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How do we come to see ourselves as writers?
#amwriting
#writinglife
#writingeveryday
#teachwriting
#whyIwrite
#writer2writer

An issue of inspirations on teaching writing & leading writing lives

September 2017

The **Oklahoma English Journal** is a peer reviewed journal, published by the Oklahoma Council Teachers of English as an affiliate journal of the National Council of Teachers of English. OEJ publishes articles of interest to classroom teachers, librarians, administrators, and university professors across literacy studies and the humanities regardless of teaching level.

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First Thoughts

(re)Starting a writing life
Julianna Lopez Kershen, editor

Composition is construction of the mind and soul. As a writer I compose with pens and pencils, crayons and markers, paint brushes and keyboards. With each notebook I find myself beginning again, starting my writing life over letter by letter, breath by breath. And yet, with little to show for it, writing continues to be a peaceful salve amidst my chaotic modern life. In writing I find space to construct who I may become, and in reading I am inspired to write.

This issue of *Oklahoma English Journal* embraces the duality of the phrase "writing teachers." Each of the authors in this issue is both a teacher who writes and a teacher of writing. Each believes that you cannot teach writing without writing yourself. Taken together, we agree that to work through the processes of writing with students, whether children, youth, or adults, we must first commit to writing in front of and alongside our learners. This public commitment to writing means that our teaching is often from a place of confusion and wonder. This commitment further requires us to bring that inquiry in front of the classroom. Teachers who write model the circuitous paths of thought they follow, how their eyes narrow in close observations of life, and their willingness to examine and celebrate an author's language and words, structures, and form. We admire the construction of theme and tone through word study, detail, and punctuation. Like our students, we struggle through the challenges of process writing. We walk them through the forests of our writing processes: from conception through erasures into revisions and writing that blooms finally as publication.

King and Sheriff LeVan (2018) begin the issue with research that provides a window into student writers' use of audio-recorded reflections on their writing. This exciting work focuses on the words of their students, and the power afforded to student writers when given the chance to talk through their writing decisions. I'll readily admit

to my joy at reading Genessis's recognition of her writing process, "my introduction was good. I used a stable context and disruption, thesis sentence…" (p. 7). I can hear in her words her thoughts about organizing her composition. By giving their students a chance to talk through reflections on writing, these teachers provide student authors a place to (re)compose themselves.

Next, Searcy and Flores (2018) document their writing partnership, revealing a professional friendship that uses technologies to bridge geography and time. This essay adds another facet to the role of collaboration in writing, with the central message that we must write and share that writing, because as they see it, sharing begets inspiration, reassurance, and creativity.

Becker's (2018) interviews with master teachers takes up this emphasis on professional collaboration. She highlights the importance of institutional memory in the teaching profession. Perhaps now more than ever, we need to hear the wisdom of experienced teachers – their successes and struggles. Nationally, our teaching force is less experienced than it has ever been (Ingersoll and Merrill, 2017), and here in Oklahoma the churn of teachers entering and exiting the profession continues to dominate schools. Becker's writing celebrates the wisdom of experienced teachers for those entering the profession.

In "Following the X's and O's," Hanna's (2018) essay transitions the reader into a series of articles about teaching practice. She describes her use of "six word memoirs" as a means of getting to know her students and assessing their writing skills. An experienced teacher-researcher, she presents multiple examples for weaving together teaching and coaching so that student writers become more adept and more confident in the English classroom.

At the center of this issue concrete poems written by fourth grade students at McKinley Elementary (NPS) offer us alternative visions for Rev. Martin Luther King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech. These poems serve as arresting constructions of children's understanding, while also inspiring us to compose new meanings in Rev. King's timeless words.

In her essay on the importance of supporting young writers through pre-writing, National Board Certified teacher-librarian Johnson (2018) challenges us to take the time to generate and collect ideas. All writers have sat and stared at empty pages, frustrated with a lack of ideas. Johnson reminds us that we are each brimming with words and images, if only we'd pay attention and take the time to brainstorm. She advocates that we give such time to our students so that they will believe in their abilities to create and produce.

In the midst of Johnson's essay, Evers Holloway (2018) shares a transgression of what could be a traditional unit review lesson. Instead, Professor Evers Holloway invites us to imagine an active classroom with bodies mov-

Conversation with
Professor Shelbie Witte
Site Director of the Oklahoma State Writing Project

I became the site director of the OSU Writing Project in 2015. The OSU Writing Project has a vibrant teacher consultant community as well as a core group of co-directors and College Ready Writers' Program consultants that work in various capacities across the state to improve the teaching of writing in our schools.

How did the OSWP get started? What is your history with the program?

The OSU Writing Project celebrated our 25th anniversary this year. It was a great time to recognize how far we've come and where we are headed from here.

I began as a Teacher Consultant with the Oklahoma Writing Project in 2000 (tech liaison, returning fellow, then Summer Institute Director), to the Flint Hills Writing Project in 2004 to the Florida State University Writing Project as the director of research, and ultimately to the OSU Writing Project as site director.

What is the mission of the OSWP?

The Oklahoma State University Writing Project dedicates itself to improving the teaching and learning of writing in Oklahoma's classrooms. As pre-k through university educators, we offer our colleagues a long-term professional development community grounded in inquiry and research-based practices. The OSU Writing Project is a member site of the National Writing Project. Each year, exemplary teachers participate in an intensive Summer Institute. These master teachers join with other OSUWP/NWP Teacher Consultants in a continuing effort to improve literacy education in Oklahoma schools by sponsoring teacher research and ongoing programs of professional improvement.

What do you believe to be most important for teachers to know about teaching writing with children and young people?

The most important asset we can offer writers is the time and space to write. Without making time for the things we value, we cannot expect growing writers to learn to appreciate it.

If you had the time to focus all your writing on one project – what would you love to write?

I have several children's books in my brain. One day!

What authors have mentored you in your writing and writing instruction?

I've had fantastic writing mentoring from my days as a student in Oklahoma schools (Patricia Coale, OSU WP TC) to my teacher preparation days (Mike Angelotti, Peter Smagorinsky, and Diane Holt-Reynolds) to my OWP days (Janis Cramer, Freda Richardson, Johnnie Keel, and Claudia Swisher) to my current mentors in the NWP, NCTE, and my colleagues at OSU. I particularly love the writing style of David Sedaris and Margaret Atwood.

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ing and minds ablaze, as students work together to write, remember, and critique in "The Prescription for Success."

In "Social Animals" Runnels (2018), like Searcy and Flores, dares to show her starts and restarts as a writer. Her description of the tension inherent in publicly sharing one's writing is important for teachers of writing to understand, because like Runnels, we are charged with finding multiple ways for our students to share and critique their own and one another's work in safe and constructive interactions. Following Runnels's essay, Slayton (2018) also shares his writing life, and through his journey we are able to reimagine the concept of a "writing process." Slayton admonishes us to leave behind the linearity of "the" writing process, and to instead work as writers to find our own way through the "messy middle parts."

Professor Phelps's (2018) lighthearted history of the Oklahoma Writing Project mirrors Becker's message of looking back so that we are better equipped to look ahead. Phelps gives us a glimpse into the experiences shared by many, many Oklahoma teachers who learned to see themselves as writers through the dedicated work of the OWP and OSUWP.

This issue of OEJ culminates in a research article in which Jeter, Rule Wicker, and Young (2018) collaborate to understand how learning how to write as professional teachers informs their teaching practices as teachers of writing. This study echoes the message of King and Sheriff LeVan, that all writers need multiple opportunities to improve and grow. Taking our work public is an arduous task, and we must always be looking for ways to invite our student writers to share and reflect. Melissa Rule Wicker reminds us, "I think it's important for students to read each other's words to gain appreciation for their own work as well as their peers… everyone needs validation, [and] anytime students' work can be praised it should be" (p. 37).

September 21st is the International Day of Peace. I believe it is through understanding ourselves we can find and bring peace into the world. Writing is one path into our memories, into our current ideas, and into composing the people we want to be. Writing offers us the space to (re)start our lives word by word, sentence by sentence. I invite you to let the ideas in this issue inspire the writer inside. Find a comfortable chair, take an hour to read, and then pick up a pen. Your writing life awaits.

Let Them Speak: Adding Choice to Writing Reflection

Marissa King and Karen Sheriff LeVan

In our eagerness to offer choices in topic selection and writing genre, sometimes we forget to extend choice-making to other parts of the writing process. Teachers have traditionally relied on writing in the evaluation and reflection stages, and students often follow up essays with an additional paper that explains their thinking or a quick write on their learning process.

For most seasoned writers, writing about writing is a chance to slow down and think carefully. After all, a fluent writer glides right through spelling and grammatical choices without expending much energy.

But for our most struggling writers, writing about writing can be even more difficult than the draft they just struggled to produce. It's hard for our most at-risk writers to focus on metacognition when surface-level concerns demand so much cognitive energy. Perhaps it's not surprising that getting struggling writers to regularly reflect on writing in writing can be a challenge.

When tasked with written reflection, struggling writers often complain that they would rather talk than write. "Can we just say it?" is a common request. As writing teachers, we initially bristled at the request to limit the writing part of metacognition. Of course, some students are probably just trying to get out of writing. But their requests prompted us to consider how a little bit of student choice- like speaking instead of writing- might change the metacognitive process.

Audio-recorded reflection offers exciting possibilities for choice in the writing classroom. The mode itself isn't new, of course. Most students are already familiar with audio recording of some kind. They use it to narrate Snapchat and Instagram videos, send voice messages, and record notes to self. Adding audio-recording into the metacognitive toolkit brings exciting possibilities.

Like most language arts teachers, we're big advocates of reflection throughout the writing process. After all, metacognition can improve academic achievement (Nielsen, 2012; Joseph, 2010), strengthen reasoning (McDonald, 2007), and help focus student thought (Hogue Smith, 2010). Especially for struggling writers, metacognition is not just a tool to learn content, but also the "figure it out skills" they need to learn from mistakes (Joseph, 2010).

We've taught writers of many ages, skill levels, and socioeconomic brackets. For years, we worked with students assigned to remedial composition courses at a rural two-year college. More recently, our research has expanded to the elementary language arts classroom where Marissa currently teaches 5th grade. Collegiate and elementary-level writers have obvious developmental differences, but we've seen struggling writers at both levels trip over written metacognitive assignments. All too often, hesitant student writers submit vague or unsatisfactory responses when they're asked to use writing as the mode of reflection.

But just because students aren't writing much, doesn't mean they aren't reflecting. When we ask students to discuss their thinking, many students can verbally discuss their rhetorical strategies in fairly complex terms. The gap between stilted written reflection and the more complex work students can do in speech calls for further attention.

Spoken reflection in the language arts

For years, language arts teachers have embraced spoken word in the writing classroom. Reading student writing aloud, for example, is a common practice to develop a "writer's ear" (Franklin, 2010, p. 83). Students benefit when they get a chance to hear their voice and present ideas in a space free from immediate evaluation. Speaking allows the most grammatically challenged writer a chance to share ideas free from the red pen. Beck et al. (2015) points out that teachers too can learn different things from student talk about writing. Strengths and challenges that aren't obvious when evaluating writing alone may be detectable in speech.

More recent pedagogical developments include audio-recorded speech in the writing classroom. Some of what is hardest to communicate in writing can more easily come across in speech. Students report finding audio recordings more personal, in part because talking lends itself to including more details as well as tone and personality (Bauer, 2011). For students who don't usually speak up in class, audio-recorded speech offers a space where students can voice questions and responses free from the worry of public evaluation (Taylor et al., 2013).

The simple act of talking about writing has benefits. Longtime writing center scholar Muriel Harris (1995) notes that when students are given space to talk aloud about their thinking, they tend to practice exploratory thinking and more easily speculate on possible revisions. Getting students to talk about their writing improves writing ability and builds metacognition (Baxa, 2015).

The case for audio-recorded writing reflection

For our most struggling students, writing about writing in writing may actually slow them down so much that they can't fully process their ideas. After all, a strug-

gling writer's attention to spelling or grammar can be a distraction from the metacognitive task at hand. If our goal is to get students to reflect on the writing process, students' request to "just say it" might be exactly what they need.

We still value written reflection, but we've added more choice into the reflection part of the writing process. Now, our students can respond to the same prompts but in spoken form using audio recording.

Fortunately, technology makes audio reflections simple and inexpensive. College students use the recording app on their cell phones or a school iPad. The upper elementary students use a shared, handheld recording device in the classroom. For classrooms with one-to-one devices, free recording apps make the process even simpler.

Like any language arts classroom reflection, the scope and focus of the recorded metacognitive exercises vary. Sometimes, students respond to a template of questions they can apply to any writing. Other times, we give more specific prompts. But now, students can choose to record instead of write their reflections.

Cognitive load allocation

Part of our decision to add choice to the reflection process comes from our study of the writing skills students need to discuss their metacognition. Over the past several years, we've analyzed our students' recorded reflections. We've marveled at the sophisticated contextual clues they can verbalize. As we transcribe student audios like those below, we pause many times to discuss mechanical choices. Do we use a colon instead of a period here? How do we punctuate this interjection? Even in transcriptions it's complicated to write about thinking.

We've included two transcribed reflections below. In each example, the students are responding to teacher-generated questions after completing the writing process. Genessis, a first-year college student in a remedial composition course, is reflecting on an assignment that explored the work of career professionals- in her case, an athletic trainer. The excerpt, like many others from the semester, was recorded out of class. Using her own cell phone, she is responding to two prompts: What did you do well in your writing this week? What advice would you give yourself to improve your writing? Her entire reflection is done in spoken form. The student starts by giving herself tips for what she could change.

> I would tell myself to ask questions such as like, for example, my MRI, I could have used it [the definition of an MRI] as an appositive instead of a separate sentence so that the reader can understand more.

> Hmmm, my introduction was good: I used a stable context and disruption, thesis statement and I clearly stated what I was- the three things that I was going to talk about. . .

> My appositives were good except that I have to understand if- I have to know if I understand what the appositive means so that my reader can- so that I can feel confident. Evidence was good. All three paragraphs had evidence.

> My transitions were good except my, I had "to begin with" and then I had, my second paragraph said "even though MRIs" so I related it back to my first paragraph. And my third paragraph, I could have done better, but I said "thirdly" so next time I'll just use a better one.

Although a transcription makes it easy to spot where a student stops and restarts, those missteps barely register when you hear the reflection. There are parts of the reflection above that are easy to critique, but the sheer volume is much more than we usually receive in written form. Of course, we cannot determine what Genessis or any student would have written in place of their audio-recorded reflection. But when we compare our students' written and spoken reflective work, two things are clear: audio reflections are longer and more nuanced.

If metacognition is the goal, students' focus should be on the writing process and their own actions and missteps. In the audio recording example above, the student struggled to pronounce "disruption" but it didn't stop her from making the point. We wonder if a mispronunciation or language discomfort would have led to misspelling or dodging the word or concept entirely.

For some writers, the writing itself might distract from the goals. In the last paragraph, Genessis quotes her own work ("begin with") and compares it to her next transition ("even though MRIs") before editorializing. Simple writing moves like integrating quotes are second nature to some writers but require a great deal of attention from more struggling writers. The additional attention required to details like these can derail students from the main goal: reflection on writing.

Genessis' recorded reflection, she uses back-to-back transitional phrases to give evidence ("such as, for example"). Although she didn't need two transitions in a row, it didn't matter much in speech. She got to her point: a reflection on how to include a definition of an MRI. As her teachers, we're glad that she was able to focus on metacognition instead of the potential for surface-level errors.

Recorded reflection offers the chance to shift the cognitive load away from mechanics. Even when teachers insist surface-level concerns won't be graded in written reflection, our most struggling writers still have to pause and consider spelling or punctuation. For them, the very act of writing demands energy. Speech may allow students to reflect in ways that they might shy away from in writing since spoken reflection is free of grammatical or spelling

distractions (Taylor et al., 2013; Franklin, 2010).

We're also using audio-recorded reflection with 5th graders at Marissa's large, high-poverty elementary school. Especially in the first months of school, some students struggle to represent their sophisticated ideas and blooming personalities in written form. Other students struggle to get just a few sentences onto the page. Audio-recording offers a chance for ideas to shine when students don't have to focus on spelling or grammar. In other words, when students "just say it" they can focus all their cognitive energy on the reflection itself.

The audio-recorded reflection below was recorded in the second month of school as part of an introduction to audio reflection. Using a classroom-owned handheld recording device, students followed a sequence of questions to prompt reflection:

- Describe what you're working on.

- Describe what you're doing well or what improvement you've made.

- Describe your upcoming goals or things you need to improve.

A teacher intervened only to prompt students to continue, move to the next question, or to clarify a thought. The excerpt below is from a 5th grader we'll call Alex. He speaks English as a second language and never passes up the opportunity for a hearty laugh. Alex starts by reading the assigned question to himself.

What have you practiced this year to improve [your writing]? Practicing writing my paragraphs. I'm trying to improve it, like, um there are some parts that the readers don't really understand, so I'm trying to make them clearer . . . like "when I was 8-years-old" they didn't know when exactly, so I said "when I was eight years old and working" . . . . Sometimes I don't think my writing is that great, so I ask my friends if I can read theirs and get inspired by theirs.

Alex covers a lot of territory in this short response. Although he initially focuses on paragraphs, he quickly moves on to an explanation of how he approaches revision. He quotes the introduction from a first draft ("when I was 8-years-old") and then explains how he considered the reader ("they didn't know when exactly"). Alex's reflection nails the metacognitive assignment: he is explaining exactly what he thought about in order to make a revision choice. His new details ("and working somewhere") attempt to anticipate his readers' questions. He explains how he started, what he thought about, and what change he decided upon.

Without the benefit of recorded audio, it might be difficult to uncover Alex's thinking. After all, he regularly struggles to produce only a few sentences during each writing period. But in speech, he is clear. Quoting, editorializing, and then representing revision can be difficult for any writer let alone a ten-year-old. The option to use speech for metacognition helped him show his advanced thinking.

Conclusion

We've found that our struggling writers say more and in more detail than they could write. Plus, they like it. Recording devices are easy to use, the process is relatively quick, and students can focus on ideas instead of mechanics. Fortunately, simple technology makes adding spoken choice easier than ever. We're not arguing to replace written metacognition exercises but simply to add audio recording to our reflective toolkit. Adding choice to the reflective part of the writing process may make metacognition more accessible to some students.

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Teachers Need to Write a Lot:
The Writing Process as a Social and Solitary Professional Responsibility
Lara Searcy and Josh Flores

Living the Writing Life

A lot. Two words, not one. English Language Arts teachers know a lot about writing. We attend a lot of workshops about writing, buy (and sometimes read) a lot of books about writing, and, often, expect a lot of writing from our students. But do we write a lot? In the classroom, teachers often live in the planning and revision stages of the writing process, but do we ever reach a final draft and publish? And how often do we publish? Since we teach writing, we know it is hard-- which is probably why so many of us do so little of it ourselves (Silvia, 2007). However, as teachers of reading and writing, it is our professional responsibility to read and to write. As Penny Kittle advocates, "you need to emphasize embracing your own literacy; owning what you write and reading what you want" (2008, p. 3). We should understand the joys of navigating new authors and the struggles of organizing words to understand our students' experiences best. Of the two, writing seems to be the more stressful endeavor. It is as if we set unrealistic expectations for ourselves. Imagine that! We overthink. We assume our writing should be perfect if we have the audacity to teach it. At these moments, reading can shape our approach to writing.

