a specific and yet generalizable problem across college campuses and writing project sites: an absence of non-evaluative forums, spaces, and opportunities for adjunct faculty and secondary teachers to come together to talk about the teaching of writing. We have chosen to begin by presenting the contexts in which we each find ourselves as well as the various historical and institutional factors that affect our work. This background information may be familiar to some, especially our National Writing Project readers, but we provide it here so that you can see how our work is connected both in substance and status.

The Rhode Island Writing Project (RIWP)

For nearly 40 years, the National Writing Project (NWP) has grown an incredible network of classroom teachers and researchers and has provided hundreds of thousands of hours of professional development. Under Jim Gray's model, professional development for teachers was turned on its head when the NWP was founded in 1976. Where there once were highly-paid consultants delivering lectures to teachers on assigned readings, now there would be classroom teachers, steeped in their own expertise and knowledge, sharing with their colleagues their practice and methods. At the heart of this model is a deep respect for and honoring of teachers' experiences, their wisdom, and their relationships with their students. Also at the heart of this model is the idea of partnership: university researchers and professors working side-by-side with K-12 classroom teachers, a collaboration that Jim Gray was smart enough to see would have the greatest potential for transformation (of students, of schools, of selves):

By the late 1970s, the idea of the writing project seemed to be catching on. Faculty members at colleges and universities throughout the country understood that if significant educational change was to take place, schools and universities would need to form partnerships based on respect for each other's knowledge. (59)

Bringing people together from across a great divide has indeed, in these 38 years, lessened the gap between the ivory tower and the K-12 classroom. And, yet, the historical, deep-seated tensions between "education" and "liberal arts," between "scholars" and "teachers," are still there, the chasm still wide, working to divide folks instead of bringing them together, even in this new era of networks, collaboration, and open access. The Rhode Island Writing Project has been located on the RIC campus for 27 years where, most notably, RIWP teacher consultants played an instrumental role in helping the RI Department of Education (RIDE) develop Rhode Island's first statewide writing assessment. But, that was nearly twenty years ago, and in the time since then, the relationship between the RIWP, the RIC campus and administrators, and RIDE has been strained for various reasons that the scope and length of this article

do not allow us to explore in detail.

When Jenn became Director of the RIWP in 2010, after several years as a Co-Director, it was clear to her that she would need to set a course for extending the RIWP's reach on campus and in the state. So, at the RIWP, we were ready and willing to participate in any new initiatives related to writing on our campus. One of the initiatives that Jenn continued, one which was begun by her predecessors, was holding a Writing Marathon on the RIC campus in celebration of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)-sponsored National Day on Writing in October, something that Becky had participated in the prior year. And, in one of her first developments as Director of Writing, Becky teamed up with the RIWP to work on coordinating the Writing Marathon and celebration of the National Day on Writing with an entire Writing Week at RIC, complete with guest speakers and writing-related events. Suffice it to say that the National Day on Writing—and Writing Week at RIC—was the catalyst for this collaboration. It was an auspicious beginning.

At the same time that we were beginning to develop a collaborative relationship as colleagues, all federal funding for the National Writing Project was drying up, due the loss of earmarks in Department of Education bills in the U.S. Congress. No longer could we depend on a \$47,000 site grant arriving each year to support our work. No longer could our College count on collecting at least 10% of that grant and adding it to the long list of grant awards secured by faculty members. The loss of funding, in a sense, caused our “rating” to drop on campus, like a plummeting stock, and it was up to Jenn, and her Executive Board and Co-Directors, to steer the ship to a place where we could breathe easily again. Some Writing Project sites have closed because of this loss of funding, so the threat of survival-of-the-fittest was, and is, real. This “survival mode” that we have been thrown into has caused the Rhode Island Writing Project to reexamine our purpose and visibility on the Rhode Island College campus. Our survival depends on making ourselves relevant not only in the context of K-12 writing instruction in Rhode Island but also in the context of what is happening on our college campus. How do we make ourselves viable and relevant—with our WP knowledge of teacher development and sound pedagogy—on our college campus? How do we make ourselves indispensable to our College?

In the 2011-2012 academic year, the RIWP had a Leadership Retreat to identify, among our Executive Board and Fellows, what our focus should be as we move forward. We needed to limit ourselves to three to five “Big Picture” ideas/visions, as we also need to keep in mind our limited human capacity and our desire for sustainable programs and systems. One idea that emerged from the WP Leadership Retreat was to strengthen our connections to Rhode Island College. But, we first had to identify the need on our campus. Where does our campus NEED the Writing Project? What could the Rhode Island Writing Project do, capitalizing on our strengths, to make ourselves useful to our college campus? In particular, how could we make ourselves useful to the School of Arts & Sciences and the English Department, our academic home?

The First Year Writing (FYW) Program

When Becky was hired in August 2009, her job description included the Writing Program Administration (WPA) duties of Director of Writing which, for all intents and purposes, primarily meant overseeing one of the English Dept's General Education offerings to the college: “WRTG 100, Writing and Rhetoric.” This four-credit course was, at the time of Becky's hire, the only required writing course for the undergraduate community (individual schools or programs might require other courses, but WRTG 100 was the single universal writing requirement on campus). While the General Education Program at RIC is undergoing changes as we write (see below), WRTG 100 continues to be one of the few courses, if not the only course, that all undergraduate students are required to successfully complete or account for (i.e., the requirement is waived because of transfer credit or early college/dual enrollment credit). RIC offers, on average, between 50 and 60 sections of this course per academic year.

The Director of Writing previous to Becky had overseen both the RIWP and the English Department's General Education offering in writing. With the split in duties and Jenn's assumption of the Directorship of RIWP in 2010, upon hire Becky was able to focus her efforts on organizing and developing the writing course offerings into a coherent, recognized program within the college. Beginning steps included branding—she created the cohesive unit called the “First Year Writing Program,” complete with web presence, logo, and an annual report. She also requested a modest yearly budget and answered the college's call for regular assessment of the program. Right now, the FYW Program is in the midst of piloting several new initiatives, including Directed Self-Placement and a new six-credit FYW course, “WRTG 100Plus.”

The biggest challenge to date that Becky has faced, however, is the staffing of FYW sections and providing professional development opportunities to instructors. As our statistics make clear, the overwhelming majority of FYW courses are taught by adjunct instructors—instructors who are paid per credit hour, who receive no benefits, who have no job security, and who only recently unionized. While the Modern Language Association (MLA) and NCTE, for example, each have statements on the status and treatment of contingent faculty in higher education, real change is slow to come to institutions like RIC for a variety of reasons (not the least of which is, of course, financial—fair, ethical compensation for qualified, experienced instructors is costly). Thus, in spring 2012, the FYW Program reached a new low since Becky's arrival on campus: 90% of the sections in the Program were taught by adjunct instructors. Of the 20 sections of Basic Writing and WRTG 100 being offered, only two were taught by tenure-track faculty (one of whom was Becky; Jenn was on sabbatical, though she is usually one of the full-time faculty teaching WRTG 100); of the fifteen instructors teaching in the FYW Program, only two (about 13.33%) were tenure-track (again, Becky was one of them).

