Much Ado About Writing

A Wisconsin Resource for Visual Literacy and Visual Materials in the Language Arts Classroom
Submission Guidelines

- Send two copies of each manuscript, typed and double-spaced throughout (including quotations, endnotes, and references), with one-inch margins. Information (including addresses) on coming issues is located in the Editor's Note in this issue.

OR

Submit your manuscript electronically to the editor, Ruth Wood (Ruthann.P.Wood@uwrf.edu); a Word attachment is preferred.

- Provide a statement guaranteeing that the manuscript has not been published or submitted elsewhere.

- Ensure that the manuscript conforms to the Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language in NCTE Publications.

- Follow MLA format throughout.

The name, address, school affiliation, telephone number, and e-mail of the author should appear on the title page only, not on the manuscript. If the manuscript is accepted, the author will need to provide a disk copy of the manuscript in Word.

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Call for Papers

Spring 2008

As we have done in the past, we will devote the Spring 2008 issue to featuring a special language arts department in the state. We haven’t picked our school yet, so if you want to nominate yours, please send an e-mail to Ruth Wood at: ruthann.p.wood@uwrf.edu

Past schools that we’ve featured include DeLong Middle School in Eau Claire, Marquette U High in Milwaukee, and West DePere High School in West DePere. We’d love to keep moving around the state!

Fall 2009

This issue will focus on creative writing—particularly creative writing done by you, the language arts teachers of Wisconsin. We’d love to publish your work and hear about how you find time and inspiration to write as you continue your life as a teacher. If you teach creative writing as well, we’d like to know what you do in your classrooms to get your students to produce poems, stories, plays and creative essays.

This, then, is what we’d like from you: a previously unpublished creative work accompanied by a 1-3 page essay discussing your means of producing creative writing and/or discussing how you teach creative writing. If you choose to include samples of fine student writing, be sure to include parental permission slips to publish.

Manuscripts should be submitted by September 10, 2008, electronically, in Word, to ruthann.p.wood@uwrf.edu

Much Ado About Writing

Students in Wisconsin will write to influence and shape the world around them, and the WCTE will provide a forum to share these students' voices.

Every English teacher has posture of wisdom. How will you shape the classroom? How will you shape the language arts classroom? How will you shape the world around them? How will you shape their voice? How will you shape their writing?

This themed issue of the WCTE offers teachers and students to explore their role in shaping the world around them.

Students should be ready to write and related questions about the language arts classrooms.

We offer a range of articles, including "Motivating Students to Write," by Kym Buchanan, and "The Value of Writing," by UW Stevens Point, offers suggestions on how to shape students' voices in the classroom. Kym Buchanan's article in the WCTE Annual Conference program notes that students are "interested in writing because they enjoy it." He goes on to suggest that students should be given the opportunity to write about a variety of topics, including social issues, personal experiences, and their experiences in the classroom.

In his article, "The Value of Writing," Matthew Merkes of Massachussetts Institute of Technology, persuades us to recognize the importance of fostering students' voices in the classroom. He suggests that students should be given the opportunity to write about their experiences in the classroom, and that this writing should be used to inform instruction. He notes that writing gives students the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and to think critically about the world around them.

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Words: Utopia or Apocalypsis, during a course he was taking...
Editor’s Note

Much Ado About Writing

Students in Wisconsin will write clearly and effectively to share information and knowledge, to influence and persuade, to create and entertain.

Every English teacher has pondered this Wisconsin Content Standard as well as other academic standards for writing. But what does this mean in everyday use in our classrooms? How can teachers of English and language arts create an environment where students are free and encouraged to explore their writing voice? How do teachers involve students in writing in ways that help them learn more about themselves and about the texts they are reading and responding to?

This themed issue of the Wisconsin English Journal offers answers to these and related questions about the role of writing instruction in the English language arts classrooms.

We offer a range of articles, each addressing a different aspect of writing instruction. Kym Buchanan, assistant professor in the School of Education at UW Stevens Point, offers suggestions on the important issue of student motivation in writing. His article, “Opportunity Knocking: Playful Interest Bridging (PIB)” provides strategies and suggestions for bridging traditional curriculum with creative uses of technology. Kym was a featured speaker at the WCTE Annual Convention on November 9th in Madison. Teachers who heard his talk were enthusiastic about his ideas for using technology to engage students in writing experiences, and we are very pleased that he shares more of his experiences and ideas in this issue of the Journal.

In his article, “The Most Intimate of All Teaching,” P.L. Thomas of Furman University, persuades us to remember our duty to the humanity of our students: to foster writers from the very beginning by “releasing the writers within all students instead of binding them with shackles.” His thoughtful and research-based writing gives us many ideas as we consider the social and emotional contexts for our instruction.

Matthew Merkes of Massachusetts provides insights into the dynamics of a classroom where students and the teacher attempt to figure out the value of grammar instruction in his article, “A World Without Parts of Speech, Only Words: Utopia or Apocalypse?” Matthew’s article began as journal writing during a course he was taking with John Zwikowski at UW Whitewater!
Linda Barrington, a former teacher at Wauwatosa East High School and now a teacher at Mount Mary College, writes about another important aspect of writing instruction in schools—the support and mentoring provided for the teacher who teaches writing to our students. In her article, "Get Real: New Journalism Teachers, Advisors Find Support in New Mentor Program," she describes a new journalism mentoring program that began this fall.

It is important for us to keep up to date with the policies in our state about writing instruction. Erin Olkowski, a teacher at New Berlin West High School, reports on the activities and efforts of an important task force brought together last spring by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. This team of secondary and post secondary English and math educators has been reviewing the state's existing Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts and those for mathematics in light of two frameworks: the American Diploma Project and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Read her article to learn about the Wisconsin effort to ensure its school curriculum can keep pace with global growth and demand.

Ruth Wood of UW River Falls reviews several important new professional texts that deal with many of the issues raised in the other articles. Read her review of Going with the Flow: How to Engage Boys (and Girls) in Their Literacy Learning by Smith and Wilhelm, Grammar for Middle School: A Sentence-Composing Approach by Killgallon and Killgallon, Lesson Plans for Teaching Writing by Jennings, and Creating Writers Through 6-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction by Spandel.

An issue devoted to considerations of writing instruction would not be complete without some poetry for us to enjoy. We are pleased to offer poems written by Paula DeHart, UW Stevens Point, and Jean Erdman, UW Oshkosh.

Finally, we have the honor of introducing to our readers the new DPI English Language Arts Consultant, Emilie Amundson. In her letter to all of you, she writes about many activities she is already involved in around the state. We were pleased that she presented a session at our Annual Convention in November where many of you were able to meet her and learn about her work. We are so very pleased to welcome her and to invite her to share in the important work we do everyday with our students and their lives. You will want to read her comments about Brett Favre too!!

JoAnne Katzmarek
UW Stevens Point
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Opportunity Knocking: Playful Interest Bridging (PIB)

Kym Buchanan
UW Stevens Point

I love a good zombie movie. For me, it’s not about the gore. I like watching a few accidental heroes discover courage and resourcefulness they didn’t know they had. For many teachers, popular media and technologies seem like zombies: unknowable and terrifying. Many schools bar the door against “pop” media and tech: MP3 players, video clips, video games, and such. In some cases, we're justified: not every technology belongs in school and not all learning can be fun. In other cases, the novelties don’t have to be monstrous. Many pop media and tech are potentially powerful tools for teaching academic learning objectives. As our students fearlessly embrace new gadgets and toys for communication and entertainment, we can be change agents or change victims. Rather than barricade our schools, we should teach using the media and tech students already play with. I call it Playful Interest Bridging (PIB).

Teachers have recently bridged to a new technology. The Web was originally a distraction in schools, filled with trivial or offensive pages. It’s becoming a global library with a variety of valuable resources. We didn’t sever our Internet connections. Instead, we bridged to the Web with new content and teaching strategies for academic learning objectives (e.g., WebQuests).

New tech and media are often embraced by popular culture first, especially by young people. Since many of our students are already deeply engaged by pop media and tech, one of the immediate advantages of PIB is motivation. One way to visualize this is using the Expectancy-Value Model for motivation. Expectancy is a student’s confidence in his/her abilities, relative to the challenge level of a task (“Can I do this?”). Value is how much he/she cares about the stakes—material, emotional, etc. (“Will success mean anything to me?”). When both expectancy and value are high, the student is motivated. When either is lacking, the student’s motivation suffers.

Yet with pop media and tech, young people often demonstrate very high motivation to learn challenging skills and content, like the vocabulary of “texting” (e.g., LOL), or the attributes of numerous and diverse Pokémon. Our students approach gadgets, toys, and games with greater confidence, and they want the experiences these novelties make possible (e.g., fun, excitement, community). By bridging from the recreational to the academic, PIB borrows the greater expectancies and values of the recreational to augment those of the academic (Figure 1).