In *Do the Work*, Pressfield (2011) demands artists - and teachers are artists - don't think, but act. You can always edit later, but you can't edit what hasn't first been drafted. In A Moveable Feast, Ernest Hemingway details his writing life-- one based on the disciplined reflection of experiences. He shares, "...I decided that I would write one story about each thing that I knew about... and it was a good and severe discipline." And that discipline is difficult to maintain as an educator because writing is often behavior-oriented. It relies on a concrete set of habits that require time and inspiration (Silvia, 2007).

Scheduled, disciplined writing time is one of the hardest commodities to acquire; however, it is also the one construct that we all have in common. Amidst the multitude of responsibilities teachers have, we must also make time to write and think a priority. Since "writing is a tool for thinking," according to the National Council of Teachers of English's (NCTE) Professional Knowledge about the Teaching of Writing, teachers must carve out a few hours each week to engage in the writing process. But, it should be noted that "writing involves many tasks, not just generating text," so teachers can prepare for writing by reading books about writing and teaching, reflecting on research, and thinking about broader career goals and advocacy (NCTE, 2016; Silvia, 2007, p. 40). One way to find time during the school day is to write when students write. Teachers need to create writing models-- "model their hesitations and insecurities and show that they are just like their students; they need to model process, not just product" (Kittle, 2008, p. 9). In addition, teachers need to "sit with their journal" and write with their students because we are the most important writers in the room. We really can't teach writing well unless we write and engage in the process ourselves. "There is power and importance in the blank lines of an open notebook. Go and fill yours. Then share" (Kittle, 2008, p. 236).

Sharing contributes to inspiration. When we share our stories, we build our professional community. Talking about our ideas with each other is intellectually gratifying and, at the least, potentially validating; therefore, find people who share your research interests to encourage, read, and write with you (Silvia, 2007). One suggested way to do this is to create an "agraphia group" (used by Silvia and named as a preventative for the disorder that causes a loss in the ability to communicate through writing). Groups are a force of constructive social pressure because they can provide positive reinforcements and insights to people struggling to change their unproductive ways (Silvia, 2007). Therefore, the goal of an "agraphia group" is to find a support system that encourages and fosters productivity through constructive writing habits. They can provide the perfect space and become a necessary resource for professional growth. Often, teachers do not consider themselves writers, so engaging with a writing group can help establish this identity. Sharing struggles and troubleshooting the act of writing is a real bonding experience. We can get hung up on developing a topic, organizing our thoughts, and combating resistance to writing. The reassurance of trusted friends can help us commit to a topic, adhere to a process, and follow-through with the product. Although most writing may be done in isolation, professional writers share their troubles with other writers (Hemingway, 1964).

Our #introvertED Writing Process

However, groups can be intimidating, so an agraphia group situation may not be beneficial for every personality type. Writing can still be productive and fun when you have a trusted friend who shares your reading and research interests (Silvia, 2007). As introverts, Josh and I understand how to adapt our needs in a noisy world which is why our agraphia group is more of a writing partnership. We first discovered our shared research interests through collaborative work on academic standards

and aligned curriculum development. As Lara researched standards-based reforms for her doctorate, Josh gathered insights from teachers implementing and troubleshooting the state ELA standards. In sharing our knowledge, we found inspiration in the other's work and ideas and discovered the mutual need for an audience beyond our own purposes and context.

However, one's writing is most certainly an act of love. When you sit down to write, you are exposing your thinking, your ideas, and those ideas can grow with or grow apart from you. Because it is so personal, it can be intimidating to share not only your drafts but also your writing process with another individual. "What if we don't get along? What if we don't have the same writing styles? What if we don't read the same genres? What if we don't work well in the same writing environments?" Josh's writing process is as scattered as his writing environments - ideas shattered across coffee shop tables in digital and tangible notebooks, sticky notes, and whiteboard space. Lara's writing process is sheathed in solitude and silence-- contained in her meticulously designed office, surrounded by color-coded and dated three-ring binder tomes. Lara is detail and deadline oriented. She is not a professional procrastinator like Josh. Josh is like an undomesticated steed in need of sophistication (that's a lot more kind than saying unorganized and unfocused.). But Josh offers narrative and creativity to Lara's analytic, structured style. And Lara supports Josh's global thinking with research-based citations. Josh is coffee; Lara is tea. That's actually hyperbole. On paper, our writing lives are incompatible, but our discourse off the page established a trust on the page. We also have some commonalities that aid our writing partnership. We're adept at collaborating with technology. We're geeked out about research. Furthermore, we're experienced educators. We have been involved in professional collaborations together over the past four years due to the nature of our careers. It was only fitting that we grew into writing partners and balance our strengths to counter the other's (self-perceived) weaknesses.

But first, before attempting to collaborate, writers need to understand who they are as writers. Josh and I have come to understand ourselves as writers by understanding our Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI). As noted, we are both "I"ntroverted and we consider this a strength. Lara is an INTJ personality type, so she is often the one seeking out external knowledge to support our "T"hinking. She is also i"N"tuitive and plans, so for her, writing is systematic. Due to this, she often imposes structure and order to our writing process (or "J"udges those who do not have a similar system; ahem, Josh). Josh, on the other hand, is an ISFJ personality type which means he provides "S"ensing and "F"eeling to our partnership by incorporating a narrative approach. Josh is also receptive to change, so he thrives in disrupting thinking which allows for authenticity and origi-

nality. His "F"eeler side shows in the robust social relationships he makes which is why he is a great teacher advocate. So for us, knowing how our personality types work together helps us plan our parts in our "part"nership-- and those who plan a lot tend to write a lot (Silvia, 2007). A writing partnership should increase writing output, not workload. Otherwise, the collaborative relationship is doomed from the start. And that's okay, too. If a writing partnership feels more like work... well, "maybe we should just be friends."

Our collaboration provided the support that helped us foster constructive, shared writing habits. We discovered that two authors can write more, can complement expertise, can help with hard decisions, and can better understand the context of decisions made (Silvia, 2007). We complement our expertise by sharing what we are reading to continue cultivating our interests. Our on-going reading list includes young adult literature, classics, and professional texts that strengthens our research agenda and allows for informal conversations about our mutual love of literature. Our co-reading of various texts gives us a common language which helps the context of professional decisions we make. For instance, we read Silvia's book, How to Write a Lot, together which gave us a structure for our habits: setting schedules, making clear goals, keeping track of our work, and rewarding ourselves (Silvia, 2007). By co-reading Silvia, we took the advice and initiative to "write a lot, " and this article is a product of that shared reading and writing.

One secret to writing is to set a schedule and make it regular because it is not about the number of days or hours, but rather the habit (Silvia, 2007). Therefore, for us, we ruthlessly defend our writing and collaboration time because finding a writing partner or group who understands and encourages you to find the time not only to write, but to think, is essential. However, geographic hurdles exist for us, so we work to align our writing schedules by participating in frequent virtual meetings. Having a meeting schedule provides us with the accountability needed to always be engaged in some aspect of the writing process, and it also provides us with frequent updates on our shared tasks.

In addition, goal setting is an important part of the writing process (Silvia, 2007). For me (Josh), goal-setting happens every New Year's Eve. I religiously spend time reflecting on the previous year's resolutions and update, revise, delete, or add something new. I did it all over again to welcome 2017, and something was clearly wrong. The past few years, I've had writing goals that have ultimately gone unfulfilled. Sadly, the most writing I did was in an E-Mail program. That's sad, but it's downright tragic that the topic of most of my emails revolves around the teaching of writing. I shouldn't train teachers about teaching reading and writing unless I'm reading and writing something, anything, other than e-mails. I feel confident in my abilities as a teacher of writing because I consider myself a writer. I didn't always feel so confident. Despite my introverted

nature, it took the guidance of groups and mentors to help shape my writing lifestyle.

For Lara, goals are more of an integrated "to-do" list cultivated throughout the year. Due dates are scheduled days before the actual submission and productive planning supplants procrastination. Since I (Lara) am currently pursuing my doctorate, writing is a prevalent aspect of my daily work. From reading to researching to seeking out publications, I am constantly engaged in the writing process. Also, because I often submit my writing for evaluation, I have realized that feedback is a big motivator in my success-- so much so that I make scrapbook-like pages filled with encouraging words, positive evaluations, and meaningful memorabilia to remind me of my audience, purpose, and context. Because I am reliant on feedback to motivate my writing, I have learned that I must also provide feedback to motivate my students.

Tracking our work is another way we hold each other accountable, and it is a vital component for effective communication. We leverage our work by using technology to strengthen our collaboration and streamline our writing process. First, we use Google Docs to update our progress and keep a running list of topics or tasks. We use this virtual space to primarily engage in evaluating research, prewriting, brainstorming, and drafting. Those writing tasks that require discussion and exploration, we save for virtual collaboration via Google HangOuts, or our less frequent, in-person work days. This balance between online and face-to-face work ensures that our writing process stays on track, is recursive, and broken-up with frequent progress checks in order to strategize and maximize our productivity and collaborative time.

Finally, when we accomplish projects (shared and independent), we celebrate our successes because we have been involved in the various stages of the writing process together. This involvement ranges from leaning on each other as a receptive test audience to co-authoring proposals. Sometimes our reward is simple-- a check mark for completion on a virtual box-- and other times it is a saved and well-deserved "cheers" during our infrequent, in-person work days. Either way, we view our collaborative finished task list as a motivator to continue seeking out shared opportunities to work together because knowing someone cares about your professional success (and has read your work) is a reward that extends beyond any curriculum vitae addition.

What We Have Learned About Writing...
from the National Writing Project

Both of us teach teachers about writing. Lara teaches pre-service teachers in an Advanced Composition course, and Josh is a K-12 English Language Arts Coordinator. In our work, we have observed that the best teachers model the writing standards we teach (and in Oklahoma, those are the Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts [OAS-ELA]). Teachers need to develop and strengthen their writing by engaging in a recursive process (OAS-ELA 2W) and finding a variety of purposes and audiences (OAS-ELA 3W) where they can acquire, refine, and share their knowledge (OAS-ELA 7). In addition, some of the theory and research that guides what we have learned about writing comes from the National Council of Teachers of English's (NCTE) Professional Knowledge about the Teaching of Writing statements.

First, writing grows out of many purposes. It can be mode-specific-- narrative, informative, argumentative, or a blending-- but it is always shaped by the author's purpose, audience, and context. Knowing its purpose provides focus. Second, writing is embedded in complex social relationships between the writer and the reader. This creates cultural communities defined by language. Language is a critical dimension for readers and writers because conventions of texts have an expectation of style. Such conventions are best taught in the context of writing. Other beliefs about the teaching of writing are that everyone can write, writing can be taught, and teachers can help students become better writers. How does this happen? By writing! Next, writing is a process. If we are to become writers, we must engage in its recursive process so that we can model its importance. Writing is also a tool for thinking. Reluctant students can often gain confidence in their thoughts by first articulating their thinking through writing. Finally, reading and writing are complementary which is why writing is often the output of the reading input. Reading informs our writing.

These statements demonstrate why writing is an important endeavor for acquiring, refining, and sharing our professional knowledge with others and they represent the experiences both of us have had cultivating our writing identities during National Writing Project (NWP) Summer Institutes. The NWP Summer Institute consists of time spent with passionate educators of various skill levels who love the craft of reading, researching, and writing. And also speaking and listening. Group time is often spent planning, problem-solving, and encouraging writing ideas. Independent time is usually spent in the actual process of writing or developing writing curriculum. The National Writing Project believes that writing is essential: "Writing helps us convey ideas, solve problems, and understand our changing world. Writing is a bridge to the future" (National Writing Project (NWP), 2017). That future includes teachers as accomplished writers, engaged learners, and active participants in the world. Teachers study instructional writing practices from many sources: theory and research, the analysis of practice, and the experience of writing (NWP, 2017). The goal, however, is for teachers to write, but first, they may need to undergo that identity transformation.

Josh attended the 2008 Summer Institute with the Oklahoma Writing Project (OWP) and models his writing

identity from the lessons of Hemingway. Hemingway surrounded himself with like-minded, driven artists. One could elicit lessons from his A Moveable Feast where he shares that he "...would write one story about each thing that [he] knew about." At the time I (Josh) was undergoing OWP training, I wrote about break-ups, embarrassing childhood memories, and classroom fails. Somewhere in that time, I also produced an academic paper about visual literacy, but that's not what received the most attention from my OWP fellowship. It was the personal, true stories that received the most attention (and laughs) and fueled my confidence as a writer. These experiences convinced me I was a writer because I now understood that it was no longer a lonely practice. Writing was no longer an avocation, but part of my responsibility as an educator who teaches writing.

Lara participated in the 2015 Summer Institute with the Northwest Arkansas Writing Project (NWAWP) and aspires to have an Austen-esque writing identity. I (Lara) value the themes of education in my work and strive for my writing to demonstrate self-actualization, though I am often reserved in my approach. During my work with the NWAWP, I wrote a literacy narrative which helped me explore "the life-giving power of literature," as Maya Angelou states. My narrative begins with a definition, a reflection, and the lessons I learned from books and characters. It is a memory about the role reading and writing played in the development of my identity. It chronicles my childhood and parallels my journey to becoming a teacher. It is a call and hope that as an educator, I can use my own love for reading and writing to teach others to become perpetual learners. Writing it allowed me to remember the nature of being an adolescent and to have hope that writing has the power to change, to transform, and move our students toward justice, awareness, and empowerment. This writing experience through the NWAWP gave me opportunities to support my personal, interpersonal, educational, and professional growth (Fredericksen, Wilhelm, & Smith, 2012).

Conclusion

In cultivating a writing lifestyle, it is important to have time-- to set schedules, make goals, track progress, and reward oneself-- and inspiration. But ultimately, the writing process is independent work. Franz Kafka shares this sentiment stating, "...writing means revealing oneself to excess... That is why one can never be alone enough when one writes..." (Cain, 2012). Ta Nehisi Coates also speaks about the lonely process of writing and the need to have an unrelenting intrinsic motivation. As an individual, he says, "you have to be geeked out over the act of writing." Therefore, we find comfort in the solitude of our thoughts and encouragement in our shared "geeking out" about writing. For us, the realization that writing is more than typing words helps us maintain our writing lifestyles. What we say, what we hear, what we discuss, and what we read are all an

instrumental part of the process (Silvia, 2007).

Teachers have a lot of experiences and expertise that contributes to the collective knowledge base of our profession. Writing is our professional responsibility and an act of professional growth. It's our responsibility because we must be stewards of our profession and document our struggles and lessons learned to pass on to future educators. Likewise, our victories should also be documented and loudly shared. This article is our reflection on the writing process as a social and solitary professional responsibility and narrates how we cultivate a writing lifestyle. It is also an application of the standards we teach. Together, we sought to develop and strengthen our writing by engaging in a recursive process (OAS-ELA 2W) and finding a purpose and audience (OAS-ELA 3W) where we could share our knowledge (OAS-ELA 7). Finally, submitting this article is our understanding that "publication is a natural, necessary endpoint of the scientific [writing] process" (Silvia, 2007, p. 8).

We believe most educators would and do feel satisfied by the act of writing even without publishing. It is an essential professional skill to regularly practice. But we argue it is a professional responsibility to publish as well. Our writing partnership grew from structured advice and was adapted to meet our personalities, needs, and shared goals. Readers may not be ready to consider publishing, but everyone should schedule the time to read, write, and find a trustworthy audience-- even if it's only to a special audience of one.

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Josh Flores is a second generation educator with experiences as a classroom teacher, researcher, part-time consultant, state-level director, and currently a district coordinator for K-12 English Language Arts. Josh enjoys writing in the margins of books, intimately underlining beautiful sentences, and unscripted journaling in notebooks, on napkins, sticky notes, whiteboards, and sometimes his blog. Josh is an ISFJ, loves coffee, Nintendo, and the smell of old books.

Circle of Wisdom
Expert Voices Guiding a Pre-service Teacher

Amanda Becker

Throughout history women have guided and supported mothers through the process of birth. Sharing wisdom carefully gleaned and preserved from those who came before them, women have protected other women, steadied them, and given them understanding and hope during their most vulnerable moments. The voices of midwives and wise women have been heard at thousands of births and within the circle of women generations have safely and confidently been ushered into the world. This work is done quietly and without fanfare, but with immeasurable impact. On the shoulders of these women life endures.

I looked for stability and confidence within the circle of women for the birth of my child. The expertise of my midwife and support of other experienced women helped me overcome common obstacles encountered in the birth process, which without their guidance might have become insurmountable. Their expert voices helped me to overcome fear and tackle with confidence the physically and emotionally intense process of childbirth. They not only prepared me for what to expect, they also stood shoulder to shoulder with me throughout the process, giving me insight and encouragement.

Seven years after the powerful experience of birth within the circle of women, my child is now in grammar school. She stayed at home with me for five years experiencing the unhurried wonder of early childhood. She had the space and freedom to climb trees, squish her toes in the mud, run with her dog, pick flowers, and plant seeds. Imagination and exploration were her educators - the same tutors that small children have relied on for generations.

Once my daughter entered her formal education, it was time for me to examine the fast-approaching new season of life. How does my role expand beyond home and family? How can I best serve others? As a person with a creative arts background and a love for children, I naturally began to consider teaching.

One of my chief joys as a mother was teaching my daughter to read and enjoy books. I poured over Jim Trelease's *The Read Aloud Handbook* as I rocked my baby to sleep, exhausted and inspired. I scoured Amazon looking for books that matched her current interests: dogs, horses, tomboys. I looked for books with illustrations that would ignite the imagination. As I envisioned a life of teaching, I thought about ways to impart a passion for reading to my students.

How could I stir within them an excitement for stories and invite them to become active participants in a world of storytelling through their own writing? Such thoughts set my mind in joyful motion imagining how the world might be changed by roomfuls of kids who enjoy reading and writing.

But with the hopeful, idealistic vision of the positive impact I could make as a teacher, there also resided an equal amount of doubt. Is the teaching profession a good fit? Is the effort and hard work a good investment, especially considering the frustrations and low pay that go along with the job? Once again, I turned to the circle of women to seek guidance and greater understanding. Within this circle are veteran educators Cheryl Devoe, Donna Orrell, my mother, Marsha Austin, and my cousin, Kim Cavett.

This circle of women have thousands of hours of combined classroom experience. They have all sought advanced degrees and meaningful professional development. But above all this, I valued their perspectives on the teaching profession because they all care about their students as people and want all kids to succeed. It is to these wise women that I brought my questions and hopes, seeking insight on whether or not I have a role to play in this field. I wanted to know how one prepares mentally to be an effective teacher, and how one weathers the emotional storms inherent in the profession.