Before we continue, it's important to note here that we are critical of the working conditions of the FYW Program and not

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of the instructors who work within the program. As the success of our Institute makes clear, we are fortunate to work with some excellent writing instructors—people who are dedicated to the teaching of writing and to the students in the classrooms of RIC. Rather, we lament the consequences of their contingent positions. We don't want to pass over the real, personal consequences of adjunct faculties' contingent status. While that has been documented elsewhere (see, for example, The Adjunct Project), and while we continue to work to address such conditions, we'd also like to consider the institutional consequence, at RIC, of these employment conditions.

Institutionally, the overuse of contingent faculty in the FYW Program at RIC means that it is nearly impossible to conceive of and implement a cohesive, coherent writing program. The high turnover rate among adjunct faculty means that while there is often a small core of regular, returning faculty, there are often new faces that come and go. Becky estimates that she has hired approximately 15 new instructors between fall 2010 and fall 2012 (and has interviewed a great deal more). Such a high turnover means that getting everyone “on the same page” is nearly impossible when it comes to such issues as shared outcomes, for example, or even a shared community. Moreover, many of our adjunct faculty are employed at more than one institution: some are graduate students at local universities and colleges (which means that they may be looking to supplement their assistantships or, in the worse case, compensating for the absence of assistantships), while others are piecing together a living wage by working at as many as three different colleges or universities in one semester. A few adjuncts have other sources of income (i.e., a full-time “day job” or reliance on the financial support of a partner).

Professional development opportunities, when offered, are difficult for even the most engaged and enthusiastic to attend. Such instructors are often elsewhere at the given time and day of an event, for example—they are often teaching at other schools. Then, too, because instructors are paid per credit hour, they have not always been compensated for attendance and participation. While voluntary attendance is not uncommon in the FYW Program at RIC, it is unfair to ask adjunct instructors to continually volunteer for professional development.

Thus the stage was set for collaboration between our programs. We had been looking for an opportunity to work together for some time: Becky had access to a budget and could provide compensation when the RIWP was not able; Jenn and other Fellows had expertise in training teachers that could only enhance what the FYW Program had been providing; the FYW Program had a population of instructors that could appreciate what both programs could offer; the RIWP could assist the FYW Program in creating a community of writing instructors, and both programs could combine their strengths to bring something new and innovative to the RIC campus.

The Absence of Professional Development: Adjunct Faculty

As has been discussed and shown in the literature on higher education, time and time again, adjunct faculty are not treated well by the institutions for which they work. This happens everywhere: public and private, large and small schools. And, adjuncts bear the brunt of much of the most challenging pedagogical work in higher education. Adjuncts are most often assigned the classes which enroll the newest students. These are often called General Education courses, or First Year courses, or the dreaded “Pre-Requisite.” Adjuncts have large classes, are burdened with high-stakes assessments (FYW adjuncts at our college submit randomly-chosen student papers for assessment each semester) and with making a good impression on the most impressionable students on campus, the newest ones. Yet, adjuncts are not treated as experts or professionals, as we well know (Jenn is married to an adjunct instructor; Becky was employed as an adjunct in the time between her M.A. and Ph.D. programs) and as these results from the 2012 Coalition on Academic Workforce (CAW) survey demonstrate:

According to data from the United States Department of Education's 2009 Fall Staff Survey, of the nearly 1.8 million faculty members and instructors who made up the 2009 instructional workforce in degree granting two- and four-year institutions of higher education in the United States, more than 1.3 million (75.5%) were employed in contingent positions off the tenure track, either as part-time or adjunct faculty members, full-time non-tenure-track faculty members, or graduate student teaching assistants. (1)

A key finding from this study of 20,920 adjunct faculty respondents is that “Professional support for part-time faculty members' work outside the classroom and inclusion in academic decision making was minimal.” (2) In the area of “institutional support,” the following results were reported:

The respondents paint a dismal picture, one that clearly demonstrates how little professional commitment and support part-time faculty members receive from their institutions for anything that costs money and is not related to preparing and delivering discrete course materials...The data...imply an institutional assumption that part-time faculty members will for the most part appear on campus only to deliver a discrete course and not to participate with students or colleagues in any other structurally supported way. (13-14)

So, it is common knowledge in higher education that adjunct faculty do not receive equitable support in their professional development. The phrase that is most telling, and the one which resonates the most for us, refers to the institutional assumption that adjuncts “appear on campus only to deliver a discrete course.” As we know, this is not necessarily the case for adjuncts at RIC, a dedicated core of folks who hold regular office hours, take advantage of proffered professional development opportunities, and take great pride in their work. This disconnect—between the dedication that adjunct faculty demonstrate and the modicum of institutional support they receive—has resonated for both of us for some time.

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Planning and Realizing the Institute: Our Story

When we met in the summer of 2011, we sowed the seeds for this Institute at Ruby Tuesday's in Johnston, RI. At that meeting, Jenn told Becky about a professional development workshop she was slated to do at the Community College of Rhode Island with their adjuncts who teach writing. Though that workshop ended up falling through, it gave Jenn the idea to target our FYW adjuncts at RIC as a possible audience for our collaborative work. Additionally, in the RIWP's 2012 Site Report, Jenn wrote about this possible collaboration between FYW and RIWP at RIC, thereby introducing this idea to our national office and thereby committing Jenn, and her site, to see the idea through.

Some details for the Institute were easier to work out than others. For example, we decided on a one-day event on a Friday in June. Some of the adjunct faculty who were in attendance would be teaching in a summer program that began the week of July 1. We decided on June 22nd so that those teaching in July would be able to attend, and so that there was sufficient time to prepare between the spring semester and summer sessions. Additionally, it meant that area high school instructors would be available to come and speak to our group of college instructors, since most, if not all, schools in RI were no longer in session as of June 22nd. Finally, we decided on a seven-hour day, beginning at 8:30 in the morning and ending at 3:30 in the afternoon, with a half-hour break for lunch. We recognized that this would be a long day—and it was—but it made sense to us. First, it meant that we would only ask adjunct faculty to commit for one day; given their many obligations, we wanted to make it as easy as possible for the most number of instructors to attend. Second, the day would require a level of commitment commensurate with the RIWP Summer Institute model, where participants would spend the day fully invested with the topic at hand and with the community in attendance. We would also ask participants to meet again at the close of the fall semester, to discuss our Institute's impact (or lack thereof) on their teaching in the fall, and to produce some writing and reflection. Finally, because there were no clear guidelines on what was adequate compensation for adjunct faculty participation in such an event, we chose to offer honoraria of \$350 for the daylong event and subsequent meetings (it was important to us to acknowledge the adjuncts' level of education and expertise, as well as the time commitment on a summer's day). While each of these steps was fairly painless, we still had to decide the most crucial question: what would the group do for the seven-hour day?

