Eastern Illinois Writing Project

Summer Institute 2020

I-Search Research Anthology

Table of Contents

Inquiry in the History Classroom

Daniel Dundas

Introduction: How I got interested in this topic

The first class I took last spring for my Curriculum and Instruction degree was based around using Inquiry within the classroom, with most of it based off of using primary sources. I was still aware of these concepts, as I used primary sources in some lessons, but more as a way to do change gears, instead of literally teaching that way every day, or designing a whole unit. I have seen that transition since I started teaching in 2007, and with the advent of the internet in everyone's pocket, we certainly are not the lone gatekeepers of knowledge anymore. Now that information is ubiquitous, it's not so much memorizing rote information, but deciphering its intentions.

Students have to be able to be better at critical thinking and using evidence, and making that part of the brain function like a muscle, will in turn helps when they are scrolling the internet. "Social studies teachers, historians, and teacher educators identify several purposes for using primary sources in the classroom. Primary source analysis appears to promote a higher level of critical thinking and improved comprehension (Callison & Saunders-Brunner, 2004; Miller, 1998; Morgan, 2002).

To put it in a different light, primary sources help do this by getting inside the mind of the people who experienced historical events, whether they were proactive in its cause, or the recipient of it, unintended or otherwise. More people have voices historically, and they don't necessarily have to be in the minority or disenfranchised. There could be multiple "points of view" or "lenses" on one topic and why people, based on maybe political, social, or economic standing have those certain "lenses".

History isn't merely events, but the perspective of who perceived them. "Students should be exposed to multiple perspectives of great issues past and present. Interpreting these matters not only to historians or politicians, but to citizens as well, which students will eventually become. In addition, they need to develop their own knowledge and skills, so they can begin to ask their own questions

and make inferences" (Singleton, 1999). Because of this, I believe that anyone can be a historian, and in this hectic year, citizens have had more time to dig deeper into the issues that plague the country. Hopefully, people ask "why" more often, because it's basis of inquiry, and discovering more into the depths, whether it wants to be seen or not.

I feel like my education growing was strictly at the bottom of Bloom's taxonomy, but not in a bad way. It was take notes and take the test, and I hardly remember anything. As a teacher now, I feel history textbooks just scrape the bare minimum. Of course, they are put forth and merited by college professors, but in the past decade plus, they have become secondhand when it comes to information. I have located lots of videos and other valid information that brings up different points than simple textbooks do, which allows me to share deeper and more valid content with students.

Description of the Search

I had a stash of primary source sites, and even found more while doing this. I know these are tedious to dig through, so initially, I wanted to know if there was an easier way to find the documents I wanted, besides spending days digging through library of Congress or Civil War websites. I thought about where I could gain access, but more importantly, possibly talk to people who have done it. Obviously I would prefer social studies, but looking up units from subjects wouldn't be out of the realm of possibility, especially with English and Science.

I also wanted to know if there were good sites where other teachers had with examples of an entire unit built with inquiry, because my research is focused on finding out how feasible this is to do. I saw a tremendous example in my first graduate class last spring, where the instructor saved a great Inquiry unit from a previous student, and it was literally what I do for the chapter before the Civil War. I could have given students this packet, and through 2-3 weeks they would come away with the same results, just from a totally different method.

Subsequently, Inquiry and its ideas are being pushed through the C3 framework, which I had come across in a previous class. The C3 framework deals are not quite standards but more of a framework, with the intent of having students become critical thinking citizens. The familiar sentiment

has been echoed, where those that endorse inquiry are ultimately looking for people to be citizens. "The C3 Framework, like the Common Core State Standards, emphasizes the acquisition and application of knowledge to prepare students for college, career, and civic life. It intentionally envisions social studies instruction as an inquiry arc of interlocking and mutually reinforcing elements that speak to the intersection of ideas and learners." C3's main foray in inquiry in itself.

Research found

I did find units on one school website, and a stash in my folder at school. These all use the same set up, what is the compelling question. These are ready made, but they also have plenty of content with them. They aren't just straight primary source and writing. "Student inquiry or exploration can range from nearly exclusive work with primary source documents to using a few, supplemented by the textbook, as well as materials supplied by the teacher" (Singleton)

I found a great book while searching that I eventually ordered for myself, which deals with implementing the Inquiry design model, and it based specifically off of the C3 framework. It discusses how to frame compelling questions, what type of content to streamline it to, duration of lessons, as well as summative assessments. Realistically, it's an instructional manual and answered some of my questions.

All the books and sites are well and good, but how feasible is an implementation on both the teacher and student end? I found a good article on Edutopia about this topic, about how students need to be "scaffolded in" to being taught that way, because they are so used to the standard rote way of learning. (Mackenzie, 2016). By using the gradual release of control model, one where students learn essential inquiry skills throughout the year rather than being thrown into the deep end of the inquiry pool right away." (Singleton, 2016) The way I teach, I can introduce it a few times a unit as freshmen, since World History isn't flush with resources, and then really go full bore with U.S. history, since there are exponentially more, and they are older as sophomores.

The following are examples of different types of inquiry that can be used as students and even the teachers progress. Structured Inquiry lets the teacher put out a big question, and gives them the

most control, as this allows the least agency for students. With controlled Inquiry, learners use several resources and have context provided, and use the same summative assessment. Guided Inquiry Is the most common where teacher empowers students. Students select resources, and they can choose how they demonstrate understanding. (Mackenzie, 2016).

Even though it concerned students, the slow change to a completely different format of teaching would also impact teachers as well. Now the main question is not so much does this work, but how do I change what I know how to do? This is probably a main reason why Inquiry isn't so prevalent. If I were to change fully to Inquiry, the pace of how fast I "change things" also comes into question, as mentioned before with students. I think it deals with my openness to that change. I found a great article that discussed that very tendency.

It noted that teachers tend to use less Inquiry tactics when they are first starting out, but the real question that got answered is that teaching through inquiry requires more training in that regard. Essentially, teachers aren't learning how to teach with Inquiry in college, so they are hesitant to gain knowledge about it once they are years into their career (Silm et al, 2017). It went on to state that there are technical, political, and cultural barriers to begin using Inquiry as far as having time in the classroom, pressure from parents and administration, and as mentioned, they're own lack of knowledge (Silm et al, 2017).

Overall, a teacher's readiness to adopt inquiry is based on their own teacher efficacy, or which can roughly be defined as, "a judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated". Teachers with higher teacher efficacy "are more open to new ideas and are more willing to experiment with new methods to better meet the needs of their students" (Silm et al, 2017).

Conclusion: how I'm going to use this info/what I still want to find out

This answered a lot of my questions, and shortened my conclusion. I am however still looking for the right article that says, "Yes! Students stay engaged when inquiry happens!" To be more

specific, one that says with quantitative testing that "Yes, this group of students were more engaged, had their phones away, asked deeper meaning questions, etc."

I think based off of what I found, the layout and roadmap is there for me, especially with the textbook. Also, finding out with that last article as to why teachers are less prone to using inquiry really opened my eyes. My question went from, why aren't districts mandating teachers teach with inquiry to, "why aren't colleges teaching how to teach that way". The evidence of Bloom's taxonomy is there. I feel like primary sources and inquiry might have to be slowly pushed down and implemented into junior high's as well.

I always wonder why I taught the same way my first ten years, then slowly got out of the book. Starting this master's program opened my eyes to new concepts, and how find research, but not every teacher is going to do that. There have to be new concepts with states and school districts that change curriculum based off of research evidence, and not just "content that needs to be covered". I could go in a never ending Socratic method, because that opens up another question. How does one go about making that change?

References

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for social studies state standards: Guidance for enhancing the rigor of K-12 civics, economics, geography, and history. *National Council for the Social Studies.* Retrieved from: https://www.socialstudies.org/c3

Dutt-Doner, Karen M., Cook-Cottone, Catherine, Allen, Susan. (2007). Improving classroom instruction: Understanding the developmental nature of analyzing primary sources. *Research in Middle Level Ediucation Online. 30,* (6).

MacKenzie, T. (2016, December 1). Bringing inquiry based learning into your class. Retrieved from: https://www.edutopia.org/article/bringing-inquiry-based-learning-into-your-class-trevor-mackenzie

Silm, G., Tiitsaar, K. Pedaste, M., Zacharia, Z.C., & Papaevripidou, M. (2017). Teachers' readiness to use inquiry-based learning: An investigation of teachers sense of efficacy and attitudes toward Inquiry-based learning. *Science Education International, 28* (4), 315-325.

Singleton, L.R., & Giese, J.R. (1999). Using online primary sources with students. *Social Studies, 90* (4), 148. https://doi-org.proxy1.library.eiu.edu/10.1080/00377999909602406

Swan, Kathy., Lee, John., Grant, S.G. (2018). Inquiry design model: Building Inquiries in Social Studies. United States of America.

Lea Fortkamp

July 5, 2020

ENG 5585/Murray

I-Search Paper

<center>Remote Learning:</center>

<center>Investigating Options at the Secondary Level</center>

This winter, while on a brief hiatus from full time teaching, I received a call from my school district. After an administrative shake-up, my former department chair had been called up to the main office. This move left two sections of ENG 102 uncovered. I returned to the classroom in early February; shortly after, COVID-19 drastically changed the teahing and learning game. What motivated me to return—reconnecting with the students I'd missed—now seemed to be in peril. I certainly hadn't signed up to teach students via the internet from my home office! How, I wondered, could I continue to grow the fledgling connections I'd made with them in those first five weeks of teaching now that we'd no longer be sharing a physical space? How could I keep them engaged?

E-Learning, unsurprisingly, proved a significant challenge for both teachers and learners, most of whom had never experienced it before as a sole method of instructional delivery. My students were different than most in that their college grades *still counted.* At least as far as the mandatory components of their research paper were concerned, I had nearly full participation. The reason? The research paper is necessary to completing the college course with a passing grade, and my students knew it. They also knew, though, that any assignment that was *not* explicitly required by the college could not be held against them, even if they failed to submit anything at all. Completion of daily enrichment activities hovered below 20% throughout E-Learning, and most of my students fell off the grid entirely after submitting the final drafts of their papers. My colleagues, whose students lacked the sense of accountability that dual enrollment fostered, had even more trouble engaging their students at home. If the situation had been different, I wondered—if we could have accounted for our diverse community of learners' situations and motivations *and still* created learning activities that figured into a student's performance, how might we have built a more successful e-learning experience? How could we have fostered greater levels of student engagement in an online environment? In researching my I-Search paper, that's what I hoped to find out.

I began the research process with the intention of using both the open web and various online databases accessible through my school. I hoped to find a balance of recent peer-reviewed research and local/national news coverage that could illuminate a path toward more effective E-Learning. I wanted to understand whether best practices exist for remote learning (hopefully, as related to high school students) and, if so, how difficult applying those best practices might be for a school district like mine. For context, I teach in a high school-only district (an educational anomaly that's seemingly specific to some Chicago suburbs). Across our three high schools, we teach approximately 7,000 students in grades 9-12 and employ nearly 400 full time teachers. Our district has a 96% graduation rate, high levels of AP and dual credit participation, and all three high schools are rated "Exemplary" by the state. 10% of our students struggle with chronic absenteeism, 7% are categorized by the state as low income, and 13% have IEP's (Lincoln-Way CHSD210). We are not a 1-to-1 school, but our district did make laptops, tablets, and no-cost high-speed internet hotspots available to any students who expressed a need.

Some of the questions I hoped to answer during the research process were:

- In what ways must a productive online learning community differ from its in-person counterpart?
- How can an online instructor more effectively engage reluctant or struggling students in online learning environments?
- How can an online instructor provide meaningful, frequent feedback without crippling herself with grading?
- How essential is student small-group interaction in online learning environments and how can this be fostered by the instructor?

Ultimately, what I hoped to establish through exploration of these questions is how schools and their teachers might better engage students and, in turn, see better learning outcomes. From my research, I've developed a short list of factor that could enable students to advance their learning—not just "hang in there"—when classes are taken online.

One of the most significant struggles that districts face in determining the quality of their E-Learning offerings has to do with a simple lack of information. When those in a position to improve student engagement in E-Learning look for guidance on how to do it, they often come up empty. A summary of the 2006 NACOL International E-Learning Survey reveals that "standards for measuring quality in online content is lacking in most countries" (Powell). It's easy to understand how this lack of clarity and direction might leave teachers and administrators feeling a little unmoored. We're

used to working in a classroom setting, where best practices and successful strategies have been researched, vetted, and reworked to an almost unbelievable degree. When parents, students, and teachers send the message that E-Learning isn't working well, a responsible educator and school will attempt to improve the program. This is only possible, though, if clear criteria for what constitutes an effective program can be found.

Furthermore, there's a dearth of information on how to drive online success across the typically broad, diverse populations of most American public schools. While online education is growing for K-12 students in the United States, it has, up until this point, been used almost exclusively to serve the specific needs of very narrow bands of students. In one of the few explorations of a successful K-12 program that I could find, researcher Jemma Bae Kwon notes that the only students engaged in full-semester E-Learning were those who met very specific criteria "mostly pertaining to the enrollment being in the best interest of the student and his/her educational path" (201). Other students who commonly pursue fulltime online learning include those who prefer home schooling for religious or ideological reasons (many of whom are typically supported by at least one highly engaged stay-at-home parent) and talented young athletes who require a more flexible schedule to accommodate their pursuits. It's worth noting that individuals in these groups often come from situations of ample family and financial support. Most of these parents also have a financial stake in students' academic success because they've paid (sometimes significant) tuition in order to gain access. For these reasons, attempting to extrapolate how we might better drive student engagement from the limited examples we have might not be a terribly useful pursuit. "Apple to apples" this is not.

Most teachers would argue that engagement is a precursor to any real learning, but how do we *drive* engagement in an online environment? A 2018 article in the journal *Themes in eLearning* points out that the definition of "engagement" in previous E-Learning literature has been inconsistent (2), and many *more concrete* definitions in educational journals and research "refer and apply to *traditional* educational environments, [...] no agreed-upon definition for 'online learning engagement' [has been] established (3). The article's authors assert that, in general, "students are more engaged when they are interested in their work, persisting in it despite challenges and obstacles, and taking visible delight in accomplishing work goals (1). The recommendations I've gathered are suggested are with this definition in mind.

First, in order for students to find their online classroom engaging, they must perceive that the work they're completing has some real, tangible value to them. For good or for ill, many goal-oriented students (or those seeking to maintain eligibility for sports and activities, etc.) shortsightedly measure that personal value in terms of the grades they

earn. For this reason, work completed in during E-Learning must impact students' grades before we can ever hope for real engagement with the material.

When Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced Illinois' statewide shift to remote learning, the Illinois Board of Education issued guidelines meant to ease the transition for all stakeholders. Hannah Leone and Karen Ann Cullotta detailed these guidelines in an April 9 *Chicago Tribune* article, noting that "[the guidelines] call for teachers to use a pass-incomplete system that doesn't give failing grades, doesn't punish kids for lack of participation and gives all students opportunities to redo or make up any assignments, with more chances to raise their grades over the summer or next fall" (4). The genuine, right-hearted intent of these guidelines was clear: *don't further punish students whose home situations and lack of technology access may make e-learning a struggle.* Unfortunately, in its intent to recognize and adjust for disparity in support and access, the Illinois Department of Education took teachers' legs out from under them before e-learning even began, effectively eliminating many students' primary motivation for logging on. Krista Badani, from St. Charles, IL, says that her seventeen-year-old son, Anotnio, is typically a high-achieving student. When Antonio learned learned that his E-Learning work wouldn't be graded, though, he said it "made me not want to do it. I did do the assignments eventually, but if they want students to take this seriously, don't tell me it doesn't count" (3). Notice that Badani never once mentioned what he *learned* or how he *grew* when he "did do the assignments eventually," just that he did them. This isn't really the engagement we're looking for as teachers, so figuring out how to hold students accountable for their work in a quantitative way (while providing additional support for those who need it) should be a "Do Not Pass Go" step on the path to actual learning.

Beyond the incorporation of quantitative assessment, providing students with frequent, quality feedback, both from classmates and instructors, is critical to student engagement online. Grand Canyon University researchers John Steele and Rick Holbeck contend that effective feedback becomes even more important in an online classroom because the transactional distance is increased (1). Steele and Holbeck identify the five essential elements of effective feedback as personalization, immediacy ("the directness and intensity of interaction"), formative assessment, mixed use of verification and elaborative methods, and efficiency of time on task (1-2). Steps as simple as establishing a "conversational and personable tone" in interactions (1), presenting feedback in a video format (3), same-day email response (4), increasing office hours (1), and fostering small-group sharing and self- assessment (4) can go a long way towards improving the quality of feedback. When college and university students are dissatisfied with the quality and frequency of feedback received in an online program, they have the option of seeking out different professors or programs. Because K-12

students typically aren't afforded this choice, instructors *must* up their feedback game if they truly expect improved engagement.

Educators have always known that the establishment of consistent routines is critical to classroom management and student engagement; nowhere is this more true than in an online learning environment. "E-Learning should not allow emergent design to occur during the course offering," a 2006 report tells us. "What might be spontaneous in an on-campus setting spells confusion at a distance, so care should be taken to be extraordinarily organized and clear (604). Both as a teacher and learner, I've experienced the frustration that unclear instructions and shifting expectations can cause. When I enrolled in ENG 5585, my first course at EIU and my first online course in over a decade, I never received a single email from EIU explaining how and where to access the course or what platform the university uses for online delivery. Only after a somewhat concerned email did I learn about D2L. I was reminded, at the time, of Zoolander's memorable query in the film of the same name: "How can we be expected to teach children to learn how to read if they can't even get inside the building?" Indeed, Derek. Indeed.

Further, my own students frequently expressed frustrations when our school, in an effort deliver meaningful instruction and reach students however they could, had some teachers offering their coursea on MS-Teams, some on Weebly sites, and some on other services altogether. Within each teacher site, students were asked to navigate a varied host of menus, pages, and tabs, and they received messages from the school and their teachers in at least two different ways. With five or six different courses to manage, this was overwhelming to even the most dedicated student. If we hope to improve student engagement, one of the first steps we must take is removing frustrating barriers to access and confusion created by a lack of standardization and unclear or absent communication. If a new platform and procedure must be learned, that obligation must fall on the teacher. Professional development is for us to pursue; the student's only job is to learn.

Finally, until teachers are adequately trained in the efficient, effective delivery of instruction online, they can't begin to think about improving engagement. As Tadd Farmer (Purdue) and Richard West (Brigham Young) found, the depth and breadth of a teacher's experience in the traditional classroom shows no correlation to their comfort with and effectiveness in an online learning setting. Farmer and West cite prior research by Dessoff and Watson in asserting that "the differences between these two settings may render practices in one setting incompatible with practices in the other" (100). They go on to point out that "teachers in traditional learning environments rely on informal evaluations of students (e.g. facial expressions, body language, questions, etc.) to reveal their level of understanding and engagement, but these

cues are less apparent or even non-existent in many online learning environments" (100). Until we help teachers understand how to replace these important means of measuring understanding (and until we ease teachers from their previous roles as sages into the position of constructivist facilitators), teachers--even great ones—will struggle to truly engage their students online.

No one enjoys hearing that they've failed to master a skill. In my experience, for no one is this more true than a teacher. In order for students to be successful—in order to move them to higher levels of engagement in online learning—we must empower and educate teachers. When teachers are given the training, tools, and information they need to approach their work with confidence, students will benefit. When we help educators understand how to construct, model, and deliver frequent, effective feedback, when we uncomplicate and clarify the means of instructional delivery, and when we educate the *entire* school community on the distinct differences between what we *know* to be a good brick-and-mortar classroom and what we *should expect* in a good classroom online, only then can we can finally focus on moving students forward.

