

English Education Mentoring

Composition Studies/English Education Connections

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At the 2001 CCCC, a special interest group met for the first time. Jonathan Bush and Janet Alsup were the co-founders of this SIG, and members were primarily English educators who had completed graduate studies in rhetoric and composition; why else would they be attending the C's? Five years later, the group—currently known as Composition/English Education Connections—has plans to meet at both CCCC and NCTE, and it is still evolving; however, “professional profile” patterns of participants have begun to emerge. SIG members tend to teach writing or literacy-related methods classes for pre-service English teachers, and they often supervise field experiences and/or student teaching for English majors. In addition, they often work with in-service teachers in National Writing Project sites or graduate composition courses. However, SIG members usually combine these English education responsibilities with so-called “straight” composition roles; more specifically, they are often (or in the past have been) affiliated with first-year composition programs, WAC/WID initiatives, or writing centers. Not surprisingly, then, some SIG members teach in English departments, others teach in education departments, and still others have dual placements in both professional settings. Everyone is welcome.

The SIG's formation coincides with the publication of two significant and closely related texts: Robert Tremmel and William Broz's *Teaching Writing Teachers of High School English and First-Year Composition* and a special issue of *English Education* (volume 31.4 to be precise). To capture Tremmel and Broz's purpose, Richard Gebhardt explains in the foreword that the book, as a whole, reminds him of the collaboration between Edward P.J. Corbett, arguably one of the most important composition studies scholars in the history of the field, and the Executive Committee of the Ohio Council for Teachers of English Language Arts (OCTELA), whose members are primarily English teachers K-12. Their cooperative and productive work *overtwenty-five years ago* provides evidence that “seeds of unity” do, in fact, exist among teachers and scholars in both English education and composition studies, but those seeds, as *Teaching Writing Teachers* attests, have not yet “grown into full flower” (Gebhardt v). The purpose of *English Education* 34.1 is similar, but Dana L. Fox and Cathy Fleischer employ a different metaphor, border crossing:

In our professional lives as English educators, our work with preservice and practicing

teachers takes us across a number of traditional education boundaries, both literal and figurative. For example, we travel back and forth between the physical sites of the university and school communities we inhabit daily, or we move across department and disciplinary boundaries within the university setting. In these border-crossings (sometimes smooth and seamless, other times rocky and uncomfortable), we negotiate among various discourse communities and cultural norms and expectations. While some of the boundaries we encounter seem natural and useful, others seem to be artificial and contrived distinctions. (3)

This roundtable attempts to continue the conversation, in the Burkean Parlor metaphor sense of the word. The co-authors happen to be SIG members, and they represent a cross-section of the group. W. Douglas Baker teaches undergraduate and graduate writing methods and theory courses at Eastern Michigan University. Along with Heidi Estrem, he is co-chair of the Conference on English Education's commission on Writing Teacher Education, a group that is working to build contact and community across all writing teacher education. Elizabeth Brockman, the current co-chair of the Composition/English Education SIG, is a former secondary-level English teacher who currently teaches a composition methods course for pre-service English teachers at Central Michigan University, where she also supervises a field experience program and student teaching. In fall 2005, she began a three-year tenure as the new director of composition, a role she has served in the past on an interim basis. Kia Jane Richmond teaches the writing methods course at Northern Michigan University, where she also supervises student teachers with English majors. She is also chair of the Conference of English Education commission on English education coursework. Jonathan Bush teaches composition methods courses at Western Michigan University and is also a co-director of a writing project. He also coordinates an intensive in-service writing teacher education experience for current teachers each summer. Like many SIG members, Jonathan Bush, Elizabeth Brockman, and Kia Jane Richmond all emerged from composition and rhetoric graduate programs. In contrast, W. Douglas Baker's background is not in composition studies but in education with an emphasis on writing and literacy.

To create this roundtable, the co-authors explored several different composition-related questions and topics, but in the end two issues emerged as crucial: (1) *What theory from composition studies do you believe is important to include in classes for future elementary and/or secondary writing teachers?* (2) *What are the knowledge, background, traits, and abilities of a successful writing teacher and/or writing methods faculty member?* To answer these questions, each co-author created his/her own responses, and then a combined works cited page was assembled.

Question #1: What theory from Composition Studies is important to include in classes for future elementary and/or secondary writing teachers? How does this relate to the preparation of college-level composition instructors?