We thought carefully about the shared interests of the RIWP and the FYW, and two commonalities struck us most forcefully: one, that the FYW Program taught students who had gone through the K-12 system in the state of Rhode Island and, two, the RIWP had taught and mentored many of the writing instructors who led those very K-12 classrooms. Not incidentally, teachers in the state are currently grappling with the introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), currently being implemented, and the college is currently grappling with the introduction of a new General Education Program which included, for the first time, a Writing in the Discipline (WID) requirement as well as a specific Written Communication outcome for a variety of required courses. Both of these developments will have profound and far-reaching implications for instructors of First Year Writing at Rhode Island College: our students—the overwhelming majority of whom are residents of Rhode Island—would be arriving in our classrooms with a “common core” of knowledge, skills and, to some degree, educational experiences. And, these same students would be expected to leave FYW having met a set of standards and outcomes that would prepare them, at least in part, for the writing they would be expected to do in their other courses. For the first time, the course was truly an introduction to academic writing. That is, instructors could teach the FYW course with the full knowledge that students would be continuing to learn about “academic writing” in other courses throughout their careers at RIC. No longer would WRTG 100 have to be the alpha and the omega of writing—all in a fourteen-week semester.

Thus, we decided that the day would be spent addressing and connecting both of these curriculum developments in light of the demands on and practices of this group of adjunct faculty of first-year writing. Our invitation was distributed to all eligible adjunct faculty (those who taught at RIC in the preceding academic year, although we were happy to make a last-minute exception for a new adjunct faculty member who joined us in the fall of 2012). The invitation, which specifically invoked the two developments, read:

While these changes do not necessarily imply a paradigm shift for you and your writing course at RIC, they certainly do change the make-up of what your students will be coming to your classes having done and learned and what they will be leaving your classes to go and do and learn. We are offering this Institute to you this summer as a way to hone your understanding of the educational and writing landscapes that surround the work you do in your writing classroom.

In response to the invitation, applicants wrote interesting one-page letters to us, telling us why they wanted to be a part of the Institute and why they felt it would enhance their teaching at RIC. The letters revealed how eagerly the group of adjuncts wanted to create a community, and how isolated they felt from some of the methods and practices of other teachers. Some adjuncts asked to know more about what students had experienced before entering their classrooms, and what kinds of writing they would experience after they left WRTG 100. In this way, our proposed topic of the CCSS and the new General Education Program seemed timely. Others brought up new topics, topics we were not prepared (nor able, in the time allocated) to discuss, but which certainly convinced us of the need and desire for future professional development opportunities¹: applicants wanted to “learn new strategies” for teaching, and to think about “in-class writing exercises” and how to “utilize technology,” for example. Overwhelmingly, the theme that resonated most consistently throughout the application letters—and, as we'll discuss below, in their final evaluations—was the desire to share

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and learn from colleagues. Applicants wrote of the need to “explore other participants' experiences” and “to gather together with like-minded peers to talk about our work.” They noted that they “always enjoy interacting with and learning from [their] colleagues” and looked forward to sharing with their peers (terms such as “colleagues” and “peers” appeared frequently; this group of faculty members had a great deal of respect for the work they did, and for the people who shared that work). Indeed, while applicants wanted to learn more about the topics of the day, they also just wanted the chance “to form some bonds,” as one applicant wrote. We were pleased to welcome nine applicants into the Institute and to begin the work of addressing some of their concerns.

In the ensuing weeks, we met several times and communicated extensively over email in order to plan the day and to put into action our idea. We articulated an overarching theme for the day: How do these developments—the new General Education Program and Rhode Island's adoption of the CCSS—affect the work we do in our First Year Writing courses? The idea to invite area (compensated) high school teachers came early on, and we planned to welcome three English instructors from North Providence High School. It is important to note that the three high school teachers were also teachers affiliated with the RIWP. Two of them—Madonna and Janine—are Fellows, having completed the Summer Invitational. Madonna currently co-facilitates the RIWP Summer Invitational Institute, and Janine teaches in both the First Year Writing Program at RIC and the Secondary Education Program. The third teacher, Jason, enrolled in the SI this summer (2012) and currently works as a clinical instructor for RIC's English education program, from which he is a graduate. All of these affiliations are significant, we feel, because they point to the fact that our “One-Day Summer Invitational Institute for Adjunct Faculty of First Year Writing at Rhode Island College” was built on a foundation of a strong network—grown in the First Year Writing Program, in the Secondary English Education program, and in the RIWP—of teacher leaders, the hallmark of the National Writing Project.

At the Institute we also wanted to implement the philosophy of the National Writing Project. Our goal for the morning, for example, was to remind instructors that they were writers, with real experiences as students and as instructors. So, we wrote. And, we shared our writing out loud. We also wanted to use our warm-up writing to help create a collaborative, judgment-free writing and teaching community—something that the NWP, and the RIWP in particular, has done so well and the creation of which is an ongoing goal of the FYW Program. Thus, as participants arrived and partook of breakfast (we can't emphasize enough the importance of food), we asked them to write a bit about what their expectations were for the day, and what they hoped to take away. After some sharing, we asked them to do some sustained writing for a more layered prompt: We asked them to consider their own high school experiences and the kinds of writing they had done, as well as the kind of responses they had received, both in and out of school. As participants shared some of their experiences, which ran the gamut from honest to redemptive to poetic to raw and everything in between, the day began to take shape, and a community began to form. One participant read a story in which she, as a high school writer, “could not wait for Mr. Berenger to read” an essay she had written for English class. Another participant recalled the drudgery of high school writing for her and left us speechless with this final line: “They don't want creative; they just want correct.” Another adjunct faculty participant recalled the “blue grammar book” of high school English, and yet another wrote about her “guitar-playing teacher who examined lyrics of songs as poems.” These personal stories worked their magic as the group quickly coalesced, all the while being reminded of the many paths we take as writers and the impact that teachers have had on us along the way.

From such a strong beginning, the collegial tone of the day was set, and we were able to present and lead discussions concerning the new General Education Program as well as the CCSS. In the morning, Becky presented on the General Education Program. She began by asking participants to consider words or phrases that came to mind when they heard the term “General Education Requirements.” From those responses, discussion ensued as instructors considered their past, present, and future relationship to General Education Programs. Briefly, Becky explained some of the changes that would affect instructors of FYW directly: additions such as the abovementioned Written Communication outcome, the WID requirement, and the new First Year Seminar requirement. From there, participants were asked, in groups, to examine some RIC institutional documents on the new General Education: the list of required courses, for example, as well as the language that described some of the writing mandates and a blog entry on the WID requirement. Before breaking for lunch, all the participants reconvened as one group and discussed their observations, questions, and concerns. Becky ended the session by asking instructors to (re)consider their courses in light of the requirements, and to contemplate how the requirements would affect their teaching in the fall.

The afternoon session, where Jenn presented on the state's adoption of the CCSS, mirrored the morning session in many ways. Participants began by brainstorming on words or phrases that came to mind when Jenn said “CCSS;” they followed this up with reading and discussion (and more word association) of some key CCSS documents, most notably those pertaining to English and Language Arts standards for junior high and high school. However, for the final event of the day, Jenn had invited the North Providence High School instructors, named above, who were (or were about to become) RIWP Fellows. The high school instructors had been asked early on to prepare responses to three questions:

1. What has your experience been like as a high school teacher of writing in Rhode Island?
2. How do you think the Common Core Standards will impact your teaching of writing in high school?
3. Tell us about your classroom practice: What do you notice in your students' writing (strengths and needs)? What kinds of writing do you emphasize in high school? What specific projects do you work on (especially senior project) with your students?