Cheryl Devoe (CD) began teaching at a racially segregated high school in Oklahoma City in 1966. Her second year of teaching took place during court ordered desegregation. During her 30+ years, she taught English and other subjects to middle and high school students. Her work included students with intellectual disabilities and autism.

Donna Orrell (DO) holds a B.S. Ed degree with an English emphasis. She taught in several states and internationally. She earned her Master's degree while teaching middle and high school English and Reading.

Upon completion of her Master's degree in Math, *Marsha Austin* (MA) taught part-time high school completion classes and college classes on air force bases in the U.S. and internationally. She taught Math at Oklahoma City Community College for *25 years.*

Kim Cavett (KC) is an elementary teacher in her 9th year of teaching. She student taught at NYOS (Not Your Ordinary School), a charter school, in Austin, TX while in school at Southwestern. She loved it so much she began

teaching there as a K/1 teacher upon graduation. She's taught 2nd and 3rd grade and works as a reading interventionist with children with dyslexia.

AB: Why did you decide to pursue a career as a teacher?

CD: To be honest, I began college with no idea of what I "wanted to be when I grew up." In 1963 many girls, including myself, saw nursing, teaching, and secretarial work as the obvious options. I had always loved English, reading, writing, and conversation, and so I decided on an English major.

MA: I never intended to be a teacher. Like many other women my age, I went to college primarily for the "MRS. Degree" or in other words, to meet someone to marry. I chose a major field of study based on my favorite high school subject. My mother advised me to get a teaching certificate so that I would have "something to fall back on" in case I ever had to work. I followed her advice and did so. But the education classes and student teaching experience I had did little to inspire me. Upon graduation, I took a job as a secretary in the OSU Dairy Extension Office. I planned to work at this job while your dad was in graduate school. Since the job provided good medical benefits, we fully

intended to start a family right away. I also had the benefit of tuition reimbursement for classes taken at OSU. On a whim, I applied to take a graduate level math class. (My job was not very intellectually stimulating!) A few days later, I received a call advising me that I had been accepted into graduate school and offering me a graduate teaching assistantship. Despite the fact that we would have to live on

considerably less money and delay starting our family, your dad and I decided that this would be the right thing for me to do. Looking back, I think that this unexpected opportunity to earn a Master's degree made it possible for me to have the lifelong, rewarding career in the teaching profession that I have enjoyed.

DO: When I graduated from high school it seemed to me that the main career choices for women were teaching, nursing, and office work. Since I typed poorly and disliked shorthand and I could never stick a needle in someone, teaching won by default. No one guided me to help me see that I did, indeed, have other options.

AB: Kim, since you're a millennial, more career opportunities were open to you. Did you always want to be a teacher?

KC: I've wanted to be a teacher since as long as I can remember! My mom and dad said I would play school when I very young. My granny was a huge influence on my desire to be a teacher as well. She was a teacher for 30 years. My grandpa was in education as well and of course, you mom inspired me as well. I've always loved working with kids. Getting to teach them to read and write has been such a huge privilege and honor.

AB: What were your goals when you began teaching?

CD: I think my goals my first 2 years were very superficial.

I wanted to be a "good" teacher, and because my nature is goal driven, I worked hard to be a good teacher. Specifically, though, I think I was pretty clueless. I thought goals meant having unit plans and daily lesson plans; I don't think I ever considered having goals that targeted student growth and achievement on an individual basis.

KC: My goal when I first started was to survive. My first year was very tough but I survived and learned a lot. I also wanted to learn and grow as a teacher every year which is my goal to this day. I am still learning and attend professional development and courses whenever possible. Of course, my main goal was to touch the lives of children and help them grow as learners.

DO: One enters the profession because she primarily loves to teach or loves the subject matter or loves the kids. When I began my career, it was all about English since that had been my favorite subject in school. The process of teaching was a close second and I spent many hours planning, preparing class materials, and improving my methods. As I grew older, students became my primary focus. I was most

interested in what made each one "tick" and how I could reach each one according to his or her needs.

AB: How did you become a more effective educator?

CD: I remember one year (too many as I look back) when I decided before school started that I was going to laugh at least once with every class, every day. When I found things funny, it changed the atmosphere in the classroom. I became more effective as a teacher when I shared with my students how much I loved something we were studying. Teaching *The Scarlet Letter* to today's students is a hard sell, but it is so easy to relate to issues we all face; *The Great Gatsby* seems so removed from their world, but my passion

for the beauty of the language and the structure in that book – I'm telling you I poured my enthusiasm on and I believe it made a difference in the way they saw those novels. Perhaps one of the most influential changes to my effectiveness as a teacher came from inservice education and workshops provided by College Board for teachers of pre AP and advanced placement classes. Learning techniques for teaching in depth textual support for close reading, discussion techniques, and methods of inquiry changed my teaching focus.

MA: I was fortunate to work in a school where professional development was encouraged – and required. Speakers and workshops were provided on campus, and funds were often provided for attendance at conferences and workshops off-campus. Membership in professional organizations on both the state and national levels also provided opportunities to interact with colleagues from across the country and learn

best practices. Faculty in my department met regularly to share teaching ideas, tips, and experiences. All of the above contributed to me becoming a more effective teacher.

AB: What discouraged you about being a teacher?

MA: I was discouraged because I knew that there would always be students who would not be successful in my class – no matter what I did. Also knowing that, no matter how well I performed, there would be little or no financial reward was discouraging. But I never once wanted to quit! I know that I was more fortunate than teachers in other schools and at other levels. Many have to deal with unsupportive

administrators as well as students and parents who are disrespectful and rude.

DO: Really uncooperative students and my not receiving administrative back-up when needed. Also the lack of parental involvement.

KC: My first year was horrendous. I had seven intense behavior issues in my class on top of having no idea what I was doing. I thought about quitting a lot. Fortunately I didn't and I am now thankful for that year. Other obstacles include mean parents, too many meetings, fatigue and feeling overworked. Parents of students has probably been the hardest part of teaching for me. It's very hard for me to not take what

they say to heart. My fourth year I had a very hard student and his mother was pretty hard on me. She was mean and blamed his behavior all on me even though this child had been kicked out of his preschool the year before. She would email rude things and I would dwell on it and worry. I had to learn that there will always be mean parents but you have to let it go.

CD: The truth is the things that are discouraging about the teaching profession are the same things that are discouraging about society – we get as students and teachers what society produces. Schools are microcosms and for society to think that schools can fix, educate, and inculcate moral excellence into children who come so broken is disheartening.

AB: Did you become cynical in your career?

CD: I did become cynical in some ways. One source of mild cynicism came from parents. It is hard to have parents enable high school students, making excuses for poor performance and behavior. I get it – I realize that I was dealing with someone who is one of the most important people in their lives; they love their children, but being overly involved in their lives and interfering with teacher expectations repeatedly

is not beneficial to the child's development.

DO: For the most part, I did not become cynical (except when dealing with a certain principal). I viewed every day as a new opportunity.

AB: Do you think the teaching profession disrespected?

DO: Yes, I do. Teaching is a grueling profession. Teachers deal with multiple personalities and abilities in a single classroom and work hard to deliver meaningful instruction. I don't think anyone can actually understand the profession without spending the day observing what all is entailed in being a teacher.

KC: I think a lot of people think teaching is easy or you are

done at 3:30 each day or just because you get the summers off it's not a big deal. It's exhausting and preparing for teaching takes up a lot of your time outside of the school day.

MA: There are people who believe that, because teachers have relatively short work days and only work for nine months each year, they do not deserve a salary comparable to other professionals. The reality is that a good teacher takes work home most evenings and works the entire year if they are preparing to be more effective when they are in the classroom. Another misconception is that people who choose to study education do so because it is less challenging than field such as medicine, law, engineering, or business. All of these things cause the teaching profession to be disrespected and undervalued.

AB: With all the discouragement and disrespect, what motivated you to do your job?

MA: I discovered that I related well with students who were beyond their high school years and were highly motivated. And I was inspired because I felt like the educational experiences I provided to them would make a difference in their lives. So not surprisingly, when I began teaching full time I found my niche at the community college level. For the most part, the students I taught were mature and had a specific goal to accomplish. Many were among the first generation in their family to go to college. They had a special place in my heart because of your father. He, too, was first generation in his family to go to college. Even after thirty plus years of teaching, it was always exciting to walk into a classroom the first day of the semester and meet a new group of students. They served as my motivation to teach. I have always believed in the importance of education and its ability to change a person's life. My hope was that each of my students would accomplish their goals, earn a degree, and better their lives – and that I might have played a small roll in this accomplishment.

AB: How did you grow as a teacher and as a person through your career?

KC: I believe teaching has made me a more confident and outgoing person. I feel more at ease with my knowledge in teaching and this had made me a leader at my school. I've also learned you can't take things personally and it's so important to take time for yourself. You will always have mean parents or a rude coworker or a crazy student but you can't let that overtake your mind. Another huge lesson I learned is

you can't do it all. It's important to choose one or two goals to work on each year. There's always new things to learn and try and you can't do everything right away.

CD: Because I began my career as a 21 year-old woman, natural maturity as well as motherhood influenced personal growth. Teaching is a teacher – believe me. I had to grow up and adjust some of the behaviors that came naturally to me to be effective in the classroom. Doing things my way, control of situations (and children), and adherence to sched-

ules and plans – these are in my nature. These traits proved to be roadblocks I faced, and I realized that they are huge obstacles when working with people or teaching children in a classroom. When I was able to loosen up in these areas, I became more effective in all my relationships. My thinking changed also. I began my career "shiny and golden" – ready to impart my vast knowledge of the English language, the canon of great literature, and the never fail five paragraph essay. I realized that I taught children, not just subjects. My goals then became to include teaching students to learn to teach themselves. I learned I must relate learning to life- the practical application. However, I learned not to sacrifice the intangible-- that which enriches life regardless of practical application. Teaching is hard work and it can't always be entertaining, but I learned my goal must be to make learning satisfying.

AB: What is the most important mindset a teacher brings to the classroom?

DO: Before school started each year, I put my hands on each student desk and prayed for the children who would occupy that seat. I tried to relate to each student as an individual. Every child in my classroom is a precious child of God, and each one carries some sort of baggage into my presence. Some baggage is light and some is incredibly heavy, and children often behave according to the baggage they carry.

KC: I believe all students can learn and it's my job as an educator to differentiate for them and teach them how they learn. I also believe teachers have a huge responsibility to not only support academic learning, but social-emotional learning as well. We teach the whole child and what they learn now affects them as adults. I believe we are teaching future leaders and it's important we give them the skills to succeed later in life.

CD: My goal became to develop a rapport with students because trust is the heart of an environment of intellectual inquiry. I developed as a goal that empathetic understanding of student feelings and motivation was essential; however, a teacher can't be too sympathetic; we can't condone irresponsibility, bad behavior, and poor citizenship. An important goal for me was my role to encourage, recognize, and reward student effort; a teacher can't, however, be indiscriminate in praise or the reward loses its power. Looking back I can see that I first wanted to be a teacher for some wrong reasons and a few of the best. Looking back on my career is like looking back on my life as a parent – I wish I could do some things over, knowing what I know now. But the heart of my philosophy remains – teachers must care about and like kids. Teachers must be interested in who they are, what they think, what their dreams are, and what is important to them. Students rightly expect teachers to be fair, to set goals, to hold them accountable, to recognize their excellence, to be honest in their correction, and to celebrate their progress.

AB: Are there students that touched your life?

KC: Yes. I had a student, Jenny, my first year who was the sweetest girl I've ever met. She was in my horrible first class but her sweet face gave me hope that I could make it as a teacher. She's in eighth grade now and I still see her from time to time. Since then she has developed lupus and had major health issues, but she continues to have that sweet disposition and always wears a smile. She is my favorite student of all time and I feel blessed to have been her teacher.

DO: I have had a number of students who impacted me, but the main one was Michael White who was my student two years at MCHS. We sort of adopted him and after graduation he lived in our guest house for five years. He is 35 now and still in our lives and like one of our sons.

CD: I will tell you about two – When I taught 8th grade, I had a nerdy boy who didn't have any friends who became attached to me. He would come and spend time with me every day. All I could do was be a friend/mother figure for him. At the end of the year, he told me he was going to kill himself. By law I had to alert the administration, and he never forgave me for doing that. I have tried to find him as an adult but

haven't so far. Fortunately, I was a teacher most kids liked. I have treasured the letters and notes of thanks I have received from some of them. Another was Jessica who thanked me for all of the grammar she hated doing in my class. She had gotten back her ACT score and had made a great score. Although she gave me much more credit than I deserved, these notes and letters are the reason to teach – you will make a difference for good in the lives of children.

AB: What would you say to someone considering becoming a teacher?

MA: Despite the fact that teachers endure the disrespect of many and low financial compensation, the teaching profession is a noble, rewarding one. The education of our children and young adults needs to be a top priority in our society. Dedicated, caring, and well-qualified individuals are needed to accomplish this.

It is on the shoulders of these women (and other educators like them) that innovators, artists, and leaders are born and contribute so much to the world. They shape the lives of children and teach them how to think critically, recognize beauty, practice goodness, and lead productive lives. Because of these educators, there is less darkness in the world.

But the impact these teachers make doesn't end with the countless student lives they have touched though their teaching. Although three of these four women are retired, their teaching journey has not ended. Through their many years in the trenches, these women have stored up priceless insight to be shared with pre-service and new teachers. All the failed lessons, unwilling students, and discouraging mo-

ments have added to the collective wisdom of these expert voices. Like the midwives and wise women who supported me as a new mother, the wisdom and experience of veteran teachers prepares me to face the challenges and difficulties within the profession with greater confidence and emotional resilience. The lessons they have learned through their careers encourage me to look beyond the performance of the student to who they are as a person. Because as Donna says:

"There is a difference between being a successful teacher and being a significant teacher. Successful teachers affect test scores; significant teachers affect lives. Though we cannot downplay the need for improvement in academic performance among our students, what they most need is teachers of significance."

Following the X's and O's:
Using a Coaching Approach to Motivate in the Classroom
Jennie L. Hanna

"Coaches who can outline plays on a black board
are a dime a dozen.
The ones who win get inside their player and motivate."
– Vince Lombardi

"The coach is first of all a teacher." – John Wooden

Some might say sports culture and the English classroom simply do not mix. However, sports have always been a staple in my classroom curriculum. I am a sports fan, and that title doesn't magically disappear when I take off my Green Bay Packers cheese head on a Sunday night and put on my teacher's cap Monday morning. Beyond being a strong buy-in, especially among secondary students, sharing this part of my identity helps to humanize myself and establish a connection with the student I teach.

Teaching is not that different then coaching. A coach is little more than an effective motivator who leads by example; someone who knows the subject matter well, yet constantly seeks out new and innovative ways to improve. It is a leader who recognizes each player as an individual with distinctive needs but also instills the importance of collaborative teamwork. Someone who demonstrates commitment by being a supportive listener and effective communicator with all team players. A praiseworthy teacher is simply a coach who just happens to lead from the front of a classroom instead of from the sidelines.

Perhaps the best example of this is through noted coach and educator John Wooden. Gallimore and Tharp (2004) attempted to identify the "credentials and accomplishments [that] warrant a claim of exemplary practice" and Wooden, as a widely-known educator and coach icon, was an easy choice (p. 120). Their research sought to identify the convergence between the traits of a good coach and an educator with Wooden as the model. Another example of how coaching can extend beyond the sports arena comes from the late Vince Lombardi. De Marco and McCullick (1997) looked at Lombardi, Wooden, and other iconic coaches to illustrate how to balance the needs of the team and individual players, with the ultimate goal of personal development for all, similar to differentiated instruction educators use in their classroom.

While most teachers would be hard pressed to achieve the status of Wooden and Lombardi, working to emulate their approach to leadership within a classroom is

an admirable goal. The following are a few key concepts – or plays – that have been successful in the classroom from my own personal playbook.

Focus on the fundamentals

"It's the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen." – John Wooden

Since English instruction is essential to all other subjects, language arts teachers face a daunting job, especially amid the current culture of high-stakes testing and new Oklahoma Academic Standards. Every year, teachers receive a new roster of students, each with their own individual needs, plans, and goals. The teacher's job is to make sure they help students succeed in reaching the expectations before them and prepare them for the next level. One way is by building up a foundation of critical reading and writing endurance. Stephen Heller (2007) claimed stamina is essential to perform well and to take skills learned in the English classroom and transfer them to other areas. The same way a basketball coach may determine each player's ability level prior to the season, assessing students early in the school year is good practice. Gauging their level of expertise in basics like grammar, reading compression and writing ability, allows educators to find the areas where additional practice will be needed.

One way in which I have accomplished this in my own class is by using Larry Smith's (2005) *Six-Word Memoirs* project during the first week of school. Six-word memoirs are a concise sentence that help to encapsulate an event, feeling, or idea – in this case, a facet of their identity. I have students first brainstorm a list of their individual likes, dreams, and goals before selecting one element to develop into their six-word sentence. Students then develop their memoir sentence into a visual poster and write an accompanying paragraph to further explain their memoir sentence. Through this project, I am able to learn a plethora of things about them, including their interests, their ability to follow directions, and the current writing and reading level. With just one project, I can see the gaps these students have in their foundational English skills, allowing me to address those early on. While this requires extra work outside the classroom to prepare each year, according to Wooden, it is well worth the extra effort (Gallimore and Tharp, 2004). Building upon foundational skills before going deeper into the content helps to ensure that students are not just studying to pass the class, but to learn.

Focusing on the "I" in Order to Build the "Team"

> "People who work together will win, whether it be against complex football defenses, or the problems of modern society." – Vince Lombardi

It is a coach's responsibility to ensure all team members are valued and their successes highlighted. The same is true of teachers. Each player on a team has his or her own specific role, yet they still relish the feeling of inclusion that comes from being a member of a team. Intentionally learning about their peers makes them all brothers and sisters in our classroom "family," the same way players work to develop camaraderie with their teammates. The best route to reach this level of connectedness is through teacher-student and student-student rapport (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Starcher, 2011). Mutual respect is an important value I model and instill in my students from day one. As illustrated with the six-word memoir project, this is done by learning about one another and sharing our own triumphs and tragedies. Having this open dialogue creates a non-threatening classroom environment that invites students to take more risks and feel comfortable.

Students can feel powerless in school, especially at the secondary level (Bieler, 2006), so allowing them to have some control of their own education is beneficial. This is where a focus on individual attention can come into play. While achievement gaps amid race and class are important to remember, gender is another prevalent gap in the English classroom (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009). Females more often tend to take the advanced placement or honors English classes, leaving males to dominate in the on-level classrooms, which is where I happen to teach. Since their focus is already on the sports realm, we might as well bring it into the classroom and increase the possibility of engaging them more (Minchew, 2002). Through the inclusion of sports, even if it just happens to be an example to explain a concept, students participate more in discussion because it is presented in a manner they can understand with real-world applications (Wiesman, 2012). I have done this in my own classroom by comparing the format of a formal essay to plays in a playbook. This way students can see that just like the arrows show where each player will go during the play, a thesis statement and transitions alert the readers to the paths the essay will take. To accomplish this, I share a basic football play example – a simple search on the internet will yield several results – and then I ask for a volunteer in the classroom to explain what the X's, O's, and arrows all mean. We then take model essays and break them down into a series of directions and plays to help them understand how each required piece in an essay serves a purpose. This one day lesson has really helped students to grasp the structure of formal writing more than anything else I have done.