Works Cited

Farmer, Tadd, and Richard West. "Exploring the Concerns of Online K-12 Teacher." *Journal of Online Learning Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, Jan. 2019, pp. 97-118. *EBSCOhost,* search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1208818&site=ehost-live.

Kwon, Jemma Bae et al. "A Snapshot of Successful Online Learning: Focused on the 2015-16 Academic Year in Michigan." *Journal of Online Learning Research,* vol. 5, no. 2, Jan. 2019, pp. 119-225. *EBSCOhost,* search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric &AN= EJ1229422&site+ehost-live.

Leone, Hannah and Karen Ann Cullotta. "Grades Can't Count Against Kids During Illinois' Coronavirus Shutdown. Does That Mean Less Incentive to Do the Work?" *Chicago Tribune,* 9 Apr. 2020. www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-coronavirus-remote-learning-grading-illinois-cps-20200409-dxsdbukd5vczzi2as3r4n7umly-story.html

"Lincoln-Way CHSD210." *Illinois Report Card 2018-2019. https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/ District.aspx?districtid=56099210016*

Powell, Allison et al. "An International Perspective of K-12 Online Learning: A Summary of the 2006

    NACOLInternational E-Learning Survey." *North American Council for Online Learning,* 1 Nov. 2006.

    EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db= eric&AN=ED514433&site=ehost-live.

Steele, John and Rick Holbeck. "Five Elements That Impact Quality Feedback in the Online Asynchronous Classroom."

    Journal of Educators Online, vol. 15, no. 3, Dec. 2018. *EBSCOhost,*

    search.ebscohost.com.login.aspx?direxct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1199171 &site=ehost-live.

Wadill, Deborah DeWolfe et al. "Innovative Action-Based E-Learning Strategies." *Online Submission*, 1 Feb. 2006.

    EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct= true&db=eric&AN=ED492728&site=ehost-live.

Yang, Dong et al. "Online Learning Engagement: Critical Factors and Research Evidence from Literature." *Themes in*

    ELearning, vol. 11, no. 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 1-22. *EBSCOhost,*

    search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct+true&db=eric&AN=EJ1204753&site=ehost-live.

Lacey Hagerman

Dr. Robin Murray

ENG 5585

9 July 2020

<div align="center">Changing the Tides by Understanding the Currents:</div>

<div align="center">Investing in a Poor, Rural Community</div>

My Story:

I love my community. For the first 22 years of my life, I lived in the same town, on the same road, in the same house, and I never really contemplated leaving. I assumed that I would eventually marry and perhaps move a town over, but I knew that I wouldn't go too far. I didn't understand those around me who often spoke about their dreams of leaving Southern Illinois, people who would say, "I can't wait to get outta here", or "This place is a shithole". To me, Southern Illinois was home; it was where my family lived, and where I hoped to make a home for my own family someday. But then I married a military man and we left. I mean we REALLY left. I spent the first 22 years of my life in the same bedroom, and before my 26th birthday, I would live at no fewer than five different addresses stretching from the New Mexico to Alaska. During my travels, I met countless remarkable people, worked for many different educational facilities, and learned two very important lessons: there really is no place like home, and home really wasn't that great.

When my husband's four-year commitment to the United States Air Force ended, we moved back home and immediately enrolled in school. We both wanted to pursue career fields where we could give back to our community: he would begin working towards a degree in medicine, and I would be getting my degree in secondary education. We both started from the bottom: he was a certified nursing assistant (CNA) and I was a substitute teacher. In these roles we began to be exposed to many of the adversities and hardships the people of our community endure. Now, my husband works as a physician assistant at a local clinic that serves the underprivileged of our community, and I am a high school teacher in a school where both the poverty rate and homeless student rate is higher than the state average. The veil had been lifted from our eyes, and we began to understand why some might dream of escaping the area. But instead of leaving ourselves, which is what many of those in our area with the privilege of mobility do, we are trying to push into the home that we love.

This Search is part of that push. Through my research I hope to better understand the struggles my students go through, and gather strategies to better serve them, so that I can help to create a better community.

Hunt for the Truth:

I began my search by striving to better understand the roadblocks to success that my students face. I have anecdotal evidence of the poverty, drug addiction, and hopelessness that plagues my community, but I knew I needed a more complete picture; I needed quantitative evidence to support my qualitative observations. According to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the district in which I work has both a higher overall low income student population and a homeless student population. The average low income student population in the State of Illinois is 48.8%, while Benton Consolidated High School reports that 56.8% of its school's students fall under the low income bracket (ISBE). According to this percentage, the majority of my students are low income learners. This significantly impacts student performance. In their study, "When and why do initially high-achieving poor children fall behind?", Claire Crawford, Lindsey Macmillan, and Anna Vignoles state, "when looking at trajectories by socio-economic background and initial achievement, we find that the performance of initially high-achieving children from the most deprived families and that of average-achieving affluent children converge" (89). They go on to find that "secondary schooling is a potentially critical period during which initially higher-achieving poorer children are at risk of falling behind their initially lower-achieving more affluent peers" (98). In short, students who come from lower economic backgrounds are statistically more likely to fall behind in school than their more affluent peers, even when they may be more academically gifted. The study also suggests that the critical time for student success or failure appears to be in secondary school, a time that can be challenging for students under the best of circumstances, and particularly tumultuous under the worst.

Teenage homelessness is another circumstance that negatively impacts my students' academic achievement. According to the Illinois State Board of Education, a homeless student is any student who does not have a "permanent or adequate home". The State of Illinois reports that 2% of its students fall into this category, while Benton Consolidated High School reports that in 2019 3.7% of its students qualify as homeless (ISBE). The 2019 statistic is significantly lower than the 8% of 2017 and the 6% of 2018, still, our reported homeless rate is nearly double that of the state, and I propose that the actual number is even higher than that (ISBE). Couch surfing, living with assorted relatives, staying with one's boyfriend or girlfriend, and squatting in

homes without running water are often norms for some of my students; norms that often go unreported. Because we live in a rural community, there are also fewer public resources for students who cannot or choose not to live at home. In their article, "For Richer or Poorer: building inclusive schools in poor urban and rural communities", Kim Beloin and Michael Peterson state that some of the major obstacles to the poor, rural student are a "lack of quality health care, post-secondary education opportunities, social services resources, and public transportation" (19). Though there are many underlying factors to the income and homeless numbers in Benton, Illinois, the increasing influence of drug abuse in our community certainly plays a significant role.

Drug abuse is becoming one of the chief negative influencers standing in the way of my students' success. Even though many of my students choose to abstain from drug abuse, for several the choice is made for them before they are born. According to the Illinois Department of Health (IDPH), "Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome refers to the collection of signs and symptoms that occur when a newborn prenatally exposed to prescribed, diverted, or illicit opiates experiences opioid withdrawal. This syndrome is primarily characterized by irritability, tremors, feeding problems, vomiting, diarrhea, sweating, and in some cases, seizures" (4). In Illinois, the rate of neonatal abstinence syndrome is 2.9 occurrences per 1,000 births, and in Franklin County that number is doubled at 5.87 occurrences per 1,000 births. (9, 12). For these children, the disease of addiction is prematurely thrust upon them whilst still in the womb. This prenatal exposure to opioids will continue to impact my students social, emotional, and intellectual development for the rest of their lives, and so neonatal abstinence syndrome is a substantial influencer on their ultimate success. The saturation of drug dependency in our community also contributes to other hardships my students experience. Beloin and Peterson point out that "rural schools are not insulated from violence, abuse, deadly diseases and teenage pregnancy" (19). In homes where addiction is present, violence and abuse are unfortunately often present as well. Though poverty, homelessness, and addiction plague our community, the loss of hope for a better future for themselves and their community is, perhaps, the most significant roadblock to my students' success.

If a child is given positive affirmations their entire life, they are more likely to be successful; unfortunately, the converse is true as well. Beloin and Peterson argue that "one of the greatest problems in poor rural and urban communities is the frequent loss of a positive vision of the future (Beloin and Peterson 15). They go on to state that together the media, collegiate, and government agencies "conspire to paint

negative pictures of poor neighborhoods and schools while ignoring the powerful capacities that exist within each. One clear example of negative representations of rural communities in popular culture can be found in the sitcom, *Schitt's Creek*. Though the rural town of Schitt's Creek (the name says it all) is occasionally depicted in a positive light, it is more often the butt of the joke. Rural communities are significantly underrepresented in the media, and when they are it is likely unflattering. When unflattering images of one's community are all one sees in popular media, "families, community members, teachers, and children themselves all too frequently develop self-destructive images of their own lives and their communities" (Beloin and Peterson 15). This obstacle, in my opinion, is what I must work hardest to address within my classroom. If I can help students see a brighter future, then perhaps they can achieve it both for themselves and our community. Just as with any situation, admitting there is a problem is the first step. Next, it is crucial to learn how to take real steps to remedying and ultimately eliminating this negative image in order to ensure the success of our children.

Now What:

One of the most critical community improvement strategies I found advocates for the building of strong and empowering relationships between the school and the family as a way to battle the barricades felt by many poor, rural students. Beloin and Peterson advocate for "Whole Schooling", and one crucial aspect of their approach is the teacher-family relationship. They state that "schools in poor communities need teachers who can communicate with families living in poverty (especially when they feel intimidated by the school) and help them feel comfortable, welcomed, and valued as contributing partners in the education and development of their children" (Beloin and Peterson 20). In my experience, parents who have lower levels of education, who are unemployed, or who live below the poverty line often take an adversarial approach to the school system. Some may have had a hurtful educational experience, some see education as potentially severing their relationship with their children, while others feel intimidated or talked over by those with higher levels of education. Regardless of the reason, many parents do not feel included or welcomed in their children's educational journeys. And every teacher knows that if school is not valued in the home, then it is not valued in the classroom. Johnsen et. al also advocate for the building of relationship between school and families as a method for supporting adolescents in low-income families. In their article, "School Competence among Adolescents in Low-Income Families: Does Parenting Style Matter?", Johnson et al. suggests that strong

parental monitoring of a child's education is "positively correlated with self-perceived school competence, whereas [educational] neglect was negatively correlated" (Johnson et al. 2290). The group claims that parents who have achieved lower levels of education "may think that mediocre grades are 'good enough', which consequently affects their children's studying efforts and school competence" (Johnsen et al. 2290). One of the most significant findings that Johnsen et.al. found was that "a high degree of neglect significantly predicted low self-perceived school competence…" (2291). In short, in order for my students to be successful, it is necessary for their parents to be a supportive force in their educational journeys. While immediate family support is essential to my students' success, the extreme nature of our predicament calls for an even more inclusive approach.

They say that it takes a village to raise a child, and oftentimes it feels like that village only exists within the walls of the school building. I personally know many teachers who feel weighed down by the pressure placed on them to guide their students towards successful futures. In small, rural communities, teachers often become more than an 8am to 3pm educator. In schools and communities with few resources, we are teachers, tutors, counselors, coaches, providers, event planners, liaisons, advisors, surrogate parents, mentors, friends, and so much more. We keep food in our desks for the hungry or diabetic students; we bring clothes to the school for kids who wear the same outfit every day; we sponsor 18 organizations; we get there early; we stay late; and we are exhausted. And while this feels necessary, there might be a better alternative. Beloin and Peterson advocate for "Whole Schooling", which emphasizes building a community that supports learning, and building partnerships (18). One strategy the authors suggest is creating "long-term relationships with colleagues, families, community leaders, and university-based faculty in order to gather support for sustained change" (Beloin and Peterson 20). It has already been established that families need to become supportive partners in their child's education, but in poor, rural communities where hopelessness and negative self-perceptions exist outside of the school walls, local businesses and colleges must also become supportive learning partners. This, perhaps, is the village that teachers need in order to support their students without feeling bogged down or burned out in the process. There must be a constructive partnership between the school and the outside community members. The community cannot continue to allow schools to be the only direct influencers in the lives and education of our children; and schools must be open to letting go of some of

their control to allow business and community leaders take on a more influential role. It truly takes a village to raise a child. This is a mindset to which me must return.

Working Towards a Brighter Future:

I love my community. The school at which I work has so many loving and devoted teachers who spend countless hours dedicated to the success of their students. However, it won't matter how many countless hours the teachers put into our students, if our students do not learn to value themselves and our community. This is where the solution lies. Moving forward, I hope to help my students invest in their community by helping them to engage in real-world projects that positively impact our community. An ISearch project, for example, that is tied to recycling, community volunteerism, and civic participation might be a helpful project for my students to complete. I also am motivated to work towards developing closer bonds with my students' parents and local community members. This has always been a weak spot in my pedagogy, and it cannot be any longer. As a sophomore English teacher, there is little difference I can make if I take a school-wide approach, but there are changes that I can make within my classroom that will begin to bring about change. As a class, we can Skype or Zoom with parents who work in career fields my students might potentially pursue; I can bring in members of our armed forces who could speak to some of my non-college bound kids; I can partner with business leaders who might be willing to provide for some of our students basic needs with their surplus; I can work closely with our local community colleges and remove obstacles for first-generation college kids. I can begin to not only stem the tide of lethargy that has settled on my community, but perhaps redirect it one student at a time.

Works Cited:

Beloin, Kim and Michael Peterson. "For Richer or Poorer: building inclusive schools in poor urban and rural communities." *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education*, 2000. Vol. 47, No.1. pp. 15-24.

Crawford, Claire, Lindsey Macmillan, and Anna Vignoles. "When and why do initially high-achieving poor children fall behind?". *Oxford Review of Education*. 2017. Vol.43, No.1, 88-108.

Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). "Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Advisory Committee: Final Report to the General Assembly", 2019, pp. 1–32.

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). "Benton Cons High School: School Snapshot.", Illinois School Report

　　　Card, 2019, www.illinoisreportcard.com/School.aspx?schoolid=210281030130001. Accessed 7 July

　　　2020.

Johnsen et. al. "School Competence among Adolescents in Low-Income Families: Does Parenting Style

　　　Matter?". *Journal of Child and Family Studies*. 2018. Volume 27. Pp.2285-2294.

Stacie Kayser

Dr. Murray

ENG 5585

9 July 2020

<div align="center">Dual Credit Composition and College Readiness</div>

Introduction:

District 155 is usually up to date with current best practices and class offerings. The district started Dual Credit partnerships with McHenry County College and for years has offered dual credit courses in automotive technology, business computer applications, culinary arts, marketing, music appreciation, and Spanish ("Curriculum and Assessment"). Many other schools in the area offered Dual Credit Composition, but for some reason, Crystal Lake and Cary were slow to get on board. Instead of offering a Dual Credit composition class, the district packed their Advanced Placement English classes, giving students with a higher aptitude the chance to test out the freshman level college English courses.

The main difference between an Advanced Placement English course and a Dual Credit Composition course is the type of student enrolled and the affiliated colleges. If a student scores a 3 or higher on the AP exam, they essentially test out the basic level English class if the college they choose accepts their credit. Students who score a 1 or a 2 on the AP exam do not receive the college credit, but still get credit for the high school course. AP classes often require a higher level of intellect, and the curriculum focuses heavily on test preparation. Students who take a Dual Credit course have a bit more flexibility. The high school is affiliated with a neighboring college and more students are admitted into the program. The college provides the syllabus, and the student must score a C or higher to earn the college credit. If the student scores a D- or higher, they recieve high school credit. Students are essentially starting their higher education while still in high school. The C or better they earn they goes on both their high school and college transcripts.

During the 2018- 2019 school year, District 155 decided that implementing a dual credit Composition class would give many students the opportunity to jump start their college careers. To be certified to teach an AP class, teachers must attend a multiple day training, often taking place over the summer. In order to teach a dual credit Composition class, teachers must have 18 credit hours in graduate level English. While many teachers in the district already have a Master's degree, most of the degrees are in Reading, ESL, or Curriculum. The district agreed to fully finance six teachers and also offered lane advancement once the courses were complete. Being at Master's +0 hours, this felt like the perfect opportunity to move up the pay scale and widen my job opportunities for the future. I applied and was accepted.

Having taught mostly remedial or basic level courses throughout my nine year career, I am excited at the opportunity to teach a brand new, higher level course. However, there is still so much I do not know about dual credit curriculum, and I am eager to answer the following questions to better prepare me for my new teaching role. Is a dual credit class a satisfactory substitute for a high school writing class? What can we learn about the composition threshold from dual credit partnerships? What is the impact of dual credit and degree attainment? What are the teaching best practices for the dual credit class?

Results of my Search:

In the article "What Happens When High School Students Write in a College Course? A Study of Dual Credit", Howard Tinberg and Jean-Paul Nadeau complete a case study with two dual credit Composition students as the case study. The study tries to decipher whether or not dual credit Composition classes are an adequate substitute for a high school writing class. The authors found that dual credit students often struggled with moving beyond summarizing a text (Tinberg & Nadeau 40). Analysis is a more complex skill, without a doubt. Compared to college students who had four years of high school English courses, the dual credit student lacked some worldly experience that is necessary for a more advanced writing. The students in a dual credit

course can be as young as 15 while college students can range from 18 to older adults, and this definitely plays a factor in their writing maturity.

Because the class is more rigorous, the prompts that dual credit students often have to tackle are multi-directional and require the students to showcase a wide variety of skills. Early in the year, dual credit students are often asked to show mastery of genre, rhetoric, and content (Tinberg & Nadeau 37). When dual credit students struggle, they are less likely to reach out to a professor for assistance. They want to appear like they belong in the class even if they are in over their head. They know they missed an entire year of English and it was reported that they don't want "special treatment" because of their age (Tinberg & Nadeau 39). It appeared that an accomplished high school writer can easily lose confidence in a dual credit setting.

There is a discrepancy between the skills taught in the high school classroom and what is assessed at the college level. Because many college and high school teachers operate under different constraints and hold different philosophies on education, the dual credit classroom can be a space where fruitful and professional discussions take place. "Transitioning Writers across the Composition Threshold: What We Can Learn from Dual Enrollment Partnerships" written by Christine Deneker discusses how college teachers often feel the need to unteach their first year college students because so much of what is taught in high school is not applicable to the college classroom. Dual credit and college students often have to go beyond the "berated five paragraph essay." College writing often requires readers to incorporate voice, expert choice, and style into their writing- skills difficult to teach at the high school level especially to low-level students (Denecker 28). College classes also require students to think for themselves, come up with their own ideas, while high school students often complete research and reiterate or summarize someone else's intellectual property (Denecker 31). Dual credit students are often caught between a conversation that, depending on the institution, may or may not have taken place. Middle school teachers often talk to high school teachers about how to best prepare students for the future, but rarely do high school teachers talk to college professors. The article suggests that

the most important way for dual credit students to get from point A to point B is for college teachers to know how and what they've been taught and what stills they still need to master (Denecker 31).

Students who take dual credit classes, although the path can be rigorous, are more likely to obtain a degree than students who do not take dual credit classes (Hanover 5). However, this is not true for students of low socioeconomic status. The popularity behind dual credit courses lies in two issues faced in postsecondary education: poor academic performance and low graduation rates. Brian P. An's article "The Impact of Dual Credit Enrollment on College Degree Attainment: Do Low SES Students Benefit" mentions that academic preparation in high school is a key determinant for college success (58). The article states that 56% of students enter four year universities prepared while 28% of students are required to take remedial coursework in order to even be admitted into the entry level class. Students who take dual credit classes appreciate the rigor and feel more prepared for their college classes and are less likely to need a remediation class (An 58-59). The resilience of the dual credit student often outweighs the student who chooses a simpler path. Dual credit students with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to to finish a degree than their lower socioeconomic status peer (An 60).

Hanover Research conducted a Texas study where they researched the best practices for the dual credit programs. The study provided an overview of, depending on the school and demographics of the students, dual credit composition programs that can look very different. The most successful programs have students with a 500 or above on the Reading/ Verbal Language portion of the SAT or above a 19 on the ACT (Hanover 6). For the class to remain rigorous, it must be composed solely of dual credit students (Hanover 6).