Adjunct instructors responded with questions not only about the kinds of preparation in writing instruction that high school students

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would receive, but were also impressed and interested in the many ways that this group of high school instructors had worked to make the CCSS their own, so to speak: the high school instructors incorporated the CCSS into their curriculum in ways that would best meet the needs of their students. Indeed, in the final evaluations, one adjunct instructor noted that

What [s/he] especially liked hearing is that they [the high school instructors] regard the CCSS as a framework and that they were very clear that they reserved the right to implement requirements in ways that did not compromise their integrity as teachers who know what their students need. More importantly, they were clear that they were the best judges of how to achieve goals.

We found that the time spent with high school and adjunct instructors gathered around a table was one of the highlights of the day; we had expected (hoped) that the high school instructors would talk a bit and there would be discussion, but we did not expect such a sense of camaraderie to emerge so quickly and satisfyingly for all involved. Participants were reminded that they shared students; many of the local area high school students will become the college students at RIC. In that way we realized that each of us are moments on an emerging timeline, that students would be writing for all of us throughout their academic careers. The difficulties, joys, and questions that we experienced as writing instructors were not always unique to our institutions or grade levels; we were (and are) all writing instructors, and so what that meant, at heart, was the same for each of us: we wanted to help students become better writers and to see themselves as writers. That shared experience meant that we could discuss our common goals as well as consider how national and institutional mandates—like CCSS and new General Education requirements—required something different from each group. Thus, our ensuing discussion lasted for much of the afternoon, and several of the adjunct instructor evaluations requested more such community-building opportunities. It reminded us of how much can be learned when K-16 instructors interact; as the above-quoted adjunct’s final evaluation note tells us, “It is, after all, the student who matters.”

This community, we felt, grew throughout the day—and we think that we have created a foundation on which to build (it’s telling that one participant asked about creating an electronic community, like a listserv, so that participants can stay in touch; it’s also telling that, within days of the Institute, two participants sent an email to the group about going out for drinks during the summer). More than one evaluation pointed to the pleasure in sharing with others who taught the same subject, in the same school, but with whom the instructor seldom had time to communicate. We felt that while much was communicated and learned about both the new General Education Program and the CCSS, perhaps the most valuable commodity from this day was the sense of community, of camaraderie, of mutual respect and shared experience, which was built.

Reflections

As we reflect on what we took away from our collaborative RIWP/FYW “One-Day Summer Invitational Institute for Adjunct Faculty of First Year Writing at Rhode Island College,” and as we read through the evaluations, it was clear to us that part of the magic of this day was completely context-specific and group-specific. On this particular day, with this particular group and these particular facilitators, under these particular conditions, we were able to make this Institute a rousing success. So, we did not begin with this end in mind. That is, we were not setting out, necessarily, to write an article or to create a model that can be replicated by others. But, we also feel that there are substantive ideas—not new ideas, necessarily (see, for example, Tremmel, Donahue, Jones, Baker et al, Alsup et al), but tried and true ideas that seem to have been forgotten—that we would like to resurrect here, thanks to our participants’ comments on their evaluations, as a way for our readers to think about collaborative, inclusive professional development around the teaching of writing. In that way, this publication is a kind of rediscovery of those ideas, and a model of how a national problem begins to be rectified on the local level.

Bridging the gap: We hear a lot about is how vital it is to “close the gap” between each of the levels of institutionalized education, traditionally K-5, 6-8, 9-12, and 13-16 (higher ed), so that students move “seamlessly” through the system. What we don’t hear a lot about is bridging the gap for teachers and instructors, something that can only come about through professional development that is collaborative and inclusive. It only makes sense that when we are trying to “bridge a gap,” we start with the teachers; they’re the ones doing the bridge-building, after all. This work is all about promoting a dialogue between and among factions in education that have historically remained separated and isolated from one another:

The disjunction between high school teachers and their colleagues in college is not, of course, a recent phenomenon, which is why I think trying to understand it more fully is so important: conditions that persist often do so for reasons that fade through familiarity. Furthermore, considering that disjunction within an historical context can help us more fully understand the ways in which the origins of our points of commonality and contention still affect how we engage in the teaching of writing. (Jones)

We feel like pioneers in having brought high school teachers and first-year writing instructors to the same table, though we know others are also doing this work. We feel like pioneers because there are so few models for this type of cross-institutional collaboration and because it is so rare to see.

The power of collaboration: We can never dismiss or underestimate the power of collaboration and of nurturing a collegial community of teachers and education professionals. In every other sector of our society, people are talking about building communities, creating networks, bringing people together around common concerns and challenges. It’s the era of the “global society,” and we hear a lot about how we are all connected. And yet, what we see, despite the mounting pressures that challenge

educators and the rapidity of change in K-12 and higher education, is less and less formal collaboration. We so often discuss the importance of creating communities in our classrooms and among our students, yet we so seldom discuss why we do not value creating communities of teachers in the same way. Based on our experience in this Institute, and on the feedback from our participants, we feel very strongly about the need for state and institutional support of opportunities for teachers of all levels and all subjects to learn, collaboratively, from one another as members of an intellectual community of shared respect. And, powerful testimonials like these from our participants’ evaluations of the day only reinforced our belief. When we asked them, “What are you taking away from this day?” here’s how some responded: “A sense of camaraderie, a sense that I am not alone, a sense that my concerns are echoed by others;” “feelings of validation and of being part of a community of instructors who are dedicated to their work and sensitive to their students;” “I got to talk to my colleagues (and boss) about mutual concerns, fears, joys, frustrations about teaching writing... and, I feel like today made me think of the students more, what they’ve been through... I think I lose sight of that sometimes;” “I am taking away a feeling of hope (after meeting the high school teachers) and an energized spirit. I am looking forward to next semester!”

We strongly believe that unless we help our instructors develop and learn and grow as part of a community of practice, we are probably going to get little in return as far as change or transformation.

The pace of change: Change is coming very rapidly to the education landscape, for good or ill, and the changes are being dictated by a very select group that occupies the top of the educational food chain. The “architect of the Common Core,” David Coleman, is currently President of the College Board. He wrote the document with the help of the National Governor’s Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (Pattinson). Needless to say, Mr. Coleman is quite far removed from the day-to-day work of a classroom teacher. Similarly, the authors of the new General Education curriculum at Rhode Island College most certainly are not the adjunct faculty. All this is to say that the folks making the changes—or at least writing and assessing the educational mandates—are far away from the majority of folks who need to implement the changes. And, we feel, unless we are reaching and speaking to the instructors who are providing the direct service to students, unless we are attempting to educate them about these changes and how they might impact their instruction, institutions can’t really expect change to actually occur as rapidly as they would like (or, perhaps, at all).

All instructors need time to take in new information, to assimilate it (or not) into their thinking, to imagine how the changes might affect their practice, to talk with colleagues who are struggling with similar questions, and to readjust their instruction based on the new information. The ridiculous expectation, in K-12 and in higher education, that we are all going to, in an orchestrated, “seamless” fashion, adjust our practice to incorporate changes without some time, space and guidance to help us along, is setting teachers and instructors up to fail. We strongly feel that any amount of institutional change depends on consistent and accessible high-quality professional development, as we’ve described it in this article.