Other avenues for the inclusion of sports to help with writing include comparing the use of performance-enhancing drugs in sport to explain the concept of plagiarism and using the money spent on sports compared to other after-school activities as material for class debates and argumentative essays. In order to ensure that we are not only including mainstream sports, teachers should intentionally try to include the other athletic interests as well. For instance, over the years I have learned about various equestrian sports, rugby, unicycling, and, an Oklahoma favorite, noodling, where one catches catfish with his or her bare hands and found ways to add them to the classroom culture. These are just a few of the ways sports inclusion gives teachers the ability to make a class that can be notoriously repugnant to young men in high school and turn it into a class that is engaging and insightful.

Practice the Way We Play: Modeling Excellence for Students

> "They call it coaching but it is teaching. You do not just tell them…you show them the reasons." – Vince Lombardi

As a sports term, "practicing the way you play" means that what a team does on the field during preparations for the game is supposed to mirror the way in which they will approach the game itself. Consistently applying this concept in a classroom is also beneficial. I tell my students that I value their time as much as I value my own, so I will never give them assignments simply to give them a grade, nor will I assign them something that doesn't either build upon something we have already done or allow them to practice a lesson or skill they need work on. In his book *Write Like This,* Kelly Gallagher (2011) promotes his Article of the Week assignment, where students read current, high-interest articles from around the world to help build their stamina in analyzing text and critical writing, but also provide them with a chance to build up background knowledge. During our unit on Edgar Allen Poe's "Masque of the Red Death," I used nonfiction articles about the different effects bacteria has on the human body to pair with the short story and give them background knowledge. After they finished reading, students used all the reading material as sources to write an expository essay to explain how bacteria can be both harmful and helpful to the body. With just one unit, students practiced the skill of analyzing narrative and informational texts and were able to see that each assignment linked together, and each had a purpose.

In their research, Gallimore and Tharp (2004), found that one of the most effective tools Wooden used was his ability to model a skill that he wanted the players to master. Gallagher (2011) also noted this same effect, stating that there is no strategy better at teaching and motivating students than modeling for them. I agree wholeheartedly with this, since it was a lesson I learned long before I became a teacher. While I was in the armed forces, I had a squad leader who always showed up with the shiniest boots, even when he knew we were headed out to traipse through the

mud or march in the rain. One day, I asked him why he would spend the time working to shine those black boots until they looked like mirrors only to have them ruined. He told me that he wouldn't be much of a leader if he asked his soldiers to do something that he wasn't willing to do himself. I knew then that this was the type of leader I wanted to be one day. When I assign my students monologues to perform on the stage, I start the class period by performing one that I too spent the time to memorize, block, and recite. If I give them a writing assignment, I will often sit at my computer in class and write for them using the projector and narrating aloud the thoughts in my head to model the process of writing. This one concept – modeling – motivates my students more than any other approach I have tried, and it helps them to have more trust in me as their leader, their coach.

Whether one enjoys sports or not, it's easy to see that coaches and teachers can both serve as leaders (Hardman, Jones & Jones 2010). Coaches who focus on "exercising qualities such as speed, endurance and technique, without the cultivation and exhibition of particular virtues, or qualities of moral character such as perseverance, patience, magnanimity in victory and grace in defeat, is to fall considerably short of achieving fully the standards of … excellence" (p. 7). In the same way, teachers who fail to focus on learning more about their students, working to identify the best ways to motivate and teach them, or simply go carelessly through the curriculum perhaps need to move to another profession. Bieler (2006) emphasized the notion that English curriculum should not be seen as a goal line, but rather a set of plays teachers need to utilize in order to reach the end successfully. This is why the coach has a playbook in the first place: to have quality strategies to rely on in order to achieve success. However, a brilliant coach also has the intuition to know when to chuck the playbook and start from scratch. An effective coach knows that each team is different because each of the players that individually make up a team are unique. In fact, that's what is so amazing about being a sport-fanatic English teacher – I get the chance to coach and lead my students every day and celebrate with them as they find victory in the classroom.

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Call for Submissions
Spring/Summer 2018

The Spring/Summer 2018 issue of the

Oklahoma English Journal invites research articles and practitioner essays, as well as student writing and art, and brief reflections on teaching English language arts and the humanities from a number of perspectives: new and expert voices, geographical perspectives, and teaching tips.

Deadline for manuscript submission: March 1, 2018.

The theme of the issue will highlight the ARTS in English language ARTS.

How do you incorporate art into your studies and research on writing, reading, listening, and speaking?

In what ways has the art of writing and the art of reading shaped your classroom?

How do you and your students study the art and aesthetics of an author's style, of genre characteristics, and/or the ways in which a plot unfolds and develops?

What research into arts and literature has influenced your instructional practice?

How do you reach out to include families, caregivers, and the community in literacy and arts at your school/library?

How does art, especially multi-modal studies, capture the interests of your students in new and exciting ways?

Where is music in your classroom? Do you study song lyrics and musical compositions alongside written texts?

What kinds of art do your students produce in response to reading and writing texts?

How do you include theatre arts, poetry slams, and performance of literature and writing in your work with children and youth?

Why do we have ARTS in ELA?

All submissions should be submitted electronically in the appropriate formatting to the editor at jekershen@ ou.edu

Concrete Poetry: Fourth graders Expressions of Understanding the Civil Rights Movement

Teachers Teresa Birden and Kylie Collins, McKinley Elementary, NPS
Poetry and art by students (in order of appearnce) Cadence Ballou, Addison Crow, Ava Ivy,
*Alex Mora, Ariel McCullouch, and Sophie Patison*

Multi-lesson Learning Objectives:

Students will research and discuss important events within the American Civil Rights Movement and its leaders.

Students will identify and explain using evidence why the movement is connected to the Southeast region of the U.S.

Students will use the words of MLK to synthesize their understandings of the themes, events, and people important in the Civil Rights Movement, and create a concrete poem to communicate their learning.

Students will make a collage to display their feelings about the Civil Rights Movement that includes a concrete poem.
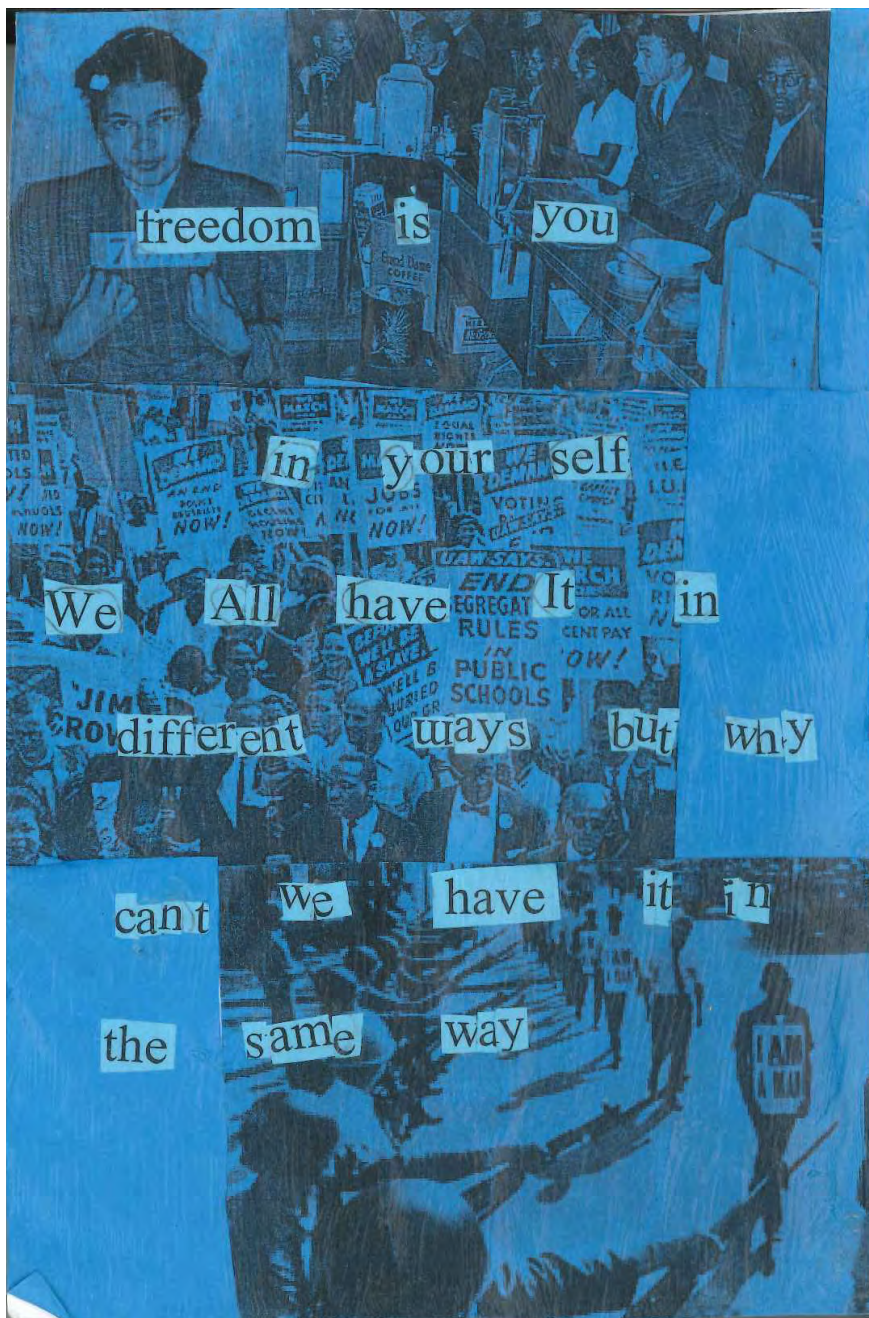
Students were introduced to the American Civil Rights Movement when we were learning about the Southeast region of the United States. They heard and read about the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. They also read multiple texts about Ruby Bridges and her part in the movement. We read *Ruby Bridges Goes to School* and watched the movie. At the same time, these students were learning about and exploring different types of poetry. They listened to Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and we discussed how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. became a leader, as well as why he wrote that speech. We also read the picture book biography of Dr. King, *Martin's Big Words.* We invited our students to make his words their own by cutting them apart and put them back together to represent what the Civil Rights Movement means to them. In prepartion, we copied civil rights images from the internet, and as classes, we discussed the importance and symbolism of each image. Students had previously made collages in art, and so we talked about how to collage the civil rights images into a collage with special meaning. Once students composed their collages we asked them arranged the words from the "I Have a Dream" speech on top of the images. We used modgepodge on top to finish the project.

Book Review
Hold Tight, Don't Let Go: A Novel of Haiti
Eril Hughes

Review of *Hold Tight, Don't Let Go: A Novel of Haiti* by Laura Rose Wagner. New York: Amulet Books, 2015. 258 pages. 2017 Sequoyah High School Masterlist novel.

Magda is shelling peas in the garden when Port-au-Prince begins to literally fall apart in 2010.   After the earthquake when dead bodies fill the sidewalks, this 15-year-old schoolgirl and her cousin-like-a-sister Nadine bind together to take care of each other, although the death of Nadine's mother shatters them both.

In some parts of the novel, one hardship seems to follow another in a long line. The two cousins begin their new lives with their uncle by salvaging materials to build a makeshift shelter on a soccer field. Magda's hope to stay in school is crushed, since there is no money to pay for schooling, and at first her only dreams are about earthquakes. However, this novel is more than just a story about a tragic disaster – it's about dreams and hopes amidst hardships as a new dream becomes a possibility for Magda. Later, Nadine joins her father in Miami, and "[t]he water buckets are so much heavier" for Magda after Nadine leaves

(74). However, Nadine promises to get a visa for Magda.

This book is also filled with the beauty and renewed love of life that can come after a tragedy. The nine days of drums, dancing, and storytelling is a wonderful celebration of life before the burial of Magda's aunt in her home place, and the time spent with family brings healing. It's also a time for Magda to move on with her life. Magda hears nothing from Nadine about the promised visa, and Nadine doesn't even telephone Magda on her birthday. Gradually, the earthquake become almost a dream, and beautiful new friendships come along for Magda as she meets Safira, a remarkable young woman who has saved the life of her sick mother by sleeping with a man in order to obtain food vouchers, and Mackenson, a potential love interest.

Potential is a key word for the end of the novel, for Magda literally writes her own ending where she answers some hard questions. Will Nadine "hold tight" to her bond with Magda, or will this deep friendship be changed forever? Will Magda's dreams stay centered on America, or will they become focused on Haiti?