For students to be able to successfully complete a dual credit composition course, they must be 'college ready' in both reading and writing long before their high school diploma is awarded. There should be a variety of supports in place, and the following supports have been found to accelerate the learning of a dual credit student: collaborative group work, in class

writing (writing to learn), literacy groups, focused classroom talk, questioning, and scaffolding (Hanover 8). Some Texas districts offer immersion programs that prepare students for the upcoming school year. These programs are often offered during the summer and ensure that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in college level academics. While material outside of a dual credit class can be modified if the majority of students do not understand, the dual credit class operates under the constraints of the partnering university; therefore, it is imperative that the students are prepared before entering the classroom. This early immersion program, which is designed for freshman and sophomores entering a dual credit class, consists of the following: summer bridge program, pre-college orientation seminar, six week enrichment program, university library research support, and tutoring (Hanover 9). Students who are juniors and seniors often just take an intensive summer camp focused on building their academic skills. No matter when a student decides for dual enrollment, parent notification and support directly affects a student's success (Hanover 12).

In it not only the student who has to be prepared for the upcoming dual credit challenges, the teacher, too, must be adequately prepared. The most effective teachers are the ones who are regularly employed by the affiliated university or must meet the same requirements. In a composition class, the teacher must at least 18 credit hours in graduate level English (Hanover 13). Best practices for teachers include annual retreats, curriculum workshops, and mentoring relationships. Perhaps out of all of these, the retreats were found to be the most effective because it fostered discussion, and the "collaboration also led to the groups defining standard college expectations and the structure of the relationship between the two institutions" (Hanover 14).

Reflection on Results

In order for a dual credit class to run smoothly for both students and faculty, it is extremely important for students to be well-selected and teachers to be adequately trained.

Student selection should be based on standardized test scores, maturity, and teacher recommendation. Once dual credit students are selected, a summer preparatory class should be provided to make sure the students' are academically prepared for the upcoming school year. Teacher selection should be based on the level of education and willingness to collaborate with the affiliated university.

While many District 155 high schools are carefully selecting students and adequate training teachers, summer preparation programs are not currently offered. If a student wants to take a Dual Credit class, very little is stopping him or her from doing so. Teachers are encouraged to let the student try the class if they have a B or better in a regular level class, and this may be a mistake. Just because a student has a B in a regular class does not mean that they are ready to take a college level course. Because grades are often subjective, it is important to make recommendations based on skills rather than grades.

Once a student is enrolled in a dual credit class, it is important for the teacher to know that there may be a large skill gap, and what the affiliated college is requiring the students to do may be above what they can complete without intensive support. While the students are often more resilient than their peers, tutoring, scaffolding, reteaching, and examples will most likely be needed especially in the areas of analysis and genre awareness. Because students who enter a dual credit composition class often believe that college is their future path, they are more likely to obtain a degree than the students who do not take the classes; however there is still a socioeconomic achievement gap.

I teach a class called AVID, which stands for Advanced Via Individual Determination. Students who are enrolled in the class are identified by socioeconomic status, parental support, race, or family collegiate history. These students are often highly motivated and first generation college students. Many of my students, who are juniors, take dual credit classes, and this seems like an additional and appropriate place for students, especially those of low socioeconomic status to get support from a qualified teacher. Within this class, students receive support from

trained tutors, and many of the tutors are college students. The AVID class, along with

continuous discussion between the high school and college, would be the best way for all

students to find success in the dual credit composition class.

Works Cited

An, Brian P. "The Impact of Dual Enrollment on College Degree Attainment: Do Low-SES

Students Benefit?" Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis , vol. 35, no. 1, 2013, pp.

57–75. JSTOR , www.jstor.org/stable/23356970. Accessed 21 June 2020.

"Curriculum and Assessment." District Home - , 2020, www.d155.org/departments/curriculum-

and-assessment.

Denecker, Christine. "Transitioning Writers across the Composition Threshold: What We Can

Learn from Dual Enrollment Partnerships." Composition Studies , vol. 41, no. 1, 2013, pp.

27–50. JSTOR , www.jstor.org/stable/43501830. Accessed 21 June 2020.

"Research Brief: Best Practices of Dual Credit Programs." Www.gssaweb.org , Hanover

Research, 2012, www.gssaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Research-Brief-Best-

Practices-in-Dual-Credit-Programs-1.pdf.

Tinberg, Howard, and Jean-Paul Nadeau. "What Happens When High School Students Write in a

College Course? A Study of Dual Credit." The English Journal , vol. 102, no. 5, 2013, pp.

35–42. JSTOR , www.jstor.org/stable/24484090. Accessed 21 June 2020.

Kizziah 1

Rachel Kizziah
Dr. Murray
English 5585
9 July 2020

<div align="center">Connecting Literature and Writing</div>

All ten years of my teaching experience have been at the same rural school where I teach all freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. Because of this set-up, all grammar, writing, and literature instruction for 75% of our high school's student body is my responsibility. This is a task I am excited to tackle, but I have found myself overwhelmed at times. I want to do it well and do not want to just teach material. I want myself and my students to thrive. When I first began teaching, I thought I had to assign formal essays every week and read every piece of classic literature that sat on my classroom shelves. Keeping up was a constant struggle. I was unable to give students the feedback that they deserved regarding their writing, I was not facilitating meaningful literature instruction, and I knew that I needed to find a better balance. This struggle has led me on an ongoing journey to better connect literature and writing in my classroom as I believe that all aspects of the English classroom are connected and should be applied together. By connecting literature and writing specifically, I can create a more meaningful learning experience for my students and will strengthen them as both readers and writers simultaneously. While researching how to better bridge these fields, I began to ask myself: How can writing enhance a student's learning experience with literature? I have always felt that there is value in teaching literature, but I questioned myself if perhaps I was putting so much focus on literature because I personally enjoy it. However, I have now discovered that literature does matter, but implementing writing is the key.

According to the National Writing Project, the book *Because Writing Matters* "makes the case that students need to write more across all content areas and that schools need to expand their writing curricula to involve students in a range of writing tasks." In the introduction for the book, writing is described as "a means of inquiry and expression for learning" (Nagin 3). Students can have true ownership of their learning when it comes to literature when writing activities are implemented with reading. Some of the information I discovered was from articles that were assigned in classes for my graduate work while others were found by chance or were suggested from fellow English teachers whom I follow on social media.

My first step towards finding answers started with a simple search: why does literature matter? Tim Gillespie's article "Why Literature Matters" explains that literature is necessary because it builds empathy in readers and nurtures the imagination (Gillespie 16). Literature also provides an avenue to explore diverse places through the eyes of diverse characters. Students can learn so much about lifestyles that differ from their own through literature. Not only does literature matter and teach students about other people but it can also easily be integrated with writing through various activities to strengthen one's skills as both a reader and writer. This text seemed to connect to so many questions that I had, but the information was somewhat general.

Relieved and encouraged, I kept searching. Katie Porteus's succinct article "Easing the Pain of the Classics" expresses to readers, by quoting former English professor Don Gallo, that classics were not written for young students but for adults who were educated enough to read such texts for leisure (Porteus 16). She almost makes classic literature sound like something to be endured, so educators need to make it as pleasant as possible. While she had good ideas about pairing modern texts with classics, the overall tone was opposite of the tone I want to set in my classroom. Ideally, I want students to enjoy our coursework not merely endure it. However, I did take note of her ideas regarding pairing classic texts with modern texts because I feel that can be a way to attract students to the characters and themes of older literature. Although I may not have agreed with everything Porteus discussed, I did not dismiss her. Her ideas also led me to my next source. a way to attract students to the characters and themes of older literature. Although I may not have agreed with everything Porteus discussed, I did not dismiss her. Her ideas also led me to my next source.

Recommended by a fellow teacher on Instagram, *Romeo Is Bleeding* is a documentary following poet Donte Clark as he relates his journey of growing up in Richmond, California, where drugs, pride, violence, death, anger, and trauma are staples in the community. One day, Clark has an epiphany of sorts while reading *Romeo and Juliet*. Clark and a team of other aspiring poets re-work the classic Shakespearean play to reflect the conflicts that they see every day in their city while keeping many of the same kinds of characters and themes. Serving as a paired text, as Porteus suggests, *Romeo Is Bleeding* can aid students in their understanding of a classic text and can also connect older literature with current events, making it more relevant and accessible to today's students. This documentary could be used in the classroom to not only relate to Shakespeare's play but also to introduce students to writing spoken word poetry about big issues that matter to them, which is what Clark does. The key to Clark finding a personal connection to *Romeo and Juliet* is writing. This allowed him, and the other poets who helped him adapt the play, take ownership of the literature. They wrote a new adaptation, but it was personal to their struggles in Richmond. They wrote and told their own story. Perhaps this is a better way to "ease the pain" of the classics.

As my research continued, I began to find more sources specifically linking better literature instruction with more writing instruction. For example, in "Connecting Literature to Students' Lives," Dan Morgan discusses the challenges of connecting students with literature, but he discusses techniques to use to bridge this gap as well. One suggestion he makes is simply to ask students if they liked a text and to have them answer this question using student-centered, reflective writing. Morgan posits that students will give very meaningful responses because they are engaged and have rarely been asked such a simple question (Morgan 499). He then goes on to explain that he asks students their opinion regarding the author's viewpoint (499). Both writing tasks are simple yet effective because they are student-centered and create a connection between the student and author instead of the teacher being a middleman of sorts. This source authenticates that literature and writing are very much connected, and by teaching them together, we can create a well-rounded, student-centered learning environment in our classrooms.

Additionally, *Content-Area Writing: Every Teacher's Guide* provided me with more evidence of this important relationship between the author and students. The authors suggest many writing to learn activities that could be paired with literature to help students better connect and own their ideas. Furthermore, they express the importance of writing by reminding educators that if we really desire for students to learn, they need to act on their ideas (Daniels, Harvey, et al 26). One specific way that students can have this opportunity is through writing. Some of the suggested writing tools are graphic organizers, journals, lists, and outlines.

Likewise, in the article "The Role's the Thing": The Power of Persona in Shakespeare," Rebecca E. Burnett and Elizabeth Foster discuss engaging students in literature, Shakespeare specifically, through writing. The authors discuss students using personas in their writing to encourage student ownership. To use persona writing, students take a creative route to write as characters from a piece of literature, carefully considering how a character might think or reflect on their actions. This allows students to go beyond reading Shakespeare to just get through it as a rite of passage. They will be able to better connect directly with the text. This type of writing can be used even beyond Shakespeare's texts, so it could easily be adapted to use with any type of literature.

In nearly every text I read during my research, there was one dominating commonality— writing and literature used together can help build empathy in students. This can begin to be accomplished through some of the writing to learn activities that I found during my research journey, which will help students relate to literature and develop ownership of their learning as well. I would like to continue researching more ways to build students ownership and empathy in the classroom, especially since I am from such a rural area that lacks diversity. While I feel I have made some breakthrough as far as better balancing the teaching of literature and writing together, I would like to continue my research focusing on how to better implement formal writing as well. While writing to learn activities may make literature more fun and relatable, these activities are small building blocks that should lead to more polished, lengthy writing projects. The search for better balance continues.

Works Cited

Burnett, Rebecca E., and Elizabeth Foster. "'The Role's the Thing': The Power of Persona in Shakespeare." *The English Journal*, vol. 82, no. 6, 1993, p. 69., doi:10.2307/820170.

Daniels, Harvey, et al. *Content-Area Writing: Every Teacher's Guide*. Heinemann, 2007.

Gillespie, Tim. "Why Literature Matters." *The English Journal*, vol. 83, no. 8, 1994, p. 16., doi:10.2307/820324.

Morgan, Dan. "Connecting Literature to Students' Lives." *College English*, vol. 55, no. 5, 1993, pp. 491–500. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/378585. Accessed 3 July 2020.

Nagin, Carl. *Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Our Schools*. Jossey-Bass, 2006. *National Writing Project*. archive.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/524.

Porteus, Katie. "Easing the Pain of the Classics." *Young Adult Library Services*, vol. 7, no. 4, Summer 2009, pp. 16–18. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=43913370&site=ehost-live.

Zeldes, Jason, director. *Romeo Is Bleeding*. Ro*Co Films, 2015.

Kaitlyn Metzler
Dr. Murray
ENG 5585
9 July 2020

<div align="center">Middle School Composition: The "What?" and "How?"</div>

INTRODUCTION

This upcoming year I will be making what I consider to be a major transition. I have spent the past five years teaching sophomore and junior English at the high school level but accepted a job as an eighth grade ELA teacher for the 2020-2021 school year to return to the Chicago suburbs. I have no experience teaching middle school, let alone teaching middle school writing. Thus, I chose to use this time to research different strategies and best practices for adapting to a middle school classroom. In my time as a graduate student at Eastern, I have had many opportunities to adjust what I have learned from a first-year composition course to my high school classes. Now, I must continue to tweak my instruction to make it more appropriate for middle school students.

Obviously, the choice to make a change from high school to middle school was difficult. However, I see potential and opportunity for fostering a love of learning and writing in younger students. To me, middle school is a delicate balance between the creativity and fun of elementary school and the rigor and academic competitiveness of high school; there is a tension between childhood and adulthood in middle school classrooms, which can make for a fantastic learning environment. Most middle schools separate literature- and composition-based classes, thus my position for the upcoming year will focus on language arts and writing. It will be new to work with grade-level teams and stack collaborative time across subjects and grades. Educator collaboration is meant to mirror classroom strategies, as team-building and collaboration are crucial at the middle school level. Collaboration in and out of the classroom is not necessarily new to me. Still, the utilization of grade levels will allow me to strategize my pedagogical approaches to middle school writing.

RESULTS OF MY RESEARCH

I began my research by exploring what types of writing are common in middle school classrooms. Collaboration and team learning are crucial at the middle school level, so I wanted to investigate how this translates to composition. In their essay "'EJ' Extra: A Snapshot of Writing Instruction in Middle Schools and High Schools," Arthur Applebee and Judith Langer provide anecdotal and statistical information regarding writing assignments across content areas in middle and high school. Their data is from 2011, but still relevant. They assert that unsurprisingly "students write more for their English classes than for any other subject, and at the same time, they write more for their other subjects combined than they do for English" (15). This is especially true in a middle school classroom. These figures may be a bit more equal now, though, with an added emphasis on writing and standardized testing. While writing is certainly occurring in ELA classrooms, the assignments are typically short. Figures in the report indicate that

> even in English class, on average, students are not writing a great deal ... the typical student would be expected to produce approximately 1.6 pages a week of extended prose for English, and another 2.1 pages for the other three subjects combined. The numbers are particularly low for assignments of three or more pages, the kinds of writing where students might be expected to engage with the discipline-specific arguments and evidence called for by the Common Core Standards. (15)

One may imagine these figures are a reflection of teacher perception toward middle school level ability. Perhaps longer writing assignments are thought to be reserved for high school classrooms, but this can certainly be challenged in my own middle school class.

Equally crucial for middle school writing is the audience. Teachers across all grade levels are encouraged to move writing beyond an audience of merely the teacher, and this seems to be a trend in middle school. "Middle school teachers were somewhat more likely to provide such audiences, with 11.1% reporting audiences ranging from parents and trusted adults to school administrators to community-based clubs, local professionals, or school magazines" (Applebee and Langer 17).

Kristen Figg writes about audience similarly in that she asks her students to write to friends to help them brainstorm. When it comes to fostering students' intrinsic motivation to write, Figg describes a number of creative invention techniques that allow students to brainstorm more efficiently and successfully. Using questioning techniques allows students to recognize the invention scheme and think about their topics (61). Figg acknowledges that students may see traditional prewriting activities as a simple means to an end, but asking questions during the prewriting process allows students to take ownership of their ideas and see how they move through the writing process (60). Clearly stating expectations helps students understand the assignment and thus be more willing to persevere through any writer's block. "Clearly specifying what is required in a particular type of writing, teaching specific strategies for prewriting, writing, and revision, using models of successful responses for students to analyze, critique, and emulate, and treating computers and word processors as important tools that support students' learning to write" (Applebee and Langer 24)

As important as it is to encourage students to want to write, it is equally important to allow students to find their unique voice in such writing tasks. Barb Ruben and Leanne Moll explore what motivates middle schoolers to write in their article "Putting the Heart Back Into Writing." They list a number of research questions that guided a study of a middle school, including what intrinsic motivators drive these young students to write, what components create a nurturing writing environment, and how can we understand student motivation so that we can nurture student interest in writing within the constraints of large classes and mandates to address Common Core Standards? Their findings included a commitment to writing, adult influence, self-efficacy, student voice, and student choice. They also write that "schools must find the time to continue to nurture young people's search for meaning through storytelling. If there is not time during the regular language arts class periods, then time needs to be provided through an elective, before school, after school, or even during lunch, for students who want a quiet, safe venue to write about topics of their own choosing with support" (18).

While I focused my research of teaching strategies, I wanted to make sure I explored options to ensure success for every student in my classroom. Thus, I felt it important to examine any modifications for students with disabilities in a middle school writing classroom. In "Teaching Writing Strategies to Middle School Students With Disabilities," Monroe and Troia explore the benefits of using strategies that facilitate planning, self-regulation, and revising while students with learning disabilities worked on writing opinion essays. Most of the scaffolding students with disabilities need is unseen in general education classroom, and Monroe and Troia argue that elementary and middle school classrooms especially must be willing to "embrace writing strategy instruction if it sufficiently addresses all aspects of the writing process, rather than a single component" (29). They suggest incorporating multiple strategies to address all of the steps of effective writing as they benefit every student in the classroom, but especially students needed extra support.

Lastly, one of the reasons I accepted this new position was an opportunity to close the gap between middle and high school writing. I have firsthand experience of writing at the high school level, and I can identify any lapses in skills. In their essay "Closing the Gap between High School Writing Instruction and College Writing Expectations," Fanetti et al. interviewed middle, high school, and college instructors to trace the lapses in writing instruction. In their interviews, they observed that "secondary teachers feel compelled to teach to the

test, and college instructors wish students hadn't learned so well in high school that an essay is five paragraphs and a thesis statement can appear only as the first or last sentence in the first of those five paragraphs" (79). Many of the instructors surveyed believe the fault of such formulaic writing lies in the strong emphasis on standardized testing in high school. They suggest, then, that teachers reevaluate high school and middle school entirely. Rather than focusing on standardized tests as the one-size-fits-all approach, teachers may use writing to encourage student individuality further.

REFLECTION ON RESEARCH
Having spent so many years teaching high school, it is unsurprising to find that minimal writing is unfortunately occurring. Middle school writing can plummet even further without proper care and consideration. As a result of this research, there are a number of ways I hope to incorporate writing into our daily, weekly, and monthly routines. Fortunately, collaboration is the expectation and norm for adolescents in middle schools. To combat the issue of students writing too little, I plan to use a combination of daily journaling and bell-ringer/exit slip strategies. I want writing to be the norm, just as group work and collaboration is the expectation. This writing will be "sacred" writing time for students to explore their unique voices. I do not want writing to be something punitive, but rather, something that helps us to build community and relationships.
 I also think incorporating different types of writing into the middle school classroom will help students tremendously as they transition to high school and career. iSearch papers like this one can be used at the middle school level; this will also approach the issue of audience. If middle school students begin practicing their writing for audiences other than the teacher early, they can develop these skills in high school and on to college or career.

Works Cited

Applebee, Arthur N., and Judith A. Langer. "'EJ' Extra: A Snapshot of Writing Instruction in Middle Schools and High Schools." *The English Journal*, vol. 100, no. 6, 2011, pp. 14–27. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23047875.