Expectancy  

Eacademic  

Erecreational  

Figure 1. By bridging schools and tech, teachers can strive to foster more motivation from being the only adult in the room now as a teacher educator.

Motivation is a complex process and learning objectives. There are three levels. There are three levels.

Playful Interest Bridging (PIB)

Investment

Finding

Adapting

Return

Figure 2. Each level potentially grants its own set of uncertainties in the learning process.

Some media and tech teachers will let students listen to music during class, which required each student to bring in their songs. I would play the song and read the lyrics aloud. We would then talk about and discuss the power...
Expectancy x Value = Motivation

\[ e_{\text{academic}} \times v_{\text{academic}} = m \]

\[ E_{\text{recreational}} \times V_{\text{recreational}} = M \]

Figure 1. By bridging from the expectancy and value of pop media and tech, teachers can increase motivation.

Motivation is a compelling reason to consider Playful Interest Bridging; we all strive to foster more motivation in our students. However, motivation is far from being the only advantage of PIB. As a high school English teacher, and now as a teacher educator, bridging has helped my students meet academic learning objectives. The principles of PIB apply to all disciplines and age levels. There are three levels of PIB: finding, adapting, and creating (Figure 2).

Playful Interest Bridging, with Examples

Figure 2. Each level of PIB requires greater investment, with a potentially greater return. The return can still be 0; there are few certainties in motivation.

Some media and tech can be immediately found and used. For example, many students listen to music on portable CD or MP3 players. For a unit on poetry, I required each student to bring a poem or song to class. Most students chose songs. I would play the song over stereo speakers, and then the student would read the lyrics aloud. We would search for techniques in the lyrics (e.g. rhyme) and discuss the power of the lyrics with and without music. My students
perceived their favorite songs in new ways: they used strategies to 
"comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate" contemporary texts 
(Standards 1 and 3, NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts, 1996). 
They mastered poetry terms and techniques by analyzing texts they already felt 
connected with.

Bridging to "found" media and tech usually doesn't require much effort, especially if students are responsible for finding and bridging. Many students are 
avid technology and media consumers, including music, movies, television, 
games, and the Web. Teachers can foster greater motivation by allowing students to use found examples in their assignments and class discussions. In my 
class, the learning objectives included appreciating great literature (so we read 
some), but also understanding how culture is continuously being produced. As 
for teaching discipline-specific jargon and analysis strategies, any specific examples 
were worthy vehicles to understanding universal ideas (e.g., theme, character, conflict). There are teachable moments in comparing Homer's Odysseus to Nintendo's Mario, or Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew to Angelina Jolie's Tomb Raider.

Some media and tech can be bridged through adaptation. For example, I taught 
clarity in writing using a clip from Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back. Using 
a video editing program, I isolated the scene I wanted, then added on-screen 
text for Yoda's unclear dialog (e.g., "So certain are you"). I did more than just 
entertain my students with an interesting scene. I paused the clip and chal-
lenged them to rearrange the words on the screen for greater clarity (e.g., "You 
are so certain"). Further, we discussed why the screenwriter gave Yoda his 
quirky style (e.g., Yoda is an alien/Other and a "sage" archetype) (cf. Stan-
dards 3 and 6, Ibid.).

The highest level of PIB is creating new learning objects using pop media and 
tech. For example, in my teacher prep course, we create and play a board 
game. From the lectures and reading on educational psychology, my students 
identify useful insights and compelling strategies. These become "Action" 
cards. They also create "Scenario" cards: short, second-person vignettes of 
classroom problems with management, instruction, or student wellness. We 
play the board game in class. Taking turns, my students confront randomly-
drawn Scenarios. A student must justify his/her choice of Action, and then the 
other students vote on whether the Action would succeed. I didn't design the 
game to reward one right way to teach. Rather, it's a playful way for my stu-
dents to examine and debate their beliefs about teaching and learning.

Some of the most exciting potential for bridging lies in video games. Video 
games can be very motivating, while requiring players to master a variety of 
skills and content. The potential for teaching using video games is poorly illus-
trated by existing games, which are generally narrow, violent, and fantastical. However, video games are starting to evolve as a medium and an art form.
Already a few games are ripe for bridging, especially simulations (e.g., the Civilization series), but also action/adventure (e.g., Beyond Good and Evil) and other genres. A growing number of teachers and game designers are trying to create more “serious” games, without sacrificing fun. The central challenge is finding gameplay and academic learning objectives that can be organically connected. Speaking as a designer, it’s not easy!

There are many other wonderful examples of PIB, old and new, from television (e.g., Sesame Street) to podcasts. So PIB is a new label, but not a new idea. Educators, like artists and activists, have long understood that pop media and tech can reach audiences and change minds more effectively than lectures or textbooks (cf. The Daily Show with Jon Stewart). Brenda Laurel says it well in Utopian Entrepreneur (2001): popular culture has the potential “to become a variety of dialogues with and between everyday people. Its discourse may be productive of desire and pleasure, but popular culture is also a language in which people discuss politics, religion, ethics, and action.” English teachers and all teachers shouldn’t dismiss the tools or the forums of that discussion. This is the last and best advantage of PIB. Bridging can foster media and civic literacy, including composition. It can do more than inoculate students against political propaganda or misleading advertising; it can empower them as discussants (cf. Standards 5, 11, 12, NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts, 1996).

The challenge to teachers is practicing bridging now, to prepare for emerging opportunities. Pop media and tech may be intimidating and challenging. We must find our courage and resourcefulness. For example, in my poetry unit I had to explain the kinds of lyrics I would condone (e.g. adult relationships) and reject (e.g. sexism), and then I had to trust my students to comply. More broadly, compared to teachers, students may be more comfortable with media and tech, and they will definitely be more familiar with youth culture. Teachers must be willing to look a little foolish or uncool, to allow students to learn with appealing tools and examples.

Playful Interest Bridging to media and tech like games can help students learn better. We must still beware of zombies. We should not teach students that something must be fun to be worthwhile. We should be wise in how we spend time and money. We shouldn’t replace academic learning objectives with fluff. Moreover, we should avoid creating monsters in our students: motionless drones mesmerized by monitor glow, endless clicking and never relating or reflecting. These risks are minor compared to the potential in front of us. Compare the students in a lecture class to the children gathered around a new video game. We know motivation is essential to learning, and we see that learning can be fun. Opportunity is knocking.
"The Most Intimate of All Teaching"—
Bridging the Great Divide in Writing Instruction

P. L. Thomas
Furman University

"Teaching English is probably the most intimate of all teaching," proclaimed Lou LaBrant (34), a progressive educator who pursued literacy instruction with a staggering passion for over 65 years. I am saddened to state here that many ELA classrooms have inadvertently and regretfully fulfilled LaBrant's proclamation by shackling the writers our students could have been to negative affect and inauthentic practices. This dynamic has been fostered by the rising standards and testing cycle that makes best practice seemingly impossible in our classrooms, but the charge I make here is that writing instruction has far too often silenced more students than it has empowered throughout the past century.

In the fall of 2003, I saw proof of my claim while teaching a memoir course in an education-in-retirement program at Furman University (FULIR). The course was filled with vibrant and eager women and men in their 60s, 70s, and 80s. But I was struck early in the sessions by resounding motifs that ran through their comments about writing:

• They were openly nervous and insecure about surface features in their writing—grammar, mechanics, and spelling. In fact, I would describe them as obsessed with correctness, to the point of writing paralysis (see Weaver’s discussion of the “error hunt,” 87-101). They all described themselves as poor writers—again based primarily on insecurities about surface features.
• They all had detailed life stories that were rich ore yet to be mined, but they were often unable to move beyond talking about those stories to writing them.
• They were reluctant to share and conference with their peers or even to allow me as the instructor to see their writing (and this is a non-graded course taken by choice).
• They invariably connected all of these negative feelings about themselves as writers with how their English teachers had treated their writing and them as writers throughout their schooling.

My experience with these writers coming late to composing has led me to offer this discussion of how we can create a shift in affect in our writing programs. As teachers of writing, we have a duty to the intimacy of our field, to the humanity of our students, and I believe that we have an obligation to our young students as writers—from the very first day that they enter schools. That responsibility is to foster writers from the very beginning—releasing the writers within all students, instead of binding them with shackles. Here, I will discuss working with memoir writing to implement writing workshop and best practice in an atmosphere of testing as an avenue that has for decades.

The great divide—
This is nothing new. We know what they know to be the default instructional practices seen in many classrooms throughout the 20th century the divide becomes more and more close. Before I look at the evidence, let’s support the breadth of your practice:

• Writing is not a breed of practice, but a necessary part of the educational process. A short example, writing as an alternative to the end of the sentences.
• Writing involves not just the management of the writing itself, but the empowerment of the writer. Writers who value silent and cooperative writing.
• Authentic writing is writing that is written for the purpose of conveying the writer’s voice, values a context.
• Daily class time is prescriptive.