A welcoming space for teachers: An important factor in our Institute was the space in which it was held. We deliberately chose to invite adjunct faculty to the home of the RIWP because the RIWP is located on the margins of our campus in an old, historic farmhouse. Alumni House, home of the RIWP, is a cozy space, a house complete with a working kitchen—where we gathered in the morning and afternoon to get our food and drinks and to talk—a large “dining room” with two fireplaces—where we sat around a table together and wrote and shared—spacious and grassy grounds, and most importantly, no fluorescent lights or cinder block walls or heinous “chairdesks.” The RIWP physically sits on the boundary of our campus: it is of the College and outside of it, a place that connects those two worlds to each other, an alternative space that allows for a break from institutional décor and, thus, a sort of mental vacation from institutional thinking. We believed that in order to create a safe space in which adjuncts and teachers alike could feel that their voices were heard, valued, and not judged, we had to move the Institute away from the institutional panopticon. Meeting in this kind of space, we feel, was essential to creating the community that we felt was formed that day.

In the context of professional development, it is vital for teachers and instructors to feel like they are welcomed in the spaces in which they work, that they are valued inhabitants of the same space, and that they are, indeed, an important part of the processes and the systems that run the space. We feel excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for future RIWP/FYW collaborations, as it has become glaringly clear to both of us that teachers and instructors are actively seeking out these kinds of collaborative and intellectual opportunities to share their ideas, their experiences, and their practice with colleagues. As we look ahead, we hope to bring more and more teachers to the table, talking about writing, looking at student work, sharing lessons that work and those that do not, and struggling together around the implementation of new standards and mandates. We are already thinking about our 2013 Institute.

Notes

1. All participants signed an informed consent form, giving us permission to use their work (anonymously). To honor that, we have chosen not to acknowledge them individually, but we thank them for their participation, enthusiasm, and generosity.

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Collaboration: Talk. Trust. Write

Mark Letcher, Kristen Turner, Meredith Donovan, Leah Zuidema, Cathy Fleischer, Nicole Sieben, Jim Fredrickson, Laraine Wallowitz, and Sarah Andrew-Vaughn

We have long recognized English classrooms, at all levels, as sites ripe for collaborative activity among students; when students read, write, and learn together, the classroom becomes a microcosm of the work we do as professionals in the field. In writing, collaboration can be vital. Collaborative writing often leads to projects that are richer and more complex than those produced by individuals, potentially engaging multiple audiences in broader conversations. However, collaboration can also present its own particular set of challenges, ranging from the practical (How do authors find each other and determine publication avenues?) to the more theoretical (Is the negotiation of power an inherent part of the collaborative process, and if so, how can it be successfully managed?).

With these issues in mind, the Conference on English Education’s Commission on Writing Teacher Education sponsored a roundtable session at the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, in Las Vegas, NV. Titled “Igniting Our Professional Work Through Collaboration,” the session gathered pairs of collaborative writers from across varying teaching contexts, with the shared purpose of discussing and examining the nature and challenges of their work together. Collaborative groups represented in the session included teacher educator and classroom teacher (Cathy and Sarah), professor and graduate student (Kristen and Jeta), and teacher educators across teaching contexts (Jim and Leah, Laraine and Nicole). As the session concluded, and the roundtable discussions extended into the hallway, some of the participants arrived at the idea of capturing their conversations in writing. Focused on the idea that effective and productive collaboration often follows a recursive cycle of “talk, trust, write,” the following sections expand on how successful collaborators manage the multiple issues of composing, both individually and together. To our original triad, we have also added “teach,” acknowledging the vital fact that our actions as collaborative writers can, and often do, carry implications for our own teaching.

Talk

Writing in the Qdoba parking lot: Talk as a vehicle for gaining trust, writing drafts and teaching what we do (Sarah Andrew-Vaughan and Cathy Fleischer)

The story of our collaboration begins in talk.

Cathy and her English education colleagues at Eastern Michigan University were looking for a high school teacher to teach one section of a required pre-service undergraduate course called “Writing for Writing Teachers.” Sarah—a high school English teacher in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and veteran of the Eastern Michigan Writing Project Summer Institute—was fired up by her professional experiences and excited about the opportunity to teach the course, and Cathy—who had not yet met Sarah—was asked to serve as her mentor. And so the two of us decided to meet for coffee to talk about the class. What we didn’t yet realize was that our initial meeting would lead to what’s become a productive and long-standing collaboration, a collaboration that quite literally has changed both of our lives.

At that coffee date, we talked about our teaching, our beliefs about literacy, and our classroom practices, and as we talked, we learned from each other: Sarah shared with Cathy specifics about her approaches to teaching English in a diverse high school; Cathy provided Sarah with new ways of thinking about research-based practices. Most immediately, Cathy talked about a project she used in her version of Writing for Writing Teachers—what she called the Unfamiliar Genre Project. In this project, pre-service teachers were asked to learn about a genre that they found uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or just plain hard. The goal was to have English majors—secure in their abilities as readers and writers—to experience the kinds of discomfort that many of their future students might experience when asked to write in *their* future classes.

Intrigued by teaching this project as part of the college course, Sarah immediately embraced the idea and then extended it—thinking about how this project might connect to her teaching of high school students. How could she better help her students *really* understand genre? Could the unfamiliar genre study—with its focus on individual study of genre—help?

And so we talked, and our collaboration began in earnest. Cathy’s pre-service teachers and Sarah’s high school students became penpals, sharing drafts of writing as Sarah began exploring the Unfamiliar Genre Project in her classroom. During the conversations, we each brought our expertise - Cathy, articles about genre and genre theory; Sarah, her experiences in the classroom. And we kept talking about how the theory and the practice might intertwine.

Our collaboration took a new direction when Sarah decided to respond to a call from *English Journal* about research and

writing. She drafted an article about the Unfamiliar Genre Project. Taking on this project alone, Sarah realized, upon finishing the draft, that she had neglected to talk to Cathy before writing! As Sarah says:

Talk was the basis of our friendship and trust! I was worried. What would Cathy think of what I'd done? Would she want me to submit it? I needed to do what I had skipped: talk with her. That phone call went better than I could have hoped. Yes, she would look at the article. Yes, she would add her part to the story. And yes, she would work quickly given that *English Journal's* deadline was in just three days.

We returned to the basis of our collaboration—we talked (quickly!) about the draft that Sarah had written, and we began what was to become our emerging collaborative writing process: one of us taking the lead by drafting a first pass and the other responding (orally and in writing) to that draft: pushing each other with challenging questions, cheering each other through the hard parts, wondering together what we were learning from this writing.

That article was published in *English Journal* (and in fact later won the Edwin M. Hopkins Award). Buoyed by the success of the article and the idea that our depiction of the Unfamiliar Genre Project might be of interest to other teachers, we proposed a book to an acquisitions editor at Heinemann. The proposal included research, where Cathy would visit Sarah's classroom and together we would document UGP. The project was fueled by our talk as we considered what we both had learned from our original forays into the UGP, how we might translate what we had learned into a high school curriculum, what kinds of research we would employ to study the practice, and more. Throughout the planning stages, we relied on each other's expertise, raising tough questions that were vital to creating a feasible research plan and a reasonable classroom curriculum.