Ruben, Barb, and Leanne Moll. "Putting the Heart Back into Writing: Nurturing Voice in Middle School Students: The Authors Share Five Areas of Inquiry That Emerged as the Result of a Voluntary Weekly before-School Writing Program." *Middle School Journal*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2013, pp. 12–18. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23610608.

Fanetti, Susan, et al. "Closing the Gap between High School Writing Instruction and College Writing Expectations." *The English Journal*, vol. 99, no. 4, 2010, pp. 77–83. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27807171.

Figg, Kristen M. "Introducing Invention Techniques: A Middle School Writing Assignment." *The English Journal*, vol. 69, no. 8, 1980, pp. 60–61. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/816823.

Monroe, Brandon W., and Gary A. Troia. "Teaching Writing Strategies to Middle School Students with Disabilities." *The Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 100, no. 1, 2006, pp. 21–33. *JSTOR*

Sue Nelligan I-Search Paper
Remote Learning, For Better and For Worse

Introduction

The year 2020 will not only be in the history textbooks to come, but they'll be on this generation's mind for the rest of our lives. With a global pandemic creating fear of socialization, our human nature took the back seat as we sat at home and figured out how to "keep calm and carry-on." Working from home also meant teaching and learning from home. The spring semester of 2020 turned into getting-by and figure-it-out-as-we-go. It was triage, but triage runs its course and now here we are wondering what fall of 2020 will bring.

Less than two months away, decisions are difficult to make: go back to school, stay home, and a variety in between. Like staff writer Frank Bruni for *The New York Times* points out, "Restaurants get eulogies. Airlines get bailouts. Universities get kicked when they're down" due to budgets slashed for education and kids contemplating whether to go back. "'That says a lot about our societal priorities'" he continues, and he's right as teachers are gearing up to redefine how they're implementing their instruction with fewer resources.

Description of My Search

It is the uncertainty that lays before us and our expectation to be ready for what may come that motivates this research on remote learning. I compare what we did last spring to using a tourniquet to preserve the limb and keep our school year alive, giving the best to our students under the circumstances. My search is to learn more about what remote learning is and what it can look like. There may be pros and cons to remote learning, so learning about each will help a teacher or district be better prepared for this coming school year and beyond. Also, what practices have been successful and hopefully what are the pitfalls to avoid? To understand the breath of this new possible normal, I need to take a look at stakeholders such as staff, parents, students, and more.

What I Found Out

As it turns out, remote learning certainly is nothing new. Emergency remote teaching, or ERT, is. Online education is based on years of research and that "online learning results from careful instructional design and planning, using a systematic model for design and development" with careful considerations for quality instruction (Hodges). There are several platforms in how it can be provided ranging from fully online to blended in many ways. Pace, instructor ratio, assessments, sources of feedback (peer, instructor, or automated), and even pedagogy need to be considered especially considering the clientele of the students.

Are they young, primer grades, or high school students? Are they needy or intrinsically motivated? If a student

chooses to take a course remotely, s/he assumes the responsibility for engagement, but when students have

no choice, this can be tricky. Face-to-face education isn't successful because our lectures shock and awe our

students, it's because of the human element we bring to the classroom, the soft-skills that come as well, and

the other resources brick and mortar schooling provides. Sleeping in may feel amazing, but does the typical

student contain the academic or psychological maturity to weigh what is lost long term to absence from the

classrooms? Teachers worry their students get short changed on their right to the best education they can get

that allow for opportunities beyond grades K-12.

Parents

Parents are certainly concerned as well about their children's learning and well-being. Remote learning

means there must be remote teaching for most students. High grade levels are assumed to be more self-

sufficient but that cannot be assumed about every student. They can ask questions of their teachers, but when

they're doing their work at 11:00 or later at night, questions don't find answers until the next day. At that point,

do they ask parents or lose interest altogether by then? One frustrated mother rants:

> Listen, it's not working, this distance learning thing. Seriously – it's impossible… The music teacher of
> my youngest sent over a musical score this morning. What am I going to do with that information?
> What, have I got some band in the house? I can't read music! Just one second, let me pull out my
> clarinet and help my son with his score… I go from one child to the other. Here's science, here's
> math… How am I supposed to know how to transform an improper fraction… If we don't die of
> coronavirus, we'll die of distance learning (Craig).

She has a point. Parents are not equipped with the knowledge base the teachers have, students are not

equipped with executive functioning skills to manage their needs when they come all at once, and schools are

left with Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Hangout platforms hoping students can or will join in. Some define

remote learning as a "quick, ad hoc, low-fidelity mitigation strategy" not online learning that:

1. prioritizes engagement by utilizing real-world, recent topics and case studies to stir discussion and even emotion, while incorporating interactivity and immediate measurable achievement;
2. makes organization and navigation easy, removing unnecessary steps and clicks that don't contribute anything to learning;
3. rethinks assessment by encouraging research and original thinking instead of memorization; and
4. always answers the "what's in it for me" question for students by building intentional learning experiences and getting straight to the point (Craig).

These goals listed hope to asynchronously replicate the classroom's three elements: the lesson, the

discussion, and the assignment. Sometimes remote learning is more of providing assignments with either one

or both other elements removed. Moving forward this fall, teachers need to think more like *online learning* instruction as to how all three elements are integrated. One of the common suggestions to help bridge online learning from face-to-face and give parents and students some sanity is with regular, synchronous class time that could be held daily or weekly. Although, unfortunately, all sources agree that no excellent remote or online learning will ever measure up to the classroom experience.

Teachers

Teachers agree, the answer to what distance learning was like falls in the name: distant. Dates vary for most teachers when they last saw their classrooms, but calendars in classrooms still show March like a time capsule for when our lives would change forever in what became a brand new personal experience no matter how many years experience under each of our teaching belts. We lose touch with the chemistry of our classes and don't know how our students are doing, academically, emotionally, psychologically, socially, and maybe even more. Teachers became teachers to work with students, not just give them material. Regardless of who you ask, teachers missed their classroom and school environment. As Brian Crosby simply puts it, "A classroom is people. A teacher cannot teach without students, students cannot learn without teachers - both need each other to thrive." However, given the choice of whether to go back, is complicated. Some teachers are immune compromised or have family members who are. According to our data collected in May for my district 11.6% still have reservations about coming back in the fall due to concerns for safety, whether that be for themselves or for those in their lives. How does a district work with their teachers and unions and be able to satisfy every stakeholder while an astounding 88% does want to come back to the classroom this fall? Interestingly, parents in our district had an even smaller percentage of only 5.8% who would not be comfortable at all to send their children back to school come fall 2020. What does a district do with this data? With what a governor allows? With unions to respect and staff and children to protect and our future to educate?

Students

Students found themselves enjoying their sleep-in routine, getting to the school work when they made the time, and the more laissez-faire environment. Student success can vary as much by teacher as does the

subject matter. Teachers can have better chances to practice how to send asynchronous lessons to their students and possibly allow for more than one synchronous opportunity either a week or a day. Synchronous teaching can be challenging as we saw last spring where many students found themselves working more hours at their essential-worker jobs to either help their families with otherwise lost income, or so that others could be home for their children who would have otherwise been in school and now face the situation where daycare is either unavailable or unaffordable. This may look something different for school hours of the past where they may not be 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM, which may cause concern for parents or teachers with families too. The disparities between schools across the country cannot be solved this summer, but alternative communication like texting or even snail mail is one way in knowing the students are getting the materials they need. As we know, intrinsic motivation seems to be a gap as well. Higher income homes and communities foster this motivation where poorer income areas may foster motivation for finding ways to get by day-to-day; those are two very different motivations these same aged kids are experiencing. It's no wonder priorities vary based on a child's address in this country where no app or computer resource can solve.

Equitablitie$

Unfortunately, it's not just a question of just opening hallways or not, but also one of equity. According to EdWeek Research Center this past spring, there are distinguishable disparities among schools, clearly in more poor or wealthy communities ranging from technology access to students who won't or can't log on or just not making contact with their teachers. As it seems, teachers from lower income districts, there was 22% less engaged instruction than in wealthier districts (Herald). It is suggested that this may have been due to technology access for instructors and also access to and implementation of new resources for these teachers because by mid-April this gap closed to 10% (Herald). What surveys are proving are what educators have been saying, that families with less income, many were unable to hold their children accountable for their own education, especially when many of these low income families may still have had to go to work rather than stay at home and help their children learn. Trying to combat some of the roadblocks, some schools from lower-income families are finding ways to get free, accessible internet access to families and distributing chromebooks for student pick-up and even dropping off to homes who do not have computers to prevent failure as defined by the "haves" and the "have-nots" (Alvarez). Additionally, higher income homes usually

means potentially higher education degrees, allowing for better ability to help with their child's education. On a positive note, the same survey from EdWeek found that teachers in rural and low income areas were turning more to "text messages, phone calls, social media, and printed communications to reach students, and they were also far more likely to send material out via snail mail" (Herald). So what does this qualitative and quantitative data tell us about what next fall may or could look like as we learn from our spring 2020 semester? Teachers have now experienced a little of what works and what does not. This does not solve all inequities, but it allows districts to shift focus for obtaining success based on who and how they are targeting.

Another population to keep in mind

However, it's not always about equitability of money, there's the concern for those with both mental or physical disabilities and also those who are high functioning but still have 504s to reach success. Teachers who work with these populations cannot send a list of to-dos for their students. These students need one-on-one, so schools are finding a way for a paraprofessional to work with special education teachers to resources like Microsoft Teams to connect with students and parents. This way, "students were getting double the lessons during the week and the one-on-one attention they needed" (Alvarez 37). This summer schools are opening doors for special needs students while hallways are mainly empty. When fall comes, it's likely some of the general population will go back, but most likely the special needs will all be back (unless parents decide otherwise). Considerations about how many can be in a space are obviously to be taken, which will impact what numbers are left for other students to walk the halls. This may even mean more paraprofessionals will be needed for the ratio of student-to-teacher, also impacting the number of regular education classrooms that can be filled. Also, districts are looking at off-site buildings or alternative locations where special needs students can receive their education so numbers for general education students can be calibrated for the school openings. There is no "fair" that can be asked, it is a reminder that all populations are part of the melting pots of our school communities.

Where will *I* go from here?

This is a hard question for me since I, like many other teachers globally, are still on hold with what school year 2020-2021 will look like. What I do plan to do is find more applications for not only me to use, but

also my students. For example, I'd like to experiment with Adobe Spark so that my students can generate alternative assignments when they're home or not in my classroom. I will look for other video platforms for students to present material and share with peers for feedback among themselve, an important part of the classroom that was lost last spring. Technology is the theme of 2020-2021 whether we want it to be or not. It will be what helps several stakeholders to succeed and maybe even find their ways permanently into our curricula moving forward. Blended learning whether it be in or outside of school building is coming to all districts so my role as an educator is to implement best practices for students and their parents.

Using what I have learned, I need to re-evaluate how I make sure the three most important components of the classroom are preserved: instruction, feedback, assessment. This will include more synchronous opportunities for my students and also a platform where students can receive feedback from their peers as well. The feedback component is likely the most lost component many ERT lacked; this means feedback from more than just us commenting on their assignments. Students learn from their peers from one another in many different ways.

In Closure

Recent article from *The New York Times* "Idea of the Day: Should Schools Open?" explains how "Pediatricians, childhood experts, and parents are arguing that schools need to reopen this fall, even if it increases the risk of spreading the coronavirus." With schools closed, universities and all the way down to pre-kindergarten, there are devastating costs. There are huge implications on families if schools do not open and as Deb Perelman from *The NY Times* states candidly, that "'In the Covid-19 economy, you're allowed only a kid or a job. You can't have both.'" And, she's right. Parents are aware of this as each day closer to August, each is asking what this fall will look like.

Additionally, the reality is some of our students will not engage in online learning whether that is due to internet access, resources at home, or intrinsic motivation. These are the same students who are in our classes who struggle to come to school every day, so how did we find success with them then? Perhaps this means more relying on our resources like student services. This could mean offering to meet a student or group in a parking lot to receive and give materials for the week.

As it appears now in mid-July, schools and colleges are contemplating the full and partial opening of classrooms. Some universities offer one student per dorm room and more classes offered on-line to go along with their in-person ones. Some schools suggest starting in the fall and resuming online learning as the weather cools as Thanksgiving approaches, telling them to stay home thereafter. Many are predicting it will be a lot like blended learning, both within and outside of school building attendance. Blended learning can allow students and teachers the fluidity they will need come this year as threats of COVID-19 numbers going up.

The wrath pandemic of COVID-19 has lay globally upon us is far from done and we will likely see the ripples for years to come. Smaller universities and private elementary and high schools will be the first to close, then perhaps within five years even many larger ones will collapse. Obviously the entire structure of higher education not will cease to exist, but the wonder remains: What will it all look like in the wake of this pandemic assault? Budgeting for education will continue to take hits as people try to recover from unemployment or less income. A vaccination will come and COVID-19 will pass and we can get back to what we do best, teaching and being with our kids. That is until the next event warrants home quarantine time. Each time we'll become better equipped and able to better handle discrepancies in districts and communities whether that be the internet or meals for families in need.

Works Consulted

Alvarez, Brenda. "The Distance-Learning Challenge." *NEA Today Magazine.* April 2020, pp 34-37.

Bruni, Frank. "The End of Colleges as We Know." *New York Times,* 4 Jun 2020.

Cary-Grove High School. "Return to School Survey" 29 May 2020.

Craig, Ryan. "What Students Are Doing is Remote Learning, Not Online Learning. There's a Difference." *EdSurge,* 2 Apr 2020, https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-04-02-what-students-are-doing-is-remote-learning-not-online-learning-there-s-a-difference. Accessed 23 Jun 2020.

Crosby, Brian. "Distance Learning Doesn't Work: Teachers Help Students Make Sense of the World." *The Chicago Tribune.* 12 Jun 2020.

Herald, Benjamin. "The Disparities In Remote Learning Under Coronavirus" *Education Week,* 4/29/2020, Vol. 39, Issue 30, http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid =6&sid=8a2b7cd7-0368-408e-a9bc-c8cc0d503d9a%40pdc-v-sessmgr06&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=142966150&db=ehh.

Hobbs, Tawnell D. and Lee Hawkins. "The Results Are In for Remote Learning: It Didn't Work."
    The Wall Street Journal, 5 Jun 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/schools-
    Coronavirus-remote-learning-lockdown-tech-11591375078. Accessed 23 Jun 2020.

Hodges, Charles, et al. "The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online
    Learning." *Educause,* 27 Mar. 2020,
    https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-
    online-learning.

Perelman, Deb. "In the Covid-19 Economy, You Can Have a Kid or a Job. You Can't Have Both."
    NYTimes, 2 Jul 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/02/business/covid-economy-
    parents-kids-career-homeschooling.html?campaign_id=9&emc=edit_nn_20200702&inst
    ance_id=19941&nl=the-
    morning&regi_id=119514943&segment_id=32426&te=1&user_id=0ac75c0d20e24baa8ac972f27011de
    42. Accessed 2 Jul 2020.

Sorkin, Amy Davidson. "The Complex Question of Reopening Schools." *The New Yorker.* 1 Jun
    2020, pp 11-12.

Adam Oldaker

Dr. Robin Murray

English 5585

9 July 2020

<div align="center">I-Search Paper: Best Practices for Teaching College Composition Online</div>

How I Became Interested in the Topic

In mid-March 2020, my in-person first-year composition classes and 200-level literature course at Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC), where I teach full time, suddenly shifted to online asynchronous format in response to the coronavirus pandemic. My course schedule will continue to be asynchronous until January 2021 at the earliest, and in fall 2020, I am scheduled to teach two sections of ENG 1001: English Composition I and three sections of ENG 1002: English Composition II in asynchronous format. Although I had taken multiple asynchronous graduate English classes for professional development by the time that the switch happened, I lacked relevant teaching experience or pedagogical training.

In early summer 2020, I completed a fully online workshop titled Excellent Online Teaching through the Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment at IVCC. This workshop helped me to learn overall best practices for online teaching and learning; however, it was tailored to faculty of all disciplines. As a result, while the workshop provided me with a strong foundation on which to build, I still needed to learn best practices for online teaching in my field of rhetoric and composition. Those are what I set out to learn in my journey for my I-Search Paper for ENG 5585.

When I established the initial parameters for my research, I set the following questions that I hoped to find answers to:

- How can I build community in the online composition classroom?

- What social-justice issues do I need to be aware of that are unique to the online composition classroom?

- What are best practices for instructor/student interaction and peer interaction in the online composition classroom?

Description of My Search

To begin my search, I decided to thumb through the recent back issues of *College English, Teaching English in the Two-Year College,* and *College Composition & Communication* that have been sitting on my bookshelves. I subscribe to these journals as part of my National Council of Teachers of English membership, but I don't read them as often as I

should. Since I wanted to learn the unique perspectives of scholars in rhetoric and composition, it made sense to me to start with journals that feature their work.

What I found as I started thumbing through the journals' tables of contents was that there was not a lot of work on teaching composition online that had been published in these seminal publications over the last few years. The only article that I found that seemed remotely applicable to my central research questions was Kelly O. Secovnie and Lane Glisson's "Scaffolding a Librarian into Your Course: An Assessment of a Research-Based Model for Online Instruction."

Next, I turned to *JSTOR* in the hope of finding results more quickly. I wasn't sure if teaching composition online wasn't a hot topic for scholars in rhetoric and composition or if I just wasn't looking in the right places. I used the keywords *teaching composition online,* and 3,642 sources came up; two articles on the first page of results looked promising for my purposes (June Griffin and Deborah Minter's "The Rise of the Online Writing Classroom: Reflecting on the Material Conditions of College Composition Teaching" and Merry A. Rendahl's "It's Not the Matrix: Thinking about Online Writing Instruction"). Now that I had three solid articles pertaining to my research questions, I felt that I had enough to start my reading process and decided not to narrow my *JSTOR* keyword search further.

After reading these three articles and paying attention to their bibliographies, I noticed that articles from a journal titled *Computers and Composition* were frequently cited, so I visited the digital table of contents of multiple issues through the database *ScienceDirect*. I also learned from Griffin and Minter that the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) had published a statement on best practices for teaching composition online, so I decided to find and read it. I also remembered that I had attended a session about the online journal *Kairos* at a previous Annual Allerton English Articulation Conference in Monticello, Illinois, so I went to the *Kairos* Web site to see what had been published. Additionally, through the bibliographies of multiple articles that I was finding in *Kairos,* I learned that Beth A. Hewett is considered an expert in online writing instruction, and her article "Fully Online and Hybrid Writing Instruction" from *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (our textbook for ENG 5007: Composition Theory and Pedagogy at EIU) was cited in multiple places. We did not read this piece for ENG 5007, but I still had the textbook, so I decided to read her piece as part of my research.

What I Found Out

The first article that I read was Rendahl's "It's Not the Matrix: Thinking about Online Writing Instruction." Rendahl shares that, while many college composition instructors fear teaching online due to losing shared space and time with students, there is no evidence that in-person learning bridges distances between people anyway (138). "Class or

cultural differences" can put tremendous space between students and educators, as well as between students themselves (138). Additionally, perceived generational differences, intentional or unintentional teacher intimidation, and learning-pace preferences can all serve as barriers between people in physical classrooms (138-39). In-person teaching comes with many other problems as well. While students and educators perform their respective roles, the latter may rely on verbal and visual clues to determine whether students understand material. However, the instructor may misinterpret those clues (Rendahl 135). Additionally, the classroom can carry "many cultural values" that make some students feel at home and put off others; the classroom itself is a site for critical examination for hegemonic values that privilege some and oppress others (136).