Elizabeth Brockman

In my composition methods classes, I always assign Maxine Hairston's "The Winds of Change," so all of my students learn Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigm shifts. As Hairston makes clear, Kuhn's theory is grounded in science, but it's transportable to other disciplines/arenas, and so for clarification purposes, we initially explore paradigm shifts of large-scale social issues: women in the workforce, marriages for bi-racial/homosexual couples, and even earrings for men are three good examples. In each case, students can easily describe the old/new paradigms governing social behavior, and they can talk with authority about the unstable transition period, citing

specific examples of often painful disagreement and unrest at the national level and in their personal lives, as different parties vie for stability or change. It's productive, too, to debate whether students believe the paradigm shift in any of these social cases is complete, and equally important, what evidence they cite to support their views. Interestingly, students seldom agree on this topic, which reinforces Kuhn's theory that paradigm shifts are anything but smooth, steady, or linear.

Next, I remind my classes that paradigm shifts need not represent solely national trends; they can also be local phenomena. Still focusing on social themes but in a single school setting, I mention that the student body in my most recent high school position was in the midst of a small-scale paradigm shift over—of all things—the value of wearing letter jackets. In previous decades, a letter jacket had apparently been a status symbol representing prowess and machismo, just as it is, for example, in *Happy Days* or *American Graffiti*; that model, however, was changing, and the transition period was fraught with tension and angst, just as Kuhn's theory would suggest. Those clinging to the old model—that is, athletes who continued to wear their letter jackets with pride—were not in physical danger, but they did pay a social price for their school spirit. In hallway and cafeteria encounters, they were often the objects of mockery, scorn, and derision by peer athletes who embraced the new model: that wearing letter jackets was naive, unsophisticated, and generally *un-cool*. As Timothy Lensmire has shown, informal social hierarchies are real and powerful forces in school culture, so Kuhn's theory applies to even something as seemingly insignificant and informal as letter jackets.

Eventually, my methods students and I return to the field of composition and focus squarely on Hairston's observations, walking our way through Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*, 70s open admissions policies, graduate composition programs, and so forth, which Hairston cites as concrete signs of instability and change. This information is all new to my students. Then we compare the old paradigm with the new: the so-called current-traditional paradigm of teaching writing to the then-emerging process model. Though unfamiliar with Kuhn's theory and Hairston's signs of instability/change, my students are well versed in the traditional vs. writing-as-a-process debates, so this comparison is "old hat" to them. In the Introduction to *Taking Stock: The Writing Process Movement in the 90's*, Lad Tobin has indicated, however, that the field has perhaps too easily dismissed traditionalists by unfairly constructing them all as old fogies, fuddy-duddies, or even villains (5), so I momentarily (and cautiously!) encourage students to sympathize with those embracing the old paradigm—any old paradigm—by asking them to put themselves in their shoes. More specifically, I ask them to imagine their reaction if in thirty years or so, after they had spent a lifetime teaching, a new group of teachers and theorists claimed literacy circles or scoring rubrics (or any method/value my students would currently defend to the hilt) were ineffective or even hurtful to students. Would they roll over and embrace the new paradigm, or would they resist, holding tightly to the old method/value that they had been using their entire career? And just how high are the professional stakes for either choice?

Having answered these questions, my students begin to see why paradigm shifts take place so slowly and cantankerously; equally important, they understand how it's possible (nearly fifty years after Dartmouth) to have both traditional and writing-as-a-process teachers "out there," sometimes working within the sameschool districts and departments. Not surprisingly, then, my students wonder if the paradigm shift Hairston heralded is complete or not, and I tell them it's an intriguing question, rendered even more so by 1990s post-process critiques of the process movement:

But like rock music, free love, political protests, and other trends that flourished in the late 60s, the writing process movement has begun to get squeezed by the past and the future, by the right and the left. The critique from traditionalists, including many

administrators, teachers, and parents, was expected . . . [but] somewhere along the line, the followers of Murray, Macrorie, Macrimmon, and Moffet, still struggling to convince the establishment, somehow became the establishment. And to their surprise and horror, they suddenly found themselves exposed on their left flank (the military metaphors unfortunately seem to fit the spirit of the debate). (Tobin 5)

And so the winds of change blow—again.

Maxine Hairston's "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing" is a landmark essay in the field of composition, and it does a fine job of introducing methods students to Kuhn's theory of paradigm shifts. Without this theory, students are likely to describe educational trends as the general public does: a pendulum swinging slowly, steadily, smoothly, and surely back and forth (back and forth, back and forth) and in only two directions. Kuhn helps students call into question this overly simplistic metaphor, and it also helps them to understand why even important pedagogical change happens so slowly, and often painfully.

Jonathan Bush

This is an important question that I struggle with on a regular basis. How much theory do I bring into my composition methods classroom? On one hand, if I do too much theory, I run the risk of having my students tune me out as they turn to other places to seek "hands-on" practice of their craft. On the other hand, I risk, by underselling theory, the possibility of passing on a notion that teaching is atheoretical—and relies on tricks and gimmicks, rather than an understanding of purpose or goals, to develop pedagogy. In each case, there would be vast negative consequences for my students' future teaching careers.