With a combination of this innovative ending, an uncanny sense of choosing the right words and phrases, and an absorbing narrative, this novel definitely deserves its good reviews and its place on the 2017 Sequoyah High School Masterlist.
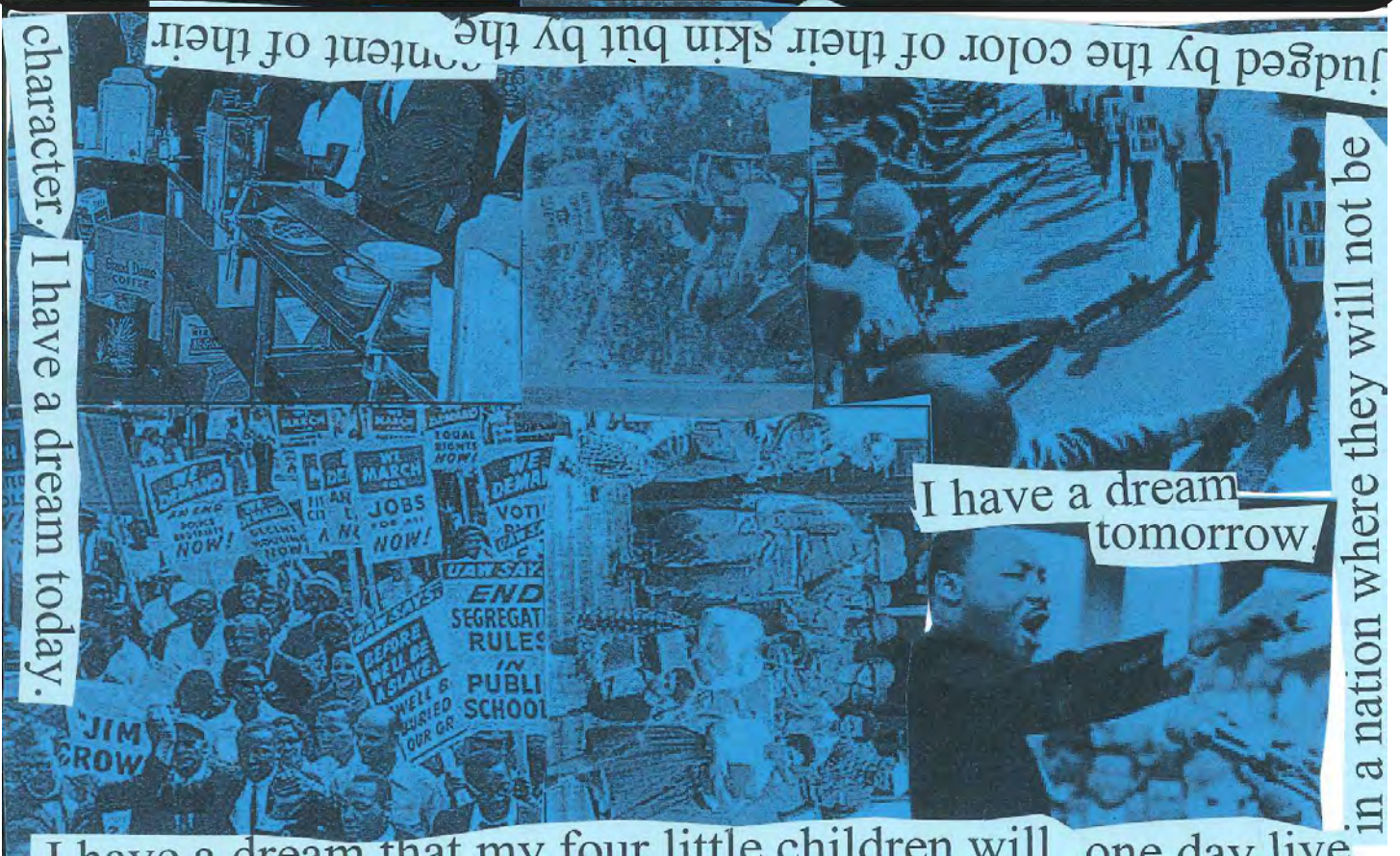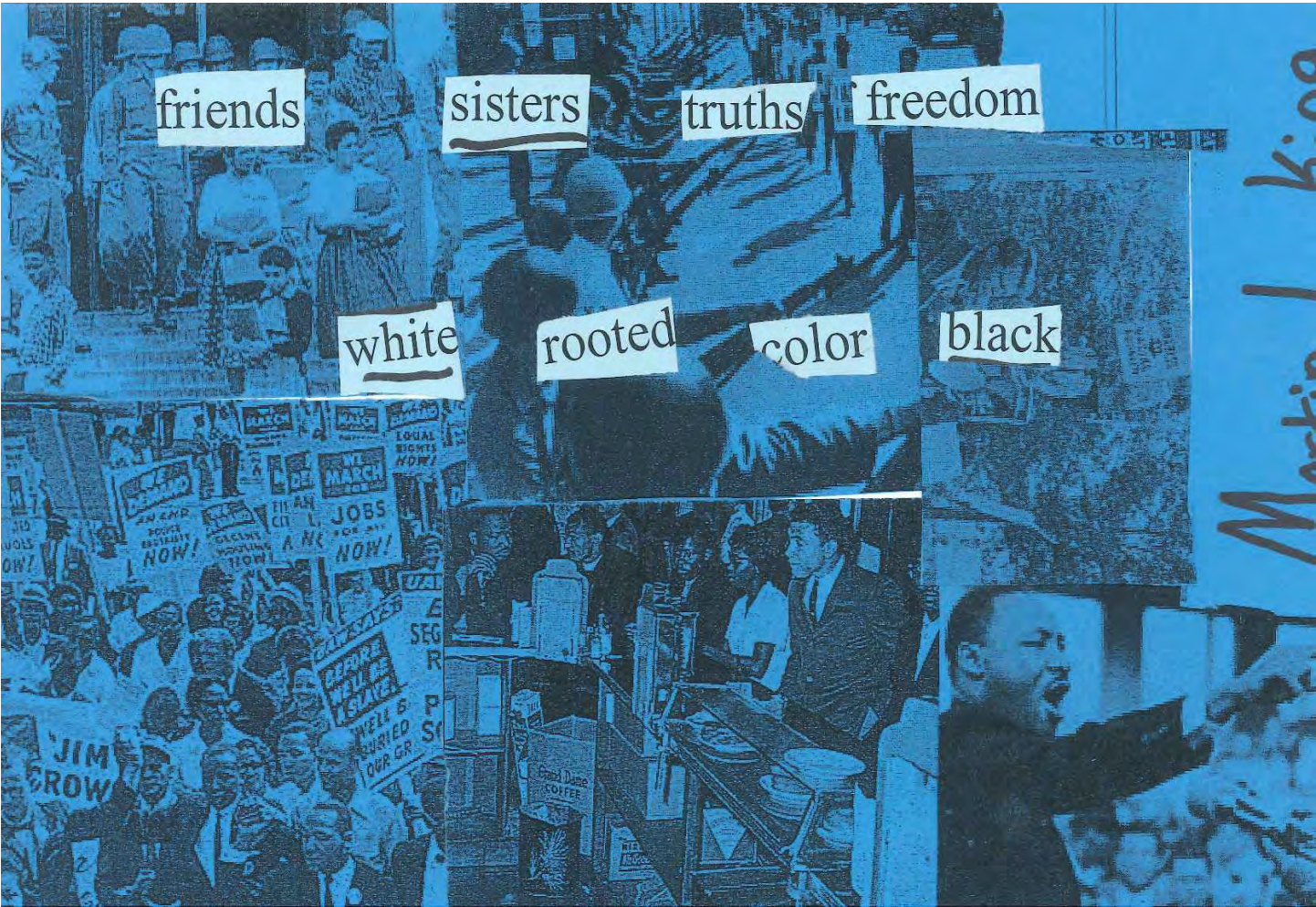
friends   sisters   truths   freedom
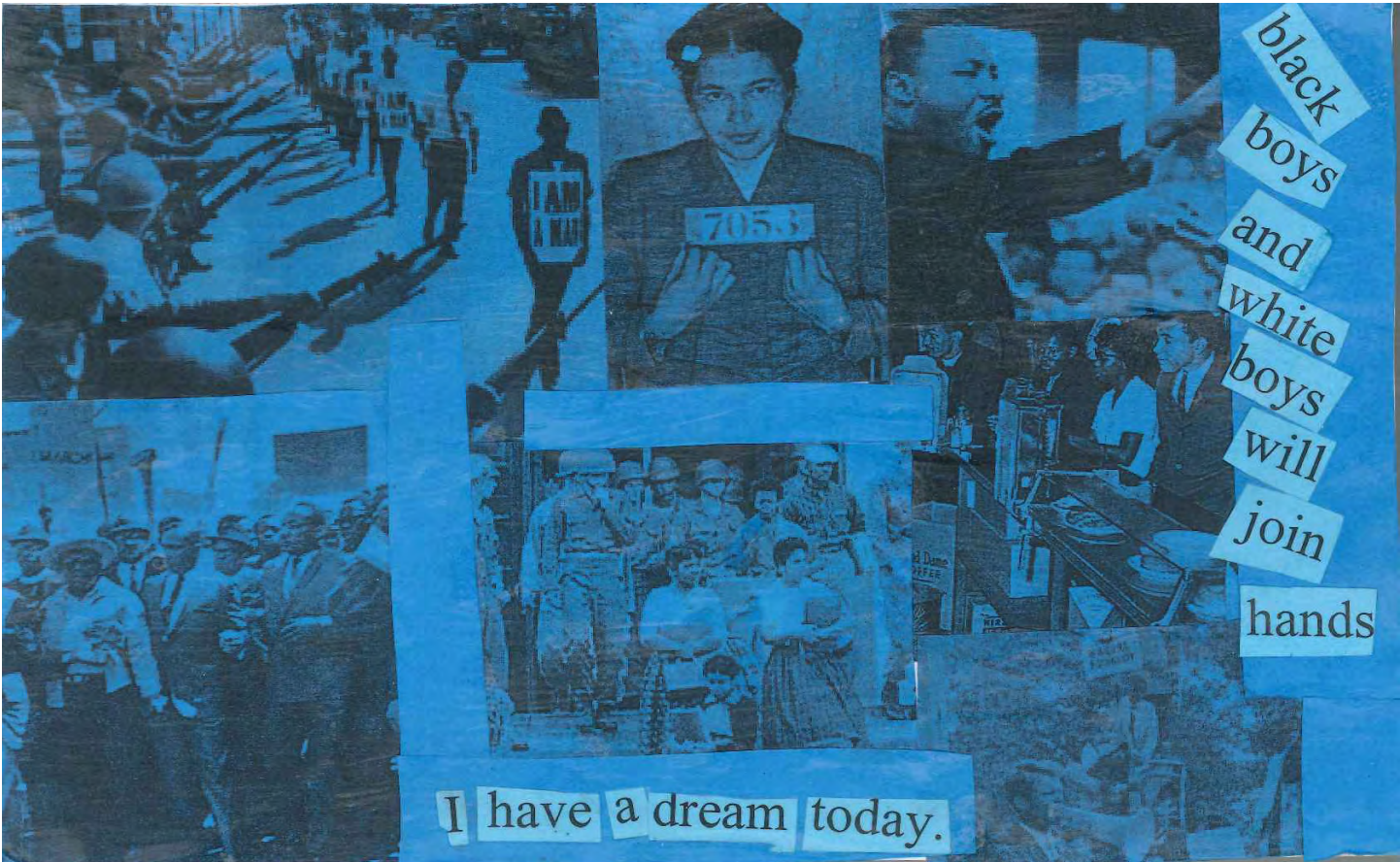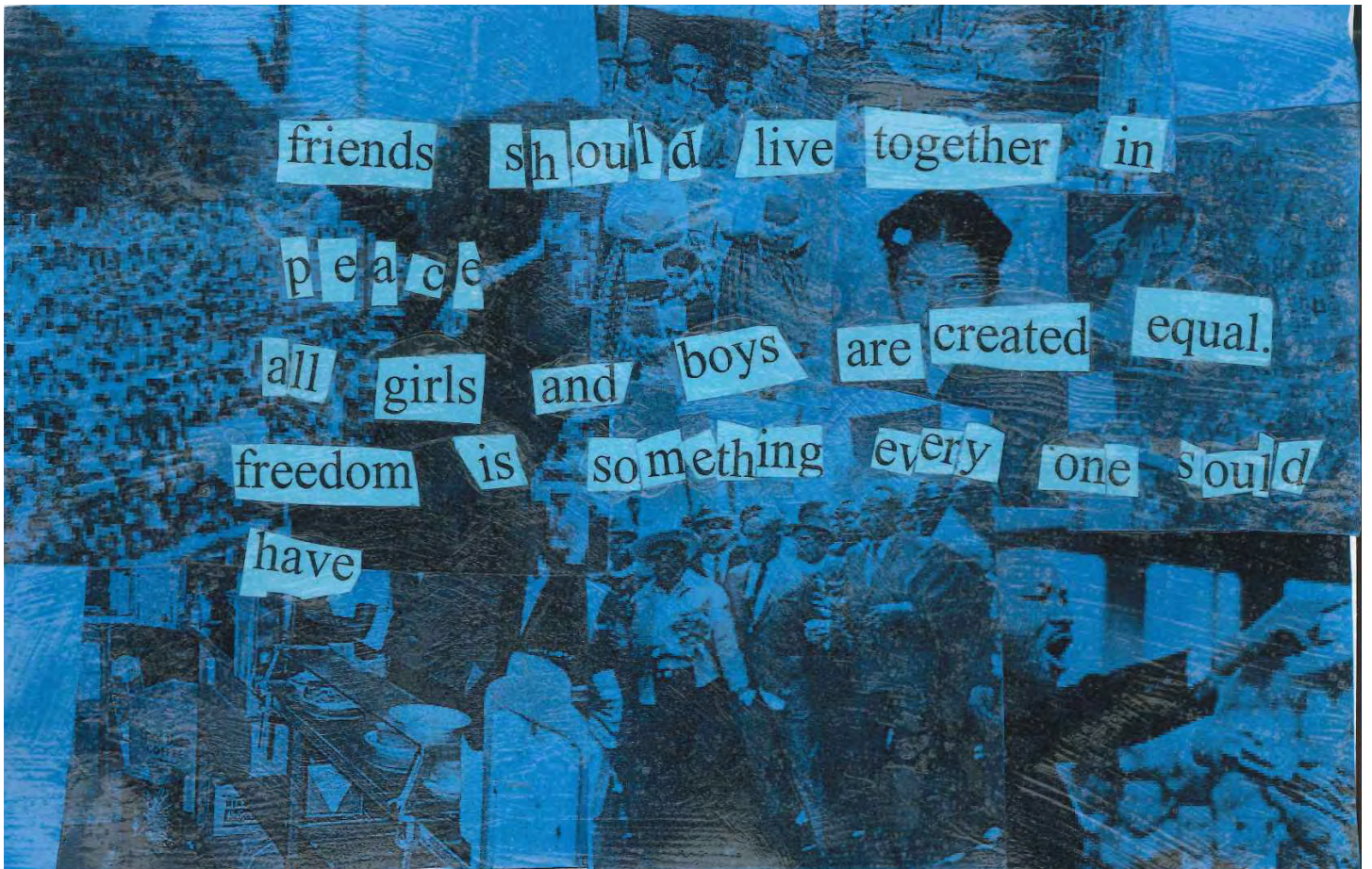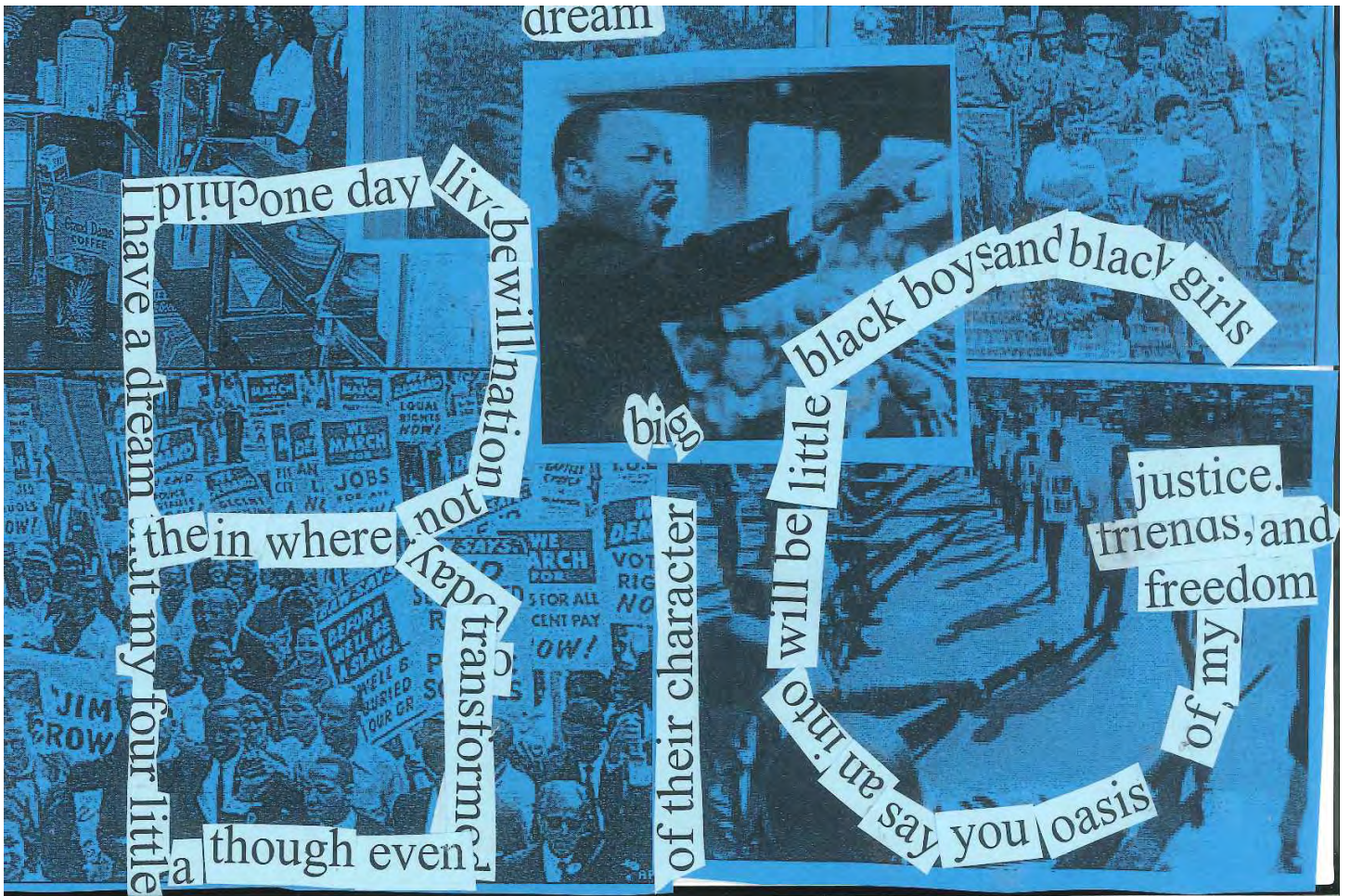
white   rooted   color   black

Martin L. K. Jr.

black
boys
and
white
boys
will
join
hands

I have a dream today.

friends should live together in

peace

all girls and boys are created equal.

freedom is something every one sould

have

Pre-Writing:

Growing Great Writers

Jamie Johnson

The 2003 Oklahoma Writing Project (O.W.P.) Summer Institute at the University of Oklahoma initially challenged and subsequently improved both my personal writing procedures as well as my delivery techniques for instruction. After twenty-five years of district, state, and national level professional development, I have concluded that the Oklahoma Writing Project was the most beneficial professional development in which I have ever participated. As an educator, my experience with the O.W.P. continues to constructively influence my crafts as a writer and as a teacher of writing; thus, advantageously benefitting my students.

While researching best practices for teaching writing, the following quote from Donald Murray resonated with me as an educator: "Writing is a craft before it is an art; writing may appear magic, but it is our responsibility to take our students backstage to watch the pigeons being tucked up in the magician's sleeve." This quote motivated my investigation into each component of the writing process so that I might facilitate the development of students becoming accomplished writers throughout the entire writing process.

While attending the Oklahoma Writing Project Summer Institute, my research about the writing process was expanded. I soon learned that in order to grow and nurture emerging writers, I needed to allow my students much more time to think, percolate, and extend their writing ideas during the prewriting process. According to research conducted by Ruth Culham in her book, *6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for Primary Grades*, 70-85% of the writing process should focus upon the pre-writing process. I chose to target methods which focused on how to utilize the pre-writing component of the writing process. I believe this focus is molding my

pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students into discerning readers and successful writers not only for today, but more importantly, for the future!

As a teacher-librarian practicing within an elementary school setting, I have countless opportunities to model procedures for teaching the writing process and to emphasize the importance of pre-writing with students as well as teachers. Fellow educators, parents, and community members are often quite surprised when I share creative writing pieces crafted by my students' young minds! I frequently hear: "How did you motivate them?" or "Can you teach me how to do this with my students?" during these sharing experiences. The magic behind my success with students and my students' proficiencies can be attributed to focus-

ing on one concept ... pre-writing! As an early childhood teacher, I learned that students as young as four years old can write and share their thoughts through written text when they receive gentle guidance from their teachers. I do not know any elementary students who are ready to undertake writing "Stephen King-like" novels. However, in his memoir, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, King stated:

"If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot. There's no way around these two things that I'm aware of, no shortcut." Each children's author I have hosted at the elementary school in which I teach, has supported King's statements about writing and has shared stories of the months spent generating ideas for the next characters or next plots. When
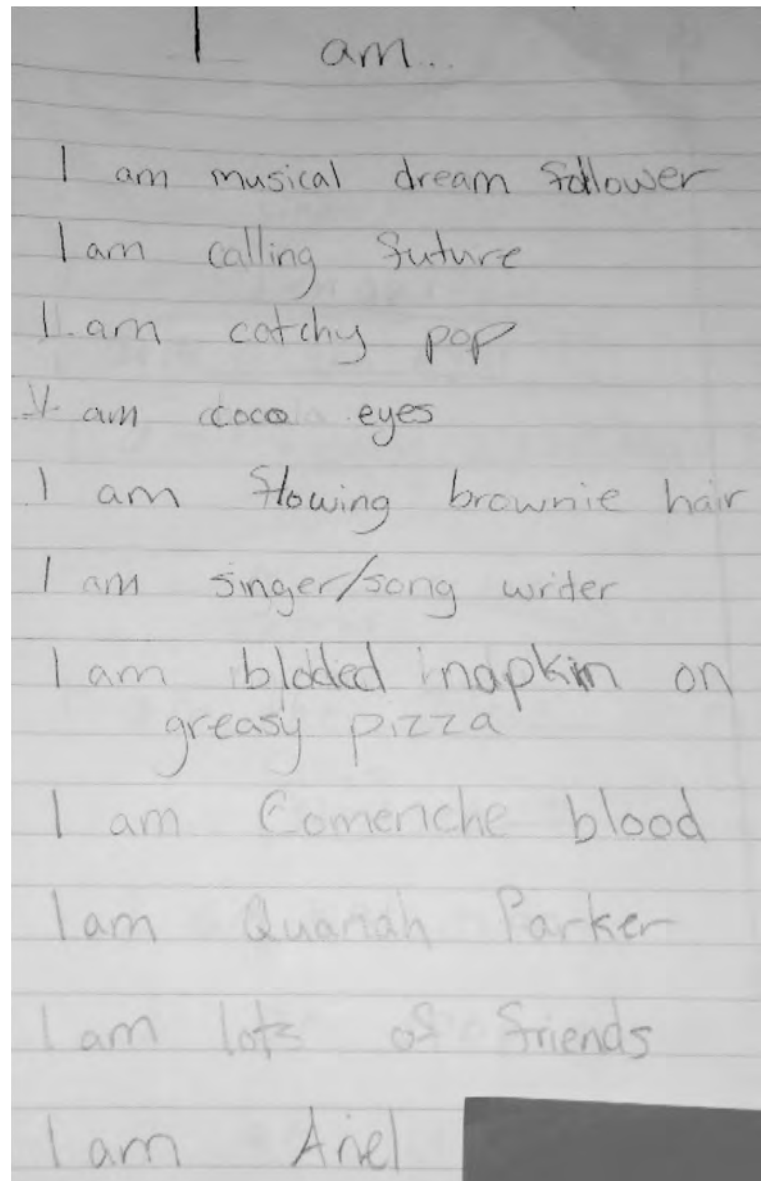
Ariel, Fourth grade

Teaching Tip: The Prescription for Success

Jennifer Evers Holloway

One of my students' favorite games to play to review previously taught ELA skills (e.g. literary elements, vocabulary, figurative language, grammar, etc.), is The Prescription for Success Game. It is an interactive learning experience that involves whole body movement, team competition, and acAtive listening and writing skills so that all students are required to be active participants. To set up the game, I go to a local pharmacy and tell them that I am a teacher in need of some prescription bottles for a classroom game. They give me, free of charge, a box of 30 bottles and lids free of advertising! I take a permanent marker and number each bottle (1-25), with 5 extra bottles in case any brake or need replacement. Next, I type twenty-five review questions from my grade level ELA objectives. I print the list of items and cut them into strips. I roll the strips up, place each one into a prescription bottle, and tighten the lid. Deposit all 25 prescription bottles into a large plastic tub and place the tub at the front of the classroom.