The weight of external pressures on writing instruction should not be underestimated. In many unstructured and inauthentic contexts, students are asked to write prescriptive prompt.

Both traditional structures and administrative quality directly in
in an atmosphere of prescribed standards and high-stakes (and inauthentic) testing as an avenue to bridging the great divide between theory and practice that has for decades stood between students and the writers they could be.

The great divide—mandates, expectations, and philosophy
This is nothing new: Teachers have struggled for decades with implementing what they know to be best for students within bureaucratic mandates and traditional practices seemingly designed to insure worst practice. LaBrant’s own career throughout the 1980s personified this struggle, but in the twenty-first century the divide between mandate and best practice seems impossible to close. Before I look at some ways to bridge that gap, let’s look briefly at what supports the broad goals we have in writing instruction that is informed by best practice:

* Writing instruction, as I am envisioning it here, is one element in a larger call to address literacy in our schools as an essential component for the empowerment of children (Freire).
* Best practice in writing instruction (and all literacy instruction) is not a template (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde), but it is informed by research and by solid theories of learning, critical constructivism (Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy Primer*, Kincheloe, Critical Constructivism Primer; Brooks and Brooks, *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms*). The authentic writing classroom, then, rejects rubrics (Kohn; Wilson), for example, while the standard for today’s classroom embraces teaching with the end in mind.
* Writing workshops are highly dependent on a classroom management system that values community and student empowerment (Kohn, *Beyond Discipline*), but traditional classrooms value silence (Ayers) and are driven by rules and punishment/reward dynamics.
* Authentic writing must occur in a classroom that has established and values a community of learners.
* Daily classroom practice in writing instruction is informed by best practice research, but moment-to-moment instruction cannot be prescribed or predicted in any uniform way.

The weight of external conflicts and hurdles for implementing best practice in writing instruction is multiplied exponentially by the expectations of our students who have been educated in traditional settings throughout their schooling. In many unsettling ways, our students want classrooms that are prescriptive and inauthentic. Students will directly ask for writing templates and clearly prescriptive prompts—usually admitting that such is easier for them.

Both traditional structures and mandates within the hierarchy of the school administration along with the expectations of our students create a climate with qualities directly in contrast to the atmosphere and learning environment we
need to teach writing well; the traditional characteristics that work as hurdles include the following:
- Silence—Classrooms function with silence being the norm. Administrators, teachers, and students associate silence with purposefulness and the best teaching-learning dynamic.
- Stasis—Classrooms have minimum student movement.
- Teacher-centered practices—All instruction, classroom management, and talk run through the teacher; students are primarily asked to be compliant to the teacher.
- Standardization—All students are expected to need the same instruction and to produce the same products and evidence of learning.
- Isolation—Each student and the teacher do most of their activities in isolation from other students and other teachers.

Next, I will discuss how we can bridge this gap, using memoir writing as a vehicle for implementing best practice in writing workshop in our classes.

Sharing our lives to write our lives
Memoir writing, writing one’s own life, presents an ideal avenue for teaching some essentials for composing, since, in memoir, the writer is relieved of creating content; even in the earliest grades, all students have life stories to tell.

The writing teacher, then, is free to focus on two key areas of writing instruction that must be emphasized above the implicit and harmful message of most writing instruction—surface feature correctness is paramount, even to exclusion of expression and content, and all writing conforms to a static and prescribed writing process and form. The first area that needs our focus is addressing the writing process.

While students over the past 20 years have been fortunate to pass through schools as the teaching of writing has grown in sophistication and importance (during the era of the National Writing Project), too often teachers have made the fatal educator’s mistake with writing instruction—forcing a holistic and idiosyncratic act into a linear and analytic process. Yes—writers tend to exhibit the traditional components of the writing process: Prewriting, drafting, editing, and preparing a public text. But the truth is that the way each aspect is practiced and the order of those elements are not standard by any means, and, above all else, the writing process cannot and should not be prescribed. Each emerging writer must be allowed and encouraged to discover her writing process; it is not something a teacher can hand to students in a template without disastrous results.

One area of the writing process cycle, prewriting, can foster a community of learners while also contributing to authentic writing instruction and preparing students for high-stakes testing of writing. Specific types of brainstorming or prewriting—such as webbing or outlining—are not magical, nor are they uni-

versal. Instead of inauthentic ways, practice along with exploration and communal events and within a community of writers within and...

What I found within my students was that their schooliness above all else in my course, thus...

Since discovering that many of writers are far more interested with writing process beyond instruction), I offered them from inhibitions an...

- At all points of talking about writers emerging they are we...
versal. Instead of forcing students to follow a writing process in lockstep and inauthentic ways, students must be immersed in the writing process as a practice along with experiencing for themselves that composing is both a solitary and communal event. Composing with one eye on the process being revealed and within a community of writers will serve our students well to release the writers within and create a supportive atmosphere in the classroom.

What I found with the reluctant writers in the memoir course mentioned earlier was that their school experiences with writing instruction that stressed correctness above all else actually inhibited their ability to form a writing community in my course, thus squelching their ability to brainstorm and draft with others. Since discovering one’s writing process and becoming a part of a community of writers are far more important than conforming to conventions (a part of the writing process best saved until a work is completed and ready for submission), I offered the following steps to sharing that serve both to release writers from inhibitions and to foster positive reflective practices among writers:

- At all points within the composing of a piece, writers benefit from talking about the process and the content of their life stories. Many writers enjoy talking among themselves about both how and what they are writing. Gradually students should be encouraged to move from discussing only to discussing that includes jotting down ideas and notes during the conversations. But one step of brainstorming and drafting can and should include opportunities for students simply to discuss their writing—either in small groups or in whole-class settings. Here, the traditional value placed on silence is directly confronted; talk may be a better sign of purposefulness and learning than silence.
- Crucial also to developing as a writer is adding to writing talk the sharing of drafts with writing partners. Often, reluctant writers are most comfortable moving from writer talk to reading parts of their works aloud to one or more partners (reading a work aloud without handing the physical draft to someone else is usually less psychologically threatening). Eventually, writers often find reading a complete piece aloud to a partner or two is helpful as well. Reading a draft aloud—again in small groups or to the whole class—allows students to keep their written drafts private; reading aloud also places writing in a different medium, sound, which will impact how we view a piece.
- Writers’ patterns and needs vary greatly, but I have found that at some point writers should release physically their writing for others to read—and even respond to by marking directly on the draft or through another format. That the piece is on paper is important both for the evolving of meaning and for moving toward a concern for having the best final product possible—which does include attention to conventions. Ideally, as writers become more sophisticated, a concern
for conventions will work its way into their on-going writing process—a sort of editing-in-progress—but for all writers, meticulous attention to conventions need not occur until the end of the process—submission and publication.

Sharing the earliest brainstorming and drafts of a piece should include talk, reading drafts aloud, sharing written drafts for spoken responses and written responses, and many combinations of these stages; these elements are not necessarily all needed, and I do not mean to imply that there is a set sequence. All of these elements should be within small and whole group settings. As I mentioned above, we must use authentic brainstorming experiences without making any element of the practice an artificial norm; some students may never need to discuss before putting their work on paper. We must give student writers a variety of experiences and help each one discover and purposefully improve those steps that work best for each writer.

Ultimately, most of our best efforts as writing teachers will be for naught unless our students embrace by choice the habits of writing. To become a writer, a student must write and the entire act must be authentic. Students tend to enter our classes expecting a lockstep approach to the writing process that is highly prescribed; here, we must work to show students that the writing process is something each writer discovers for herself—not something a teacher imposes on a student in hopes of that student conforming to the template.

Crafting our lives—the purposefulness of composing

The second area we must emphasize—one that should subsume our misguided compulsion about correctness—is the purposefulness of writing, the craft of writing. Labrant also stated in many of her writings about teaching English that she would have nothing to do with forcing students to polish the surface features of works that were vapid, prescribed, or inauthentic. She knew, as many of us do, the conventions in a piece of writing improve dramatically when the writer has a purpose for producing a public document.

Just as Cash in William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* works with the precision of a jeweler on Addie’s casket—when a more utilitarian approach would have suited just as well, Tull notes—our students will gravitate toward the conventions and techniques of language if they themselves become craft-persons as writers. Ultimately, as they write their memoirs, these are the big ideas that matter most:

- Above all else—whether it is the placing of a comma or inserting an apt metaphor—writers compose with purpose. Literary technique, grammar, mechanics, and the like—all are tools for writers to manipulate language for a reason. While writing actually has no rules, students must be made aware of the need to be conscious of their choices and must be supported as they gain power over the conventions of language. Writing a fragment out of laziness or carelessness is a purposeful fraud. How detached can carelessness be from a purpose? That is the student to me.

- Hemingway said about his day editing: “Always from a draft. We resaved the best pieces I have seen. We rejected from deleting good power. As students, when they learned about the rooms that they can enter (Fletcher). This is where they can already mark (correcting), (or as already marked)."