That said, face-to-face format is conducive to easily making human connections, and that is something that *needs* to carry over into online teaching and learning. As Rendahl says, "[O]ur humanity is not left behind when we bridge distances via technologies" (135). She suggests having students write for, in response to, and with one another, in a performance of "literacy of involvement" (140). While some professors may see writing as an isolated activity, that's probably not the best way to see language for online teaching and learning: "[W]riting is a powerful and dialectic means for connecting human beings and exploring ideas" (140).

Additionally, Rendahl shares that we don't yet have an established language for teaching composition online, and she encourages us to think of new terms for when we adapt some of our most treasured pedagogical practices to online format. For instance, the term *peer review* implies a certain amount of verbal conversation happening among students. As we modify peer review to go digital, we probably need a new term for what we come up with so that we don't notice the verbal chatter that's lacking; using the same term may call to mind *a lack* and put us in a negative headspace for online teaching. She suggests "virtual peer review" as an alternative--not the same as peer review, as we understand it, but something different (145).

Rendahl's study provided me with some answers to my initial research questions. First of all, while I was seeking information specifically about social-justice issues that I need to keep in mind while teaching online, she rightly put this matter into a better perspective for me. Like many other teachers, I can sometimes romanticize and idealize the in-person classroom. However, face-to-face instruction certainly comes with its flaws, and her points reminded me very much so of bell hooks's many criticisms of in-person learning in *Teaching to Transgress,* including the fact that we tend to expect our students coming from diverse backgrounds to adapt to our way of doing things, that many of us use language in imperialistic ways by punishing students for failing to use standard academic English, and that some of us can unfairly

expect students who are minorities to speak on behalf of all others in their in-group. Additionally, Rendahl's central philosophy for building community with online students is basically to have them create knowledge in collaboration, in as many ways as possible. I believe that this approach is a shift from the deeply traditional in-person classroom, which typically consists of lectures and instructor-led discussions. In response to Rendahl's points, I found myself questioning whether there aren't additional collaborative activities and major projects that I can build into my newly online composition courses.

The next article that I read was Secovnie and Glisson's "Scaffolding a Librarian into Your Course: An Assessment of a Research-Based Model for Online Instruction." Secovnie is an English instructor while Glisson is a faculty librarian at Borough of Manhattan Community College (MBCC), and the two of them describe their experience collaborating on extensive embedded library instruction in a fully online section of Introduction to Literature from fall 2012 to spring 2018 (119). Introduction to Literature at BMCC serves a similar purpose to courses with titles like Rhetoric and Composition II at many other community colleges; it is a course in which students are expected to learn how to do research and incorporate their findings into larger course papers. They also share that they set up and consistently "used pre- and post-course surveys to discover our students' attitudes and reported behaviors about research" (119). To determine the effectiveness of this extensive embedded instruction, they distributed the same surveys to two other types of courses: one that had a one-time instructional session by a librarian and another that had no instructional session by a librarian (123).

Glisson's intensive library instruction unfolded in stages throughout the various modules of Introduction to Literature. To sum up those stages, Glisson was present through every stage of the research process for students, and she used a combination of personalized instructional videos tailored to the unique needs of Introduction to Literature, posts and prompts on discussion boards, and written responses to student work on discussion boards. She also was given an introductory video that was placed in the same place in the course's online learning platform as the English professor. Overall, the course design depicted the librarian as an important partner for the students in their writing and research process, and the instruction for the course was collaborative; while the English professor provided individualized assistance with helping students make writing choices, the librarian provided personalized assistance with research matters (Secovnie and Glisson 126-27).

What Secovnie and Glisson found was that extensive library instruction had positive effects on students' attitudes about research, and their learners reported an increase in "reported library use in all courses" and a shift in their initial

thinking that "the library was not a resource for them" (128). The students with intensive library instruction also demonstrated a change in how much they "value a more diverse selection of research materials," including books, ebooks, encyclopedias, and newspapers (130). The students who had a one-time instructional session with a librarian and those who had no librarian instruction did not show the same increases in library use, positive changes in attitude toward libraries, or difference in perceptions about their selection of materials (129-32).

Secovnie and Glisson helped me to realize that, in my fall 2020 online composition classes, extensive collaboration with a librarian will help students to meet learning objectives pertaining to research. Additionally, I should involve the librarian in as many digital activities as possible. The librarian should give recorded presentations, set discussion-board prompts, and interact with students on discussion boards, just as I do. Also, her contact information should be prominently displayed in the digital learning environment.

The next article that I read was Griffin and Minter's "The Rise of the Online Classroom: Reflecting on the Material Conditions of College Composition Teaching." Griffin and Minter's main goal is to share and think some of through the results of the CCCC's published results of a survey of online college composition instructors while also reflecting on "the material conditions of teaching writing in a digital age" (141). Griffin and Minter share that, while there are some online composition educators who are embracing and implementing new technologies in order to facilitate collaborative student writing, there are many others who are migrating face-to-face teaching practices to digital format (141-45). Most online composition instructors appear to "reject cutting-edge technology"; instead, they require their students to complete "fairly traditional text-based assignments" (145). In other words, the implementation of new media for online teaching and learning has not yet happened on a larger scale.

Other points made by Griffin and Minter alarmed me since online teaching and learning may disadvantage students in some groups. For instance, students who come from wealth and privilege are more likely to have newer, faster technology to complete assignments while those living in poverty are more likely to have older, slower technology (146). Additionally, according to Kathryn Zickhur and Aaron Smith of the Pew Research Center, "Among smartphone owners, young adults, minorities, those with no college experience, and those with lower household income levels are more likely than other groups to say that their phone is the main source of Internet access" (qtd. in Griffin and Minter 147). The fact that some, if not many, students may only have access to course materials via a touchscreen is another factor complicating online teaching and learning. Other groups that are particularly at risk for online teaching and learning include those with disabilities who may not be able to fully access all of the online material; usability testing for online teaching and learning

is a subject that faculty and staff at many postsecondary institutions (including mine) are still learning about (148). Additionally, there are other groups that tend to perform more poorly in online versus face-to-face environments (147).

Besides these social-justice issues, Griffin and Minter share that, of all disciplines, English classes adopted to online format tend to have "the greatest negative effect for persistence and course grade" (147). There could be many reasons why students in online English courses tend to fare poorly, but Griffin and Minter share that the conditions for online teaching and learning in composition can be gruesome for both the professor and the students. As Amy C. Kimme Hea shares, "[P]erpetual contact between students and teachers creates an expectation of constant, continual engagement. This anytime, anywhere position carries risks of exploitation" (qtd. in Griffin and Minters 151). In other words, students tend to expect immediate responses when, for instance, they email their professors or submit assignments, and it is easy for instructors to give in to unreasonable student expectations unless they establish clear professional boundaries.

That said, students can also be exploited in online format. While English teachers report that teaching online is substantially more work than face-to-face teaching, the same holds true for their students, and it is easy for an online teacher not to realize how much time is truly required for the students to complete all assigned tasks. Griffin and Minter share that, from their research comparing and contrasting online composition classes with their face-to-face counterparts, what they call "the literacy load" for online classes (taking into account all of the expected reading and writing) is generally "2.75 times greater than the face-to-face classes" (153). Especially when the instructor considers that the students have to read all of the discussion boards taking place for an online class, the literacy load can quickly become unmanageable for learners.

Overall, Griffin and Minter feel that online teachers should not just transfer everything that they're doing in face-to-face format to a digital environment, but they also should be more aware of emerging technologies and think of ways to incorporate them so that they still hit on the most important learning outcomes for composition. They feel that online composition instructors deserve additional compensation for the work that they do, and they believe that teachers have to be careful not to ask for more than is reasonable from students. They encourage all online teachers to be aware of social-justice issues in teaching composition online, particularly for students with disabilities. Accessibility is an issue that all of us should be paying attention to (156-57).

Griffin and Minter's article is directly relevant to my initial research questions pertaining to social-justice issues and interaction between students and teachers, as well as among peers, in the online course. However, after reading it, I found myself alarmed by some of their findings. What should I do with the knowledge that people in many groups—

including students of low socioeconomic status, black students, and men—may be disadvantaged in online-learning environments? How do I ensure that I am helping to meet the needs of students without finding myself in a position that I'm doing so much work that my labor is being exploited? Additionally, Griffin and Minter made me realize that, with online teaching and learning, less can be more. While substantial interaction between students and teacher, as well as among peers, is essential for online teaching and learning, it is easy to create demands for writing and reading that most people cannot fulfill. As I set up future online assignments and collaborative tasks, I need to make sure that I am not overdoing what I expect of either my students or myself.

The next article that I read was "Fully Online and Hybrid Writing Instruction" by Hewett. She describes the precursor to online writing instruction as distance learning, including correspondence courses that included packets of material for students to complete and send back to the teacher, educational programs broadcasted on television, and cassette tapes with recorded instructional material for students to listen to (195). As distance learning has changed and developed into online teaching and learning, many concerns about it have arisen. One is that it may "level teacher-to-student power," and another is that it may "restrict empathetic contact within a faceless, body-less environment" (195). Additionally, those students who were born into technology, or "digital natives," may have an advantage over those who came to it later in life, or "digital immigrants" (196). Hewett acknowledges that there are some issues that are unresolved in relevant research on online writing instruction, and the in-progress nature and relative newness of the relevant research is part of the pedagogy (196).

Additionally, Hewett describes what she calls "several building blocks" for online writing instruction, including "course setting, pedagogical purpose, digital modality, medium, and student audience" (196). Some of her key points regarding these building blocks are that the course setting should facilitate interaction between the professor and students, as well as between peers (196-97). The pedagogical purpose of OWI should be to "teach and learn writing"; instructional focus should not shift to the teaching of technologies (197). She also stresses that, whatever one's pedagogy in rhetoric and composition, it should transfer; "[f]or example, expressivism, social construction, critical pedagogies, and rhetorical argument lend themselves to OWI [online writing instruction]" (197). That said, Hewett describes the need for "an intentional pedagogy of digital rhetoric" that incorporates simple, user-friendly technologies that lend themselves well to online teaching and learning, including blogs and wikis (197).

Further, Hewett provides some suggestions for student-teacher interaction and peer interaction. She states that teachers "must engage their students interactively often and thoughtfully" (200). To build the students' trust in their

teacher, teachers need to respond to student work in a timely fashion. Additionally, Hewett suggests a direct approach to communication with online students; for instance, to solve a problem, the teacher should state what it is, explain "why it is a problem," and provide explicit suggestions for changes (198). In terms of peer interaction, Hewett states that teachers need to be careful to avoid the transfer of digital communication patterns in the lives of many students where "hurtful or educationally inappropriate communication can occur" (197). One only has to read public comments on just about any news story shared through social media to encounter the kind of abusive language that Hewett is referring to. To prevent the possibility of students behaving rudely toward one another and their instructor, online educators can provide instruction in netiquette and create a system of "communal accountability"; in other words, rather than assessing the individual student's success, there must be ways in which the students have to work together in order to make the class work, and they must be held accountable in some way when that communication breaks down (197).

Most importantly, Hewett made me realize that I have to keep my focus on creating positive communication among peers in the online environment. I fear the inevitable breakdowns in communication that will happen in online teaching and learning, but I also feel that everyone can behave cordially and engage in a kind of rhetoric of mindfulness that doesn't always characterize the communication that we see daily in social media. I also think that Hewett is right that, while the instructor is one partner in the online learning environment, the students are ultimately deeply responsible for how well the class goes. I need to think through how to establish a sense of "communal accountability," as Hewett says, as I approach future digital teaching tasks.

The last source that I read is probably the most useful to me: "A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction (OWI)" by the CCCC Committee for Best Practices in Online Writing Instruction. This impressive and extensive document is tailored to a wide audience of postsecondary online composition teachers, writing program administrators, and writing center professionals. It is, in my opinion, a must-read for any online composition instructor, and I have already shared it with my colleagues in English at IVCC.

The CCCC Committee describes fifteen principles for effective digital writing instruction, but the first five are the most directly relevant and helpful for online composition teachers; the rest are meant mainly for administrators and writing center specialists. The first principle is that "[o]nline writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible" (7). According to the CCCC Committee, the instructor should foresee any social injustices that could occur and resolve them before they do, particularly in regards to "learners with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, multilingual backgrounds, and learning challenges related to socioeconomic issues" (7). The authors provide multiple

strategies for preventing social injustices, including the incorporation of principles of universal design, the early assessment of students to determine any technology or accessibility issues, and the implementation of "multimodal means for distributing and accessing learning materials" when students request them (8-10). The CCCC Committee also cautions against the common attitude among college professionals that students who need accommodations must request them through Disability Services. The CCCC Committee writes: "We encourage students to be proactive in obtaining academic accommodations, but expecting most undergraduate students to acquire such independence overnight is not realistic" (10). The CCCC Committee asks online composition educators to be flexible with student learning preferences, including some students who express a desire for "quality over quantity" in discussion-board participation (10).

The CCCC Committee's second principle is in line with Hewett's recommendation for OWI to focus on learning outcomes pertaining to rhetoric and composition, rather than the acquisition of new technology skills. To quote the CCCC Committee, "Students should use the provided technology to support their writing and not the other way around" (11). If the online composition instructor is going to incorporate digital genres, that is fine as long as the focus is on "the rhetorical nature of writing for the Web," not "html coding or Web development" (11). Relatedly, the CCCC Committee's fourth principle directly states, as does Hewett, that "composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies" should transfer from in-person classes to the online environment (14). In other words, the online writing instructor can and should continue to use process, rhetorical-genre, critical, or any other pedagogy that is established in the field of rhetoric and composition.

Also, the CCCC Committee's third principle is that pedagogical strategies should be used and developed that take advantage of the "unique features of the online instructional environment" (12). The CCCC Committee acknowledges that there is an increase in literacy load for online teaching and learning, and educators should use (but not overuse) features like discussion boards, blogs, private messaging, hyperlinks, and more to facilitate learning in a "text-centric and reading-heavy" instructional environment (12). Further, they encourage the use of redundancy of information in order to give repeated exposure to material and to accommodate diverse learning styles; for instance, visuals should have corresponding text descriptions, and videos should have a printed text of the audio (13).

The CCCC Committee's fifth principle is that, while there may be times when institutional mandates conflict with the instructor's wishes, the teacher should have "reasonable control over their own content and/or techniques for conveying, teaching, and assessing their students' writing" (15). The CCCC Committee's rationale is that composition instructors ultimately understand the unique challenges and circumstances specific to their teaching situations the best,

and their judgment should not be easily overridden by writing program administrators or other authorities in positions of power (15). Additionally, while teaching mandates for institutions taking advantage of graduate-student labor and part-time faculty for the majority of courses are typical in many larger institutions, they should not interfere with the academic freedom of the online composition instructor; "institutional pedagogical goals" must be balanced with "teacher flexibility" (15-16).

The CCCC Committee's report directly addresses all three of my central research questions, and it helps me to see that I have a lot of work to do in order to accommodate different learners in my classroom. However, I am also concerned about the amount of time that this task will involve. If I'm going to use videos, for instance, and closed captioning is available, then do I need to spend the time making a transcript of the video if closed captioning meets the same goal? The CCCC Committee recommends that, due to the increased literacy load of online teaching and the demands for universal accommodations to meet the needs of all students and prevent social injustices, the online composition instructor should have "no more than 60 students in a given term" and "a maximum of 45" students who could be considered at risk (21). Given that I teach full time at a community college, most of my students could be considered at risk, particularly if you use Griffin and Minter's description of students who might perform less well online: men, younger students, developmental students whose skills do not reflect overall college preparedness, and so on. If all of my online composition classes at IVCC meet their caps in fall 2020, I will have 90 students, double the number recommended by the CCCC Committee. As I move forward, I will need to make careful decisions to ensure my wellness as I strive to employ best practices in my field.

How I'm Going to Use This Information and What I Still Need to Find Out

It feels a bit overwhelming to me to think about *all* of the ways in which I can use my research in practical application in fall 2020, so I think it's important to narrow down what I can do to three practical steps:

1. While I have an embedded librarian in my summer 2020 online section of English Composition II at IVCC, I need to continue to develop my partnership with her and ensure that we are following best practices, as described by Secovnie and Glisson. I have asked my embedded librarian to order Secovnie and Glisson's article so that she can read it and we can discuss it in preparation for fall 2020.

2. I need to consider ways to increase student collaboration in my college composition classes so that peers are working together more to generate knowledge. I also wish to establish a "communal accountability" for each course's success, as Hewett recommends. While I have one major collaborative student writing project in

English Composition I at IVCC, I have nothing collaborative beyond daily discussion-board work in English Composition II. I also think that my expectation for "communal accountability" needs to be communicated clearly in my syllabus and other introductory materials for the class. The message to students needs to be that, while I'm an important partner in your learning, all of you must work together in order to generate learning and make this class work.

3. Multiple authors in my research emphasize that, if online composition instructors are not careful, we can end up asking far too much of our students and taking on too much ourselves. While I did cut what I consider to be the excess from my English Composition II curriculum for this summer, I think that I need to take a careful look at my English Composition I curriculum to see what can be cut as well for fall 2020. I also need to prioritize my own wellness, and that of my students, moving forward.

After this research process, I still remain a bit unclear on how I can prevent social injustices from happening in my online composition classroom, and I want to read more about the related issues. More specifically, the CCCC Committee recommends the implementation of principles of universal design, but I need to learn more about it before I can do so well. Additionally, the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment at IVCC is developing a workshop on accessibility in online classes, and I plan to take it once it is offered.

Further, I need to continue my research into best practices in teaching composition online. One common point of all the scholars whose work I read was that online pedagogy is new, and people are still theorizing and sharing findings from practical classroom applications of ideas. I can't consider myself done with learning about online composition pedagogy, given the nature of the field itself. I am just beginning.

Also, despite having no cited sources from *Computers and Composition* or *Kairos* in this paper*,* I did spend quite a bit of time skimming sources from these two journals and consulting their bibliographies. I think that these are two places where I can look in future to learn more about what other online composition instructors are doing. I also found and printed off two relevant articles from *Computers and Composition* that I plan to read after ENG 5585 is over: "Interactivity and the Invisible: What Counts as Writing in the Age of Web 2.0" by William I Wolff and "Toward a Complexity of Online Learning: Learners in Online First-Year Writing" by Rendahl and Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch. While I was hoping to read these articles and incorporate findings from them into this paper, I ran out of time.

Works Cited

CCCC Committee for Best Practices in Online Writing Instruction. "A Position Statement of Principles and Example

    Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction (OWI)." *Conference on College Composition and*

    Communication, March 2013, https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/owiprinciples. Accessed 6 July 2020.

Griffin, June, and Deborah Minter. "The Rise of the Online Writing Classroom: Reflecting on the Material Conditions of

    College Composition Teaching." *College Composition and Communication,* vo. 65, no. 1, Sept. 2013, pp. 140-

    161. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.com/stable/43490811. Accessed 6 July 2020.

Hewett, Beth L. "Fully Online and Hybrid Writing Instruction." *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies,* edited by Gary Tate

    et al., 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 2014, pp.194-211.

hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom.* Routledge, 1994.

Rendahl, Merry A. "It's Not the Matrix: Thinking about Online Writing Instruction." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern*

    Language Association, vol. 42, no. 1, spring 2009, pp. 133-50. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.com/stable/25674361.

    Accessed 6 July 2020.

Rendahl, Merry, and Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch. "Toward a Complexity of Online Learning: Learners in Online First-Year

    Writing." *Computers and Composition,* vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 297-314. *ScienceDirect,*

    http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2013.10.002. Accessed 8 July 2020.

Secovnie, Kelly O., and Lane Glisson. "Scaffolding a Librarian into Your Course: An Assessment of a Researched-Based

    Model for Online Instruction." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College,* vol. 47, no. 2, Dec. 2019, pp. 119-48.

Wolff, William I. "Interactivity and the Invisible: What Counts as Writing in the Age of Web 2.0." *Computers and*

    Composition, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 211-25. *ScienceDirect,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2013.06.001.