As students arrive, I assign them to small groups containing 4-5 students. Each student labels a sheet of notebook paper 1-25, leaving a few spaces for each item. When I sound the starting bell, a runner from each group runs to the front of the room, grabs any prescription bottle and runs back to the group. The student reads the item number and review prompt to the group. The team formulates their answer collaboratively, and each student in the group records his answer for that numbered item. Once each member of the group has the answer recorded, the runner rolls the prompt back into a scroll and places it securely in the bottle. A new group member now runs that bottle back to the tub and picks up another available bottle. As groups complete several items, it becomes important that the runner knows which numbered items remain, so the group can complete all twenty-five efficiently. If a group needs a bottle that another group is using, they must wait their turn, which holds up their group progress. The first group to record answers to all 25 review items is the winner of round one. Round two is the review of accuracy for all 25 items. You can do this by making a self-checking sheet available digitally as a Google Classroom file or by using other collaborative share sites. The group with the highest number of correct responses is the winner of round two. I award winning groups with 5-10 bonus points on the exam. This is a fun, interactive way to motivate students to think, respond, discuss, and write.

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children's authors, whom are known and loved by students, share that their pre-writing periods can engulf six to eight months, children begin to conceptualize the importance of spending time to develop ideas in order to create worthwhile stories.

As an educator, I am committed to teaching students to write by first sharing my personal love of books and language. Reading aloud to students and motivating students to read a wide variety of genres foster opportunities for exposure to words which may not have previously been heard or seen in print and then allow possibilities for those new words to slowly trickle into their writings! According to language arts guru, Gail Tompkins, reading and writing are recursive. Students demonstrate Tompkins' wisdom almost daily in the school environment where I teach.

The three most important items needed in a "writing teacher toolbox" are: (1) positively reviewed, age appropriate, high interest texts ; (2) an enthusiastic attitude when sharing the mentor text s with students; and (3) numerous strategies for scaffolding writing. Outlined below is one pre-writing lesson with which I have had success when teaching students as young as four and as accom-

plished as college seniors. The steps identified comprise the methodology I employ when teaching second grade students about the pre-writing component of the writing process.

LESSON TITLE: "I AM POETRY"

Oklahoma Academic Standards English Language Arts

Standard 1: Speaking and Listening

Students will speak and listen effectively in a variety of situations including, but not limited to responses to reading and writing.

Reading: Students will develop and apply effective communication skills through speaking and active listening.

2.1.R.3 Students will engage in collaborative discussions appropriate topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups.

Writing: Students will develop and apply effective communication skills through speaking and active listening to create individual and group projects and presentations.

2.1.W.1 Students will report on a topic text, tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

Standard 2: Reading and Writing Process: Students will use a variety of recursive reading and writing processes.

Writing: Students will develop and strengthen writing by en-

gaging in a recursive process that includes prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

2.2.W.1 Students will develop drafts by sequencing the action or details in a story or about a topic through writing sentences.

Methodology:

Step One: Begin the lesson by reading Charles Smith, Jr.'s book, *I Am America* . It will serve as a mentor text for a series of lessons encompassing all components of the writing process.

Step Two: Ask students to discuss the following prompts with an elbow partner: What color are your eyes? What is your favorite thing to wear? How would you describe your smile? Do you have any distinguishing features...dimples, freckles, etc.?

Step Three: Ask students to share what they discussed and record their answers by using a document camera and or a large piece of chart paper. I often utilize a graphic organizer with the letters of the alphabet listed along the side or in small blocks on the page. The students address the writing prompt with ideas that begin with each letter of the alphabet. This small amount of support, rather than a blank page, motivates the students to think and engage in the pre-writing process.

The collaborative brainstorming takes time, however, it generates many new ideas and levels the playing field for struggling writers. *See an example of the graphic organizer below.

Step Four: Ask students to create their own brainstorming lists. Scaffold student responses to the following questions:

What is your favorite...

> ...subject at school?

> ...sport to play or watch on television?

> ...pet or wild animal?

> ...healthy snack?

> ...junk food?

> ...summer day activity?

> ...rainy day activity?

> ...author or book character?

Step Five: After allowing students time to create their own pre-writing lists, ask them to circle their top three ideas. Request volunteers to share their ideas and record the ideas shared. Creating a shared pre-writing list enables those students with limited vocabularies, learning differences, or "writer's block" to experience new words and/or techniques for employing ideas into their compositions.

Step Six: Allow students to add ideas to their lists after hearing the ideas of their peers and to add any additional ideas attained after the sharing process.

Step Seven: Collect the pre-writing pages so they can be utilized to create I Am Poem drafts.* The time span between brainstorming and drafting can range from one day to two weeks.

Step Eight: Review the writing prompt and some brainstorming ideas from the previous writing lesson. Create a collaborative poem with students. This poem will serve as a model for students. Instruct students to create drafts that focus on content and main ideas of the writing.

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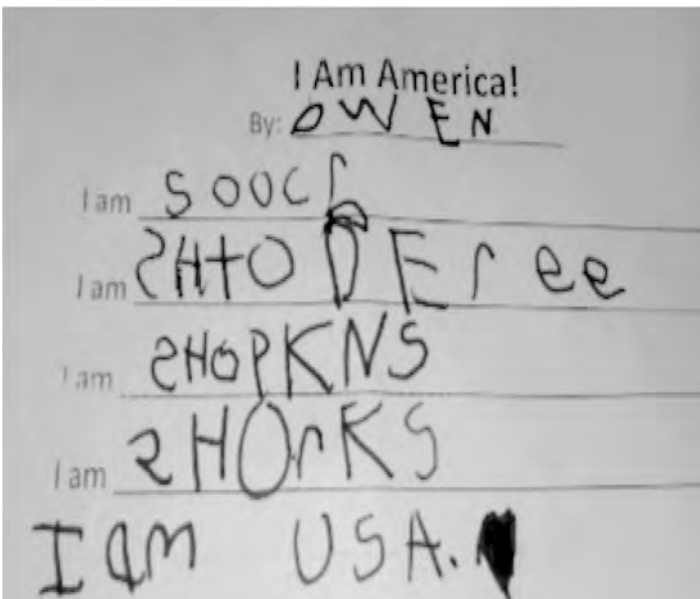
Owen, Kindergarten
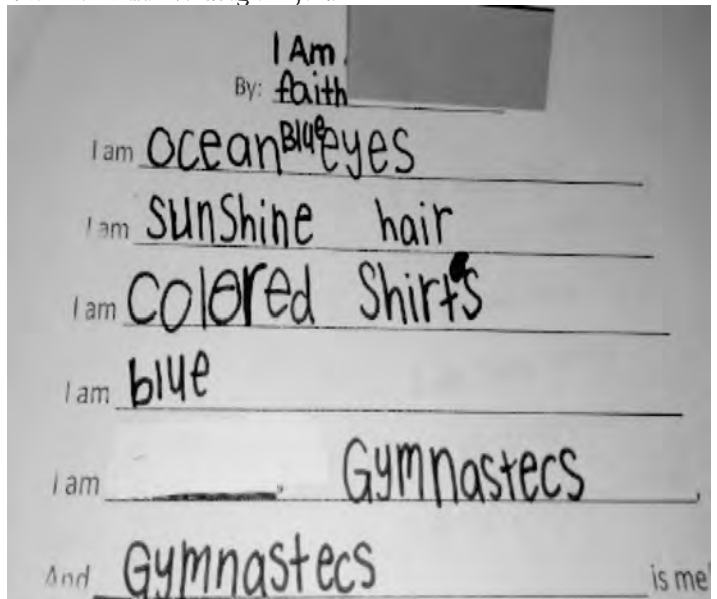
Faith, First grade

I am dog lover
I am prayer of irad
I am school smarts
I am brownish greenish eyes
I am brownish blondeish hair
I am the eater of pizza
I am the slurper of spegeti
I am german Erlish and something
else
I am basket ban shorts on a freezing
day
I am bascket ball star
I am pop country hip hop and rock
I am Nikes
I am sad
I am happy
I am funny and more
But best of all I am me

Gibson, Fourth grade

I am fun in the sun all day
I am soft hearted but harsh
I am kitty cat cuddles
I am basketball star
I am pho with lots of tofo
I am messy, sticky korean ribs
I am cartwheels on my living room floor
I am spook my sisters heart out
I am shop till I drop
I am my dads blue eyes
I am Peter Paul and mary in the car all day
I am beetles on the way to school
I am creamy chocolete after school
I am moms worried thoughts
I am happy and sad but best of all
me

Addison, Fourth grade

Augustus, Kindergarten

* ABCs of Me	A	B	C
D	E	F	G
H	I	J	K
L	M	N	O
P	Q	R	S
T	U	V	W
X	Y	Z	

I AM
Written by: AUGUSTUS
I am dogsu
I am iscreM
I am cHecrs
I am APPLS

Social Animals:
Teenagers, Vygotsky, and Writing Instruction

Natalie Runnels

It is not very often that I get to experience some of what my students may feel in class, but after sitting through the first day of the Oklahoma Writing Project's Summer Institute (OWPSI), I felt an uneasy bond with my students. The Institute's directors were explaining that we would be assigned a writing group with whom we would share our writing each day, and I—a mature, experienced, English teacher—was panicking. A hundred objections rose in my mind. Nevertheless, I had been accepted into the Summer Institute, and I had committed to it for several weeks. I had hoped that I would be challenged, but what I didn't yet know was that this single experience of sharing—or "publishing," as they call it—of my own writing with my peers would transform my writing instruction and my students' writing experiences.

Writing is a priority at my school, and naturally, that presents more than a few challenges. I teach at an inner-city college preparatory charter high school that accepts students from all educational backgrounds. Sixty-five percent of our graduates are first-generation college-bound students, and many of them come to us in 9th grade far below grade level in reading, writing, and math. In fact, it is not uncommon for a third of the freshman class to read at or below a 6th grade level (STAR). Many have never written an essay before. Regardless, we offer an open-access, all-Advanced Placement (AP) curriculum, and all students graduate having taken at least five AP classes regardless of their ability. Ninth graders who enter our school unable to write a complete sentence graduate after writing six-page research papers and 40-minute timed analysis essays over the likes of Mary Wollstonecraft and T.S. Eliot by the time they're in 12th grade. Many graduate from our school with six hours of English credit in their college classes, and all of them are better readers and writers than when they came. The challenge, of course, is how to get students to that point.

This idea of audience and purpose is a constant struggle for our students. At a certain point—usually in their sophomore year—our students begin writing automatically: they know how to get themselves started and they know how to get at least some content on paper in an organized manner. But many times, doing so is merely an academic exercise for them, and although they've been told repeatedly to adopt an academic tone, to write as part of a discourse community, and to assert rather than rely on the redundant first person, they don't always understand why. Even with frequent teacher modeling and interacting with real-world scenarios, students struggle to find purpose and voice. As for audience, imagining a discourse community is one thing, and actually joining one is quite another. Too often, we focus exclusively on academic writing, and therefore, too often, their audience becomes some mythical combination of me and a group of old men meting out grammar rules from a tall white tower. When it comes to the publishing stage of the writing process—the stage that, for me, added so much purpose—we don't always help students' voices to surface beyond the blue lines of college-ruled notebook paper. These issues foster a constant discussion within our department, and they were the reasons I found myself sitting with a group of strangers who were supposed to become my OWP writing group during my summer break.

As it turns out, OWP participants share their writing constantly. The program emphasizes the entire writing process as essential to any writing, no matter how small, but one of the most sacred components was the final stage: publishing. Over the next few weeks, I would learn that this took many forms, but two of the most common were based in Think-Pair-Share activities and the more formal writing groups. These were two activities that I had shied away from as a teacher, limited by my own experience: I had been a loner in school and preferred to keep both my learning and my writing private. Although I had embraced the ideas from Vygotsky and sociocognitive learning theory in my undergraduate work, these had not successfully filtered into my writing instruction beyond the idea of teacher-centered apprenticeship. However, as Michigan State University professor Carol Sue Englert explains (and as I have come to realize in practice), providing space for students to collaborate with both the teacher and with their peers, allows them to "inform, question, think aloud, self-correct, challenge and construct meaning together" and in doing so, they "talk their way into deeper understandings about writing practices" (211). By talking through their writing, students are able to internalize and master it.

As I came to realize, this is exactly what Vygotsky was talking about when he wrote that children only internalize skills after they first discuss them with others in an open social setting. In my experience, Think-Pair-Share activities allow all this to happen in the earlier stages of thinking and writing, in what Vygotsky would call the interpsychological (social) stage, when students are still

learning and processing. I've found writing groups to be most useful for the revising and publishing steps, allowing students to explore and develop the intrapsychological (psychological) stage when they internalize and take control of these skills, though some Vygotsky proponents would say that writing groups fulfill both stages (Everson 9-10). In any case, guiding my students through these levels and "into deeper understandings about writing practices" was one of my main goals, and the price for that was to share my writing—constantly.

Needless to say, the first week of OWP was extremely uncomfortable for me. I went home each day exhausted and overstimulated from all my social interaction. The pressure I put on myself was tremendous, for, as English teacher Terry A. Moher notes, we fear that our writing will not reflect the depth of our thinking (37), and to face this fear multiple times throughout the day pushed the introvert in me far beyond any "reasonable" boundary I had previously established. Nevertheless, I persevered, and after about a week of this, a funny thing started happening: I actually started to look forward to sharing my writing. Even after being forced to change table partners, I wanted to share my words; I wanted someone to hear what I wrote and what I thought. I even volunteered to share my work with the whole group on several occasions—it was addicting. Moreover, I loved my writing group. They were affirming and insightful, and their critiques were constructive and straightforward. I have always enjoyed writing, but now I felt I was writing for a clear audience, and that seemed to give the writing a special type of purpose. Not only did talking my way through writing help me clarify what I wanted to say, but it also helped me construct meaning on a much broader scale: my thoughts and my learning took on much more significance because I was connected to a larger conversation. Vygotsky argues that we become more and more human based on the interactions we share with others (Prior 57), and it was this element that was giving life to my words far beyond what I could summon on my own.

By the end of the Institute, I knew for certain that this element of sharing writing would be crucial in my writing instruction. Slowly, painfully, I re-worked my curriculum to include such opportunities. For every unit, I added a slew of journal entries, both reflective and analytical, as springboards for discussion. It worked: not only did every student have something written on their paper, but they were far more willing to volunteer their answers or join the discussion on their own, even my lowest students. It seemed that because someone had already listened to what they had to say once, they felt it had enough value to allow others to listen in, too.

Beyond the journals, I wanted students to have multiple opportunities to stop, think, and write as they processed the material in class, and so less formal Think-Pair-Share activities became routine. At the beginning of school, I assigned students their pairs or groups (based on geography, not ability since it was still August) and worked hard to establish expectations for productivity in their discussions. This worked, too. I can count on one hand the number of times students have gotten off-topic; rather, these informal exchanges tend to generate better questions and deeper observations.

The more challenging task for me was to establish and guide formal writing groups. Whereas I could rationalize the time required for Think-Pair-Share activities as a necessary pedagogical sacrifice, consistently making time for formal writing groups proved much harder. Moreover, my students felt more pressure in these groups since there was an element of evaluation involved. We struggled. Some groups flourished, but several of my groups didn't mesh well and often produced only stony silences. Additionally, I was never sure what to do when various students didn't do the assignment but still expected to participate in the writing group, and that often produced some level of frustration among group members. Although there was some progress with the groups, it was hard to focus on the effective elements when all I noticed were the wasted minutes slipping by.

Finally, it occurred to me to move writing groups to an online forum. I had heard of Edmodo but had never used it. As we approached research-paper season, I was desperate to find a better format for writing groups, and online work seemed like a good avenue for both preparation and collaboration throughout the process while also protecting in-class time. I switched up a few of the groups and started with a tiny, unassuming assignment: as groundwork for their research, students were to find and post a current news story, writing a brief introduction and position on the topic. Group members were to comment on an aspect of the story as well as respond to the author's position.

It worked like magic. As with the Think-Pair-Share activities, students who had previously had very little to say in class suddenly opened up and wrote some of the most profound, thoughtful, and complimentary comments I've ever seen. Many embraced a confidence, wit, and empathy that had been missing in the original writing groups. To my surprise, this also trickled into class every now and then. At one point, a student stopped me mid-lecture to call out another student (the class clown) on how kind his comments were on a related topic. The entire class concurred, and discussion leaped ahead. I was delighted.

As the research process progressed, so did students' comfort with each other and with the writing process. Although they had struggled to ask questions about their own writing in the classroom setting, online they asked for their peers' opinions much more readily. Dave Boardman,

English teacher and National Writing Project collaborator, explains this difference:

> Students wrote [online] with the understanding that I was no longer their audience — I was just one small part of a readership that might bass their entry by altogether or linger over every word. That idea made our constant conversations on writing more meaningful to some of my students. Turning it in wasn't good enough anymore. Their work was going out with their name, and that matters for most teenagers. (165)

Just as I had discovered the power of audience, my students, too, were finally eager to write for this very real audience and many commented that they were both excited and nervous for feedback. A few came to me for additional, individual writing conferences, and they admitted that the online comments had confirmed their own suspicions regarding necessary revisions. We discussed this as them making "writerly decisions," but essentially, in Vygotskian terms, students were beginning to cultivate an "inner voice" that directed the steps for revision on their own, with a little prompting from the "social voice" (Everson 9). This interplay between the inner and the social voices is what is so vital in any stage of development in children, but it is was especially important in teaching my students about revision.

By the time their rough drafts were due, most students already had a solid series of small revisions and ideas behind them, and many felt they were well-equipped to synthesize the sources and ideas necessary for the paper. Naturally, their final papers still contained errors common to sophomores, but I saw significantly fewer under-developed papers, and I fielded far fewer panicked questions and emails throughout the process. Even with the writing process, there is always a danger of prioritizing the published product, but allowing my students to think and puzzle and question and revise their understandings throughout the process was valuable not just to their writing but also to their growth as inquisitive, thoughtful, people.

The following year, I was assigned six sections of AP English Language and Composition, so I moved up with the same group of students. Time constraints and the demands of designing an entirely new curriculum prevented me from continuing the formal writing group component of my class; however, the informal write-and-share pattern continued all year. As in the previous year, students responded well to this process. However, I didn't see or hear the depth of commentary from students reflecting on and critiquing their writing in my new context. Even so, this year our senior AP English Literature and Composition teacher commented that this pilot group of students were "unusually wise" when it comes to evaluating their own writing, and I have to credit their previous work in writing groups for this. It was that continual collaboration, that continual publishing,

and those continual conversations that allowed my students to "talk their way into deeper understandings" about writing, and they thrived.

In the end, of course Vygotsky was right: learning is a social process—and so is writing. Whether it was having a clearer audience or an enhanced purpose, or for some, simply getting words on the page, interacting with peers provided invaluable opportunities for students to grow as writers. I am so grateful to OWP for forcing me out of my comfort zone and encouraging me to change my teaching style, and I am so grateful for that group of students who muddled through it all with me as we learned together.