I see my goal as a writing teacher educator, particularly when dealing with undergraduate teacher education candidates, as one of developing commitment, confidence, and competence in these future teachers. This deeply influences how I approach composition theory in this context. This theory is a tool for us as a community of teachers to think about our practices, develop ideals that support and guide those practices, and then evaluate how we have met or missed those pedagogical goals.

I always begin this sort of course by focusing on the commitment aspect of teaching composition. Many of my students have come to English language arts because of their self-described love of literature. Many of them define themselves as being literature teachers. Often, because of the ways many of them (although not all) have been taught writing in their past—primarily in a current-traditional mode that emphasizes formula over invention, and teacher-directed text over real audiences and purposes—many of my students come to the class seeing writing as a chore, something to dealt with, but not enjoyed on the journey to teaching literary texts. My first goal, then, is to use theory and practice to break down this concept and create excitement about teaching writing. I want students to realize that writing can be an enjoyable, yet rigorous, act. I begin this process by introducing the concept of best practices in writing as described by Stephen Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, and Arthur Hyde in *Best Practice: New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*. This text summarizes composition practice into short, bullet-like statements with explanations and discussion that describe the general ideals that many writing teachers believe describe good composition instruction. These statements, while skirting controversies that span across composition studies, include, among others

- All children can and should write.

- Grammar is best learned in the context of actual writing.
- Teachers can help students get started writing.
- Teachers must support students as they write.
- Students should write for real audiences and real purposes.

These statements give my students something to grasp, so they can also say, “The five-paragraph essay from my high school class WAS bad teaching after all.” It opens the door to deeper understanding of the core issues of teaching writing and allows for further exploration. Does this mean that best practice is enough for teachers to know? Absolutely not. Rather, these truths are used to provide a base for later explorations into composition theory; without that base as a springboard from commitment into competence and confidence, however, students tend not to appreciate composition work.

Once this initial commitment phase is completed, I bring in some composition theory to complicate my students’ evolving beliefs about teaching. In particular, I introduce them to various traditions of teaching writing—the expressive, cognitive, socio-epistemic, neo-rhetorical—and then ask them to identify themselves within those approaches as we learn about methods associated with each. When we look at issues of revision, for example, I might ask students to consider how an expressive approach to revision may look in comparison to one from a critical/social perspective. Likewise, I ask students to consider the writing process from a cognitive and a neo-rhetorical perspective. As students articulate a greater awareness of their own beliefs and conceptions of “best practice,” I ask them to take a stance and declare their own philosophy of teaching writing, both in terms of the best practice ideals and traditions of composition studies that complicate those ideals. By doing this, I try to place theory into the appropriate context as these new teachers begin to come to terms with their own history as writers and their developing knowledge as teachers of writing.

Kia Jane Richmond

I introduce my students to C.H. Knoblauch’s four philosophies of composition, as they are defined in his *College English* article, “Rhetorical Constructions: Dialogue and Commitment.” Doing so helps students to analyze their own educational experiences with writing, as well as to examine various trends in composition instruction in the public schools. We discuss Knoblauch’s philosophies (defined as ontological, objectivist, expressivist, and sociological/dialogical), and then attempt to classify teachers we have observed during field experiences or authors we’ve read for the course (i.e., Nancie Atwell, Peter Elbow, and Mary Erhenworth). Reflecting on how beliefs are connected to one’s actions in the classroom is an important part of making the transition from student to teacher.

As Dick Fulkerson argues in “Four Philosophies of Composition,” it is also important to match assessment to one’s philosophy of teaching writing; therefore, I also ask students to consider what types of evaluation would be used by teachers who fall into each of Knoblauch’s categories. What kind of assessment strategies are used by a teacher who believes that writing involves personal voice, creativity, expression, and collaboration (expressivist)? How would the classroom of a teacher who sees writing as experimental and tied to correctness or standards (objectivist) set up a portfolio system of evaluation? By inviting our English education students to examine how writing is taught (and evaluated), we are apt to produce strong writing teachers who will in turn help their students to be more critically informed and reflective.

As a group of writing teacher educators, we value connecting students to the rich history of composition studies. Whether it is using an overview approach or a specific

examination of one epistemological position, each of us works to invite students to view writing not as a stagnant set of skills that can be taught but as an academic discipline, one that is fluid and tied as much to practitioners' beliefs as to its situatedness within the larger context of English Studies.