- Possibly more valuable than a copy or a day teaching essay (writing) is writing, an introduction (what is this essay), a summary, a memoir writing or a life history, and the parameters for the purpose of writing. Most importantly, the purpose of writing and purposeful writing is the thesis, and other aspects that start and concludes and combines and other aspects can be purposeful writing be reduced to teaching: purposeful writing.

- Throughout this chapter and allowed to do inside, did not and the theory, their is also effective in not external authority to create through students themselves in the atmosphere of the
carelessness is a problem, but it is not the fragment (since a purposeful fragment is common in published writing), but the carelessness is the problem that needs to be addressed. Just as Salvador Dali painted with purpose, so does the writer write with purpose. That purposefulness is what distinguishes the writer from the student merely turning in an essay because a teacher assigned it.

- Hemingway shared many letters with fellow writers and editors about his day of writing, which involved cutting thousands of words from a draft. Yes. A whole day of writing involved cutting words. Our students putting their lives on paper will see their writing soar when they learn to cut and focus—and even to abandon. In many places I have seen this described as exploding a scene, which comes from deleting other parts of a draft to elaborate on a part that has more power. As students draft, they and their peer editors should look where they can zoom in on a scene and bring it to life by exploding the scene with details—writing with specific nouns and verbs (See Fletcher). This revision process is far more important than what most students do for revision—mere editing (what they refer to as “correcting”), often simply complying with what the teacher has already marked for the student to address (but never understanding why).

- Possibly more so than with the writing process, the composition form has been essentially destroyed by traditional approaches to teaching essay writing in schools. Most approaches to teaching the introduction (with the obligatory thesis), body, and conclusion have resulted in little more than teaching paint-by-numbers art. With memoir writing, students can discover the more authentic and broad parameters for forming a composition into a unified, final piece. Most important to a finished piece of writing is the beginning; in the real world of writing, beginnings need to be interesting, provocative, and purposeful. The number of sentences, a sentence functioning as a thesis, and other such nonsense do not matter. How a piece develops and concludes are also equally important, though none of these aspects can be prescribed; these elements of composition form cannot be reduced to templates if our goal is authentic writing.

- Throughout the drafting of a memoir, students must be encouraged and allowed to experiment and take risks—especially with their diction and their syntax. Again, the key is purposefulness; crucial also is effectiveness. Students are rarely eager to conform to some external authority’s rules for correctness. But a student is often eager to create through experimentation and risk taking anything that the student herself chooses to write and wishes to share when the atmosphere of the learning community acknowledges and values risk
as essential for growth. Too often we teach writing as a drive to avoid surface errors—when in fact writing is a series of experiments that are constantly being monitored by the writer and his editors for effective expression.

In the memoir class I taught, and when I conduct in-services for teachers of writing, I share the Prologue to Louise DeSalvo’s memoir, Vertigo. In a seven-page piece that is self-contained and an opening to a wonderful book, we see all the elements that make writing worth reading, especially when a person is writing her life. The voice of a child is captured in the syntax and diction of the first paragraph; sentences beginning with “it” (which we extol students never to do) form a unifying motif throughout the Prologue; the disturbing focus of the opening and the book reveals itself three pages in (What? No thesis in the introductory paragraph!).

DeSalvo’s work, as does the work of all professional writers, dances with craft and purposefulness. This is the stuff we want, willingly, from our students of all ages. But here is another disturbing assumption lurking beneath our classroom practices. Many teachers and administrators are convinced that only a rare few students can express themselves in sophisticated ways through language. The self-fulfilling prophecy of our schools is that we allow only a few students to read and write authentically while relegating the rest to worksheets and template writing. After years of these reductive practices, those students certainly appear unable to write as DeSalvo does.

Intimacy in a time of high-stakes testing?

Let’s end by confronting the Big Problem: We are so driven to produce high test scores by our students that we commit ourselves to the most manageable and measurable practices that give our field the appearance of being rigorous. The irony is that these highly mechanistic practices are least likely to foster authentic acts such as writing.

I have seen countless teachers commit to writing workshops and discover that their students became more willing and capable writers; invariably, they score higher on high-stakes tests as well. Can the divide between theory and practice be bridged in our classrooms without sacrificing student achievement or teacher professional security? Yes. Lucy Calkins found that students receiving direct grammar instruction had quantifiably less knowledge and understanding of punctuation than a group of students who acquired their grammar instruction through their writing (Weaver). The evidence of classroom practices and of research show that isolated skills related to writing and composing both are improved better by having students write than by addressing those skills in isolated and inauthentic activities such as Daily Oral language or workbooks.

But the change cannot happen instantaneously. I recommend that any teacher begin small—focusing on writing process and craft, as I have discussed above,
for example—and build with the big picture in mind—a writing class that honors a community of learners committed to performances driven by choice and purpose.

I want to end with Freire: "Men and women rarely admit their fear of freedom openly, however, tending rather to camouflage it—sometimes unconsciously—by presenting themselves as defenders of freedom. . . . But they confuse freedom with the maintenance of the status quo. . . ." This statement seems to capture well how we function in our schools, how we decide to treat children learning to read and write and think; we are driven by fear. The status quo in writing instruction has a long history of mechanistic practices that are being reinforced by a standards and testing movement gone terribly wrong. Contributing to that momentum is the expectations of our students.

Recently, I was supervising a first-year ELA teacher who is implementing writing workshop in her sixth grade classes. The mentor for this teacher emailed me not to push this teacher to hard because she is being "brave" by implementing writing workshop. "Brave"? This comment by a school administrator suggests that doing the right thing is a risk in the classroom. While engaged in "the most intimate of all teaching," I believe we must choose risk, then, over fear.

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I liked the guy who didn’t wear deodorant and sat next to me in class. I liked his bearded face with crinkly eyes, and his big, teddy bear build. I liked his care for kids, his earthy smile, and his warm and friendliness. I liked the guy who didn’t wear deodorant and sat next to me in class.

I wonder where I’d be if I hadn’t said yes to coffee after class. Would I use solar heat to make lavender soap, and grow organic basil? Would I cut my own bread from scratch and card wool from our sheep? I’ll never know. I turned him down and moved on with my life. I married a man who plays tenor sax and never took children.
Choices
Paula DeHart
UW Stevens Point

I liked the guy
who didn’t wear deodorant
and sat next to me in children’s lit.
I liked his bearded face,
crinkly eyes,
and big, teddy bear body.
I liked his care for kids,
earthy smile,
and warm and friendly banter.
I liked the guy
who didn’t wear deodorant
and sat next to me in children’s lit.

I wonder where I’d be
had I said yes
to coffee after class.
Would I use solar heat,
make lavender soap,
and grow organic beans?
Would I cut my own wood,
bake bread from scratch,
card wool from our sheep?
I’ll never know
I turned him down
and moved on with my life.
I married a man
who plays tenor sax
and never took children’s lit.
A World Without Parts of Speech, Only Words:
Utopia or Apocalypse?

Matthew Merkes

For weeks, a young teacher-in-training ponders what lesson he wants to teach his methods class. He gets one shot and too many exciting activities lie at the tip of his brain. Should he teach crafting vivid scenery in writing, or perhaps creating interesting characters? No matter the choice, he will relish it.

Then, a fellow teacher-in-training (out of only 20) introduces a lesson on parts of speech, becoming the fifth to do so. The young man rolls his eyes, and knows one fact: he will NOT teach a lesson on parts of speech!

Although he finds the matter of little interest, he assumes (or at least hopes) that so much time in his education was dedicated to parts of speech for a purpose. Surely, it must be in Wisconsin’s Model Academic standards. Referring to the standards, he presupposes a standard would state (in dramatic terms nonetheless): “Thou shalt teach parts of speech, and thou shalt like it!”

What is the purpose of grammar?

Shockingly, he finds no such standard. Afterwards, he breaks it down to a larger question. What is the purpose of grammar? Is it useless? Having a secret passion for linguistics, he isn’t so easily convinced grammar is only useful for the intelligentsia. Yet, many children seem to think so. Why? Many teachers (this young man’s 7th grade English teacher in particular) do not make the purpose and value evident to students.

Resorting back to the big question, he decides grammar must be a means of improving, as the standard states, students’ abilities to “write clearly and effectively to share information and knowledge, to influence and persuade, to create and entertain.”

So, if English teachers erase parts of speech from English class, would the American population descend into a writing apocalypse, removing all ability to write effectively or would it transform into a writing utopia where students love words and reach new heights of effective writing? Perhaps, the issue isn’t that polemic. Nevertheless, the battle to teach the love and art of exemplary writing rages within each teacher.

Pondering the same question while student teaching

About one year later, he finds himself pondering the same questions while student teaching in Milwaukee. The student population has a wide range of needs, and the need to write clearly with some grammatical sense is quite significant. Well, why not just follow the grammar book his cooperating teacher showed him, run the copies, pass out the paper, and rake them in for grading at the end of the week?