    Accessed 8 July 2020.

Chandra Paschal

Dr Robin Murray

ENG 5585

July 2, 2020

<div align="center">Writing Revision in the Secondary Classroom</div>

Introduction

I started out interested in learning more about the revision process. Revision is my weakest area of writing instruction, and I felt like I needed some structured activities for students to do as they work through the revision process. If they learned some kind of process to work through during revision, I believed my students would be successful at the task.

Initially, I was looking for structured activities for students to use in their revision process. I know the idea is to be more creative in writing, and I do include activities that are much more open and unstructured. But students tell me quite often that they don't like English because they don't know how to write well. They also tell me they prefer math because there are rules to the process. So my goal was to give those students, the ones that need it, more structure. I believe that they are overwhelmed by their perception that there are no rules of writing to follow, especially when they feel judged as not doing it well. I wanted something other than peer revision activities, as students struggle to get past meaningless commentary like "it's great" and "nice job." Plus, it's hard to expect students to be good at peer revision when they lack the skills to truly revise their own writing first.

When I was ready to craft my guiding question for my ISearch journey, I decided that I should use the activities covered in my demonstration since they culminate with a research purpose statement. First I brainstormed some words and phrases that I associate with revision. I struggled at first, only coming up with editing, strategies, peer review, flow/organization, and checklists. It took a little more time for me to come up with another five, but I eventually added expectations, revision process, transposition, sentence structure, digression or on-topic, sentence structure, and follow-through to my list. This brought me to a total of ten items, which is the same amount of subtopics I require from my students when I teach this activity.

Next, I organized these subtopics into categories, which is another prewriting strategy that I shared during my demonstration. After grouping them, I determined how the words in each category were related, and labeled my groups according to these relationships. The groups are as follows:

Sentence Level Issues	Cohesion	Approaches
editing	flow/organization	peer review
sentence structure	on-topic	strategies
	follow through	checklists
	transposition	revision process

After looking at these categories, I came to a better understanding of what I wanted to explore. I wanted to provide students with the tools (strategies) to improve the cohesion of their writing.

At the beginning of this class, my interest was sparked by something that caught my attention in the article "Because Writing Matters: A Book That Shares What We Know." In this chapter, the author interviews Mina Shaughnessy, who states the following: "As student writers develop and are challenged with ever more difficult writing tasks, the number of mechanical errors and defects in their writing often increases. Spelling errors may give way to blunders in word choice, syntax, and rhetorical strategy. But errors of this kind can be misconstrued as regression rather than a sign of growth" (16). This quote made me consider what it is that I wanted students to achieve during their revision process. As a result, I decided that I wanted students to concentrate on improving the cohesion of their writing at all levels during revision rather than focusing on simply "mechanical errors and defects in their writing" (16); I wanted students to learn how to determine what works the way it is and what needs to be addressed to improve the overall effectiveness of their writing.

And so I arrived at the specific aspect of revision in which I was interested; the purpose for the research itself. Since I used all the other strategies in my demonstration to arrive at this point, I could not resist the urge to write my own purpose statement in the same manner presented in my demonstration: I am researching revision because I want to find out what revision strategies address writing cohesion and flow in order to teach my students how to approach the revision process more effectively. Thus my research question is—What are

some revision strategies for improving cohesion and flow that I can teach my students to make them more effective writers?

The Search

Once I narrowed down the focus of my research, I began to search for studies and articles on revision that did not focus on editing. When I began looking for articles, I set out to collect around ten articles on revision. I decided to do this in the following manner: first, looking through our class texts; next, using the EIU Library online database to find journal and research articles on teaching revision; and finally, by using the search term "revision methods" on the Google. I knew this way I could find a good combination of studies, articles, blogs, and websites with strategies and lessons on teaching revision.

I began by looking for articles on revision in one of the textbooks for this class, *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory.* I was only able to find one article that appeared to be applicable, so I decided to move on.

Next, I accessed the EIU library database, where I searched for revision instruction methods. This search initially returned over 40,000 hits, which was too many to go through. So I narrowed my parameters by adding the phrase "secondary education" and narrowing the publication timeline to the last 20 years. This narrowed the choices to a much more workable number around 2,000, so I began searching the results. Tackling 2000 articles is no small feat, though, so I began working my way through the list by scanning for titles that included the term "revision," and then reading the snippets provided by the database. Knowing that I only wanted to collect about four articles from this database made the process both easier and much quicker. Surprisingly, it was pretty easy to eliminate many articles since they either focused on content areas outside of English language arts or were geared toward students outside the secondary level. Eventually, I settled on four articles.

Finally, I moved my search on to Google. I searched for the term "writing revision strategies." I worked my way through several pages by focusing on results that seemed to be strategies from schools and teachers. I clicked through many websites and articles, finally selecting four. After reading through my articles, I decided to provide a short synopsis of the articles that I found to be relevant to my search.

The Articles

Sommers, Nancy. "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: a Reader*, by Victor Villanueva and Kristin L. Arola, 3rd ed., National Council of Teachers of English, 2011, pp. 53–63.

Nancy Sommers, the researcher, conducted what she calls a case study approach to analyse the revision strategies of experienced writers and college student writers. She found that student writers revise by focusing on word choice and repetition, while experienced writers revise by focusing on overall meaning and argument. From the study Sommers identified several other differences between student writers and experienced writers. One of the most important differences is that student writers consider the first draft to be their goal, with the act of revision simply being a way to clean up their drafts. Experienced writers, however, consider their first draft just the act of getting the ideas onto paper, and most of these writers believe that revision is never completely done. One of the experienced writers even claims that pieces are eventually abandoned rather than finished. Based on her research, Sommers believes the lack of understanding about the revision process is caused by students learning to write in a linear process in which there is no need to revisit the finished product. In contrast, Sommers asserts that experienced writers see revision as a repetitive process with many cycles required. While this article is about the revision process, it is essentially a comparison of the revision practices of experienced adult writers and college student writers.

Baer, Allison L. "Creating a Shared Definition of Good and Bad Writing Through Revision Strategies." *Middle School Journal*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2008, pp. 46–53. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23048099. Accessed 22 June 2020.

In this article, Baer describes her experience implementing the Worse/Better Writing Strategy developed by Andrews-Beck in 1989. First, she provides a research review on revision strategies. Next, she describes the strategy she put into place using the idea of shared definitions of good and bad writing. The first step involves students writing a storyline for a comic strip, then writing a worse version, and finally writing a better version. Students were asked to define bad writing on the second version, and then to define good writing on the third. An analysis of the definitions and comic strips revealed that

most students believe good writing is mostly good mechanics. A few students identified specific ideas about good writing being related to the contents, but few actually changed their content to reflect "good writing" or "bad writing" as understood by teachers. Then, Baer and her students came up with a list of characteristics for both good and bad writing in general, and separated the list into two categories; one regarding content and one regarding mechanics. In the final part of the article, Baer reviews the most effective revision strategies she implemented. They are listed as follows: by making the environment in the classroom more literacy focused; by having students write on every other line when writing to leave room for revisions; by increasing the amount of time dedicated in class to revision and decreasing the amount of time spent editing; by having students write their revisions in green ink; by having students read their papers aloud to each other; and by learning to respect the ideas of the author.

Early, Jessica Singer, and Christina Saidy. "Uncovering Substance: Teaching Revision In High School Classrooms." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2014, pp. 209–218., www.jstor.org/stable/24034731. Accessed 22 June 2020.

This research article includes a short review of research on revision and then discusses an experimental workshop called "Multiple Component Feedback Approach to Revision" created and implemented by Jessica Singer Early and Christina Saidy. The two researchers carried out their workshop in a public high school in which they pushed into a class already in progress. The workshop guides students through several activities designed to teach them about revision through the use of models, self reflection, and group activities. Early and Saidy found that this method allows students to learn about revision by analyzing pairs of first draft/final draft essays for the revisions made, answering in-depth questions about their peers' essays, and then considering how the same things they noticed about their peers' essays could be applied to their own writing.

"Academics: Revision Strategies," Center for Teaching and Learning at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, 2020, https://www.hws.edu/academics/ctl/writes_revision.aspx. Accessed 22/06/2020.

This article is a typical checklist provided by college writing centers across the nation. The checklist is divided into four categories, and each category has several bulleted questions for writers to review. The categories are as follows:

1. "The Big Picture": These questions focus on the overall effect of the essay.

2. "Focus on Development": These questions focus on the main ideas and supporting evidence in the essay.

3. "Focus on Structure": These questions focus on thesis statements and topic sentences.

4. "Focus on Sentence Structure": These questions focus on sentence level issues.

Dobbs, Meredith. "Three Essential Editing and Revision Mini-lessons for Argumentative Writing" *TeachingWriting.org*, 18 Sept. 2018, https://www.teachwriting.org/612th/2018/8/28/three-essential-mini-lessons-for-teaching-argumentative-writing. Accessed 22 June 2020.

This is a blog post that does exactly what the title says: the author shares three mini-lessons for editing and revising argumentative writing. The first mini-lesson is "Does This Show That." For this activity, students work at the paragraph level. First they review their commentary, then they examine their quote and determine if the quote demonstrates what they describe in the commentary. The second mini-lesson is "Key Words and Ideas." In this lesson, students check to make sure they have not deviated from their thesis statement or argument. To do this, students review their thesis statements and topic sentences to ensure that the key ideas remain the same. The third mini-lesson is "Powerful Verb Choices." In this activity, students go through their essays and examine all of their verbs. Next, they answer a series of questions about their choice of verbs. Finally, they make changes to verbs where they are needed to avoid things such as passive voice, repetition, and shifts in tense.

"The Magic of Real Revision (and How to Teach It)." *The Graide Network*. 22 Jan 2019, https://www.thegraidenetwork.com/blog-all/revision-strategies. Accessed 22 June 2020.

This article is a blog shared by The Graide Network. There is no author of note. The article is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the differences between revision, editing, and proofreading. The author provides some examples of questions geared to each of these activities to

demonstrate the differences. The second section discusses the merits of revision and ways to get students to buy into the idea. The third section offers three different strategies for revision. The first strategy involves sharing revision models with students. The second strategy introduces the idea of assigning revision memos. Revision memos are questions that professors ask students about their revision process that students respond to in writing. The idea is that students are thinking critically about their revision process in order to answer the professor's questions. The third strategy provides students with a revision tip sheet created for a specific writing assignment.

Philippakos, Zoi A. A, and Charles A MacArthour. "The Use of Genre-Specific Evaluation Criteria for Revision." Language and Literacy Spectrum, New York State Reading Association. 30 Nov. 2015, eric.ed.gov/?q=the%2Buse%2Bof%2Bgenre-specific%2Bevaluation%2Bcriteria%2Bfor%2Brevision&id=EJ1108470. Accessed 22 June 2020.

In this article, the authors discuss the underlying reason for poor revision by students. Essentially, they claim that students have not learned to read for evaluation or to read for revision. Philippakos and MacArthur encourage teaching students to "evaluate to revise" (42). Philippakos and MacArthur suggest that students should be explicitly taught the specific criteria required for different genres of writing. They then lay out their plan for teaching students to evaluate for revision, which includes a combination of modeling the process of evaluation, guiding practice and collaboration as student groups work through the process together, and assigning independent practice in which each student completes the process on his or her own.

My Findings

The last article I found was "The Use of Genre-Specific Evaluation Criteria for Revision" (Philippakos & MacArthur). At first, I wasn't sure of its usefulness, as the introduction was an anecdote about two fourth-grade students, and I am looking for strategies for upper grade level secondary students. Interestingly, this article will probably end up having the biggest impact on the way I teach the revision process. I decided to read through it and see if it would work anyways. Surprisingly, the research and strategy were not confined to any

particular grade level. Furthermore, the strategies were easily applicable to any content area and/or writing genre. Ultimately, this article provided the guidance on the process of teaching revision that I was looking for.

The article begins with a look at what past research has revealed about the revision process. First, Philippakos and MacArthur explain that many studies have shown that students' "troubles with revision on the level of ideas, organization and content may stem from a lack of understanding about the task and a lack of strategies on how to evaluate writing (Hayes, Flower, et al., 1987)." (42). Students need to have more than good reading comprehension to successfully revise these types of issues in their writing. The authors cite research which demonstrates that "when reading to evaluate and reading for revision, the reader needs to apply critical-thinking processes and utilize a larger set of goals (Hayes, 2004)" than when reading for comprehension (42). The idea that reading for revision was a totally separate skill from reading for comprehension was not something that I'd ever considered. It stands to follow, then, that at least part of the problem I'm having with effectively teaching revision is that students haven't developed the necessary reading skills.

Next, Philippakos and MacArthur explain that multiple studies have been done to identify revision strategies that improve students abilities in idea generation, organization, and content areas. Strategies that have shown positive effects on revision ability all have similar components. These components include using "procedural facilitators (e.g., De La Paz, Swanswon & Graham, 1998), the practice of observing readers (e.g., Moore & MacArthur, 2012) and the use of goal procedures (Graham, MacArthur & Schwartz, 1997)" (42). In addition, these strategies all also incorporated "specific-evaluation criteria" and self-reflection (42). A common component of the strategies that improved this type of revision was the focus on genre-specific elements. Conversely, the use of general writing criteria as a basis for revision strategies showed no steady improvement in revision ability. According to Philipakkos and MacArthur, these types of general writing criteria or elements are used in different ways in different genres, and if writers don't know the expectations for each genre, they do little to improve revision (43). In the past, most of the peer revision checklists I have distributed to students have directed them to evaluate more general components of writing, such as word choice, organization, and tone. Unfortunately, as the authors point out, if students don't know genre specific expectations, then they

don't know how to make suggestions for improvement. This has also been my experience with using peer revision activities that focus on more general writing elements.

In addition to teaching students genre-specific elements, the authors outlined how to teach this type of revision. In the planning phase, teachers should identify each genre and its expected elements. Next, they should create a rubric specific to each genre based on those elements, and gather examples of writing that include (or should include) those elements at different levels of proficiency. Additionally, they should consider elements related to grade level expectations (44-45). It makes sense to consider the outcome for essays in essentially the same way we (teachers) do for other types of assessments, such as quizzes and tests. For example, in a multiple choice test, we know what the expected answer is when we write the test. So identifying the expected components of a persuasive essay should be an obvious precursor to assigning a persuasive essay to students.

According to Philippakos and MacArthur, teachers should first explain the genre and its expected elements during writing instruction. When teaching the reading for evaluation process, teachers should begin by modeling the process for the whole group. During modeling, teachers should explain their thought processes as they determine whether or not specific elements are present in the writing, if the element is used correctly, whether revisions are needed, and, if so, what revisions the writing may need. Next, teachers should work through the process again with students either as a whole class or in small groups, allowing students to lead the process. Finally, students should complete the process independently. Also included are examples for specific things to do or say during discussion, modeling, collaborative or guided practice, and independent work. Philippakos and MacArthur included criteria examples of genre specific writing and a genre-specific rubric for reference (45-46). Interestingly, this is the way I tend to teach writing, first by modeling and then guiding the class through the activity as a group, before finally having students complete the work independently. Incorporating this particular strategy should blend seamlessly into my current writing curriculum.

Overall, this article was eye-opening. The authors' explanation of why many revision strategies don't improve student writing also seems likely to be the reason that peer revision strategies I have used in class are

ineffective for my students. The authors provide clearly explained steps for teaching students to evaluate writing that are likely to help students improve the quality of their writing. Most importantly, the strategy presented in this article is easily modified to any grade level and easily incorporated into my current curriculum.

Conclusion

When I started this ISearch project, my hope was to find a single strategy for teaching revision more effectively. Of course, as a typical human being, I was hoping for a magic bullet solution. In the course of my research, I found that this was not an option. I also thought the most useful information I would find would be the lessons and activities shared through blogs and teacher websites. I was surprised that I found the actual research articles and studies much more helpful than the teacher blogs and websites.

 In the research articles, I found an abundance of information, ideas, and strategies that can be integrated into my current writing curriculum. I learned some new information about the process of revision that I didn't know, such as there is a specific way to read for revision or evaluation. My other research articles presented some inspiring activities I can use with my students to improve their understanding of revision. In particular, the "Multiple Component Feedback Approach to Revision" created by Early and Saidy has several components that can be integrated into the strategies outlined in Philippakos' and MacArthur's study. For example, once students learn the criteria for each genre of writing and work through the revision process independently, it would be beneficial to have them complete the group revision activities from Early's and Saidy's research. During this peer activity, students are encouraged to take the lead in the revision process rather than waiting for teacher feedback to begin, which is a large part of the reason I decided to assign peer revision in the first place. Finally, the idea of creating definitions of good and bad writing with students described in Baer's article is both compelling and workable. It seems to me that this activity would enhance students' understanding of both the purpose and process of revision. Plus, the activity would directly address students' mistaken belief that revising is fixing mechanical mistakes.

I was also able to find some useful ideas in the blogs that I read. I particularly like the "Does This Show That" revision activity shared by Dobbs. I'd also like to do some further research on the Revision Memos

activity discussed in the Graide Network blog, "The Magic of Revision (and How to Teach it)." It was interesting to see that the blogs included some of the same ideas suggested in the research articles, such as explicitly teaching the difference between editing, proofreading, and revision. However, I was disappointed to find that a few of the lessons mentioned by these teachers were actually editing activities rather than revision activities. Perhaps the murky relationship between editing and revising exemplified here might explain my own struggles with teaching revision.

Overall, my ISearch research was educational. The process itself wasn't as overwhelming as a traditional research project tends to be for me. The way that I worked through this project was very similar to the way I search for information outside of the classroom. Most of the information I found doing this research will be useful to me in the classroom, and I can see adding many of these strategies and lessons to my current curriculum. Prior to this experience, I wasn't sure what I thought about the Isearch project as a teaching tool. Now I can say that I think it is something worth teaching.

Works Cited

"Academics: Revision Strategies," Center for Teaching and Learning at Hobart and William Smith

Colleges, 2020, https://www.hws.edu/academics/ctl/writes_revision.aspx. Accessed 22/06/2020.

Baer, Allison L. "Creating a Shared Definition of Good and Bad Writing Through Revision Strategies." *Middle*

School Journal, vol. 39, no. 4, 2008, pp. 46–53. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23048099. Accessed 22

June 2020.

Dobbs, Meredith. "Three Essential Editing and Revision Mini-lessons for Argumentative Writing"

TeachingWriting.org, 18 Sept. 2018, https://www.teachwriting.org/612th/2018/8/28/three-essential-

mini-lessons-for-teaching-argumentative-writing. Accessed 22 June 2020.

Early, Jessica Singer, and Christina Saidy. "Uncovering Substance: Teaching Revision In High School

Classrooms." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2014, pp. 209–218.,

www.jstor.org/stable/24034731. Accessed 22 June 2020.

Philippakos, Zoi A. A, and Charles A MacArthour. "The Use of Genre-Specific Evaluation Criteria for

Revision." Language and Literacy Spectrum, New York State Reading Association. 30 Nov. 2015,

eric.ed.gov/?q=the%2Buse%2Bof%2Bgenre-

specific%2Bevaluation%2Bcriteria%2Bfor%2Brevision&id=EJ1108470. Accessed 22 June 2020.

Sommers, Nancy. "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers." *Cross-Talk*

in Comp Theory: a Reader, by Victor Villanueva and Kristin L. Arola, 3rd ed., National Council of

Teachers of English, 2011, pp. 53–63.

"The Magic of Real Revision (and How to Teach It)." *The Graide Network*. 22 Jan 2019,

https://www.thegraidenetwork.com/blog-all/revision-strategies. Accessed 22 June 2020.