The connection between theory and practice seems to be both overt and imperceptible. Jonathan, Elizabeth, Doug, and I encourage students to examine the practices of real teachers and writers, including ourselves. Traversing back and forth between teacher and theory, talking or writing about why they think writing teachers do what they do, our students are invited to be active participants in their own learning and to develop (or identify) their own reason for writing (or teaching) from one position or another. By giving students the opportunity to examine "the assumptions, biases, fears, fantasies, literacies, values, and political beliefs they are bringing with them to their teaching" (Tobin, *Reading Student Writing* 137–8), we are setting up our classrooms as sites of both reflection and action. This invitational approach to dialogue and self-knowledge seems to support the way that Lad Tobin defines teaching: as "a way of reading and writing" (129). Tobin goes on to say, "Students learn to teach through, first, learning to read the classroom and, second, learning to write themselves within that classroom." Our students, by responding to and discussing theories of composing, and by observing and analyzing best practices, are enacting the concept of teaching as an act of such reading and writing.

W. Douglas Baker

I strive to make visible to student-teachers representative theories of writing and the underlying assumptions and implications for what becomes available for students to learn. However, these student-teachers face three main tasks that make it essential that we provide tools for guide them.

First, pre-service teachers (our students) spend huge amounts of time visiting classrooms and observing instruction, or at least watching the interactions among class members, and they read about and discuss the practices and conceptual frameworks of model writing teachers (found in, for example, Nancie Atwell's *In the Middle* or Katie Wood Ray & Lester L. Larminack's *The Writing Workshop*); providing a framework of multiple lenses for these observations and interactions becomes a tool to inform how they understand what is revealed to them through classrooms and texts. Second, pre-service teachers are often encouraged simultaneously to examine their experiences and processes as writers in classrooms and to teach implicit instructional frameworks and conceptual models. A concluding objective is for these student-teachers to weave all of this information into beliefs that form theoretical underpinnings of cohesive, planned curricula that demonstrate alignment to theories reflected in them and to the presumed needs of their students. A tall order for inexperienced teachers—for any teacher.

As English educators, we are interested in how pre-service teachers plan, organize, and design activities of proposed curricula because these actions will presumably drive what their students have access to for learning. However, I find that these objectives for our students are challenging for us as teachers and for them. As a teacher, I model instruction, analyze and discuss representative strategies of writers and writing teachers, seek to develop in the students a conscious awareness of their choices as writers, and encourage them to reflect on their processes as writers and teachers. As students, they listen to a teacher reveal his/her pedagogy, maybe for the first time, they read about in texts and engage in some of the strategies of writers and of writing teachers, they observe and informally interview teachers, and they participate in classroom discussions in their quests to develop as writers and teachers.

Part of revealing choices that I make as a writing teacher demands that I provide a rationale for pedagogical beliefs and practices, but embedded dilemmas rise to reveal some of the complexities of teaching writing. For example, similar to Donald Murray (in *A Writer Teaches Writing Revised*), Peter Elbow (in *Writing without Teachers*), and Nancie Atwell (in *In the Middle*) among other writing teachers, I position students as writers and encourage them to write from their experiences, e.g., personal narrative, a genre that lends to an expressivist approach, or the sociological/dialogical since the composing will be personal and informed by the interactions with others (and their own personal contexts). As writers, student-teachers may wonder, “What is a personal narrative? What should I choose to reveal to my peers? Do I have to tell the whole truth? What if I want to change something? How long does it have to be?” However, I also position student-teachers as writing teachers, and so other questions may be raised from this perspective. For example, what counts as a personal narrative? What if a student feels constrained by writing from his or her personal experiences? How should I respond to their experiences, especially if they are really personal?

In order to guide the student-teachers to answer these questions from the different perspectives, I believe that it is essential to invite them into the conversations of assessment. As the field of composition studies generally agrees, assessment practices should be aligned with the teacher’s conceptual framework for teaching writing. By examining questions of assessment from the perspectives of writers and teachers, student-teachers may begin to change conceptually how they view an idea or action (such as writing personal narratives) and, subsequently, reconstruct their beliefs that lead them to consciously develop and align classroom practices, ones that meet the needs of their students. Of course, one of the dilemmas of this conceptual change process is that despite all of their efforts in a writing pedagogy class, beginning teachers seek unequivocal methods that they can implement during their student teaching. But an understanding of how to apply informing frameworks evolves over time, and that is why teaching writing is a career.

Question #2: What are the knowledge, background, traits, and abilities of a successful writing teacher and/or composition methods professor? What should he/she know, believe, and be able to do?

