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Re-envisioning Professional Development for The Teaching of Writing: Lessons Learned From The National Writing Project and Where We Go From Here

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RE-ENVISIONING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR THE TEACHING OF WRITING: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT AND WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, I compare what we know about the teaching of writing from thirty years of disciplinary research and development versus what secondary pre-service and in-service teachers know about it. In terms of theoretical and practical alignment, I also examine the transition in Texas from one standardized test (TAKS) to another (STAAR) and the implications for teachers. Finally, I outline a Professional Development sequence for secondary school teachers that would better prepare teachers to teach writing across the secondary school curriculum, including an argument for particularly effective methods of delivery for communicating this information. This professional development design includes, but is not limited to, a background in composition theory through a summer institute with teacher mentors; writing across the curriculum through trainings of the larger staff, inquiry research groups and individually guided acts; and sustainable professional development through coaching, practice, mentoring, modeling and study groups.

DEDICATION

For my husband, Jeremy Diaz, who has turned my life around and motivated me to complete this process. To my mother, Tina C. Hauff, who started it. To my father, Donald G. Hauff, who funded it. To my sisters, Kathy Lang and Tina Sandell, who listened to it. To all my students, who inspired it. To my boss, Cindy Hamilton, who gave me time for it. To my friends, Ashley Card, Julio Martinez, Rebecca McAfee, Corrina Noriega, Stephanie Heinchon, who helped me forget about it.

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CHAPTER I

THIRTY YEARS OF COMPOSITION HISTORY: WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE DO

Precisely three months ago, I left my profession as a classroom English teacher of 17 years to start a new venture. I am the Secondary English Language Arts Specialist for Region XIII, the Educational Service Center for the Austin area. Since Region XIII is housed in Austin, it is closely allied and connected to the Texas Education Agency. Victoria Young is the state director of English/Language Arts student assessments at TEA; she has given us such greatest standardized test hits as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and the newly instituted State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) End of Course. For well over a decade, Young has developed the theoretical design and content of Texas's standardized assessments for reading and writing. My job is to provide professional development for the region's English teachers on whatever I perceive as areas of need. We plan for the inservices over a year in advance, and since I walked into this job mid-year, I am completing the plans of the woman I replaced. I did have a bit of latitude to delete a few of the inservices I had no desire to present (like "Teaching Grammar"), but, for the most part, I am fulfilling someone else's vision. Our method of delivering professional development is "episodic, decontextualized injections of knowledge and technique"—exactly the model that research says does not work (McLaughlin and Talbert qtd in National Writing Project and Nagin 57).

As I start to plan the inservice offerings for the 2012-2013 school year, I find myself asking, “What do teachers need to know about writing and what is the most effective mode of delivery for information such as strategies, approaches and changing attitudes toward writing?”

In this thesis, I compare what we in the rhetoric and composition field know about the teaching of writing from thirty years of disciplinary research and development versus what secondary pre-service and in-service teachers know about it. In terms of theoretical and practical alignment, I also examine the transition in Texas from one standardized test (TAKS) to another (STAAR) and the implications for teachers. Finally, I outline a professional development sequence for secondary school teachers that would better prepare teachers to teach writing across the secondary school curriculum, including an argument for particularly effective methods of delivery for communicating this information. This professional development design includes, but is not limited to, a background in composition theory through a summer institute with teacher mentors; writing across the curriculum through trainings of the larger staff, inquiry research groups and individually guided acts; and sustainable professional development through coaching, practice, mentoring, modeling and study groups.

A History of Composition Theory: What We Know and What We Do

Prior to the 1970’s, most teaching of writing was focused on a final product. Teachers assigned writing with little to no direct instruction. Students would receive their essays back marked up with red ink and cryptic comments. Often, skills and grammar were taught in isolation (through worksheets). During the early 1970’s, cognitive rhetoricians such as Janet Emig, Linda Flower and Donald Graves began studying the composing processes of individual writers. They were attempting to uncover what actually goes on in the mind while a person writes (Nystrand 17-18). Their research “identified phases and activities in the act of writing