While grading papers, he learns to college, he even leaves a way in disgust, the other students at the past week’s grade exercise for this class: student papers, and goes.

Ideal as any fresh teacher could prove student writing. They range from specific parts of speech to using subordinate clauses to pen and due to his own, decides to tackle home.

As the Chinese proverb man to fish, feed him.

Returning to school on, aren’t as excited about, not know why they should.

Teacher: Are you sure this should be ‘are’?
Student 1: Yes.
Teacher: Does it make sense grammar? Be able to their students.
Teacher: [he’s mind you] “I don’t care who and cared about showed how much about him doing about him.”

What is wrong?

Student 2: You mean grammar?
Student 3: It’s a bit.
Teacher: Do you want a
Student 2: Uh no.
Teacher: Good.

From there, the teacher chose directly related to improve the specifically into the we.

He chooses homophones, if the exercise pays off, students could use it as
While grading papers, he sees common errors glaring in his eyes. Going back to college, he even learned relevant terms that make students’ eyes roll – one way in disgust, the other in confusion – such as syntax and gerunds. Looking at the past week’s grammar exercise, he knows there has to be a more useful exercise for this class; thus, he mixes the book exercise, grabs the stack of student papers, and goes home for the weekend to ponder the possibilities.

Ideal as any fresh teacher, he’s determined to create an exercise that will improve student writing. With a sheet of paper at his side, he reads over the papers and writes down grammatical jargon from his observations. The list ranges from specific grammatical issues like to/too/two to stylistic issues like using subordinate clauses for a sense of variety. Following his prophetic green pen and due to his annoyance for continually correcting the same issues, he decides to tackle homophones and drafts a worksheet out of student writing. As the Chinese proverb goes, “Catch a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime.”

Returning to school on Monday, he’s deeply disappointed that the students aren’t as excited about a new grammar exercise as he is. Perhaps, they just do not know why they should be excited. So he asks them:

Teacher: Aren’t you excited about improving your grammar?
Student 1: Yeah right, Mr. Merkes!
Teacher: Does anybody know why it’s important to work on grammar? [silence] Who thinks teachers are just trying to torture their students? [a few hands rise]

Teacher: [He pulls out a sheet of paper and reads – all in one breath mind you] “Tupac Shakur was the greatest rapper that ever lived and I don’t care what other people may say because he was a good person and cared about his people and wrote lyrics from his heart that showed how much he loved his people and anybody who speaks bad about him don’t know nothing because there ain’t nothing bad to say about him.” That is one sentence, and the whole paper is like that.

What is wrong with it? [a student raises her hand] Yes, Reneisha.
Student 2: You’ve gotta breathe.
Student 3: It’s too long. And there’s no breaks.
Teacher: Do we have a term for that?
Student 2: Uh, run-on sentences.
Teacher: Good, now...

From there, the teacher continues the dialogue on how improving grammar is directly related to improving clarity and quality in writing. Then, he goes more specifically into the week’s exercise on homophones.

He chooses homophones partly because it is easily measurable and noticeable if the exercise pays off, and he made the worksheet like a reference sheet so students could use it as a resource when correcting papers. In addition, he has
a growing list of grammar lessons he wants to include in the future, all inspired by student work; thus, instant justification.

Despite the obvious antagonism toward grammar books, using its lessons are not out of the question; he merely plans to choose whatever exercise, self-generated or from a book, that best teaches the concept the students really need. Textbooks are designed for the masses, and a class has all the individuality of each student wrapped up into a bundle.

**Two basic principles to dictate further grammar lessons**

Breathing a sigh of relief after seeing a slight liberation to the subconscious slash through “their” of the pen and rewriting “they’re,” he digests the previous process to pick out his own important lessons learned through the analysis of teaching grammar. Rethinking everything, he comes out with two basic principles to dictate future grammar lessons.

Presupposing many students find grammar meaningless and/or boring, his first principle is that the teaching of grammar and *every* individual grammar lesson must be made meaningful to students. Perhaps making grammar exciting is a stretch, but students can be shown how good grammar improves writing effectiveness and clarity and, ultimately, their ability to express themselves. As in the case of the student with the four mile long sentences, students clearly saw the desperate need of punctuation.

Following another assumption that no textbook was specifically designed for his 8th grade class, his second principle is that grammar lessons must fit the unique personality of his class and be timely; thus, inspired directly from student work. Student work is likely a good source for practice materials as well, and this principle improves the former, making work more meaningful.

Armed with these two principles, he ponders the issue of parts of speech again. He hasn’t found a way to make them meaningful yet, though he’s assured he’ll find a perfect reason down the road after he’s successfully boycotted arming his students with those terms and struggling to explain a grammatical concept.

Pulling parts of speech lessons from student work? He doubts he’ll ever read over a student’s paper and comment, Well, it’s quite clear this student doesn’t know what a noun or a verb is. Nevertheless, he’s not ready to proclaim a writing utopia if the banishment of teaching parts of speech became the 28th amendment in the US Constitution or caution a writing apocalypse if it became an amendment. For safety’s sake, he’ll state that the only reason he would ever teach parts of speech is if he needed the vocabulary to teach a more practical grammatical concept.

Reminiscing about his days of methods classes, he reconsiders his behavior toward the “parts of speech girls.” If he could do it again, he would definitely
ask immediately, "Why do we need to learn parts of speech?" and continue to ask "But why?" until he gets a satisfactory answer or the professor's icy glare silences him. The young man may be torturing a teacher-in-training for a few minutes, but at least he might be preventing years of student torture!
Mark and Tiffany and My Life

Jean Erdman
UW Oshkosh

There was one day, it
Was a warm day, and Mark, Tiffany and
Most of the class were zoned out, a world
Away from the discussion I was trying to
Ignite.

Mark with dark hair, nice smile, nobody could stand him,
He was often not where he
Was supposed to be and sometimes
He would sit down in my class at the
Wrong hour or
Come and stand by me when he
Was supposed to be somewhere else and I
Would just keep teaching, figuring that he
Wasn’t engaging in illegal behavior or
Causing problems.

Tiffany, smiling enthusiastic Tiffany, who had brought me a
Big cookie for my birthday, in a pink
Victoria’s Secret shopping bag tied with streamers of
Curly ribbon, reassuring
Me that it wasn’t something from that
Store, and encouraging me that there
Was time to open it before the rest of
The class arrived.

Usually I enjoy the teaching day but as
This hot, humid September class began,
Mark, Tiffany and too many
Others began goofing around,
Not participating, slouched down looking
Bored, it occurred to me that district
Decisions mandating
“What to teach when” despite
My instincts that this unit
Would be better taught to
Juniors, not my
Sophomores,
Well
It got
To me.

I change tactics, an
Passing out a different
Specific directions, a
Couple of individuals
After school I revised
For 7th hour, having
Tomorrow’s plan to

I drove home, radio
Breathing deeply, a
My second job of night
Family, sipping coffee and
Essays, monitoring
Finally falling asleep
More pages of an A
Perry mystery.

Tomorrow I will try
Plans, and anticipate
Keep Mark and Tiffany
Engaged, and I may
Door for tips, and I
The guise of staff development
Back into perspective.

In public school we
Just the most interested
We teach without a
Schools in the upper
It six weeks a year.

I have to believe I can
Challenges under different
Stresses that occasion
In perspective for it
Attention of the “Mo
I guess I wouldn’t know
Least not to my satisfaction.

Deep breath, strive
Those “aha” teaching
That may be the reason
You a giant cookie,
Remember that Am

Tonight.
I change tactics, and move to small discussion groups,
Passing out a different written discussion prompt to each with
Specific directions, giving myself time to talk to a
Couple of individuals, and regroup.
After school I revised tomorrow's plans
For 7th hour, having used up
Tomorrow's plan today.

I drove home, radio cranked high, singing to the music, and then
Breathing deeply, a working parent tactic to help me transition to
My second job of making dinner, feeding the
Family, sipping coffee while reading
Essays, monitoring our kids' homework and bedtimes,
Finally falling asleep while trying to read a few
More pages of an Ann
Perry mystery.

Tomorrow I will try out my revised
Plans, and anticipate some new insight about how to
Keep Mark and Tiffany et al
Engaged, and I may ask the teacher next
Door for tips, and I will push district "bossiness" under
The guise of staff development
Back into perspective.

In public school we teach all the kids, not
Just the most interested and capable. And
We teach without air conditioning since
Schools in the upper Midwest "only" need
It six weeks a year.

I have to believe I can solve teaching
Challenges under duress, and keep problems and
Stresses that occasionally surface
In perspective for if I cannot capture the
Attention of the "Marks" and "Tiffany's", then
I guess I wouldn't call myself a teacher, at
Least not to my satisfaction.

Deep breath, strive to revise plans to create
Those "aha" teaching moments and connections
That may be the reason Mark stands by you and Tiffany brings
You a giant cookie, and
Remember that Ann Perry awaits you again.