Jonathan Bush

On the first day of my teaching writing course, I usually ask my students to describe the perfect writing teacher. We then turn this into a somewhat silly activity where small groups of students use crafts (yarn, construction paper, markers, etc.) to construct an image of this teacher, with labels and background. Some groups always seem to take the contrary route and mine some negative experiences to create a villainous teacher of writing. After they present, I leave the room for 5–7 minutes and ask the class to create a list of dos and don’ts for writing teachers. The lists tend to be remarkably accurate in terms of the concepts I like to teach. My most recent class created the following lists:

Do	Don’t
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give one-on-one feedback 2. Give constructive criticism 3. Provide rubrics 4. Build relationships 5. Be positive but critical 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Waste time with busywork 2. Make writing an “exercise” or a formula 3. Have a red pen mentality 4. Emphasize grammar over

6. Encourage individuality/respect difference 7. Be flexible 8. Allow revisions 9. Create relevant assignments, with real purposes and real audiences 10. Provide choices 11. Be available 12. Return papers quickly 13. Leave room for creativity 14. Teach grammar in context	communication 5. Humiliate students 6. Single out students 7. Use writing as punishment 8. Become a dictator 9. Prejudge 10. Do the same thing over and over again 11. Expect perfect papers
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When I return, my students and I go through their lists, and I describe my expectations for our course. In particular, I describe my goals of helping them use the course to become committed to the concept of teaching writing, competent in the theories and practices that guide writing teachers and exemplify best practice in writing, and experienced in applying and using those theories and practices. Within the construct of the course, and its limited opportunity for field experiences (usually a one-week project in a local middle or high school at the end of the course), I see my course as a stepping-stone towards my ultimate goal of creating a generation of committed, competent, and experienced teachers of writing.

This list I show above, with minor changes, is essentially replicated each time I teach a new section of this course, or I interact with students unschooled in composition theory and practice who are studying to become teachers. What it tends to show is that the concepts we teach in composition theory are not foreign ideas, or ones that run counter to intuition. Rather, what we do, as writing teacher educators, is build on those ideas—ones that are already in our students' memories from their own experiences—and give them names, theories, and practical implications.

For example, I see my course as an introductory experience in which I break down students' previous perceptions of teaching writing, show the possibilities that exist (as well as the theories that back those practices), and give students an opportunity to practice their craft in a assisted, controlled, supportive environment. The full process cannot become complete until afterward, when my students have made the full transition from student to teacher. I engage them in the concepts and practices of the field of composition and work to help them engage with these ideals, and, most importantly, commit to these concepts, no matter the roadblocks they may find in their schools to putting them into practice.

Referring to my responses to question #1, a good beginning for this process of intellectual maturation is the *Best Practice* series (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde); once my students begin to understand that their ideas are within the overall guiding concepts of our field, then we can begin to take those ideas, and break them apart, critique, and develop them by reading, developing, and considering composition theories not as another concept, but as a reasonable follow-up of finding out more about what we already know.

One of the benefits of being in my current position for several years now is that I am beginning to see how this project I have taken on is beginning to turn out. My first students are now in their third and fourth years of teaching. Some of my former students have become best practice teachers who teach to our "dos" and live up to their expectations and our concepts. I see them at writing project programs, at conferences,

and at in-services. I also get e-mails with questions (and sometimes advice for me, telling about situations they've come across in their teaching). Much like the popular circular metaphor of the writing process I advance, they all know that they, like their students' drafts, are never a truly finished product. This trait is clearly the most important one that they have developed about teaching writing.

Kia Jane Richmond

I believe one of the best qualities a writing teacher can have is a solid understanding of oneself and a desire to know students as individuals. I use two theories from psychology to help my writing students (and future teachers of writing) to develop this kind of self-awareness: personality theory (a la Myers Briggs) and Howard Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. I introduce these theories into my classes and ask students to use their IBM ThinkPads to search online for any number of web sites that offer the opportunity to complete an inventory based on the Myers-Briggs personality indicator and the multiple intelligences. Students reflect on themselves as writers, students, and teachers in a first assignment designed to give them self-knowledge and to give me a glimpse into their personalities and preferences. They are asked to consider questions such as these: How does being an "extraverted-feeling type" influence your choices as a writer, peer response partner, or teacher of writing? How does knowing that you are drawn to "kinesthetic knowing" find its way into your preferences for revision or responding?

Examining our motivations and our preferences helps us have information we can use during the writing (or lesson planning) process. Multiple intelligence theory, for instance, encourages us to view all individuals as gifted and talented. Each of us has strengths, intelligences as Howard Gardner calls them, and each of us interacts with our world from different perspectives. I myself am highly linguistic, spatial, and musical. This affects the way I prewrite, the way I organize my thoughts in drafts, the way my voice comes across on the page. Getting a student to identify his or her own strengths allows me to translate assignments for an individual's preferences. I can help the student who is logical/mathematical to use outlines, lists, or flowcharts in prewriting. I can show the strongly intrapersonal learner how to use journaling or freewriting to help them through difficult periods of revision.