(planning, drafting, revision and editing)" (National Writing Project and Nagin 22). This research also "sought to understand where writing comes from: how a writer selects and limits a topic, and how writing moves from inchoate and vaguely defined thinking to more organized, coherent, and polished presentation of ideas and subject matter" (NWP and Nagin 22). For whatever the limitations of these researchers, they had a profound effect on the teaching of writing: from here on out, we know writing is a process (Tobin 1-18, Murray 3-6 and Perl 17-43). During the 1980's, emerging voices such as Patricia Bizzell, Martin Nystrand and Lester Faigley began to realize the social nature of writing. Bizzell, questioning the cognitive model of writing, asserted, "…what's missing here is the connection to the social context afforded by the recognition of the dialectical relationship between thought and language…we can know nothing but what we have words for, if knowledge is what language makes of experience" (qtd in Nystrand 19). The relationship between the reader and the audience became much of the focus. This is also the time when the Writing Across the Curriculum movement developed. In the 1990's and beyond, the social aspect of writing research continued to morph into a more encompassing socio-cultural view. How is writing situated in all contexts of society such as historical, political, institutional and the everyday? (Nystrand 20) Currently, many view the writing process as non-linear, recursive and a means of problem-solving (Emig). Students can be explicitly taught writing strategies that, over time, will be internalized and automatized. These theories represent a history of composition studies that guide what we "know" about writing and how it should be taught, "yet, surprisingly little of these new data and understanding…has reached the general public; nor do these new findings inform much current debate about educational reform" (NWP and Nagin ix-x).

The Framework

The "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing," developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Writing Project, describes the "habits of mind" (fostered through writing) necessary for students to be college-ready. The habits of mind are as follows: curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility and metacognition. These habits of mind are to be applied to writing, specifically, to rhetorical knowledge, which is "the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes, and contexts in creating texts"; to critical thinking, which is "the ability to analyze a situation…and make thoughtful decisions based on that analysis…"; to the writing process, which is "multiple strategies to approach and undertake writing and research"; to knowledge of conventions, which is "the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate…in a piece of writing"; and the ability to compose in multiple environments, which is "from traditional pen and paper to electronic technologies" ("Framework" 1).

Essentially, rhetorical knowledge requires writers to adapt to different purposes, audiences and contexts. This, according to the "Framework," is the "basis of good writing" (6). Something brought up in this section of the "Framework" is the idea of writing for real audiences and purposes. Though most teachers understand the impact and power of providing such authentic writing situations, we rarely if ever utilize them in our classrooms ("Framework" 6). In critical thinking, "writers think through ideas, problems and issues; identify challenges and assumptions; and explore multiple ways of understanding" ("Framework" 7).Teachers need to help students converse with texts in order to enter into an academic conversation, evaluate the credibility and bias of sources and write for a variety of purposes ("Framework" 7). Students

need to be taught the recursive nature of the writing process and employ various strategies when appropriate; this helps them develop flexibility as writers ("Framework" 8). Knowledge of conventions should be rooted in specific contexts and genres. Students need to realize there is an "underlying logic" to citation systems such as MLA and APA and that each discipline has its own set of rules and conventions ("Framework" 9). Finally, the "Framework" addresses technology. Students should be taught that composing is more than just the written word in the 21st century and that technology can enhance a writer's message when used appropriately (10).

Teachers and Writing

Yet for all researchers and academics know about writing theory and pedagogy, are pre-service and in-service teachers adequately prepared to teach it? Researchers have proven that teacher quality has the most profound impact on student learning "outweighing the effects of class size, previous student achievement, and ethnic and socio-economic diversity" (Dudley-Marling et al 167). *No Child Left Behind* mandated that by the year 2006 every teacher must be "highly qualified" in their subject area. In a survey conducted by NCTE, they attempted to find what makes a highly qualified ELA teacher. Instead of relying on academics or policy makers to answer this question, NCTE polled 5000 experts—real, live English teachers. Out of choices such as amount of experience, teaching pedagogy, literary/reading theory and the like, 85% of the teachers ranked knowledge of composition theory and 93% ranked strategies for teaching reading and writing as "very important" for success as an ELA teacher (Dudley-Marling et al 173), yet "only a handful of states require courses in writing for [teacher] certification" ("Neglected 'R'" 27). According to NCTE's "Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts," teachers need to be able to describe the theories and research that inform their curricular decision-making processes. They assert that knowledge of theory and

research “is essential for creating a productive teaching and learning environment” (32). Based on my experiences and those of fellow English colleagues, college was woefully inadequate at preparing us to teach writing. I chose to major in English and not education in order to strengthen my content knowledge, but I also took the required education courses so I could get certified to teach. This ended up taking me an extra semester. Many English teachers graduate with education degrees; much time is spent on teaching pedagogy and not on content-specific pedagogy. And then there is the problem of emergency certification programs. There are a great deal of English teachers in the field who do not possess an English or an education degree; these teachers are referred to as being “out of field.” In the 2010 school year, 15.6% of high school English teachers were teaching outside of their degree field (“Who Is Teaching”). In light of the transition from TAKS to STAAR and the aforementioned statistic, it is more crucial than ever to prepare teachers to teach writing.