Rachel Roderick

English 5585

Dr. Murray

7/06/2020

<center>Revision Strategies to Encourage Writers</center>

An Introduction

I don't like hugs. I enjoy ordering the same items when I go out to eat. If I find a clothing store, I will patronize that establishment until they are out of business. My idea of a fun weekend is reading a book on my porch...without interruption from my neighbors. It's my comfort zone. As you can see, my comfort zone has a small width. One might call it a comfort bubble as it is easily penetrable, frequently broken, and quickly repaired with a quick breath in and out. It's important to recognize this to understand how I landed on revising as a research topic.

When I graduated Western Illinois University in 2009, I had taken classes with professors I liked and with whom I grew comfortable. Immediately I began teaching at the high school I attended (see that bubble again?). As a first year teacher with extra curriculars, I put my Master's on hold. In 2012 I decided to start taking classes, and yes, I decided to head to my alma mater WIU. What I found was disappointing. There was little guidance, the classes weren't applicable, and the expectations worked against a distance learner, so I stopped.

Last summer I decided it was time to renew my efforts. This time, I decided that WIU wasn't the road for me. Eastern Illinois University seemed to have what I was looking for. Thus far, the classes I've taken have focused on writing, and with each class I've begged the question: Why isn't this required of all English Education majors?

That question guided my consideration of what to pursue as an I-Search topic, and as I considered I realized that each class I've taken at EIU has led me to seriously consider revision as a valued part of the

writing process, which is a concept I never received instruction on in my undergrad or professional development.

In my first class, Responding to Writing, Dr. Taylor guided me through how to dialogue with students through writing assignments. Both intensive reading and application through exercises allowed me to have someone review and critique how I engage with writers. Part of that discussion revolved around letting students respond to my dialogue. To allow students to learn from their mistakes in writing, there has to be an opportunity to continue a conversation, make decisions, and implement further exploration of an idea through writing. The class opened my eyes to a different form of engagement through writing.

My second class, Professional Editing, was geared toward the trade, but Dr. Fredrick made sure to adapt concepts for teachers. In this case, I received the technical instruction I lacked in my undergrad. In my final project for this class, I began researching different areas of response to student writing, and what I found was that all roads (or most) lead to revision. I began constructing a Concise Writing unit that focuses on what students need to know WHEN they write in order to efficiently revise. This class helped me to see that we assume students have been taught how to revise, when most of the time they've been handed guided questions or given brief feedback with no real direction for a particular writing prompt.

Which brings me to the National Writing Project. Because of the natural progression of the last two classes, it feels right to further research revision strategies. I started to engage some of the principles I had learned (like extending revision time), and I saw an increase in writing engagement. However, I didn't quite get an increase in commitment to revising. I'd like to see students not only revise, but start to make significant changes to their work.

It is my hope that through this I-Search, my comfort zone is again expanded. I know it will be a push for my students, as well. Thus, I began my research with the question: What best instructional practices guide students through the revision process?

Research and Reflections

I began my search with the annotated bibliography I co-created last semester. There were a few key articles among the lot that felt like a good place to start and review. "Negotiating the Margins: Some Principles

for Responding to Our Students Writing, Some Strategies for Helping Students Read Our Comments" by Elizabeth Hodges stood out as a solid piece to revisit. In this text, Hodges provides an overview of her study where she worked with students and teachers in deciphering what happens in the margins of a student's writing. In this case, she had instructors record a narration of their comments and thought processes as they provided student feedback on papers. She then had students record their verbal responses to reading instructors' comments (Hodges 77-78). What she found was that most instructors were missing opportunities to have a conversation and give guidance through the margins. As it is a one-on-one opportunity, it should be a healthy dialogue; however, most students found comments to be too brief to understand what the teacher was suggesting they do to improve. It led to frustration on both ends. From her research Hodges makes four recommendations. At the heart of these recommendations is that teachers need to teach students how to revise after receiving comments by modeling the process. The teacher should complete the writing assignments and let students offer feedback (Hodges 84-85). Further, teachers need to allow students to respond to the marginal notes--ask questions, receive clarification, argue a point... Then teachers need to give students time IN CLASS to make revisions. That way there is an expert to guide them through the process.

Next I looked at another source I had previously encountered: Glenda Pritchett's "First-Year Writing: A Student-Centered Paradigm," where she discusses an intensive program used at her university. Students are given an orientation for entry-level college composition courses; they are then allowed to choose whether or not they want to enter the more intensive program. This program means more time in class. The instruction involves the same texts and assignments as the other class; however, it allows for more scaffolding and small-group/one-on-one work to build students' writing skills. Students receive credit for their class, but the idea is that they are spending their work time in class with someone who can help them navigate the materials (Pritchett 65). Instructors focus on providing positive feedback in the form of formative comments to strengthen students' writing; grading is based on the fulfillment of student goals as opposed to a traditional rubric. The success of the program showed through the progression of writing the students in the intensive group experienced. Pritchett's class yielded three points to be considered. First, some students need more time and help than others. Second,

just because students need more time and help, doesn't mean the texts, writing, or instruction should be dumbed down. Finally, continuous revision and summative assessment became the grading norm (Pritchett 67-68).

This took me to search a little more about portfolios (outside of my previous annotated bibliography). Kathryn Howard's "Making the Writing Portfolio Real" chronicles her review of using the portfolio in consecutive years with middle school students. In her article, she talks about the process of the portfolio, which includes student choice in picking strong pieces of writing, as well as selecting a specific piece to reflect upon. They start the process in February; students are introduced to the concept and can begin to think about what will go into the portfolio; they then also have this portfolio in mind as they continue new writing tasks. Further, they are given dedicated time to work on the portofolio (Howard 5-6). This is more than a collection of the students' favorite pieces. It also includes guided reflection on some of their writing. This helps students see their progression throughout the year, and over time if the school engages in this.

The portfolio began to feel like a natural next step, so I began to search for more intensive methods of approaching revision of a piece for a portfolio. This brought me to Tanya Baker's "A Thousand Writers: Voices of the NWP: Teaching Writers, Not Writing." National Writing Project colleagues implemented a program at their school which engaged students in writing every single day, all day for fifteen days. In other words, writing became the sole effort, a communal effort at their school. Students were given one due date and opportunities for feedback from peers, multiple teachers, and professional writers (Baker 108). This allowed students to truly engage in accepting or rejecting suggestions and seeing that not all writers prioritize or make the same suggestions. Writing also became much more personalized. Students were able to work in their own zones (Baker 109). In other words, writing really isn't supposed to be one-size-fits-all, so when we have a day for organization, a day for drafting, a day for editing, that doesn't work for all students. In this program, some students ended with four drafts while others ended with eight. It became a process that met the needs of each student. Finally, there was no traditional grade given to the writing. It was more of a reflective commentary on the piece and the process.

The final articles gave a little more insight, but this is where I really began to formulate what I have learned and where I believe this research can take my instruction.

Future Plans

With this information, there are several conclusions that shape my belief in best practices for revision. First, I think there is an assumption that students have been taught how to translate editing marks and teacher commentary, and I believe that is false. Teachers need to model the entire process, and students need to be instructed on what editing marks mean. Teachers need to communicate better. There's really few excuses in a digital age. Commentary can be left in the margins in great detail. That brings me to the type of commentary teachers should be focusing upon. It is imperative that commentary be encouraging, include explicit direction, and provide examples--especially if students are receiving direction from only one person of authority. The commentary should be treated more like a dialogue, and students need to know they have agency; they have control over the suggestions given and how those do or do not become a part of the composition.

That conversation cannot stop within the margins; teachers also need to give students the opportunity to talk this through in class, one-on-one. When there's no room to continue the conversation, students will not invest in the revision process. Similarly, students have to be given the time to implement those revisions, preferably in class. If the majority of commentary is given after a final draft, then students have no motivation or opportunity to truly revise. Strategies that can be employed to effectively engage students include some controversial steps. John Warner's *Why They Can't Write* suggests that removing traditional ranking as a form of grading encourages students to invest in revision as part of the writing process because there is no longer a checklist of tasks to complete to get the grade (213). It provides space for students to become agents of their own development. Similarly, Jeffrey Sommers presents the idea of the student-memo as a reflective tool in his article "Behind the Paper...:"; in this case, the student has agency over what type of growth they'd like to focus on in their own writing (78-79). I take this to mean that the rubrics we value so much as assessors are less valuable than we think. It can definitely be a guiding tool, but there's so much to focus on, that students can become overwhelmed. If they have choice over what gets their undivided attention we may see more and quality progress.

Susan Sipple's "Ideas in Practice…" discusses the use of audio commentary as a form of feedback for students. She cites Nancy Sommers when sharing that teachers are often overwhelmed by the need to complete

one-on-one conferencing, and audio commentary can serve that purpose and release the teacher from some of the pressures of fitting necessary comments into a brief face-to-face discussion (Sipple 22). Sipple's study, which included providing handwritten commentary on a first draft and audio commentary on another first draft, showed that ten out of ten students preferred audio commentary and agreed it increased their confidence as writers. Students found the commentary to be more detailed and more encouraging, which increased their motivation to write (Sipple 24-25).

Revision has to be taught as a process just as important as the initial invention and drafting processes. It has to be more than a one day peer-editing session. Students don't have the confidence to peer-edit nor confidence in their peers' abilities to provide solid commentary. I consider how long it's taken me to develop my current response and editing skills, and I'm finding through my own education to be subpar in directing students. High school students are going to be less polished and confident; therefore, it's imperative that I give my guidance before giving a final grade on a composition.

With this info, I plan to implement the following changes to my instruction:

1) Commentary on essays will be more thorough. It will tell enough that if I am unable to conference with a student, they still have a clear idea of what needs to be done, how to do it, and an example that could be incorporated or modified.

2) Revision will be taught either in conjunction with the writing steps (ex: during organization time at the beginning, I would tell them how we will revise after a first draft), during the writing process, or as a separate unit.

3) Students will be given more time and flexibility to implement suggested revisions. Once those revisions are done, the students' grades will improve. An overall grade will be negatively impacted if revisions are not completed. If a student wants to continue revisions throughout a semester, they can and will be eligible for an increased grade.

4) I will implement an end-of-year portfolio that allows students to select their favorite pieces from the year. These pieces will be revised, and one will be accompanied by a revision memo, where students

discuss why they selected the piece and how it developed over the year. Students may opt for a digital or physical portfolio.

None of this will be easy to accomplish, especially if a transition to online learning is necessary. However, I am confident that my comfort zone has expanded, and with that my students will feel more comfortable as writers.

Bibliography

Baker, Tanya N., et al. "A Thousand Writers: Voices of the NWP: Teaching Writers, Not

Writing." *The English Journal*, vol. 105, no. 4, 2016, pp. 108–110. *JSTOR*,

www.jstor.org/stable/26359241. Accessed 01 Jul. 2020.

Hodges, Elizabeth. "Negotiating the Margins: Some Principles for Responding to Our Students'

Writing, Some Strategies for Helping Students Read Our Comments." *New Directions for*

Teaching and Learning, no. 69, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Spring 1997, pp. 77-89. doi:10.1002/tl6907.

EBSCOhost, 2003, Accessed 29 Jun. 2020.

Howard, Kathryn. "Making the Writing Portfolio Real." *The Quarterly.* Pp. 4-7.

https://archive.nwp.org/cs/public/download/nwp_file/860/Making_the_Writing_Portfoli

_Real.pdf?x-r=pcfile_d. Accessed 01 Jul. 2020.

Lee, Chien Ching, and Seng Chee Tan. "Scaffolding writing using feedback in students' graphic

organizers -- novice writers' relevance of ideas and cognitive loads." *Educational Media*

International, Vol. 47, No. 2, June 2010, pp. 135-152. Accessed 30 Jun. 2020.

Pritchett, Glenda. "First-Year Writing: A Student-Centered Paradigm." *The International Journal*

of Humanities, Vol. 8, No. 8, 2010, Common Ground, www.humanties-journal.com.

Accessed 30 Jun. 2020.

Ruegg, Rachael. "The Effect of Assessment of Process After Receiving Teacher Feedback."

Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, vol. 41, no. 2, Mar. 2016, pp.199-212.

EBSCOhost, doi:10.1080/02602938.2014.998168. Accessed 01 July 2020.

Sipple, Susan. "Ideas in Practice: Developmental Writers' Attitudes toward Audio and Written

Feedback." *Journal of Developmental Education*, vol. 30, no. 3, Spring 2007, pp. 22–31.

EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=25122571&site=ehost-live.

Accessed 09 July 2020.

Sommers, Jeffrey. "Behind the Paper: Using the Student-Teacher Memo." *College Composition*

and Communication, vol. 39, no. 1, Feb. 1988: pp. 77-80.

Treglia, Maria O. "Teacher-Written Commentary in College Writing Composition: How Does it

Impact Student Revisions?", *Composition Studies,* Vol. 37, no. 1, Spring 2009, pp.67-86.

EBSCOhost, https://web-a-ebscohost-

com.proxy1.library.eiu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=640c11ce-67e4-4bb1-a82d-

4d370a234005%40sdc-v-sessmgr03. Accessed 02 July 2020.

Warner, John. *Why They Can't Write: Killing the Five-Paragraph Essay*. John Hopkins

University Press, 2018.

Hannah Schult

Dr. Murray

ENG 5585

9 July 2020

<p style="text-align:center">The Use of iSearch in Middle School Classrooms</p>

Introduction

In my current teaching position, I teach English, primarily writing and grammar, to sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. In my three years of teaching, each year I have taught research papers to each grade in some capacity. Typically towards the end of the school year, I pull out the notecards, come up with a topic, and we start our formal research paper unit. Without fail, every year I dread teaching this unit, and my students dread it even more. So what can I do about it? I cannot simply forego teaching research, as it is a skill that students need to have for high school, but I just cannot continue teaching it in the same traditional way that I learned it and have been teaching it for three years.

After learning more about iSearch papers and writing one in multiple classes during my time at Eastern Illinois University, I started to wonder how I could integrate iSearch papers into my middle school classroom. The iSearch paper feels natural. It indulges our natural curiosity in the topic selection process, it allows for creativity in the research process, and takes a less formal approach while writing. Rather than feeling unnatural, stuffy, or just plain boring, it allows for space for authentic research and learning to take place.

The topic of this paper will be the use of iSearch papers in the middle school classroom. I want to learn how I can use this more authentic form of writing to teach my students the research skills necessary. This paper will form the basis of my research unit for this upcoming school year. First, I will research the use of iSearch papers, their benefits, and potential drawbacks. Next, I will research the impact of allowing student choice and authentic research in the middle school classroom. Finally, I will come up with the process that I will use to implement iSearch papers in my middle school classroom this year.

Research and Findings

My research began with the article shared by Dr. Murray. "I-Search in the Age of Information" opened my eyes to the idea of using iSearch papers in the middle school classroom. The author, Huntington Lyman, starts her article by giving a short summary of the iSearch paper. It "requires the student to do independent personal research," choose their own topic, "tell the story of the research," and "reflect on what he or she learned" (Lyman, 62). Rather than simply restating information that is found, the iSearch paper requires students to "show evidence of critical thought" (Lyman, 63). This information, along with what I knew from experiencing it myself, were enough to sell me on the idea of using iSearch papers with middle school students.

Lyman continues her article by explaining her procedure of implementing this type of research and writing into her own middle school classroom. She starts with the caveat that she did not assign this project with only one due date; rather, she broke the assignment into smaller pieces, making it more manageable for middle school students. This was important for me to note, as this was one of my biggest concerns with the implementation of iSearch with middle schoolers. Lyman details how she "divided the paper into three sections" and then spent "approximately one class a week dedicated to tracking progress and providing instruction" (Lyman, 64). From this information, I took that Lyman was teaching other content and the iSearch paper was an ongoing assignment. While reading about Lyman's process was helpful, I found her findings the most interesting.

Lyman expresses that "for many students in the class, the iSearch project represented their best work of the year" (Lyman, 65). Her students were engaged, completing independent research, interviewing individuals, and taking ownership of their learning and writing. She expresses that many of her students learned the value of personal connections through interviews, and learned more through those connections than through the Internet. Lyman's reflections on using iSearch papers in middle school convinced me and had me wanting to learn more, so my research continued.

The next article I found discussed the use of iSearch papers in high school. This article, "Researching the I-Search Paper: An Exploration of Analytical Thinking and Student Learning," discussed the criticisms of iSearch papers, as well as looked at a study of sixty four high school students who completed iSearch papers. The biggest criticism "is that it lacks rigor and that by foregoing the traditional research paper in favor of the

iSearch, students will not be adequately prepared" (Muchmore, 53). In simpler terms, most critics think that while it may be more enjoyable, it will not equip students with the necessary skills. The authors of this article decided to explore that criticism by studying the writing of sixty four high school students.

In the first year of the study, Maggie, the teacher, assigned a formal research paper. The students had little control over topics or format, and the papers showed that. They were "formulaic--usually written in a detached, third person style and devoid of original analysis or evidence of learning" (Muchmore, 55). However, in the second and third years of the study, Maggie began implementing elements of the iSearch paper into her research instruction. Rather than finding papers lacking critical thought, the findings were quite opposite. Instead, the papers "tended to show more evidence of analytical thinking and student learning than those from the first year" (Muchmore, 58). These students also began taking more ownership, showed a higher level of engagement, and were engaging in more critical thinking than they were with the traditional research paper.

After reading these articles, along with others, I began to start thinking about what it would look like to implement iSearch writing in my classroom. I could envision a classroom where my students are excited about research, because they get to choose a topic that they are curious about. I could picture my students making meaningful connections to their research, and writing in a way that sounds and feels authentic and natural to themselves. All of this research helped me to start to form a basis of how I would implement iSearch into my classroom.

Implementation

Rather than writing a narrative of my plan for implementing iSearch papers into my classroom, I decided this space would be best used for a lesson plan. This lesson plan shows a rough plan of how I will use iSearch papers in my middle school classroom.

Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2

  Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.8

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

Objectives

- Students will be able to:

  - Write an organized, informative text on the topic of their choice.

  - Gather relevant information to their topic through a variety of research methods.

  - Assess the credibility of their sources.

  - Properly cite their research.

Overview

My goal for the iSearch paper is that students will engage in a more authentic form of research. For this project, it will be divided into four sections: topic selection, gathering research, informative writing, and reflection. Each section will have deadlines, but the process will be decided upon by the individual. Rather than assigning topics, I will choose one broad topic that is yet to be determined, and students will choose their subtopic. This allows me to provide some structure, without dictating what students are writing. I envision this project to be an ongoing project for most of one quarter of school.

Procedure

1. Introduce iSearch papers. (1 class period)

2. Brainstorm potential topics for iSearch papers. (1 class period)

3. Gather research. (Multiple class periods)

4. Introduce the format of iSearch papers and begin writing. (Multiple class periods)

5. Write the reflection portion of the iSearch paper. (Multiple class periods)

6. Revise and edit the iSearch paper. (Multiple class periods)

7. Publish and share the iSearch paper (1 class period)

Due to the ongoing nature of the iSearch paper, this project would span several weeks, if not longer. This is a rough outline of the procedures I would use. Students would be working at their own pace, completing the steps, revising and editing along the way, and submitting the smaller sections to me based on the deadlines I give.

Conclusion

When I was first introduced to iSearch papers, I will admit that I was slightly confused. It took me some time to be comfortable with the idea of writing research in a less formal tone. However, now that I have written several as well as researched the benefits of them, I am sold on iSearch papers. They are a more authentic form of research, and allow for a more natural tone of writing. I can see that my middle school students would especially benefit from the choice they would receive in this project, as well as the narrative style of this type of research.