As with every research project, we needed to work through challenges, and we talked after almost every lesson. Our conversations helped us to think hard about the role of research in a classroom setting, and as we thought about notions of responsibility and ethics, we constantly revised our research and writing plan. After months of teaching and research, we had gathered an amazing amount of material about the class. Ready to write, we again turned to talk. We talked about the format and goals of the book, the way we might design chapters, the approach we might take to writing and revising.

We come from different personal and professional circumstances, and found it sometimes difficult to carve out moments for analyzing data and writing. In order to move forward with the project, we would regularly grab lunch at the local Qdoba restaurant at the end of Sarah's school day. We would talk through the research and what we were learning, as well as the challenges we were facing. Inevitably the talk would keep going, so much so that we'd finally give up our table and adjourn to one of our cars in the parking lot. One day as we sat in the parking lot—a day when Sarah was overwhelmed trying to figure out how to write a chapter that she was taking the lead on—Cathy pulled out her tape recorder and encouraged Sarah to “Just talk through what you want to say.” Sarah needed the reminder that sometimes we can't prewrite the piece in our mind's eye. Sometimes we must just begin; the recorded talk, followed by transcription, became a perfect first draft for the section that Sarah now found easier to complete.

As we kept talking, we returned to one of the realizations we'd had at the beginning of our writing collaboration: while our writing might at certain points be more Sarah-led or Cathy-led, the ideas underlying it were shared ones, ideas that we could not have come to alone or without the amount of talk that surrounded our work. Successful collaboration—we have come to understand—is so dependent on the ability to talk honestly about just about everything connected to the work: from theoretical underpinnings to the intricacies of child-rearing and home life. Our collaboration has worked because we've been able to do this. The trust that we have established through talk allows us to recognize that true collaboration does not mean a 50-50 split on everything we produce, but rather that each of us takes a lead at various times in the process. We both contribute, we both value what each other brings to the process, and we are constantly thankful that we have each other to guide us through.

Trust

Collaborating Across the Desk (Meredith Jeta Donovan and Kristen Hawley Turner)

Jeta walked into Kristen's office an eager, hopeful doctoral student. She nervously wondered what her relationship with her new mentor would be. Kristen, a relatively new faculty member working toward tenure, wondered how this novice researcher, who had an interest in literacy, might help her advance her research agenda. Like so many doctoral students and faculty members, we were paired by circumstance and geography - we happened to be in the same place at the same time. Unlike many pairs, who independently work their own interests or who sacrifice the graduate student to focus entirely on the faculty member, we have developed a collaboration that is mutually supportive and beneficial. Imperative in this symbiosis is trust.

Like Cathy and Sarah, our collaboration began with hours of talk. Filling the only two chairs that would fit in Kristen's closet-sized office, we talked about issues of language. Kristen shared her ideas for a research project that investigated the texting language used by adolescents. Jeta responded with stories from her middle school classroom where her 7th graders blended African American Vernacular and Standard English. We connected our practical observations to theory and research that we had been reading, and we began to think about the kinds of questions we had and the kinds of research we wanted to conduct.

The talk turned more formal as Kristen developed a major research project with faculty members from two other institutions,

and Jeta became a sounding board for theoretical framing, methodological choices, and coding practices. By the time it came to code the data, Jeta was as familiar with the project as Kristen, and it seemed natural for her to join the research team in earnest. She coded, trained secondary coders, and participated in analysis as a full team member. Kristen trusted her completely, and invited her to co-author with the three faculty members.

Before we could begin writing together, we had to learn to trust each other. Writing collaboratively, especially between a student and a teacher, requires trust. We needed to trust in each other's abilities, trust in our individual value to each other, trust that we could ask questions and take risks, trust that we could disagree, and trust that we would both be better off for having worked together. We developed this trust through talk, through trial, and through action.

Trust through talk. The dynamic between a student and a mentor is an inherently hierarchical one. For authentic collaboration to happen between us, we had to traverse that power imbalance. For Jeta, that meant being willing to open her mind to Kristen's work but also to open her mouth, to share her thinking, her questions, and her doubts. When it came time for Jeta to select a topic for her dissertation, the most conforming and safest route would have been to do an extension of Kristen's research. But for authentic collaboration to happen, Jeta had to know her own mind and take risks down her own academic path. Jeta ended up selecting a topic very much informed by the work on adolescent digital writing she had done with Kristen but also drawn from her own independent experiences as a teacher.

For collaboration to happen, we had to be willing not to defer to Kristen's expertise but to wrestle openly with her thinking. As we worked together on a coding scheme for the study of teenager's writing, we each brought our strengths to the deliberation-- Kristen's knowledge and experience of qualitative coding and Jeta's deep knowledge of the data from the study. This process had to involve push back. As the two of us sat down to define categories and identify themes, Jeta had to be willing to disagree, to question, and to put forth her own ideas. Through our process of disagreements, questioning, consultation, and consensus, we were able to develop a very strong coding scheme, one that represented the strengths we each brought to the work. Dewey (1999) described meaningful, beneficial collaboration between individuals. He said, in “the give and take of participation... conformity is the absence of vital interplay; the arrest and numbing of communication” (p. 42). For Dewey and for us, authentic, honest talk was the only way to build a more balanced relationship. This balance, achieved through trust, allowed us to move from teacher and student to collaborative partners.

Trust through action. When Jeta began working for Kristen as a first year doctoral student, she fumbled through the language of qualitative research and trudged blindly through her first data coding project. She spent anxious hours figuring out specific tasks, such as how to code an interview, and more global issues, like how to think and communicate as a researcher. She had much to learn in both process and product, and Kristen took time and effort to guide her entry into the world of academia. As we worked through tasks together, building Jeta's knowledge of qualitative coding software and interrater reliability, we also built trust. New projects brought new tasks, such as field work and transcribing, and with each step, we learned each other's work ethics, problem-solving skills, and communication patterns. These actions all helped build trust in our partner.

Trust through trial. As a graduate student learning the ropes, Jeta often felt uncertain, and in the fast-paced world of research, she needed to plunge into this uncertainty with full force in order to hold Kristen's trust. At the same time, she needed to admit when she was unsure, trusting that Kristen would be there to support and help. When Kristen invited Jeta to co-author with the faculty research team, Jeta put aside her fear of putting her own writing alongside that of seasoned academics. She was willing to take that risk because we had developed a relationship where we respected each other's efforts. We did not develop trust by staying in our comfort zones. To move forward, we had to take risks, to experiment with each other, to be willing to make mistakes, and (even worse) to be willing to make mistakes in front of one another. When Jeta first sent her draft of the paper to Kristen and the research team, she accepted a certain professional and even personal vulnerability. It is a risk for others to read your words, to know your skills, to know your thoughts, and evaluate those. Sharing our writing and taking these risks has been an integral part of our pathway to collaboration. As her doctoral advisor, Kristen reads Jeta's writing all the time, but Kristen also asks for feedback from Jeta before submitting manuscripts. This give and take of feedback and critique, though scary at times, is how we built value, trust, and respect for each other's perspectives. These trials shaped our collaboration and solidified the trust we had in each other.

Trust cannot be achieved without talk, action, and trial, and through these recursive phases our collaboration has blossomed. From that moment four years ago, when Jeta entered Kristen's office, two novices have become two colleagues who talk, share, and write together - from their individual perspectives, across the desk.