CHAPTER II

FROM TAKS TO STAAR

TAKS vs. STAAR

In 2009, the newly adopted Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR TEKS) were adopted for the state of Texas. With the changing of the standards also came the changing of the standardized test from TAKS to STAAR. Writing on TAKS was solely tested at grade levels 4, 7, 10 and 11, and students were only required to write in one genre—personal narrative. The TAKS test was loosely tied to the standards, with only a relatively narrow scope of TEKS that were test-eligible. In order for students to graduate, they needed only to pass the exit level exam administered their junior year. The TAKS test, which had no time limit, has been the "criterion-referenced assessment program since 2003" ("STAAR Debuts").

Alignment of Standards and Assessments

For almost a decade, teachers in Texas were only "accountable" for one genre of writing, the personal narrative, and had become quite proficient at teaching it. Interestingly, the newly adopted TEKS state that the personal narrative should stop being taught at grade 7, though the TAKS exam was testing this genre of writing up through grade 11. This is because there was a lag between the adoption of the new standards and the implementation of STAAR. Our new standards were not aligned to the old test. The "Neglected 'R'" states, "Although every state

commits itself to alignment between standards and assessments, rigorous reviews of state standards and assessments efforts indicate that only 9 or 10 states have well-aligned systems, while many of the remainder have quite a bit of work to do" (29). Texas was one of the states that had some work to do. The newly created STAAR test precisely aligns with the "testable" TEKS. For instance, speaking and listening would be almost impossible to test in a standardized exam format, so they are ineligible TEKS for testing. But almost every other TEKS is fair game.

STAAR Blueprint

If we look at the test design blueprint for the STAAR found on the TEA website, we can see that there are two categories of testable TEKS: readiness and supporting. Readiness TEKS will be tested every year, while supporting TEKS will be assessed on a rotating basis. That doesn't mean a teacher should just focus on the readiness standards. For instance, on the STAAR End of Course English I exam, the readiness standards account for 60% to 70% of the overall score, so if a teacher ignores the supporting standards, she is putting her students at a 30% to 40% disadvantage ("STAAR Resources: EOC Blueprint"). One positive aspect regarding this change is teachers had moved away from teaching the standards since relatively few appeared on the test; now, teachers will be accountable for covering almost ALL of the TEKS.

STAAR and Student Accountability

Another key difference between the TAKS and the STAAR exams is student accountability. Not only has the writing test expanded from four grade levels (4^{th}, 7^{th}, 10^{th} and 11^{th}) to five grade levels (4^{th}, 7^{th}, 9^{th}, 10^{th} and 11^{th}), but STAAR scores from EOC-designated courses (mostly high school level courses such as Algebra, Physics, World History and English I-III) will count as 15% of the students' final averages on their report cards. Of particular concern to English teachers is the inclusion of several "new" genres of writing on the STAAR

EOC. TAKS had one genre—the narrative. STAAR has five—narrative, expository, literary, persuasive and analytical. Fourth and seventh graders will write a narrative and an expository composition, ninth graders will write a literary and expository composition, sophomores will write an expository and a persuasive composition and juniors will write a persuasive and analytical composition. But not only has the new test upped the ante on genres, it has also done so with quantity. Instead of one composition on the writing exam per testing year, there are now two. To compound the difficulties further, instead of having two pages to compose one essay as students did on the TAKS, they now have only one page to compose per essay on STAAR. And the STAAR is timed—high school students have 4 hours to complete a revising section of 15 multiple choice questions, an editing section of 15 multiple choice questions, two 1-page compositions of differing genres and, for the next few years, one field test composition ("STAAR Resources").

STAAR Rubrics

The rubrics for STAAR look essentially similar to the TAKS ones. They are based on organization/progression, development of ideas and use of language and conventions. (Interestingly, though the students are required to write in several different genres, the rubrics for each genre are almost identical.) The major change in each STAAR rubric is the addition of the word "formulaic." If a student's response to the prompt is considered formulaic, the composition will be deemed a lower-scoring paper, yet many teachers rely heavily on formulas because of their limited knowledge of composition theory ("STAAR Resources").