Tonight.
Get Real: New Journalism Teachers, Advisors Find Support in New Mentor Program

Linda Barrington
Mount Mary College

The reality of the high school classroom for a beginning teacher—developing effective instructional strategies, applying theoretical knowledge, meeting individual student's needs, incorporating changing curriculum frameworks, preparing students for high stakes assessment testing, integrating emerging technology, dealing with class management issues, and remaining sensitive to societal issues—may be one of the most challenging transitions faced by teachers in their entire professional careers. (Virginia Dept. of Education)

With mentoring for new teachers mandated in Wisconsin public schools, new teachers have a lifeline to support them in this transition to their own classroom. Many of us remember what it was like to go it alone with everyone teaching behind closed doors. That doesn't mean that's the way it has to be.

"Mentor programs help beginning teachers make a successful transition into teaching by relying on the expertise of veterans to provide a clinical, real-world training process," according to the Virginia Department of Education. "Districts that provide effective support attract the most capable candidates, who remain on the job and improve student performance."

But what about new yearbook or newspaper advisors who aren't teaching journalism classes, aren't certified in journalism and may have little or no training in journalism? For one reason or another, they find themselves faced with advising a publication after school with little idea where to go for ideas or support. The National Council of Teachers of English says that we need to do something about providing that support.

Journalism as an integral part of the English curriculum
The NCTE supports journalism programs—during or after school—as an integral part of a strong English curriculum. In its 2004 resolution, the NCTE said that it "reaffirms the value of journalism courses as part of the English language arts curriculum; supports maintaining, reinstituting, or creating journalism programs and courses; and promotes the value of journalism programs that, under the guidance of a qualified journalism educator, give students a voice and allow them to exercise their constitutional right of free speech."

It is important to note that a body of research provides data showing that students who participate in journalism programs do better on testing and college language arts courses. In *Journalism Kids Do Better* (Dvorak, Lain, Dickson),

research shows students who take only Advanced Placement English students who take only AP college entrance exams.

"We've done a number of studies and found that journalism is equal to or exceeds AP English classes," "Journalism students' writing skills and grammar, punctuation, and usage are far better than the average student. They are used to handling these skills on a daily basis."

Publication is an essential part of the educational program in the classroom, and helps students develop skills in writing, research, and public speaking. It also helps them develop a critical and creative thinking process, and gives them an outlet for self-expression. But it also serves to improve their individual writing skills, and to make them aware of their own limitations and the limitations of others in the same field.

In its *Writing Framework for Educational Progress*, the National Council of Teachers of English recognizes the benefits of student publication programs:

"Developing student writing skills in a real setting, where students are faced with the demands of publication, is an essential part of the educational process. It helps them develop a sense of self and a desire to share their thoughts and ideas with others."

Furthermore, "Publication programs provide students with the opportunity to develop skills in critical thinking, writing, and research. They also provide students with the opportunity to develop a sense of responsibility and accountability, and to take pride in their achievements.

Student publication programs, such as the Journal of School Community, help students develop a sense of community and responsibility. They also provide students with the opportunity to learn about the responsibilities that come with being part of a community, and to develop a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others.

"The mentoring program..."
research shows students who take journalistic writing courses score higher on the Advanced Placement English Language and Composition exam than students who take only AP or honors English courses. They also score higher on college entrance exams such as the ACT.

“We’ve done a number of research studies that show that high school journalism is equal to or exceeds standard English [courses], Jack Dvorak said. “Journalism students’ writing skills, their sensitivity to audience, their use of grammar, punctuation, spelling, their concern with accuracy, their use of sources — all of these tended to be significantly higher in their performances.”

Publication is an essential part of the writing process. Ensio and Boxeth comment on the enormous value of publishing to any writing program: “Not only does publication encourage students to write by creating purpose and vision, but it also serves to improve writing skills.” Writing is vital to all publications, whether print, broadcast, or digital media.

In its Writing Framework and Specification for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress, the National Assessment Governing Board recognizes the benefits of student publishing:

“Developing student writers are expected to achieve an increasingly broad and deep knowledge and understanding of the value of writing in their lives, of their own individual writing processes, of the range of writing strategies available to them, and of the benefits of sharing and publishing their writing for a wider audience.”

Furthermore, “Publications work is authentic assessment at its best: a synthesis of analysis and critical thinking, planning, and relating to an audience beyond the classroom, and performance-based outcomes. Student work leads naturally to a portfolio of specific completed tasks, and publications skills positively support school-to-career progress” (Graff).

Student publication programs thrive with a knowledgeable, supportive advisor who helps students develop a culture of responsible journalism within the school community. But programs with a revolving door of advisors each year are likely to founder and may fail to guide students to develop a sense of responsible journalism.

**Journalism Mentoring program**
The Journalism Education Association (http://www.jea.org), with more than 2,500 members nationwide, is piloting a journalism mentoring program in five states this fall, with Wisconsin as one of the key states.

“The mentoring program addresses the very crux of what we’re all about –
training and maintaining quality journalism teachers in quality programs across the nation," said Ann Visser, JEA past president.

Each of the five states will enter the program this year with two mentors who are experienced, highly qualified, and recently retired journalism teachers. Wisconsin's mentors are Nancy Becker of Janesville, retired from Milton High School, and Sandy Jacoby of Salem, retired from Tremper High School in Kenosha.

"We realized that the retired advisors had the expertise, the more flexible time schedule and the love of journalism to help make the mentoring program work," said Julie Dodd, co-chair of the committee.

Becker and Jacoby, along with the other eight mentors, participated in a day-long Mentor Training Academy in Philadelphia in early November. The training team from Santa Cruz's New Teacher Project (Nick Ferentinos) and the California Scholastic Journalism Institute (Steve O'Donoghue) guided them through mentoring techniques, data-gathering activities, formative assessment, and use of journalism standards in classrooms and after-school publication coaching. Next spring the ten mentors will meet in Anaheim for another day of follow-up training.

Meanwhile, the new mentors are following leads to recruit new journalism teachers and/or advisors to become their protégés with a two-year commitment to this project. The support of the mentees' school administrators is essential, but the program is offered at no cost to the school. The JEA is paying for the mentor training and materials; each state has secured its own financial support for the mentor stipend, travel and supplies. Here at home, the Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation in Madison provides all funding.

Next fall, Becker and Jacoby will each contract with an additional two new mentees, while continuing into the second year with their first two. And two more mentors from each state will be selected for training in the fall and they will each take on two mentees. By this time next year, Wisconsin will have four trained journalism mentors working with twelve new journalism educators.

**Valued experience for mentors and mentees**

Both research and anecdotal experience tell us that "new teachers who are mentored receive higher ratings from their principals, develop better planning skills, handle discipline problems more effectively, conduct more productive classroom discussion, and remain in classrooms longer than teachers who are simply left to 'sink or swim.'"

Likewise, "veteran teachers who serve as mentors report increased professional revitalization, less isolation, greater recognition, and a belief that they impact the profession more than teachers who are not involved in mentoring new professionals." (Virginia Dept. of Education)
This program can provide an ongoing support system to improve the retention rate of new journalism teachers and advisors, while strengthening journalism programs across the state.

JEA's goal is to train journalism teachers and media advisors who will stay with their publications and build them into strong, effective programs that promote JEA's goals of freedom of expression, responsible journalism, and support for diversity. The JEA initiative will help teachers meet the "highly qualified" teaching expertise mandated by No Child Left Behind.

The Mentoring Committee will be working to develop funding partnerships and apply for grants to expand the program.

The Journalism Education Association has been leading the way in scholastic journalism and media education since 1924. Based at Kansas State University, JEA has more than 2,500 members, who are high school and college media teachers and advisors of high school media - newspapers, yearbooks, broadcasting, magazines and online publications.

JEA Mentoring Committee
The Mentoring Committee members are Julie Dodd - professor in the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida; Linda Barrington - JEA's liaison with the National Council of Teachers of English; Steve O'Donoghue - director of the California Scholastic Journalism Initiative; Nick Ferentinos - coordinator of the CSJI Mentor Program; Peggy Gregory - journalism teacher, mentor and newspaper advisor at Greenway High School, Phoenix; Candace Perkins Bowen - director of the Center for Scholastic Journalism at Kent State University; and Norma Kneese - journalism teacher and newspaper, yearbook and photography advisor at Snake River High School, Blackfoot, Idaho, and chair of the JEA Multicultural Commission.

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**Mentors: Nancy Becker and Sandy Jacoby**

**Nancy Becker** has advised newspaper and yearbook for 20+ years at Milton High School. Her publications are in the National Scholastic Press Association Hall of Fame and are Columbia Scholastic Press Association Gold Medalists. Nancy also judges yearbooks and newspapers for NSPA. She is a Certified Journalism Educator, a former president of the Kettle Moraine Press Association, and a current member of the board of directors. For 17 years Nancy was the director of KEMP’s Summer Journalism Workshop. She also serves on Wisconsin Newspaper Association’s Partners Committee and has helped organize and present at WNA’s advisor workshops.