Writing this iSearch paper really helped me to think through how I could implement iSearch papers into my middle school classroom as a replacement for a more formal research paper. It is important to base the iSearch paper around standards and objectives. I chose several that I would typically cover with a formal research paper. This allows me to keep the iSearch paper focused and use it in a purposeful way. Another important aspect of the iSearch paper is allowing students to choose their topic. The authentic feel of the iSearch paper can easily be lost if students do not have a choice in what they are writing about. The goal of using iSearch papers is for students to be engaged in research that is captivating and thought provoking. If this is the case, it can improve critical thinking and help them to truly learn, rather than just restating facts. Finally, it is important for students to take part in reflection at the end of the process. Students should reflect on what they learned, how they will use that new information, and what they would still like to learn about their topic. This metacognition is powerful and allows students to deepen their learning even more.

Researching iSearch papers has taught me so much and influenced me to try a new style of teaching research. I now have an outline of how I can implement iSearch papers into my classroom and I look forward to further developing this project. However, I still have some work to do before teaching this to my students. I still need to develop instructional materials for this unit, gather examples for student analysis, develop a rubric, and

come up with a broad topic for students to choose a subtopic from. I typically teach research in the third quarter, so this will be an ongoing project for me until it is time to use it later this year.

Bibliography

"English Language Arts Standards " Writing " Grade 7." *English Language Arts Standards "*

    Writing " Grade 7 | Common Core State Standards Initiative, www.corestandards.org/ELA-

    Literacy/W/7/.

Kaszyca, Mary, and Angela M. Krueger. "Collaborative Voices: Reflections on the I-Search

    Project." *The English Journal*, vol. 83, no. 1, 1994, pp. 62–65. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/820962.

Lyman, Huntington. "I-Search in the Age of Information." *English Journal*, vol. 95, no. 4, Mar.

    2004, pp. 62–67, https://secure.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/EJ/0954-

    march06/EJ0954Information.pdf.

Muchmore, James A., et al. "Researching the I-Search Paper: An Exploration of Analytical

    Thinking and Student Learning," *Journal of Teaching Writing*, vol. 19, no.1, pp. 52–75.,

    file:///Users/hannahschult/Downloads/1273-Article%20Text-3620-1-10-20100929.pdf.

Carrie Theobald

English 5011

Dr. Murray

July 9, 2020

I-Search Paper: Student Response to Formative Feedback on Writing Assignments

Introduction

Every so often my district will do a big writing initiative: whole-school writing prompts, district-wide writing rubrics, teacher-led professional development sessions. Each one of these has fizzled out as it has become clearer how little we truly understand how to move students forward with their writing skills. And after all the big talk from the district and the content-area teachers, everyone loses interest, and the English teachers are once again the only ones truly invested in teaching student writing. With that being said, only English teachers can truly appreciate the insatiable monster that is grading writing. It never ends and triggers what some call "grading fatigue." This is a syndrome in which teachers have all the best intentions to thoughtfully grade student writing until they find themselves overwhelmed with too many essays to grade and too little time to do it in.

"Grading fatigue" has gotten the best of me more times than I can recall. I start off grading a stack of essays with a high level of motivation. However, this motivation starts to wane the more I grade. Students whose essays are at the top of the stack are rewarded with meticulous comments on both the essay itself and the rubric while students whose essays are among the last ones graded receive few, if any, comments and checkmarks on the rubric. I was also finding that even students who did receive ample feedback rarely did anything with it. Our district has a liberal retake policy. I allow my students to do as many revisions as they would like; however, students rarely take me up on it. To be honest, I have no evidence that students are even reading the comments that take hours to write.

So, I decided to look into this. What is the most efficient way to offer student feedback, and what type of feedback are students most receptive to?

Description of Search

When I first started researching for this project, I was imagining finding checklists and indexes of symbols that would transform the way I graded writing. I specifically included the word "formative" into my

searches because I wanted to transform the way I graded writing into not only an efficient machine, but also a tool by which my students would become better, more reflective writers. However, I was surprised by the search results I received. Rather than the concrete strategies I expected, instead I found articles about the mode of feedback and how students respond to that mode. I also found research about how students felt about feedback and how those feelings can transform their perception of teacher comments. So, it was clear that my focus should not be on what to write on student papers, but the mode by which I would deliver these comments, and the response my students would have to these comments.

What I Found Out

Immediately I stumbled across a couple of research studies which suggested that audio feedback was significantly better received by students than written feedback. While written feedback is often well-received by students, it generally does nothing to improve student writing. (Denton 52) The author also notes that this type of feedback is what he refers to as *developed* which means that it goes beyond phrases here and there and requires a significant time commitment from the teacher. While students appreciate this, if it does nothing to improve their writing then what is the point? Denton also notes several studies in which teachers use audio recordings instead of comprehensive written feedback. Students reported that they felt more confidence about their ability to revise their paper as well as a sense of personal attention from the instructor (53). Indeed, a case study conducted by Denton corroborated this. He also notes that verbally recording feedback via screencast is less time-consuming than written feedback.

A second study conducted by Cavanaugh and Song delved more deeply into how both students and instructors felt about audio feedback and written comments. They found that teachers who relied on written feedback were more likely to comment upon what they called "micro" concerns ie grammar and sentence structure. While teachers who used an audio method of feedback focused more on the writing itself, "global concerns" (123). Students' preference was dependent upon what the focus of their revision was but by-and-large it was reported that they preferred audio feedback (124).

A common thread through these and other articles was the issue of how students feel about their instructors' feedback. It became clear that students need to feel that their teachers are genuinely interested in their improved writing, and that the comments made by the instructors are not construed as negative. Several articles stressed the importance of instructors being "good listeners, observers and communicators"

(Horstemanhof 63). The importance of this could not be stressed enough. After all, as Macklin points out, many students have had negative experiences with writing throughout their schooling (89). Their teachers have provided unhelpful and, often, unkind feedback which serve to alienate teachers from students and renders any productive feedback useless. Macklin also points that students need to be able to participate in a dialogue with the teacher about the feedback using vocabulary that the student understands otherwise the teacher risks alienating the student (90). Written, impersonal feedback then only serves to stifle student voice as they write, not to master their skills, but to appease their instructor.

Conclusion

When I first started researching this topic, I hoped to find concrete ideas which would allow me to give beneficial and compassionate feedback to my often-struggling writers. And while my research took a different direction than what I had thought, I did come up with several concrete ideas that I can immediately implement in my classroom. The first of which is using screencast. I am familiar with a free version of screencast called Screencastomatic. With this tool, I can not only add verbal comments to a student's paper, but I can also show them the actual text. This visual combined with the audio might make my feedback clearer to the student. With the great uncertainty about in-person learning this fall, this is a perfect time to implement this strategy. I also need to be more cognizant of my students' relationship with writing. In her article, Macklin suggests having the students make a collage at the beginning of the year depicting their relationship with writing. From this I could start a dialogue with the students about their negative writing experiences and determine where they believe they need the most help. This could be done with discussion or anonymously with a survey. One of the most important points that numerous authors made was to allow the students choice. Some students might prefer to get their feedback in the traditional written way while others want an audio file with teacher comments. Students should be allowed that choice. I need to start thinking of writing feedback as a collaboration with students rather than a dreaded task that I need to complete. A final suggestion which I took from the research which will make the writing process a more collaborative, conversational one between student and teacher is to have students reflect on the writing process before they turn in their final copy of the paper. This way I can read their concerns and address them in my feedback rather than offer them impersonal comments.

In conclusion, I was glad that my research led me to further reflect on my own practices as well as directed me to concrete ideas that I can immediately implement in my classroom. It is clear that there is no one-size-fits-

all response to student writing. Rather we must consider each student and his or her own journey and relationship with writing.

Bibliography

Cavenaugh, Andrew J, and Liyan Song. "Audio Feedback versus Written Feedback: Instructors' and Students' Perspectives." *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, vol. 10, no. 1, Mar. 2014, pp. 122–138., doi:https://jolt.merlot.org/vol10no1/cavanaugh_0314.pdf.

Denton, David W. "Using Screen Capture Feedback to Improve Academic Performance." *TechTrends*, vol. 58, no. 6, 2014, pp. 51–56., doi:10.1007/s11528-014-0803-0.

Horstmanshof, Louise, and Sonya Brownie. "A Scaffolded Approach to Discussion Board Use for Formative Assessment of Academic Writing Skills." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2013, pp. 61–73., doi:10.1080/02602938.2011.604121.

Lafontana, Virginia R. "Throw Away That Correcting Pen." *The English Journal*, vol. 85, no. 6, 1996, p. 71., doi:10.2307/819831.

Macklin, Tialitha. "Compassionate Writing Response: Using Dialogic Feedback to Encourage Student Voice in the First-Year Composition Classroom." *Journal of Response to Writing*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2016, pp. 88–105., doi:https://journalrw.org/index.php/jrw/article/view/60/37.

Price, Margaret, et al. "Feedback : All That Effort, but What Is the Effect?" *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2010, pp. 277–289., doi:10.1080/02602930903541007.

Anita Theodore
Professor Robin Murray
ENG 5585
9 July 2020

<div align="center">One-Stop Shopping: A Look into Single-Point Rubrics for the Writing Classroom</div>

Introduction:

The Humanities Divisions in my district are revisiting senior year electives. All courses are up for review, revision, and reincarnation; in short, no sacred cows will be spared. Sadly, these changes could mean that many beloved courses, units, lessons, and materials will be forever lost. Excitedly, these changes could also dislodge several thorns that have been stuck in English teachers' sides for years, and for me and many of my English teacher colleagues, one of those thorns is writing rubrics.

Effective feedback is specific and timely, and in an effort to provide effective feedback to our students, some of our required rubrics grew to epic proportions. Yes, the feedback was specific, but for me, my feedback became less and less timely. The rubrics turned into a labyrinth of columns and rows, boxes and numbers, skills and qualifiers--oh, those adjectives and adverbs are the worst! The words that the rubric used to differentiate students' mastery of certain writing skills, including "fully," "approaching," and "partially," became a game of self-doubt for me because there really is no significant difference between "approaching" and "partially." It took so much time for me to navigate and complete the rubrics because I would often have to return to the papers to feel confident in my evaluation that the very tool I used to communicate students' growth became a Herculean task that took hours for me to complete.

If all the classes are up for review and revision, then so should the methods that English teachers use to evaluate the writing that takes place in those classes. Just as fresh classes may better meet the needs of our contemporary students, fresh approaches to providing effective feedback on students' writing may better meet the responsibilities of contemporary teachers. This started my curiosity about an approach called single-point rubrics.

Description of the search:

My research focused on the following research questions (RQ):
1. What are single-point rubrics?
2. What are their benefits for teachers and students?
3. What are their drawbacks for teachers and students?

My years as a literacy coach familiarized me with a wonderful blog called *Cult of Pedagogy,* and this is where I first learned about single-point rubrics; however, since I was no longer teaching and teachers weren't approaching me for rubric troubleshooting, I didn't have the opportunity to familiarize myself with this kind of rubric until now. Thankfully, Jennifer Gonzalez's blog also included a link to a much-needed research paper that looked at single-point rubrics' use in classrooms. Now that I'm addressing my curiosity with specific research questions, I also turned to Edutopia.org, another resource that I commonly used when I was coaching because the site is known for its accessible information.

What I found out:

In *the Cult of Pedagogy* blog "Meet the Single Point Rubric," Jennifer Gonzalez shares the single-point rubric below. to help define it for readers and emphasize its simplicity.

Gonzalez acknowledges my experiences with traditional rubrics when she recognizes the amount of time they take away from teachers and calling them "convoluted," but then her blog shifts attention to the most important people involved in the feedback process: the students. Prior to completing research, I was concerned with the ways traditional rubrics impacted me and my time; I didn't consider if they were working for my students. This made me edit my research questions so that RQ2 and RQ3 includes benefits and drawbacks for teachers and students. The most impactful point she makes is, "[teachers] no longer have to spend precious time thinking up all the different ways students could fail to meet expectations" because it made me take another look at the meaningless qualifiers that appear throughout the traditional rubrics I'm required to use. Those qualifiers aren't there to empower my students; they're there to find ways to knock students from one achievement column to another. Because of their simplicity, Gonzalez explains that students are more likely to read the expectations featured in the rubrics when working on their writing assignments, which is another purpose I hadn't considered; rubrics are students' GPS for success if they're accessible. Gonzalez does recognize that single-point rubrics, " allowed no space for actually pointing out when the student hit the standard, apart from maybe circling or highlighting the middle column," and she provides the modified version below as an option to address this area of need, explaining, "With this format [see below], teachers can pinpoint where the student is on each descriptor, then offer feedback, either constructive, positive, or both.

In Edutopia's article "6 Reasons to Try a Single-Point Rubric," Danah Hashem echoes much of Gonzalez's information, including the ways the rubric is student focused and the aforementioned limitation, but she also encourages me to have a paradigm shift about rubrics. Maybe rubrics can be more than a tool that provides feedback, "The ideology behind the single-point rubric inherently moves classroom grading away from quantifying and streamlining student work, shifting student and teacher focus in the direction of celebrating creativity and intellectual risk-taking." Hashem is correct: I've never had a student say, "That rubric really helped me become a better writer," but I've had students walk away from a troubleshooting conversation saying, "I've got a better idea on how I'm going to write this." All the tools I use to inform and support my students should be just as helpful as I am; thus, as Hashem identifies another single-point rubric benefit, I want a rubric that, "creates space for our students to grow as scholars and individuals who take ownership of their learning."

Jarene Fluckiger's "Single Point Rubric: A Tool for Responsible Student Self-Assessment" presents the benefits of single-point rubrics with specificity, which I appreciate because it helps me prepare myself for those conversations I know I'm going to have with administrators, peers, and parents. Gonzalez's and Hashem's works are good to reach for when I want to know I'm on the right track whereas Fluckiger's work is good to reach for when I'm having conversations with others to lead them to the right track. Fluckiger's study attaches the shift from traditional rubrics to single-point rubrics to the deep-rooted tenets about feedback, and these are the very academic hooks on which I need to hang my conversations when considering alternatives to traditional rubrics. Fluckiger emphasizes, "The single point rubric is a tool for each student to indicate the following: a) I know where I'm going; b) I know where I am now; c) I know how to get there; and, d) I know how to go beyond" (19). Gonzalez's and Hashem's works highlight how student-centered single-point rubrics are, but Fluckiger's work puts an academic spotlight emphasis on it.

Fluckiger's work is not only more academic, but it also shares benefits that Gonzalez and Hashem do not identify. For example, Fluckiger explains that teachers work collaboratively with students to create and/or revise the single-point rubric, and this difference makes me wonder if this is a common defining characteristic of a single-point rubric, or if this is just a practice that

Fluckiger prefers.

Fluckiger also explains how the single-point rubric includes space for students to evaluate themselves and include evidence to support how they've met the criteria (see example below). This is the biggest departure between Gonzalez and Hashem and Fluckiger: Gonzalez and Hashem feature single-point rubrics as a summative tool, and Fluckiger features them as a formative tool because the single-point rubric's purpose is, "primarily developmental (to further learning) and not summative (for scoring)....[Its purpose] is to provide specific written feedback on various aspects of students' work that will help them know how to improve….[It is] not a tool for scoring or grading" (20). This explains the differences between the rubric Gonzalez shares in her blog and Fluckiger includes in her study. The way Fluckiger explains single-point rubrics allows students to improve their work because the feedback helps them set goals so that they can move from where their skills currently are to where they want them to be. Fluckiger's article was published before Gonzalez and Hashem published their works, and this suggests that the way teachers can use single-point rubrics has evolved over time, but Fluckiger's heavy emphasis on using it for formative feedback over a summative grade does make me revisit my first thoughts about using it as a rubric for summative writing assessments. In short, the feedback feature encourages revising, or growth, along the way, which is the purpose of formative feedback.

Fluckiger includes the findings of a collective case study as well. As the professor of a graduate course in classroom assessment at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Fluckiger has access to teachers' action research which focuses on using single-point rubrics to enhance student learning. Fluckiger selected 10 action research reports to complete for her own collective case study research on single-point rubrics. It's uncertain how many of the reports feature high school classrooms with a specific focus on writing, and this makes a difference to me because those are the defining characteristics that apply to me and my peers. She does highlight one high school English teacher who used single-point rubrics with her literature students, and this teacher noted in her action research that her students shifted from, "'what is my grade' to 'what have I learned,'" and, "'I have been working for the past three years to shift student focus to learning, so this was a monumental step in the process'" (22). For me a fellow teacher's observations are powerful when I consider new approaches in my own classroom, and I must admit that this teacher's first-hand observations are powerful; however, I can't base this important instructional decision on 10 action research papers because it's too limited. Additionally, Fluckiger doesn't include any of the students' reactions to the single-point rubrics in the findings even though she does share a few of the teachers' reactions to the change. It seems like an odd piece of information to exclude, especially considering how student-focused single-point rubrics are.

Conclusion:
Researching single-point rubrics showed me that there is more work for me to do with this tool before I implement it in my classes. My research tells me with a lot of certainty that single-point rubrics are an important tool for me to consider because it's a more effective tool for both me and my students. Yet, what remains unclear is when can I use this tool and what impact will it have on my students. To answer these questions, I need additional information that will be helpful to me, my specific goals, and my students' specific needs, and the best way I know how to do this is to turn my own classroom into a place for research. These are the steps I'm going to take to make this happen.

1. I'm going to enlist the help of my school librarian to revisit academic search engines in search of research articles concerning studies about single-point rubrics. I don't need additional informative articles about single-point rubrics, but I do need studies, if they're available. More specifically, I'd like to see studies that a) feature high school classrooms;

b) Writing content area classrooms, not just writing assignments; and, c) include students' reactions.

2. I'm going to share my iSearch paper and additional studies with my division leader.

3. I'm going to ask for permission to conduct my own research use single-point rubrics as both a formative and summative tool in my first semester senior elective College and Career Writing (CCW) class.

a. I anticipate my division leader to be reluctant to grant me permission because this class is brand new in the district, a lot of time was spent creating assignment-specific rubrics for each unit, and this class was created with the expectation that the students completing the class will then enroll in a dual credit Writing course. Thus, the rubrics featured in CCW mimic the rubrics students will see in the dual credit class, which is a class that will be heavily influenced by our community college's expectations. (This class is still being developed as I write this iSearch.)

4. Should my division leader not grant me permission to use my CCW class as a place for research on single-point rubrics, then I'll ask for permission to conduct the research in my senior elective second semester Best Sellers class. This, of course, will not be an ideal setting, but it is an option.

5. I haven't brainstormed all of the steps for the study, but I do know I want to emphasize my students' impressions of the traditional rubric and the single-point rubric, which was information that was missing from Fluckiger's work. Specifically, I'd like for them to compare and contrast the writing process that supports a traditional rubric with the writing process that supports a single-point rubric.

6. Although I haven't brainstormed all of the steps for the study, I do know that I want to include certain elements in the writing process, thanks to my experiences in 5585, particularly my peers' demonstrations and discussions. For example, I know that I'd like to try recorded verbal feedback, which is something that Carrie Theobald featured in her work. I would also like to include elements from the Creative Writing Marathon in the writing process.

Frequently when I conduct research, I end up having new questions, and in this case, it doesn't discourage me from wanting to finish the inquiry journey that I started on because, ultimately, it means I'm going to provide my students with better experiences, and it emphasizes something I've always expressed to my students: We're all learners, even me.

Bibliography

Fluckiger, Jarene. "Single Point Rubric: A Tool for Responsible Student Self-Assessment."
University of Nebraska Omaha Teacher Education Faculty Publications:
Department of Teacher Education , Summer 2010, 18-25.

Gonzalez, Jennifer. "Meet the Single Point Rubric." *Cult of Pedagogy* ,
www.cultofpedagogy.com/single-point-rubric/. Accessed 27 June 2020.

Hashem, Danah. "6 Reasons to Try a Single-Point Rubric." *Eductopia.com,* www.edutopia.org/article/6-reasons-try-single-point-rubric. Accessed 27 Jun 2020.