Teaching writing can be a difficult undertaking. By using strategies that help students to become more self-aware, we can make that process more meaningful and less intimidating. Taking this approach also does something else: it allows us to define the teaching of writing as a social act, as an interpersonal interaction. In *Reading Student Writing: Confessions, Meditations, and Rants*, Lad Tobin writes that he changed his teaching methods after taking a graduate class with Donald Murray and then doing some serious contemplation on the works of scholars, such as Elbow, Bartholomae, and Sommers. He says, "From the moment I started reading drafts for potential rather than for assessment, my relationship to my students and my sense of self as a writing teacher changed in fundamental and exhilarating ways" (11).

In a way, I am reading my students for potential. What gifts do they have to bring to the community of teachers or writers in my classroom? What preferences or talents do they have that will influence the way they choose to write or teach composition? Identifying our strengths (and shortcomings) allows us to enter into the act of writing or teaching as makers of knowledge. By viewing students as knowers, we position them as active participants in their own learning. Teaching writing involves a relationship between writer and reader, between teacher and student, between writer and peer response partner. Developing a better understanding of ourselves in these and other roles helps

us read our students and our classroom more effectively. Effective teaching of writing, then, includes an invitation to self-actualization. Bringing in psychological theories can help a writing teacher to encourage individual as well as community growth in the classroom.

W. Douglas Baker

To answer this question, we first need to discuss what constitutes “successful” or “effective” writing instructors. On one hand, teachers are presumably evaluated through the actions of their students: if students improve as writers, the teacher must be offering instruction that at least partly engineered the change. (Of course, how to measure students’ progress is debatable.) On the other hand, to judge a teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom, we often rely on anecdotal information, student testimonies or evaluations, and peer or administrator observations. How teachers discuss their pedagogy among their peers, or present ideas, further reveals their philosophical beliefs about writing and selected classroom practices, and these public displays invite comparisons with literature of the field and the beliefs and practices of their peers. Therefore, the success of writing teachers is judged through evaluation of student writing, anecdotal information and testimonies, and their public discourse.

The National Writing Project and many composition and English education Education scholars believe that writing teachers should position and engage their students as writers: people who invent topics, select appropriate genres for the intended audiences, and struggle to craft words for the chosen purposes, especially when that purpose is to communicate or think through an idea. Most importantly, writing teachers should write. These beliefs have roots in research that sought to understand the composing processes of writers and how to integrate the information in classrooms, e.g., Janet Emig’s groundbreaking work on the composing processes of a group of senior high school students. By engaging as writers, students will learn how to compose in selected genres for particular purposes, and through response by the teacher or their peers, they will talk as writers within a community; by writing, teachers can learn more about their own composing processes, link that information with existing scholarship, and plan curriculum that will provide opportunities for students to practice as writers and examine the elements and processes of writing. Through these actions, it is presumed that teachers will construct theoretical frameworks and align classroom practices for chosen objectives.

Constructing metaphors of writing instruction is part of designing a framework and explaining how instructional activities are aligned. For example, teachers might view learning to write as a journey and interpret their role as a guide, or writing could be understood to be performance and teachers act as coaches. These metaphors imply particular actions (e.g., a coach understands that repetition is important and that students need to try actions without constant correction). Writing teachers must be able to apply the metaphor and their knowledge to local contexts and their students’ developmental levels. For example, I recently observed an elementary school teacher instruct her students (a first-second grade combination class) on writing letters to their parents, specifically on how to choose an interesting and appropriate greeting. One of the first graders is capable of selecting from a range of possibilities and writing a letter that showed her ability to explain and describe actions from the week. She had also drafted and illustrated a few “books” (each told the story of an event or incident), which were made from quarter sheets of paper and stapled together. However, another student struggled to jot down more than a brief greeting in his letter; yet, according to the teacher, the student is capable of orally describing and explaining details of his stories. Therefore, the teacher must address the different developmental stages of these

students as writers by encouraging their composing processes while introducing next steps.

Successful writing teachers have usually experienced an epiphany as a writer, and these discoveries inform their instruction. Nancie Atwell and Donald Graves, among others teacher-scholars, offer insights to their composing processes and experiences as writers that informed their teaching. By struggling as writers, teachers of writing are more prepared to coach or guide students' efforts as writers. For example, one of my students stated, "I hate writing, although I've done a lot of it in school." I too remember the feeling of writing for school, instead of writing for myself. As I learned to see the choice within the parameters of assignments, I changed as a writer. Hopefully, I will be able to guide this student to see writing as an opportunity to explore, reflect on, or discover an idea. Furthermore, by demonstrating responses as one of her readers, I plan to invite her into the conversations and practices of writers, which include struggle and uncertainty.