**Sandy Jacoby** has advised the award-winning yearbook at Kenosha’s Tremper High School for 31 years. Her books have won national honors including National Scholastic Press Association Pacemaker Finalist, NSPA best of show places for 13 years, and Quill and Scroll Yearbook Excellence awards. She is a Board member for the Kettle Moraine Press Association, co-director of KEMPA’s Fall Conference, instructor at Summer Journalism Workshop, Adviser of the Year winner, and inductee into its Hall of Fame. She has also been named the Journalism Education Association Special Recognition and Distinguished Yearbook Adviser of the Year.

**Moving Forward: What are ADP and P21?**

The demands of today’s global economy are insisting that schools and curriculums change. Intercontinental competition and change are influencing what employees and students are taught. Acknowledging this is time to move forward by engaging in a new conversation about growth and demand. Last spring, the Partnership for 21st Century Learning convened a group of English language arts educators, from the secondary level, to develop a comprehensive design for new English language arts standards. The group charged these design teams with conducting an analysis and development of two frameworks, those of curriculum and instruction for English language arts educators and the standards of English language arts that schools and states have adopted.

Since then, the design teams have been working on developing revision suggestions and an updated framework for English language arts standards that is reflective of the demands of the 21st century. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning has developed a network of 30 states, each of which has been more successful in aligning the demands of the academic and workplace requirements for college and workplace readiness. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) was developed in 1993 by a group of education leaders, business leaders, and community leaders from across the United States. The Partnership’s mission is to ensure that American students are prepared for college and work in the 21st century economy. The Partnership’s current work is focused on three core areas: 1) Education Policy, 2) Research, and 3) National Network.

**What are ADP and P21?**

The American Diploma Project (ADP) is a national coalition of business, education, community, and government leaders formed in 1995 to ensure high school graduation for all students. The ADP is committed to improving the quality of public education in order to prepare all students for college and work in the 21st century. The ADP works to ensure that all students in every community in the United States have the opportunity to participate in high-quality education programs and to achieve academic success.

Like ADP, the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) brings together business, education, and community leaders to support the development and implementation of educational standards and policies that prepare all students for college and work in the 21st century. P21 is committed to empowering students to become active participants in their own learning and in their communities. P21’s vision is that every student will graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and work in the 21st century economy.

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Moving Forward: Wisconsin Seeks Revision Suggestions for Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts

Erin Olkowski
New Berlin West High School

The demands of today’s global world are pushing educators to rethink their curriculum and reconsider the scope of the classroom. Vast information networks, intercontinental communications, and unprecedented cultural exposure are influencing what employers want and need and therefore what and how students are taught. Acknowledging this fact, the state of Wisconsin believes it is time to move forward by ensuring its curriculum can keep pace with global growth and demand. Last spring, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction convened a group of English educators, along with a group of mathematics educators, from the secondary and post secondary realms. The Department charged these design teams with reviewing the state’s existing Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts and those for mathematics in light of two frameworks, those of the American Diploma Project (ADP) and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21).

Since then, the design teams have studied these frameworks and are now developing revision suggestions for the existing standards. (The current English Language Arts standards were published in 1998.) Below are answers to questions English educators may have about this process so far.

What are ADP and P21?
The American Diploma Project, which partners with Achieve Inc., The Education Trust, and the Fordham Foundation, spent two years investigating the discrepancies between what it took to earn an American high school diploma and the skills employers and post-secondary institutions required to be successful. As a result, in 2004 the Project published its findings along with benchmarks for college and workplace readiness in English and mathematics. Now, ADP has developed a network of 30 states that are using the benchmarks to guide a more successful alignment of high school degree requirements with the demands of the academic and working world. In Wisconsin, the English Language Arts design team reviewed an ADP generated side-by-side comparison in which the state standards were ranked individually by how well they reflected ADP’s benchmarks. More information about ADP and its network can be found at www.achieve.org.

Like ADP, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills is future-oriented, emphasizing learning and work. According to its mission statement, the advocacy organization “brings together the business community, education leaders, and policymakers to define a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure every child’s success as citizens and workers in the 21st century.” The collec-
tive efforts of the Partnership have led to a 21st century skills framework that focuses on life and career; learning and innovation; and information media and technology. The teaching of core subjects with 21st century interdisciplinary themes supports the framework. These P21 themes are global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; and health literacy. The English Language Arts design team studied the P21 framework and themes and discussed ways in which existing standards address the curricular possibilities suggested by the Partnership. More information about P21 can be found at http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/.

What were the design team’s findings and what are its recommendations so far?
ADP’s side-by-side assessment of the English Language Arts standards revealed that a majority had an excellent or good alignment with its benchmarks. The state exhibited less alignment in the areas of logical thinking and specific aspects of American literature. The design team agrees that a greater emphasis on instructing logical thinking could be directed by modifying the wording of some standards; however, the existing standards do emphasize thinking skills throughout. The literature discrepancies are choices the design team feels should be left to districts, schools and departments rather than to the state.

The design team discussed at length the possibilities for the English classroom as suggested by the P21 framework. Ultimately, it found the P21 skills and themes infused in the existing standards, although pedagogical choices can determine how aptly the overall framework is implemented. Therefore, the design team is recommending embedding a P21 focus statement prior to each of the content standards, providing suggestions for implementation and indicating features of a P21 classroom. Overall, these features include the following: collaboration, information communication technology literacy, authentic and applied uses of English Language Arts skills and knowledge, higher order thinking skills, and global awareness.

Recognizing that any change in the standards will send ripples throughout the state, the design team will also suggest consideration of these implementations issues, in light of its recommendations: professional development; pedagogical instruction in colleges of education; cross-curricular connections in PI-34; integration of English Language Arts and reading; materials selection; critical classroom talk; formative assessment that develops metacognitive awareness; and a developmental model for secondary students in P21 classrooms.

What now?
ADP and P21 are currently reviewing the design team’s first draft of revisions, as described above, for further input. Being only advisory, once the design team’s suggestions are in their final form, they will go to a DPI-based leader-
ship team that will consider these suggestions as it moves through the actual standards revision process with the State Superintendent. Design teams in both English Language Arts and mathematics will submit their final suggestions for standards’ revision to the leadership team and State Superintendent in May of 2008.

Works Cited


Reviews of Recent Books about Writing

Ruth Wood
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Smith and Wilhelm have made a mark for themselves as practitioners and purveyors of teaching strategies that engage the disengaged. This volume, like their earlier volume, Reading Don’t Fix No Chevys, bases the approach to issues of engagement on studies made by Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi on what he calls “flow” experiences in human experience. Real learning can only take place, according to Csikszentmihalyi, when the learner experiences a sense of “control and competence, a challenge that requires an appropriate level of skill, clear goals and feedback, and a focus on the immediate experience (3). To this list, Smith and Wilhelm add the importance of social interaction.

The right level of challenge seems central to achieving a sense of control and competence; the task undertaken can neither be too easy or too hard, but must provide a challenge that the learner feels they can succeed at. Follow that with the dictum that engagement in that task must be followed up with the learner receiving some immediate feedback about how they are doing on the task, and you can understand why Nancy Atwell’s writing workshop approach has so great a following. And you can understand the wisdom of Peter Smagorinsky’s warning that we never “never dumb down instruction.” How many of us argue to ourselves that we’re giving students a break when we give them “easy” worksheets to fill in, when we know that what we’re really doing is failing to provide enough challenge to motivate real engagement?

The chapter of Smith and Wilhelm’s book that deals directly with writing instruction features an additional set of scaffolding that goes beyond Atwell. Chapter 5, “A Look at Writing: Getting to the Heart of the Matter,” draws particularly from George Hillocks’ heuristic of the two-by-two block matrix, which illustrates the four kinds of knowledge that writers must possess before they can be expected to succeed at any writing assignment: declarative knowledge of substance, declarative knowledge of form, procedural knowledge of substance and procedural knowledge of form. If students are enabled to know the formal characteristics of the writing they are to produce (declarative knowledge of form) and how to put this knowledge into practice, facts or appropriate procedures for are able to meet the...
practice, facts or contents that they are to write about, and the appropriate procedures for including and arranging them in a text, then they are able to meet the challenges a writing assignment poses. Bad writing instruction, Smith and Wilhelm argue, occurs when teachers fail to equip students with these four forms of knowledge on each particular mode of writing we assign to them.
Like Smith and Wilhelm’s other books, this one fills teachers with a sense of hope that there are practical strategies for engaging apparently unmotivated students that enable them to develop academic skills.