Write

Forming Partnerships and Writing Identities (Nicole Sieben and Laraine Wallowitz)

Just like Cathy and Sarah, and Kristen and Jeta, our collaboration began in talking, taking action, and trusting. As critical feminist pedagogues, we found that our mutual interests and goals in research, teaching, and learning led to fruitful teaching, presenting, and writing collaborations. When Nicole was a master's student, Laraine was her professor for five courses. During one course, Laraine allowed Nicole the chance to plan a lesson with her on preconceived notions of feminism. As a preservice

teacher, it was a powerful experience for Nicole to talk through the metacognitive process of planning and writing a lesson with an experienced educator. As it turned out, the lesson was a success in that everyone was engaged and eager to share perspectives on our position statements. From this first, low-stakes collaborative experience, Laraine and Nicole realized the potential success that their collaborations could have. We believe that this brief writing and lesson planning exercise was an important part of our establishment of trust in each other as writing partners and co-authors.

After talk and trust, it was time to write! Once we had collaborated on a short writing activity, we were able to engage in larger research and writing projects together. Deciding who should begin the writing was our starting point. On our first publication, Laraine took the initial lead, since it was initially her project, and she had invited Nicole to write with her as part of Nicole's final assignment in her master's seminar. Laraine suggested splitting up the task 50/50. She wrote the introduction, and Nicole wrote the conclusion. Then we divided the chapter into subsections. Every time we completed a sub-section, we would exchange sections, read each other's writing, edit and revise for one another using track changes in Microsoft Word, and then we would meet to talk about the draft. Together, we researched, wrote, revised, and edited each other's work on influential women in the labor movement until we—and our editors—were satisfied with the product we created. For this publication, we wrote in a singular voice, taking care to ensure that our piece sounded unified. From this writing project, Nicole learned experientially about editing, deadlines, researching, and formatting for publication.

A year after our first publication, as a high school teacher with a master's degree completed, Nicole still kept in touch with Laraine as she had been, and still is, an extremely influential mentor in her life. When we learned of the call for manuscripts for a special issue of the *English Journal* on teaching gender and sexuality in secondary schools, we decided to collaborate and create a double voice article. After conferencing, we realized that it might be more effective to layer the article using two voices to illustrate the effects that a graduate class on gender and sexuality could have on a teacher's classroom. For this piece, we decided to maintain our *individual* voices as writers but to share our *mutual* perspective about the importance of teaching queer theory in secondary classrooms and in English education programs. With this shared vision, we detailed our inclusive teaching practices at the college and secondary levels respectively. This is the article that resulted in our 2010 Edwin M. Hopkins Award.

The success that we have experienced in writing together has come from a multitude of factors. When we originally discovered our mutual pedagogical interests, Nicole was Laraine's student at their university. Based on our dialogues during class discussions and advising sessions, we quickly discovered that we shared a mutual vision of teaching for social justice, particularly with respect to issues of gender and sexuality. Thus, our collaborative writings so far have been grounded in critical theory, feminist theory, and queer theory. Together, we have contextualized current issues in education, problematized the familiar, and created curricular frameworks and recommendations for secondary English language arts teachers to use in their classrooms.

We also respect each other as writers, thinkers, teachers, and researchers. Neither of us clings desperately to our egos. We welcome feedback from each other and are open to recommendations for changes and edits. As scholars in English education, we value intellectual property rights and realize that discussing first authorship roles is important when setting out on a collaborative research and writing project. Laraine took the lead on the first publication and was first author; however, Nicole took the lead on the second publication and was first author on that piece. Ultimately, we felt that we had both contributed to both publications equally and therefore alternated first authorship roles. We believe that this discussion of authorship and sharing credit is important in maintaining a collaborative relationship.

In addition, we are loyal to deadlines and make sure to update each other on progress that we are making along the way. While writing deadlines are important to maintain, we realize that as teachers sometimes our students have needs that require us to revise our writing schedules. With our students and our writing as equally important priorities, we maintain constant communication with one another so if an event necessitates our immediate attention, we are able to adjust.

We are still supportive of each other's individual work in various ways. While Nicole is completing her dissertation at another university, Laraine has provided sound advice as a friend and mentor about the process and has remained a supportive collaborator in offering to be a second coder of essays during Nicole's data analysis. Additionally, Laraine's writing on social justice teaching methods in literacy education has been influential in Nicole's dissertation work and curricular choices. Nicole's students often read Laraine's writing and other texts that spark important conversations and collaborations in Nicole's classes. As a collaborative team, we have modeled the benefits of collaboration for our students and often encourage our students at the university where we teach to find those powerful partnerships and pursue them to create joint writing identities. As many of us know, writing is an identity building skill (Lavelle, 2009) and writing collaboratively also contributes to our individual and collective identities as scholars. The people who we choose to write with become a piece of our writing histories, and we become a part of theirs. Therefore, choosing the right collaborations are important.

Since writing can be a strenuous process—one that takes a great deal of time, commitment, and energy—we also feel that celebrating the small victories along the way is important in motivating us to forge forward. During our writing collaborations, we make sure to self-consecrate. Whether we treat ourselves to dinner or a show in the city, we make the time to reward our proximal accomplishments en route to meeting our long-term writing goals, with shared celebratory moments that continue to establish the trust and trueness of our working relationship. Working together in this way, we have established a professional friendship that transcends

our writing, but we recognize that it is through our collaborations that we have formed a trusting alliance that we can both equally depend on for professional support throughout various academic endeavors.

Teach

Collaborative Writers Teaching Collaborative Writing: Lessons Learned (Jim Fredricksen and Leah Zuidema)

When the two of us reflect together on our experiences with collaboration, we notice some unique aspects of the goals and situation of our partnership, yet we also see many connections with the ideas shared so far. Unlike the other pairs in this article, ours is a long-distance collaboration: when we were both beginning professors, we agreed to be thinking partners who would check in once a week to talk reflectively about our teaching, our scholarship, and our roles as professors. Initially, writing was a means of “talk”: we used a shared Google Docs journal to dialogue about our work. We've since broadened the range of tools that we use to support our collaboration: now, in addition to sharing documents in Google Drive, we have regular Skype and Google Hangout meetings that allow us think aloud together while also drafting, revising, and editing in our shared online tools, which include VoiceThread conversations, Dropbox folders, and DeDoose data analysis projects. We've become writing partners who compose teaching materials, teacher-research studies, conference presentations, and manuscripts together, but we've found that talk still takes as much or more of our time as putting ideas into words on the screen.

Though the projects and modes of collaboration have changed over time, the goal of learning together has stayed the same. We share anecdotes from our work and make meaning of them; we raise questions that surface assumptions about learning, teaching, and writing; we challenge each other's assumptions, practices, and interpretations of ideas. In short, we take an inquiry stance toward our work, and as others have already said so well, we've learned that there is a reciprocal relationship: to risk meaningful inquiry requires trust, and trust fosters meaningful inquiry. We aren't “just” writing. We are learning together, and we are learning how to learn and write together.

Teaching Writing Together

Our inquiry has consistently included a focus on teaching writing. One unanticipated outcome of our own collaboration (and of our attempts to have our students engage in cross-institutional collaboration) is that we've also learned a few things from these experiences and conversations that are useful for teaching our students to be effective collaborative writers (and teachers of collaborative writing).