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Managing the Messy Middle Parts between Prewriting and Publishing:
The Importance of Actually Teaching the Process in the Writing Process
Bonner Slayton

Years ago, 18 to be exact, when I was a very new and very impressionable teacher with a very new class of very impressionable 6th grade Language Arts students, I learned that it was important to teach writing and the writing process in a specific, linear way. My new colleagues taught writing this way in their classrooms, just as my professors in my undergraduate courses taught me writing this way. Their idea was that one had to complete a prewriting activity before one could start drafting a paper. Then, during some wait time (no one really ever explained to me how to get from one stage to the next), one would need to edit the draft before revising it so one could reach the epitome of success: publishing (Reimer, 2001; Elbow 1981). During this impressionable time in my career, I listened to workshop leader after workshop leader explain that, "85% of your work in writing should be in the prewriting stage." This meant, of course, that they spent 85% of their time teaching the prewriting stage to participants, rushing to the last 10 minutes of the presentation where they would showcase beautifully published poems, stories, and essays in beautifully bound anthologies as examples of how well this process worked. As I attended in-service after in-service where experts shared this philosophy, I felt compelled to nod and agree, not fully recognizing that they were only showing the best work from their best students. Deep inside I knew that this method didn't really work for me as a writer or as a teacher of writing.

Being new I didn't want to rock the boat. Regardless of my own frustrating experiences with this concept, I accepted this perception of writing as truth. I just didn't have time to be different. I was trying to find the faculty restroom, navigate mandatory meetings, and discover which teachers in the building not to tick off (I eventually learned that as an English teacher I would anger everyone at some time). Besides, it's not that I was a stranger to this process of writing. Like almost everyone else, I had seen the posters in my 7th, 8th, and 9th grade classrooms that showed a nice, neat flow chart of what would help me get to real writing. Many of these posters were even creative, and they were even placed in creative places like the ceiling and above the doors and windows, which was great since these were the places I would glance as I struggled as a bored adolescent who only wanted to stare at the cute girl sitting in front of me but didn't want to get caught doing so.

For years I religiously taught my students this same writing process in the same linear fashion (Slayton, 2013). But something always bothered me. Something kept me questioning if there was more to this concept of a specific, linear "writing process." Yet I carried on. I had had some amazing English teachers, and using the logic that as new teachers we, "teach how we've been taught" (Owens, 2013), I thought I was doing the right thing. This meant that whenever I assigned a writing assignment in any secondary class (middle school, high school, Career Tech, or college), I posted the writing process on the white board, went over the five steps very quickly, and then rushed to the part where they turned in their papers. I was spending 85% of my time engaging my students in prewriting activities and 15% of the time helping them publish, giving lip service to the drafting, editing, and revising stages. Not knowing how to help students navigate these three areas, I meshed them all together like I had just stuffed a handful of blue, green, and yellow sour Skittles into my mouth hoping that the taste would be palatable.

I was afraid to admit that writing was, and still is, a struggle for me. A real struggle. A deep struggle. A deeply real struggle. It is one that causes me an inner (and sometimes outer) panic attack with meltdowns. No amount of creative posters with cats explaining the steps I should follow to get to real writing will alleviate this stress. Actually, forcing me, as a writer, to cram my thoughts into a system that has a linear process that looks neat and is easy to grade does more harm than good. For years I thought there was something wrong with me. I wasn't doing it right. I sensed that my frustrations were abnormal and since others could produce brilliant papers within the confines of this lock-step program, I felt like a dismal failure.

What's worse is that I forced this same frustration onto my students. The more I came to terms with my stress as a writer, the more I noticed stress within my students as they flooded my classroom floor with crumpled pieces of paper, throwing them with the speed of a pitcher trying to pitch a no-hitter. Aghast, they would yell, "I just can't do this. I'm not doing it right. I hate this!" A turning point came for me one day when, after picking up their papers and self-esteem off the floor, I looked up and realized that luckily for them, I, too, had placed creative posters of the writing process in creative places around the room so I, in turn, could remind them that they were not doing writing "right." They could, therefore, focus on the cute boy or girl

in front of them. It was a mangled mess.

After five years of participating in this circus, I found myself sitting in a graduate class with my mentor and professor of English education, Dr. Michael Angelotti (or Dr. A. as his students call him) at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. A., it seems, has never had a problem with pushing the boundaries of accepted writing norms. One night while we were discussing this linear "writing process," he got up out of his chair and quietly drew a bunch of squiggly lines on the chalkboard to represent his conceptualization, a different conceptualization of what I knew, of the writing process. Those squiggly lines changed my life forever.

Dr. Angelotti explained that the problem wasn't with me: my frustration was that I was trying to put my thinking, creativity, ideas, dreams, and goals into a linear process of steps that didn't make sense in my mind. He explained that it is acceptable to modify the traditional writing process to one that truly helps the writer. Through the lenses of Paulo Freire, Nancie Atwell, Peter Elbow, Tom Romano, Jim Burke, Mina Shaughnessy, and others, he gave me the permission to walk through the steps in a way that helped me be successful. In the words of my close friend and mentor, Claudia Swisher, who has been teaching writing for over 40 years in K-College settings and is an expert in navigating her own path through the writing process while helping others to do the same, Dr. A. helped me "find my own way."

It was here that I discovered that writing is more recursive in nature (Thompson, 2011; Kapka & Oberman, 2001; Goldstein & Carr, 1996), and when I did, I felt a real freedom to write. David Arbogast explains how I felt in The Virginia English Journal when he states that the writing process "certainly isn't linear...it is more circular, recursive" and that when we look at it this way, the "boundaries between pre-writing, drafting, and revising become blurred." When I realized, like Arbogast, that the steps of the Writing Process can "fall out of order," I finally felt success (2016).

Later, while completing the Oklahoma Writing Project Summer Institute, teacher consultants reinforced to me that I could start writing an essay, poem, letter, or paragraph from multiple entry points. My writing improved immediately, and I wondered if this same concept would make a difference in my teaching. I moved from focusing on teaching a rushed, rusted, and mechanical writing method to one where I spent 70% of my time workshopping with students in whole group and small group settings to revise their work. During the other 15% of time we worked in the prewriting stage, spending the other 15% of the time working in the drafting, editing, and publishing stages.

I do things a little differently now. I ask my students to grade their own papers with the rubric before they turn them in to me. In addition, I give them a grade for showing their thinking process (prewriting, drafting, revising) and

this grade is equal to the grade of their published product. As a group, I walk them through their rough drafts as a class, teaching them to look for formatting issues and organizational problems. Among other things, we look for issues in their own writing in regards to sentence variety, descriptive adjectives, and vocabulary. As they mark their own papers while looking at their own writing, they begin to feel more secure in their ability to navigate their way to successful writing (Shaughnessy, 1977). While I feel that it is much harder and time consuming to teach this way, the payoff has been immense for me and my students.

As my students navigate their own writing processes, I no longer see a floor crumpled with paper. They turn more papers in on time. Fewer students drop my college writing courses, and students tell me all the time that, "This is hard, but where I was once frustrated, I now feel I can do it." While I still show them the writing process in a linear fashion as a starting point for conversations, I now give them permission to find their own way so they can develop a process that works for them.

Amazingly, I have found that this has even freed up more space to post other distractions on the ceiling, above the door, and next to the clock so my students can focus on something new when they are staring at the cute guy or girl in front them trying not to get caught.

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Oklahoma Writing Project Helps Thousands of Teachers
Terry O. Phelps

"What's a cutcherry? What's a whaup?"

These were the opening lyrics of a song (to be discussed later) I wrote in 1978 at the end of the first Summer Institute of the Oklahoma Writing Project (OWP) at the University of Oklahoma. Twenty-five teachers from all grade levels and several disciplines from all around the state met for five weeks, sharing ideas that profoundly impacted our teaching. Since then, more than six hundred teachers have completed OWP summer institutes, and thousands of teachers have benefitted from OWP workshops and conferences.

The OWP was one of the first fourteen state sites outside California for the National Writing Project (NWP), which began in 1973 at the University of California at Berkeley. The NWP now includes almost two hundred sites in fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. I've had the good fortune to share ideas with teachers from many of those sites for the past thirteen years at the spring meeting of the NWP in D.C. Teachers at that meeting also meet individually with Congressmen to discuss funding for education and to share our writing project experiences – some of which I will now share with you, perhaps giving ideas for activities in your classes.

Inspirational OWP founders/directors Frances Dunham and Martha Mills captured the vision of the NWP with riveting sessions for five hours per day. Every day we were fully engaged, demonstrating lesson plans and assignments, hearing guest speakers, writing and sharing our writing, exploring techniques, and soaking up the ideas and energy of enthusiastic peers, epitomizing the NWP mission: "Teachers Teaching Teachers."

The previous sentence is an example of the "cumulative sentence," a structure explored in one of our 1978 OWP summer institute sessions using the Francis Christensen book *Notes Toward a New Rhetoric*. Since then, I have taught the cumulative sentence in virtually every writing class, as well as in seminars and in-service workshops. I even published an article, *"A Life Sentence for Student Writing: The Cumulative Sentence,"* in the Journal of Teaching Writing in 1987.

Of the many guest speakers in the 1978 summer institute, the one who influenced me most was University of Oklahoma science education professor John Renner, a foremost authority on Jean Piaget's learning theories. He explained the importance of beginning lessons with concrete examples, and then moving into abstraction. Renner eventually directed my dissertation, which was published by the NWP as a monograph, *Going in Cycles: A Piagetian Ap-*

proach to Teaching Writing. Everything I have taught since then employs an inductive approach, moving from concrete to abstract.

Another speaker was renowned linguist Kenneth Pike, who spoke about grammar. His and Renner's ideas significantly influenced my teaching grammar and ultimately my recent e-book Kindle publication, *Grammar Upside Down*, which begins each grammar concept with examples instead of rules, definitions, and terminology. My students for years have told me that my approach helped them to really understand grammar for the first time.

A third guest speaker who impacted everyone's teaching was Mary K. Healy, co-director of the NWP, who spoke about the writing process, which was a major theme of the OWP summer institute. For many of us, the ideas of brainstorming and freewriting were new. Our traditional writing process had been to outline, then write a draft, and then revise. We learned the benefits of spontaneously brainstorming lists of ideas as they came to us, not trying to put them in any order. That free flow of thought continued in freewriting, writing a rough draft, maintaining momentum without stopping to edit for word choice or mechanics. I have used brainstorming and freewriting in my own writing as well as requiring it in my Freshman Composition classes. I suggest that if students have trouble not editing as they write, they can turn off their computer monitor so they can't see to edit. Of course, in 1978 no one had computers.

Each teacher in the summer institute gave a presentation about writing, followed by discussion of how we might employ the teacher's ideas. We learned the possibilities of adapting any lesson to our students' grade level. The most influential presentation for me was by Marge Brown, a Waukomis Middle School English teacher, who emphasized the importance of audience by having students write and send letters to the editor and to Congressmen. She showed us that posting students' writing on bulletin boards provides audiences of classmates, teachers, and parents for students' writing. What an eye-opener! Few if us had thought beyond ourselves as audiences for student writing. Since then I have my students write for real audiences, thinking of me as an editor who will help them tailor their writing for someone else. For example, in my Freshman Composition classes I have students write proposals to our university, suggesting new programs, facilities, classes, or other improvements, and I bring in panels of administrators to see the students' PowerPoint presentations and written proposals. Some of their proposals have been implemented on campus.

I also have students write magazine articles and letters to the editor of our school newspaper or other newspapers, and this past semester had them write letters to the next U.S. President as part of the National Writing Project initiative for students aged 13-18 to voice their opinions on issues that mattered to them in the election. Almost 13,000 students nationwide wrote letters (see https://letters2president.org/ for examples of letters submitted).

In the OWP summer institute, we wrote daily and practiced peer editing, which I regularly have students in my classes do. The writing that we shared that summer was sometimes amusing. For example, we all wrote instructions for a robot to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Then the teacher who had made that assignment tried to follow the instructions. We found that we often assumed our readers knew what we knew, such as where on the bread to spread the peanut butter (the teacher spread it on the crust). As a result of such presentations, I have my students write instructions for tying shoes, then show them how someone not knowing how to tie shoes could misinterpret.

Daily writing assignments in the OWP summer institute included comparing unlike things, like a skyscraper and a leaf, requiring us to think beyond the surface. We kept journals to record ideas for future writing and teaching. We wrote fables, poetry, descriptions, and narratives. We drew pictures and wrote about them. All these writing experiences not only provided great assignments for our own classes, but also gave us empathy for our students.

Teachers who complete the OWP summer institute are called Teacher Consultants (TCs for short), and in addition to utilizing their new knowledge in their classes, they make in-service workshop presentations for other teachers and for students. One of our first summer TCs, Pat Smith from Moore Central Mid-High, organized several series of workshops. Since then, the OWP has coordinated numerous conferences and workshops around the state. I have had the privilege to present more than a hundred workshops in schools all around Oklahoma in the past thirty-eight years, incorporating many ideas from the OWP summer institute.

OWP presentations include the basic tenets of the Writing Project: 1) Teachers Teaching Teachers; 2) Teachers of Writing Write; 3) Teachers of Writing Write With Their Students and in Front of their Students; 4) Audience; 5) Peer Editing; Fluency, Form and Correctness; and 6) Writing Across the Curriculum.

OWP co-directors Martha Mills and Frances Dunham facilitated and encouraged the process of arranging the seminars. They held yearly luncheon meetings and invited superintendents from across the state to learn about the OWP. They also held yearly reunions of OWP alumni to assist us in networking and facilitating workshops in our own districts and others. When they retired, Dr Gail Thompkins and then Dr. Michael Angelotti followed as directors. The current director is Dr. Priscilla Griffith. Twenty-five years ago, members of the OWP helped begin a sister project, the Oklahoma State University Writing Project, directed currently by Shelbie Witte.

Now back to the opener: "What's a cutcherry? What's a whaup?" Cutcherry Whaup is the title of the 145-page anthology of the writing of the teachers in the first OWP summer institute. As Cathy Merrell, a Moore Middle School teacher, wrote at the conclusion of the anthology, "A cutcherry is a public office for administrative or judicial business in India, and a whaup is a migratory curlew, a Northern English shore bird." Then she explains an activity in which each teacher was given two small squares of paper and asked to define cutcherry and whaup, without having seen the words before. These definitions were mixed with the real definitions and read aloud, and everyone guessed which were the real definitions. As Cathy pointed out, "Answers ranged from a knife to cut cherries to a Spanish shawl for cutcherry and various degrees of beating on the head for whaup. The entire purpose being to learn to write in a particular style such as that of definitions."

Cathy concluded with "The words have very little actual connection to the writing contained herein. Cutcherry and whaup were just two little words that caught the ear and inspired a song." The song, which I wrote and performed on a recorded slide presentation, is in the anthology and includes some of our activities and what we learned. Here is the song.

What's a cutcherry? What's a whaup?
Lexicographers we are not.
Composition's our stock and trade
Teaching students how themes are made.

Share ideas on things you do.
Other teachers may try them too.
Tape each speaker who has the floor.
Listen to the recorder roar.

Mind you what M. K. Healy stressed:
Fluency, form and then correctness;
Work together in groups of three;
Keep a journal for posterity.

Try pre-writing before you start.
Cut an apple and orange apart.
Teach a robot to make a meal.
Stick 'em up with banana peel.

Small world projects are fun to make.
Pineapple doilies sell like hotcakes.
Write a letter to either coast.
Marge will mail it and pay the post.

Take my gusto but not my "Awk!"
Make a sandwich for grammar talk.
Match a skyscraper with a leaf.
Write a fable, but make it brief.

Teach Joanna to take a puff.
Have a festival with Shakespeare's stuff.
Write a five-carat paragraph.
Make a living comic strip for laughs.

Charlotte says we must proofread right.
Debby says keep the red marks slight.
Both our panels tradition blast—
Grade and grammar iconoclasts.

"Learning centers just can't be beat,"
Say Donna, Anna Belle, and Margherite.
Diana and Sherry keep students straight
Making movies with Super 8.

ACT and SAT tell it all,
Like the handwriting on the wall.
We all know from examinations
Johnny can't write. But that's hypostatization!

When we started five weeks ago,
Sharing all the good things we know,
Who could guess how much fun there'd be?
Who could Carolyn's Title 4C?

If the Project accepts this caper
(Song in lieu of position paper),
One brief stanza will culminate
My philosophy to propagate:

Composition is art not science.
No one theory gets total compliance.
Flexibility is the key.
Thanks for everything, OWP!

Oklahoma Writing Project and Oklahoma State Writing
Project websites:
http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/owp.
html
https://osuwritingproject.okstate.edu/

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Two Teachers' Transfer from the Oklahoma Writing Project Summer Institute to their Classrooms

Gage Jeter, Melissa Rule Wicker, and Stephanie Young

Introduction

The Oklahoma Writing Project (OWP) at the University of Oklahoma, a local site of the National Writing Project (NWP), offers professional development for classroom teachers (early childhood through college) with the goal of validating and refining teacher beliefs and practices concerning writing and the teaching of writing. The writing project aims to help educators transfer this work to classrooms and students in order to improve student achievement in writing and literacy. This study explores if and how teachers' beliefs and practices about writing and the teaching of writing are influenced by their participation in the OWP Summer Institute (SI). Additionally, this research attempts to discover if beliefs and practices transfer from the OWP SI to teachers' pedagogy. If so, how? And if not, why not? In essence, the goal of this research is to shed light on the OWP SI in order to promote and improve authentic, meaningful, and relevant professional development for teachers of English language arts.

Research Design

Melissa, an 8th grade English-Language Arts teacher and Stephanie, an 8th grade Resource Lab teacher, co-teach an 8th grade English language arts class at a large suburban middle school in Oklahoma and, as a result, were purposefully selected as participants for this study. Melissa has eight years of teaching experience (five years at her current school site) and is completing her Masters degree in reading. She previously earned a Bachelor's degree in English. With a Bachelor's degree in Human Resources, Stephanie is alternatively certified and has taught for three years – all at her current school site. She recently completed her Masters degree in special education. These two teachers represent a diverse educational background, but both continue their education in graduate programs.

During the research process, I conducted a series of five observations and semi-structured interviews, recorded field notes, and collected teachers' writings (lesson plans and personal writings) in order to investigate the transfer of teacher beliefs and practices from the OWP SI to their classroom environment, especially in regard to the social nature of learning and writing. Then, I coded the data obtained from these observations, interviews, and artifacts in order to develop themes to determine if and how the transfer impacted the teachers' pedagogy and classroom environment. I looked specifically for NWP principles regarding the social aspect of writing and also writing processes and products.