Writing teachers should exemplify patience and curiosity as a reader of student writing. They should observe, listen, and raise questions. By approaching a student's text as an interested reader, a teacher will be able to provide insights from the perspective of one experienced reader. And then the teacher can initiate and model discussions that may lead to revisions of the writing. Yet, becoming an experienced reader and coach of student writing requires that teachers continue to study. With the rise of potential online writing opportunities for students, teachers must learn about emerging genres and experiment with them. Teachers should read texts that represent a range of genres, purposes, and styles. For example, one of my students has expressed interest in writing a graphic novel, and I am developing a more informed perspective of that genre. Writing teachers do not need to be expert writers in all genres, but they should grow in their understanding of them in order to make them available to students. Years ago, I learned that I am not a poet, but I write poems periodically and struggle as a poet; and I offer my students opportunities to write poetry.

Finally, writing teachers should believe that writing is a craft, that their students have experiences to draw on as writers, and that students can improve as writers; writing is not a skill granted through grace to the gifted and talented. Students want to communicate their stories, their perspectives on topics, and contribute to conversations that matter to them. One of the professional and ethical responsibilities of teachers is to guide students to expand their understanding of topics that influence them and to show them how to participate within those conversations. Classroom writing provides avenues for learning how to contribute to change, and successful writing teachers welcome students into the conversations and show them how to make a difference.

Elizabeth Brockman

During the 2004–05 school year, I have had the pleasure of working with three unusual MA candidates: Margaret Fedder-Hauke, Laura Grow, and Mary Rosalez. Margaret, Laura, and Mary all boast 7–12 teaching credentials, but none is currently a middle/high school teacher; instead, they are all full-time students with graduate assistantships in the English Department at Central Michigan University. As graduate assistants, they completed a required practicum to teach ENG 101 and are fully responsible for two sections each semester. They do the planning and teaching, they post and hold office hours, and they calculate and submit grades. Additionally, they share offices with other graduate assistants sans teaching credentials, take a full course load each semester, and generally live a life apart from their secondary-level counterparts. After graduation, Margaret, Laura, and Mary will face three obvious, and potentially overlapping, career choices: return to public schools, explore community colleges, or—most relevant

here—pursue PhD work in the hope of landing a tenure track position in English education. Not surprisingly, this last option has prompted many spirited conversations, and our echoing themes showcase the qualities and characteristics that composition methods faculty might or should possess.

What makes Margaret, Laura, and Mary outstanding candidates, however, is that they have combined credentials in English education and first-year composition. As undergraduates, the three women enrolled in teacher education programs and completed all state certification requirements, including coursework, field experiences, and student teaching. In the process, they read composition scholarship, such as Atwell's *In the Middle*, Burke's *The English Teacher's Companion*, and Dale's *Co-Authoring in the Classroom* (as representative examples) designed specifically for writing teachers 7–12. In short, the women were *Making the Journey* (Monseau) and *Composing a Teaching Life* (Vinz) by planning careers in secondary-level education. As graduate assistants, Margaret, Laura, and Mary have reinforced and extended their knowledge of composition pedagogy by studying first-year composition texts: Harris' *A Teaching Subject*, Clark's *Concepts in Composition*, and Good & Warshauer's *In Our Own Voices*, as well as a course pack with readings that range from Peter Elbow to David Bartholomae. In addition, the women have received instruction and practice regarding writing assignments, responding techniques, scoring rubrics, and grade calibrations, and they have analyzed features of effective course readings, class discussions, and one-on-one conferences. No one would deny that Margaret, Laura, and Mary are not currently qualified for composition methods positions; they would be wise to complete at least two or three years in classrooms 7–12, and they need further graduate work in literacy studies or rhetoric and composition with the requisite PhD in English or Education. I still contend, however, that Margaret, Laura, and Mary have taken an important first step by combining English education with first-year composition.