Although others have made the point that writing teachers should be writers themselves (*e.g.*, Gillespie, 1991; Kittle, 2008; McEntee, 1998; Mohr et al., 2004; Romano, 1991), we want to extend the idea. As we see it, teachers of collaborative writing should be collaborative writers themselves. Our reasoning is simple: writing together influences the way that we teach students to write together. To make our case, we share here a few of the lessons about teaching collaborative writing that we've learned by doing collaborative writing.

1. *Writing well together requires talk about process.* Collaborative writing helps writers in our courses better understand the writing process, specifically how it can be a distinct and individual process. In our own collaboration, we see this at play. Often, we find ourselves talking to one another as a way to find the things we might want to say in a piece. Yet, we approach these moments quite differently. For example, one of us might open up a Google Doc and start throwing down words and ideas. The other might need to do more reading. We might need to clear other things off our plates or we might work for just a handful of minutes as we only have a set amount of time in our day to work.

These differences in writing processes play out in our classes when we teach writers or future teachers of writers. One of our takeaways is that we want our students to better understand their own writing processes and practices and, at the same time, to learn how others approach the act of writing differently. We want to open up space—not only to talk about content in our pieces or about the final products we create, but also to talk about our stories as writers: what are our goals? what obstacles do we face? what resources, including others, could help us overcome these obstacles? how do I see the process and how is that different than my collaborator's view? We ask these kind of questions of our students, and we're able to share from our own experiences, because we take the time to ask ourselves these questions as we work together.

2. *Writing well together requires rhetorical attention.* Collaborative writing helps writers in our courses understand rhetorical principles. One such rhetorical principle might be, “Move your reader from what is familiar to what is unfamiliar, from what is known to the reader to what is unknown to the reader.” In our own writing process, we sometimes do not consider the audience, especially early on. Usually, we're simply trying to figure out our own claim, how our evidence supports it, and how it's all tied together to what others have written or thought about before. Yet, there is a point when we do consider the audience, and it's usually after we have a good start on where we might want to head. Of course, this happens when we write individually, too; however, our collaboration means that we must talk and, importantly, listen to ourselves. Our conversation around a central task - the push and pull of talking

and of listening and of writing - means that we can check our own assumptions about what we're writing, about what we're trying to say when we write, and about what we want our audience to consider. As collaborative writers, we find that we need to return time and again to questions of genre, audience, purpose, and situation. And as teachers of writing collaboration, we find that students need support in developing these same kinds of rhetorical sensitivities—and in doing so with a partner. Like us, they need time, space, and permission to spend at least as much time in talking as in putting words on a page.

3. *Writing well together may be messy.* We know some collaborators who divide the work into sections, and one person takes the lead here and the other takes the lead there. Occasionally that happens for us, but our most generative and satisfying collaborations happen when we work through a section together, testing what we mean against what we write. We do that through the lens of moving from what we think our audience is coming to our text knowing and believing, and then moving them to new insights. This movement, of course, takes place at the whole text level, at the section level, and even at the sentence level. Collaboration helps us as we generate ideas, but also as we refine them. A rhetorical principle helps to move our conversations forward in a focused and shared way.

This informs our teaching in many ways, but mostly it's because this approach is pedagogical: we're trying to teach our readers, and to understand our students' knowledge and abilities. Put another way, we find our collaborative writing to be analogous to our teaching: we take a stance of inquiry in our teaching, which means that we want to learn from our students as we pursue answers to big questions central to our work. That is, although we're leaders of a group of students, we see ourselves as collaborators, too.

We see this pursuit with our students as a form of collaboration, and we're trying to model and mentor our students into a collaborative way of inquiring and producing. When we collaborate with one another, we are in fact engaging in the kind of practice we see as central to our work as teachers and scholars.

4. *Writing well together is a creative act.* Collaborative writing helps students see that writing is not simply an act of demonstrating what one knows: it's also a way to discover those ideas. We see this play out in several ways. We often work with students who believe that they have to know what they want to write before they put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboards. We want them to begin to recognize that writing can be one way to discover (e.g., when a writer writes an initial draft and discovers the thesis at the very end of that draft). Collaboration, we think, helps writers discover insights they wouldn't otherwise make on their own. When we collaborate, we often find ourselves speaking to the other person while that person takes notes. These are often brainstorming moments, and later, when the speaker looks at the notes, an insight not considered beforehand rises into view. That is, the collaboration helps us learn how to listen to our own selves, because someone else is listening to us and consequently helps us pay attention to our own words.

When our students—who often see writing as a one-shot demonstration of proving what they know—begin to collaborate, they are forced to work with new and different ideas. Differences and even conflicts arise. We don't shy away from them. In fact, we come just short of celebrating them, because we believe these conflicts are the whole point of working with another person: how does someone see a situation differently than you? How can you come to consensus? How might you synthesize your ideas or approach? This kind of conflict is often an internal one when writers work alone, and it can be the thing that prevents some students from committing to an idea. In other words, sometimes students have conflicting ideas and aren't quite sure how to move forward to the first sentence of a piece. Other times they have an idea and never question it - never see how others might read it differently than what they imagine. Collaboration can provide a space and an opportunity to practice identifying and navigating more than one idea.

5. *Writing well together is a choice.* An important lesson from our collaboration is that we collaborate by choice and we're generally interested in the same goals. That is, we value the same kind of relationship and goals for our work together. This raises questions for us about teaching collaborative writing. How can we ensure that our students have significant learning experiences with collaborative writing—essentially requiring that they participate—while also allowing them the freedom to make the kinds of choices that are essential to writing well together? How can we provide them with both the opportunities and the skills to build collaborative partnerships around shared goals and practices? We have more questions than answers on this front, but our own experiences with collaboration lead us to believe it is important for us to keep negotiating these dilemmas.

For us, collaborating as partners in inquiry about our teaching evolved into a way to also be partners in scholarship and writing. Unexpectedly, our work together has also become a resource for thinking about how best to help students collaborate as thinking partners, scholars, and writers. We wouldn't have it any other way.

Conclusion: Successful Collaboration is about Relationships

It was apparent during the NCTE session, as we feel it is in this piece, that at the heart of every successful collaboration is a successful relationship. The authors represented above have negotiated issues of power (such as the student-teacher relationship), institutional differences, and geographic distance. Above all, they have valued the relationships that form the core of their writing partnerships. Throughout the NCTE session conversations, those relationships were consistently mentioned above all else, and we feel that as with any relationship, trust can emerge.

Laraine and Nicole, as keynote speakers at the session, presented attendees with a tip sheet for collaborative writing, which we have collaboratively revised. We share these tips with other writers, with the understanding that a true collaboration will begin with talk in an effort to build trust.

Tips for Writing Collaboratively:

- Let go of egos.
- Be honest about what you do and do not know.
- Respect co-writer's expertise.
- Allow co-writers to be mentors.
- Decide on double voice or unified voice.
- Establish authorship roles.
- Maintain deadlines.
- Self-consecrate as a team.
- Use technology as an aid for editing, meeting virtually, and researching collaboratively.
- Maintain a sense of humor and seriousness in harmony.
- Recognize the power and possibility of writing with other people.

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About the Authors

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