Killgallon, Don, and Jenny Killgallon. Grammar for Middle School: A Sentence-Composing Approach. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006. All of us struggle with the issue of how to teach grammar effectively and how much grammar to teach. Most of us make compromise choices: we don’t ignore it (keep parents and principals happy), but we don’t spend too much class time on something that doesn’t seem to help students either write better or do better on their standardized writing exams. The Killgallons’ text is something that promises to enable teachers to devote meaningful time to grammar instruction that actually will help students write better and do better on standardized exams. Many of us are familiar with sentence-combining exercises that feature an array of short sentences or sentence parts that challenge students to put them together in graceful, succinct fashion. Studies on those efforts show that students gain significantly in language facility, but retain little about how to identify the parts of a sentence they were manipulating (Andrews).

Exercises in Killgallons’ book go beyond merely supplying a set of short sentences to be reformed into a single sentence. Each segment of the book is set up so that students develop, piece by piece, a “sentence-composing toolbox.” Each of the “tools” (from parts of speech, to various types of phrases, verbals, clauses, and sentence types) is introduced with a definition and examples, followed up with a list of model sentences and varied practices, and solidified with “creative writing” opportunities to apply the new tools to the student’s own writing.

Two early lessons in the book give students practice in how to use the “opening adjective” and the “delayed adjective.” A teacher would have to believe that taking students through these nine workbook pages would leave them skilled in knowing how to identify adjectives, how to move them around for different effects and varied structure, and how to revise their own writing to improve structure and effect. Advanced lessons in the latter pages of the book include using noun, adjective and adverb clauses. Clearly, this is a range of lessons that
middle schoolers cannot master in one grade level. But a language arts program committed to giving students useful grammar lessons could gain from investing in Killgallons’ methods. A well-planned curriculum could distribute this range of lessons over two or three middle school or even high school grades.


This volume contains 75 writing lessons, grouped into the categories of “Writing Process,” “Portfolios,” “Literature,” “Research,” “Grammar,” “Writing on Demand,” and “Media.” I found the sections on “Media” and “Writing on Demand” the most timely and interesting—for providing lessons on things we ought to be teaching but may lack ideas on how to. Writing about Media ideas includes clever possibilities such as analyzing freeze frames from video and learning journalism basics by reporting on events from Arthur’s Round Table.

The Grammar section is disappointingly heavy on error correction; the Portfolio section is short, with not a lot to add to the abundant material already available; the Research section is also short and not groundbreaking, but still interesting. The opening section on Writing Process is the longest and most varied, offering advice on peer response, developing detail, growing paragraphs into essays, developing organizational skills, among other things.

This isn’t a book that will teach you how to plan and deliver a writing unit, but, if you already have some experience with teaching writing, it will provide you with ideas for varying the approaches you’ve already used.

If you are looking for a book that gives you a comprehensive program for teaching writing, you might want to try the following:


This is a huge book—almost 400 pages—so it’s not something you can pick up in Mid-August to help you revamp your approach to writing for the upcoming semester. But it is a very comprehensive book that can help inexperienced (and experienced) teachers polish their writing pedagogy in a multitude of ways.

Even if you don’t buy into the 6-trait approach, you might appreciate the range of guidance Spandel offers. The chapters in the first half of the book address teaching of the various traits; they also provide sam-

Chapter 13 seems extremely sound advice about conducting conferences in the classroom. There are sample teachers might duplicate. Owning a personal copy of this book has given me the confidence to continue departmental copying of traits instruction—a
ple papers written to develop each of the specific traits, which might be useful as classroom models.

Chapters 7 through 14 deal more universally with writing teachers’ concerns: how to help students develop successful writing process, “unlocking the door to revision,” troubleshooting on common writing problems, and others. Every chapter in the book ends with a summary—the chapter’s key lessons “in a nutshell”—plus ideas for extending these lessons. These summaries provide good thumbnail tips to a hasty peruser and good pre-reading focus for each chapter, to guide the teacher to look for explanation of each of these points of advice.

Chapter 13 seems especially useful to the spectrum of teachers, offering sound advice about ways to respond to student writing, conducting conferences, and making peer groups work. Throughout the book there are sample rubrics, checklists, and writing guides that teachers might duplicate directly for classroom use. Owning a personal copy of this text would be good for the teacher who wants to continue to develop skills in teaching writing. Acquiring a departmental copy seems advisable to any school who has adopted 6 traits instruction—and even those who haven’t.

Other Works Cited


Touchdowns and Interceptions

Dear Colleagues,

Just like virtually every October in memory, I’ve been thinking about Brett Favre. Specifically about September 30th, when Brett sunk a beautiful pass to succeed Dan Marino’s long held record for most touchdown passes ever made. 421. Interestingly, just one week later in a true heartbreaker against the Bears, Brett tied another record at 277—this time for most interceptions.

There is a message resting in these tandem records, and one that speaks to me as an educator. Though I hate to admit this because it has certain implications for our playoff hopes, I believe that holding both the most touchdowns and most interceptions might be the part of Brett’s game I admire most. Together, the records illustrate the confidence he has shown as a leader, and the deeply held belief that he is responsible for making the play. He often plays outside the script, and he acts, reacts, and adapts on the run. Sometimes he makes magic, and when he doesn’t, the worst I can accuse him of is trying too hard.

I have come to realize that the qualities I value in a quarterback are similar to those I value in an educator, and I have met countless “Brett Favres” since joining DPI as the English Language Arts consultant. I spend my days with individuals known for taking risks, and with districts and teams who possess the passion, hard work, and creativity to drive education forward. I’ll share a few of these with you because honestly, who doesn’t love a Brett Favre story?

Recently I joined our English Language Arts design team, comprised of secondary and post secondary Wisconsin educators, as they reviewed recommendations for changes to our current ELA standards made by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and American Diploma Project (ADP). This is difficult work mired in deeply held values and beliefs.

Over the last months, the design team has wrestled with many recommendations that have sought to more narrowly define particular aspects of our ELA standards. Design team members have carefully discussed each recommendation and have refused to accept a particular recommendation simply because other states have done so. Team members speak in meetings with passion about a set of standards that will allow Wisconsin teachers to make independent choices and create personally meaningful curriculum. They see this revision work as an opportunity to be bold in defining a vision for communication in the 21st century, a vision that values the myriad modes and perspectives our students know and need.

As the district level, one group recently is in the midst of a big writing meaningful ELA curriculum group recounted that the impatience needs uncovered when asked, Rather than purchase a pre-designed core group resource for teachers of ELA plans, assessments and web-based resources have received national attention districts outside Milwaukee through.

To meet the teachers behind hundreds of hours to improving their craft will have a positive impact on the district, this group appears unique curriculum for English Language Arts have done is infectious, and the need in their district is admired by not waiting for someone else.

Of course, despite making the book quarterback at best, he is unbridled. Either way, Favre shares qualities with those in the room with a true and infectious pass bold and not content to simply that part of who we are is warranted.

For me, Favre’s dual records indeed come great risk. To get the true prediction? We’re headed for interceptions. I am proud to be a Packers.

Take care, and I’d love to hear.

Sincerely,
Visiting the design team, I found a group not content to simply approve the recommendations. The design team is comfortable crafting recommendations outside of the national "playbook," and I believe they will draft a proposal that will allow Wisconsin teachers to be bold, fearless, and able to make the big plays most likely to benefit our students.

At the district level, one group of Milwaukee Public School teachers I've met recently is in the midst of a big play, having devoted the past five summers to writing meaningful ELA curriculum. When I met with them this August, the group recounted that the impetus for the project grew from the distinct curricular needs they uncovered while teaching a highly transient student population. Rather than purchase a pre-articulated curriculum from one of the many national vendors, this core group set about creating a comprehensive, web-based resource for teachers of ELA that includes learning targets, hyperlinked lesson plans, assessments and web-based video. The project has grown in scale and has received national attention and some of this work is now available to districts outside Milwaukee through the MPS website.

To meet the teachers behind this work is to meet folks who have given hundreds of hours to improving the MPS curriculum framework in the hopes it will have a positive impact on teachers and students. In Wisconsin's largest district, this group appears undaunted by the challenge of mapping meaningful curriculum for English Language Arts. Their enthusiasm for the work they have done is infectious, and the boldness with which they attack the perceived need in their district is admirable. Like Favre, this group of MPS teachers is not waiting for someone else to make the big play.

Of course, despite making the big plays, people rarely discuss Favre as a textbook quarterback. At best, he is unorthodox and creative. At worst, he's risky and unbridled. Either way, Favre continues to play like I want to teach, and he shares qualities with those in the education field who I admire most--those with a true and infectious passion for their subject. People who are risky and bold and not content to simply follow the playbook. These folks share the idea that part of who we are is wrapped up in what we do and how we do it.

For me, Favre's dual records illustrate the philosophy that with great reward comes great risk. To get the touchdowns, we must be willing to throw some interceptions. I am proud to have met so many "Brett Favres" this fall. My prediction? We're headed for a Super Bowl. I hope I can say the same for the Packers.

Take care, and I'd love to hear your "Brett Favre" story.

Sincerely,