And Robert Tremmel would agree. In his provocative essay, "Seeking a Balanced Discipline: Writing Teacher Education in First-Year Composition and English Education," Tremmel claims that though English educators and WPAs inhabit different university spheres, they share the same goal: teaching teachers how to teach writing. Moreover, he claims the two roles and corresponding fields are so historically and currently similar that "writing methods [should be] an emerging discipline in its own right" (6):

I think it makes sense to open negotiations on how we might re-route and re-grade [our] common path[s], starting with serious discussion about what life would be like if we were to remove some of the impediments that keep us apart. Writing teacher education for secondary teachers should not be a completely separate enterprise from writing teacher education for first-year composition. The writing curriculum should not be severed between grade 12 and grade 13. (24)

Given university politics, disciplinary biases, and even "essential differences" (Alsup 33) between English Education and composition studies, it's difficult to predict if Tremmel's vision will come to fruition; however, his basic premise—that student writers would benefit from stronger "grade 12 and grade 13" connections—is relevant here because Margaret, Laura, and Mary are the kind of new professionals who could one day help build them. As ENG 101 graduate assistants, they have direct knowledge of the methods, theories, and materials associated with first-year composition. If they graduate and return to public schools, the women will bring with them a fuller and more nuanced understanding of university writing conventions, and this understanding will enliven and enrich not only their daily teaching in classrooms 7–12, but also their professional dialogue at the department and district levels. Imagine, too, the potential contribution at state and national conferences.

This same understanding, however, will also enliven and enrich their professional lives if Margaret, Laura, and Mary pursue PhD work leading to English education positions. With dual credentials in English education and first-year composition, they would more likely teach composition methods classes with built-in and productive *contact zones*, as Janet Alsup defines them in “Seeking Connections: An English Educator Speaks across a Disciplinary Contact Zone.” Imagine, for example, a course where composition methods students read Nancie Atwell and Nancy Sommers, where they ache with caring (like Mem Fox) and eat like owls (like Wendy Bishop), and where they critique both *No Child Left Behind* and *University Written Competency Standards*. These formerly incongruent possibilities are endless, and for now, just that: possibilities. My ruminations suggest that, like Peter Smagorinsky and Melissa E. Whiting in *How Writing Teachers Get Taught*, my “purpose is not to have the final word . . . but rather to provide some grounds for . . . a healthy, spirited, and necessary professional conversation” (3–4). And because the overarching purpose of this conversation is to open doors and not close them, to be inclusive and not contentious, our dialogue must include the venerable contributions of English educators whose graduate work didn’t—or, because of impenetrable borders and boundaries, couldn’t—include access to a first-year composition program.

Conclusion

In May 1977, Janet Emig published her landmark CCC article entitled “Writing as a Mode of Learning.” In that same important CCC issue, Richard Gebhardt published a lesser known essay entitled “Balancing Theory with Practice in the Training of Writing Teachers.” His basic claim is that new writing teachers need four essential kinds of knowledge: (1) structure/history of language, (2) understanding of rhetoric, (3) a theoretical framework regarding writing, and (4) awareness of good methods. Even more relevant than these claims, however, is Gebhardt’s inclusive conception of “new writing teacher.” He defines that term as “students preparing to teach writing in public school or college” (134). In short, Gebhardt makes no distinction between pre-service English teachers and new ENG 101 graduate assistants.

Thirty years later, Richard Gebhardt continues to be a powerful force in writing teacher education, and he is, not surprisingly, a member of the previously mentioned Composition/English Education Connection SIG. Here is the CCCC abstract for his 2006 SIG talk, entitled “Seeking Crossovers in Writing-Teacher Courses”:

When the same faculty members teach courses for future language arts teachers and new graduate students, they are in a particularly good spot to advance broad goals of writing-teacher education as an enterprise that cuts across traditional divides (high school from college, for example). They can and they should do this by deliberately seeking points of cross-over in their teaching. They can do this, for instance, by having composition grad students consider research about young writers and read in writing methods texts used by undergraduate language arts majors. They can do it, too, by foregrounding in their undergraduate methods courses the research and theoretical roots of recommended teaching strategies. Those are just examples. This SIG segment would illustrate a point and then invite interested people to develop a list of productive crossovers that could be pursued in introductory writing-teacher courses for language arts undergraduates and composition graduate students.

Gebhardt’s pedagogical goals are both substantive and innovative. However, as this *Writing Instructor* roundtable suggests (and as Gebhardt would surely agree), English educators needn’t be WPAs to find crossovers between their writing methods classes and composition studies. All they need is open space and a little innovation in their

course syllabi and lesson plans. In other words, composition scholarship may be the most accessible crossover of all. As this article tries to demonstrate, it is possible and productive to assign Janet Emig, C.H. Knoblauch, Maxine Hairston, and Peter Elbow (to name just a few) to pre-service teachers, along with Nancie Atwell, Harvey Daniels, and Katie Ray Wood. As Gebhardt has claimed, this kind of crossover “makes it more likely that academics specializing in “composition” and “English education” can better understand each other’s work and cooperate in the important task of preparing writing teachers” (Foreword viii).

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