In terms of my position as a researcher, it is significant that I, too, was a participant in the 2015 OWP SI alongside the two participants for this study. Therefore, I must acknowledge my "biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research" (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). Since I experienced the 2015 OWP SI, I knew first-hand the beliefs and practices promoted by the professional development experience and have reflected about if and how the SI influenced my own beliefs and practices about writing and the teaching of writing. Without hesitation, my experience in the SI certainly affected my beliefs and practices in a positive way regarding writing itself and the teaching of writing. Therefore, it was imperative that I remain open to alternative explanations, feelings, experiences, and beliefs in my position as researcher. I had to focus not on my own experiences, but on the participants'. This required me as researcher - in both observations and interviews - to place my own experiences, beliefs, and expectations aside as I instead allowed the participants to share their beliefs and practices stemming from the OWP SI and extending to their pedagogy.

Findings

From the multiple observations and interviews, as well as the planning session and writing artifacts, three themes emerged. First, both teachers spoke of the OWP SI as an effective, relevant, and meaningful professional development opportunity that extended beyond the SI itself. Next, teachers discussed and demonstrated – in their teaching and writing – a variety of practices related to social learning and writing. Finally, it was discovered that teachers focused more on writing as a process as a result of their participation in the 2015 OWP SI. Moreover, the teachers and their students envisioned writing products as more than the words of a formal, academic essay. The what and how of writing took on a new form.

Meaningful Professional Development

Discussing the OWP SI on a broad level, Melissa described this professional development in relation to prior experiences:

> I've been to professional developments where you're like "Seriously? Why?" But . . . everyone wanted to be there; we wanted to learn. We knew we were able to be vulnerable because we knew people had our backs, and we weren't going to be judged. That allows for a lot more risk-taking – a lot more developing personally and professionally.

Melissa's words about the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of professional development resonated throughout our conversations and were reflected in the classroom observations. For Melissa, the OWP SI was different because participants were "all in." Moreover, a safe, comfortable environment was created that allowed "for a lot more risk-taking" and for participants "to be vulnerable." Stephanie echoed her sentiments: "A little risk-taking. A little permission to take some risks."

The two teachers discussed at length their experiences during the 2015 OWP SI and how what they did and learned there carried over to their practices as teachers. During interview sessions, both teachers spoke positively of the OWP SI. Melissa discussed how the OWP SI was:

> eye-opening. It validated a lot of what I knew, which was nice. Because I think as teachers and writers . . .we question our practices in the classroom – whether they are truly effective, whether they really mean anything, whether they are challenging our students . . . so I think in a lot of ways it validated what we have done. I know that it helped us be more . . .intentional with our planning.

The idea of intentionally transferring skills from the OWP SI to the teachers' work in their classrooms was further extended as Melissa spoke of being more purposeful as a result of her participation in the OWP SI:

> I think everything that we've done this year has had some basis in what we did at OWP. I think we're able to take a broader view at what we're doing, and we've adjusted a few things to make sure that there's a purpose to it and we know what the purpose is.

This newfound sense of purpose permeated lessons and activities in Melissa and Stephanie's classroom. The two collaborated with social studies teachers to create a multi-disciplinary research assignment in which students bridged novels, primary sources, and nonfiction texts to create a thematic representation of historical events, including the Oklahoma City bombing and September 11th terrorist attacks. The teachers, along with their colleagues, facilitated the connectedness of history, literature, and composition. Students were able to see how these often discretely taught subjects could work in tandem. Writing had a purpose outside of the ELA classroom; so too did social studies impact what students read and wrote.

Stephanie, too, saw positive influences from the OWP SI to her teaching and the way she and Melissa planned collaboratively. In addition to describing how "collaboration is . . . huge," Stephanie offered the following insight regarding her relationship with Melissa extending beyond the OWP SI:

> I liked the team building part of it with Melissa and

I being able to do it together . . .because sometimes when we're planning, "Oh do you remember that activity that we did, or who did that, or how could we change this to fit?" And I don't have to take time to explain to her what someone did and how it would fit. We already know. We've been able to do a lot of really . . .interesting things.

During the OWP SI, Stephanie and Melissa collaborated with teachers from a variety of grade levels and subject areas (even a secondary social studies teacher). They were then able to transfer that collaborative, purposeful vision to their own classrooms and school site.

Social Learning through Strategies and Feedback

These teachers value writing with others. During one observation, students were rewriting a scene from The Outsiders from a particular character's perspective. I asked both participants during an interview to tell me more about this particular writing assignment. During our conversation, Melissa described an upcoming culminating activity: "we're going to do kind of a gallery walk so the other language arts teachers and admin can come through and read them and write notes for them." She emphasized an important aspect of sharing and an often neglected stage of the writing process: "the publication part with having other people come in and read it and them to not be afraid of having other people read it, their peers read it." In the classroom setting, especially during the gallery walk activity, students received feedback from one another, from other teachers, and from the building administrators.

In one classroom observation, students were working on editing and revising their pieces. As Stephanie floated the room to assist students, she exclaimed, "We want to show this off!" She went on to describe her efforts toward encouraging her students to share their writing with others: "I've laminated many things and mailed them home in large envelopes with specific instructions for parents to hang it on the fridge." Sharing, for Stephanie, involved reaching audiences within and beyond the classroom itself.

Sharing was an important theme for Melissa's philosophy and practices in relation to writing and the teaching of writing:

> I think it's important for students to read each other's works to gain appreciation for their own work as well as their peers. It is also important that they share their work with others so that their confidence is increased and so that they see there is a reason behind completing activities. Everyone needs validation, [and] anytime students' work can be praised, it should be. Plus, it helps keep them motivated to write and complete our activities.

Melissa described several activities involving sharing, including six word memoirs students composed and "published"

on the walls of their classroom, a writing gallery where students' works were made available for other adults in the building to read and leave feedback, and an overall emphasis on informal sharing as students work through various writing assignments. For Melissa, sharing can and should occur on a consistent basis in a variety of formats.

In general, the two teachers often expressed how their classroom, much like the OWP SI, functioned as a social community of practice. The teachers stated and I observed that the physical arrangement of desks in the classroom made the aspect of social learning explicit. Desks were arranged in groups of four to six, making collaboration a priority. Talk among students was a common behavior in my observations, and Melissa and Stephanie emphasized this facet during a collaborative interview. The conversation went as follows:

> Gage: I noticed in my observation this morning the desk arrangement and students interacting and working with one another.
>
> Melissa: And when they are working in their groups, they do a lot of talking.
>
> Stephanie: They do.
>
> Melissa: We don't have quiet rooms. We're not the typical Language Arts classroom. Even when they're supposed to be doing individual work, they ask each other questions, which, you know, [is] not necessarily a bad thing.
>
> Stephanie: Collaboration is a huge part.

Melissa also discussed her personal experiences as a writer before participating in the OWP SI, discussing her previous hesitations to share her own writing and how that now connects to her reluctant writers in her classroom:

> I don't want to share it . . . as far as having the confidence to write, that I can develop it into something that is good if I just take the time . . . that lets me be able to relate to kids who say I can't write, I don't know how to do it. Well if I know how to break it down . . . a little bit more and look at it from different angles to get them to be interested enough to want to write or to make it easier for them to get their ideas out.

Feedback, too, was a significant aspect of a community of practice in this particular English language arts classroom. I observed students working through a writing activity modeled after *Dear Abby*. Students were assigned a specific character in *The Outsiders* and a specific "problem" related to that character. Students constructed an "email" that described the situation and asked a question that would elicit advice for their specific issue. Their descriptions had to include one piece of dialogue, one piece of imagery, and at least 5 "vivid verbs" – skills, according to both teachers, students

had been working on throughout the school year. Students also worked to convey a particular tone representative of the situation. As a culminating activity, students answered their peers' letters with valid, relatable advice.

While the *Dear Abby* assignment was a particularly relevant and meaningful activity involving sharing and feedback, Melissa also noted that she struggled with providing individualized feedback for her students:

> I haven't been providing the amount of individualized feedback as I probably should. Having such specific, creative, scaffolded activities, though, has allowed for more intensive whole-class feedback. I also have not provided students with formal ways to leave feedback for each other, but I would like to. I think we've created an environment where this could happen easily and where the feedback would be positive and constructive.

Based on Melissa's responses, teacher-to-student and student-to-student feedback is something she feels can and should be a focus in the future. Stephanie offered similar insights into the struggle of providing consistent and useful feedback for her students:

> I intend on using rubrics more to give feedback and building in time to read through some of the more important or harder assignments feedback with students either individually or in small group of two to three students, and I have to be more intentional about building in time to do this. My students don't view feedback as an important aspect to making their work better but as criticism. It is my job to change that mindset . . .

The collaborative classroom culture they have fostered is a step in the right director for these teachers. Moreover, the Dear Abby assignment allows students to offer written feedback for their peers. Evident here is that Melissa and Stephanie are reflecting not only on their strengths, but also areas in which they feel they could improve. Both acknowledged providing feedback is constrained due to time and other factors (such as student attitudes toward teacher feedback), but both have also noted the importance of feedback and thought out action plans to improve in this area.

Redefining Writing: Process and Product

Perceptions about what counted as writing processes and products shifted as a result of Melissa and Stephanie's participation in the OWP SI. Melissa describes her perceptions about writing processes and products prior to her involvement with the OWP SI:

> I think I was still stuck in the mind frame that writing had to be this elaborate piece of . . . some written product . . . I knew the writing process but . . . it was very much a linear progression. And

then in order for it to be a fantastic piece you had to work through the entire process from start to finish to get this . . .essay for lack of better words . . .so for me as a teacher I got frustrated and limited a lot of the bigger writings that we would do in a class because I knew I couldn't go through the entire process each and every time. It was too overwhelming, too time consuming, so I shorted the kids on that to a certain extent . . .

The frustrations from Melissa center on how we define "writing." Both of the teachers felt constrained by time limits, and Melissa often felt "limited" with what she could do in her classroom. However, through the OWP SI, she discovered that "writing" could be redefined:

But then . . . going through the writing project, so the pictures that we do, or the graphic organizers that we've done are all writings, and if we are shar- ing them out they can be the entire writing process in one short little something that's very tangible and very easy for the students to get and understand, and then you can use those as building blocks into a larger piece if you need to, something bigger, and it breaks it down to more manageable pieces for us as teachers but then for the students to be able to really understand and grasp what they're doing.

Stephanie talked of viewing writing as a process, both as a writer and a teacher of writing:

I had no idea the extent of the writing process and what it entails and even how to break it into pieces and chunks and how to support, um, students going through the writing process and what they needed . . . [I] didn't know any of that. I just knew that you just start writing. But having it broken down and examples of each part has helped tre- mendously. They don't want to, and if I can make it easier for them both educationally and personally, then that's something that I want to do.

Reconsidering *The Outsiders* writing activity, stu- dents were able to carry out various stages of the writing process. Both teachers felt it was a priority to view this proj- ect as a process instead of just a product. In describing the process of the retelling of a scene from the novel, Melissa noted the following:

that was their kind of brainstorming, kind of get- ting all their thoughts together. Some of them did a rough draft, like a formal rough draft, and then they edited it some more into a final copy, but I think from what I can see a lot of them used their planning sheet, rewrote it in their own perspective, in the different perspective, but as they were writing is when they were doing that revision in their heads because maybe what they have written on

the paper wasn't quite what they needed to get to the final product.

A focus on the planning/brainstorming stages of the writing process was a common theme in interview sessions and classroom observations. From the OWP SI, Stephanie found "knowing different strategies to use for the planning part" of the writing process to be particularly useful. She went on to describe how significant this aspect was:

Instead of just me giving them a piece of paper and saying, "Write this." We can go back to the brainstorming part of it, and I really know how to help them brainstorming and different ways to do it. And what it can look like. And probably what it shouldn't look like.

Stephanie described how "just backing up and taking it one step at a time" can help "eliminate frustration." Both teachers saw merits in an explicit focus on brainstorming for students who might traditionally be struggling or reluctant writers. Stephanie described using graphic organizers for brainstorming activities. For a characterization prompt, she created a police report graphic organizer that required students to consider traits of a character in a class novel. Completing the police report graphic organizer gave stu- dents time and space to brainstorm ideas, including textual evidence to back up their argument.

Stephanie also discussed how the OWP SI "opened up so many other ways to do things . . . we're not limited to just writing essays all the time." In a joint interview, the following dialogue occurred:

Stephanie: Art is ok.

Melissa: Art is very good.

Stephanie: That using the images. I mean, there's so many . . .things that I didn't feel like counted as writing.

The idea that writing can be more than an essay, more than words on a page, resulted in positive changes for both the teachers and the students. In one of her graduate courses, Melissa created a visual representation of students' success- es and struggles with writing processes. She was able to demonstrate her views through writing and drawing. The idea of an extended definition of a writing product aided Melissa as a student and teacher, and moreover encouraged her students to think critically. According to Melissa,

A lot of the visual stuff that we've done requires a higher level thinking than just writing an answer, which has been great because it tricks the kids. They don't know they're working harder on this graphic organizer than they would if they had to just write an essay or write a paragraph. But they have more fun doing it. Which has been great. "Oh, this is fun! Oh, language arts is fun now!"

Which is nice. They're more engaged.

So, not only did a focus on writing processes resonate throughout the observations and interviews I conducted, but also a new insight emerged: for these teachers and their students, writing products can go beyond traditional, academic essays. Multimodal writing – moving beyond words on a page and incorporating visual, aural, oral, and even kinesthetic approaches to texts – offers teachers and students alike a new take on what it means to write and be a writer. Melissa articulated this vision of writing:

> Multimodal writing has always been one of my most favorite things, but prior to SI, I worried that it wasn't "real" writing. We have class discussions about the different ways we write and that creative outputs often seem easier when in reality they are much harder than traditional responses. Students are quick to say that they enjoy the multimodal writing more than essays, and they truly put a lot of thought and effort into their work.

What constitutes "real" writing is certainly dependent on context and situation. Melissa and Stephanie discovered that "real" writing is difficult to define, and that this is useful instead of problematic.

Discussion

Professional development for teachers can certainly be valuable if it transforms what they do in their classrooms – their pedagogical beliefs and practices. For this pair of teachers, particular beliefs and practices about writing and the teaching of writing transferred from their experience in the 2015 OWP SI to their pedagogy. Their words and actions validated the OWP SI's embodiment of Haskell's (2001) culture and spirit of transfer. Additionally, both participants demonstrated "how the new situation [their classroom setting] is connected with . . . [a] trace of a previous situation [the 2015 OWP SI] in a way that enables something learned to be used anew" (Lobato, 2006, p. 18, as cited in Donahue, 2012, p. 146). Having established a social community of practice in the SI, these two teachers easily transferred that community to their school site easily as co-teachers of an 8th grade English language arts class. Since both teachers plan lessons and activities collaboratively during a common plan time, they were able to discuss and integrate understandings and new knowledge from the SI to their own practices.

Both teachers noted positive influences of the SI on their teaching beliefs and practices, especially regarding the social nature of writing, as well as writing processes and products. In interviews, teachers discussed how, after participating in the SI, they were more willing and open to allow students to share their writing – not only with their classmates and the teachers, but audiences outside of the classroom. Elbow (1968) notes, "teachers of writing have

begun to learn how immensely it helps a student's writing if he imagines a specific audience" (p. 199). He continues to describe how "the student's best language skills are brought out and developed when writing is . . . designed to produce a specific effect in a specific reader" (1968, p. 199). Published nearly 50 years ago, Elbow's ideas concerning a new method for teaching writing are still relevant in these teachers' classroom, in part thanks to ideas gleaned from the OWP SI.

As Melissa and Stephanie's students worked on retelling scenes from The Outsiders and composing advice letters modeled after Dear Abby, they considered their work in relation to a wider audience – not just their English language arts teachers or immediate classmates, but also other teachers in the building, their principal, and their friends. Sharing and audience go hand-in-hand, and, as observed in the classroom setting, students were not only willing to share, but also cognizant of how their potential audiences affected their writing. Similar to Dierking and Fox's (2013) finding of teachers' voices being discovered and valued, students also found their voices as writers through the publication of their pieces. The idea of sharing was certainly a positive transfer from the OWP SI to the teachers' beliefs and practices; not only did Melissa and Stephanie benefit, but so too did their students.

Along with sharing and audience-awareness, students were allowed the opportunity to provide feedback for fellow writers during the Dear Abby activity. Melissa described how the Dear Abby assignment "was a presenter's activity at SI, and we really enjoyed it. We thought it would be a great and engaging way for students to explore various perspectives and investigate tone without it seeming 'too hard' for them." This teachers-teaching-teachers model of professional development allowed for sharing of research-based best practices during the SI and the application of those practices back in the classroom setting. Considering the idea of transfer, teachers in this study explicitly implemented specific activities learned from fellow participants during the OWP SI.

With informal sharing and feedback procedures in place, both teachers reflected on the challenge of providing feedback for their students. During the OWP SI, teacher participants regularly engaged in writing groups where feedback – both written and verbal – was a top priority. However, although Whitney (2008) notes the usefulness of feedback in writing situations, this aspect seemed to be inhibited by a variety of constraints in a classroom setting. Both teachers reflected on their practices concerning feedback. While they both believe feedback is essential, they also both admitted to struggling with transferring this practice from the OWP SI to their pedagogy. Since the school setting and the OWP SI setting do not necessarily align, it is only logical that certain beliefs and practices will not transfer

with ease (or maybe even at all).

In addition to the theme of sharing, both teachers exhibited an intentional approach to writing as a process and not solely an end product, aligning with NWP's focuses on writing processes. Elbow (1998) encourages writers to "think of writing as an organic, developmental process in which you start writing at the very beginning – before you know your meaning at all – and encourage your words gradually to change and evolve" (p. 17). Melissa and Stephanie both described the positive influences on students regarding viewing writing as a process. They discussed beginning with brainstorming and prewriting, a low-stakes time for students to get their ideas down on paper without regarding to conventions or correctness – there was no "right" answer. This focus seemed to stem directly from OWP SI quickwrites in which both teachers engaged during the professional development. Through prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing – students engage in collaborative writing processes. Both teachers in this study, largely in part to their participation in the OWP SI, promoted these processes and a variety of products.

The products described by the teachers moved beyond traditional, academic essays. Melissa and Stephanie both described multimodal compositions incorporating visuals, art, and other mediums. Stephanie concurred with Melissa's celebration of multimodal writing, describing is as "enlightening." While I found the focus on writing processes to be unexpected due to its emphasis and on-going practice during the OWP SI, I discovered the idea of multimodalities to be both surprising and informative. These teachers and their students seemed to enjoy writing (and produce better writing, from their own perspectives, at least) when it involved not solely words in a page in formal academic writing situations. The theme of multimodalities aligns with the National Council of Teacher's of English position statement on multimodal literacies. Now, more than ever, student compositions might extend beyond traditional academic essays. For Melissa and Stephanie (and their students), the OWP SI allowed writing to mean more than simply words on a page.

Implications: Beyond the Summer Institute

This study discusses two teachers' reflections on their experience participating in the OWP SI and attempts to demonstrate how their beliefs and practices about components of writing and the teaching of writing were influenced by their experiences. The OWP SI is a longstanding site for professional development, but research on what teachers do both during and after the SI is lacking. While this is only a starting point, the behaviors and words of the teachers reflect the authentic, meaningful nature of the OWP SI, portraying this professional development as one that positively affects teachers and students alike. Professional development can in fact be time well spent.

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