What STAAR Means for Teachers

At the Texas Council of Teachers of English Languages Arts 2012 conference (TCTELA), I had the chance to hear Victoria Young speak about what is expected of students on

STAAR. She emphasized the importance of students taking creative approaches to the topics, creating their own organic organizational structures and developing narrow and deep ideas. So in summary: for STAAR tested grade levels, teachers must prepare students to write two compositions that are organic, non-formulaic, creative, narrow yet deep in two distinct genres—in 26 lines. Since this is the first year of implementation of STAAR, I have experienced first-hand teachers' apprehension about the expository task. The persuasive and analytical essays will be phased in over the next two years, so this year, most teachers have spent their time and energy trying to wrap their minds around expository writing. They attend our professional development in droves. In the past, at our service center, we were lucky to have 10 to 15 participants in any given workshop. For our expository professional development offerings, we have had upwards of 90 participants. These teachers want answers, and by answers, I mean a formula. And the most challenging of the writing tasks, the analytical essay, will not be revealed until the 2013-2014 school year. Teachers struggle with how they were taught to write versus the message coming from TEA. We recall the five-paragraph essay we learned in high school, and how that structure was effective enough to get us all the way through high school and college. They argue that teenagers need to practice writing within the confines of a structure before they can learn how to break away from it. Victoria Young claims she wants students to create their own organic text structures that suit the tasks presented to them. She wants students to be fluid and flexible writers. She also realizes that it would be problematic to attempt to fit a five-paragraph essay into a mere 26 lines. At the Coalition of Reading and English Supervisors Conference of 2012 (CREST), Young spoke about her preliminary observations from the inaugural administration of the STAAR Writing. Students struggled with the expository task. She saw weak thesis statements, jumpy ideas, choppy sentences and stilted transitions. In her opinion, this was caused

by teachers preparing students for the exam via the five-paragraph essay model. She stated it is impossible to develop ideas with any depth using this structure given the parameters of one page. Noting such common problems across all grade levels, Young called this “an instructional problem” (“Assessment”).

The bottom line is there is no formula for good writing. There is, however, theory, research, process and strategies. We need a paradigm shift in teacher-thinking about writing. The paradigm shift for me was graduate school, but we can’t expect all teachers to go back to college to earn additional degrees in composition studies. What we can offer is a change in how professional development is delivered at our service center that will support teachers in becoming a community of lifelong learners who remain constantly informed on rhetoric and composition theory and research.

CHAPTER III

COMPOSITION THEORY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Case for Professional Development

Starting in 1999, the lifetime certificate for Texas educators was discontinued, and newly certified teachers from that point on were required to receive 150 hours of continuing education credits each year in order to keep their certification current and valid. These hours are mostly achieved through professional development. While the intention of this measure is sensible—the idea that teachers should keep current on theories and strategies in their respective disciplines—what has occurred because of this change is nothing new or innovative. Most professional development looks the same as it did before 1999: a series of disconnected workshops developed by outsiders "with little follow-up or guidance for implementation" (Guskey 15).

According to Thomas R. Guskey, author of *Evaluating Professional Development*, successful professional development is defined by three characteristics: it is an intentional, ongoing and systemic process. He goes on to elaborate on the intentionality of effective professional development by saying: "It is a consciously designed effort to bring about positive change and improvement" (17). Professional development should be guided by clear purposes and goals that are worthwhile and measureable. Because content area and pedagogical knowledge is ever expanding, so, too, must professional development:

> To keep abreast of new knowledge and understanding, educators at all levels must be continuous learners throughout the entire span of their professional careers. They must constantly analyze the effectiveness of what they do, reflect on their current practices, make adaptations when things are not going well, and continually explore new alternatives and opportunities for improvement. (19)

That being said, professional development must be "job-embedded." Professional development should be more than isolated and fragmented trainings that randomly occur a few days throughout the school year. A systemic process requires "a clear and compelling vision of the improvements needed, combined with explicit ideas on the organizational characteristics and attributes necessary for success" (Guskey 21).

Models of Professional Development

Based on these characteristics, we need models for the delivery of information, the sharing of ideas and the construction of knowledge. Guskey categorizes the models of professional development as follows: training, observation/assessment, involvement in a development/improvement process, study groups, inquiry/action research, individually guided activities and mentoring (22). Training is the most common and familiar form of professional development. It is good for disseminating information to large groups, and, therefore, is cost effective. The drawbacks of trainings are they are usually "one and done," meaning an isolated day with no follow-up and they are pre-created, not co-created, so the information is generalized. A way to improve this model would be incorporate follow-up activities (Guskey 22-23). The observation/assessment model either involves observing others or being observed by others. The idea is to learn by example or to learn through constructive criticism. An advantage to this model is both parties benefit from the experience; the observer gains expertise in data collecting and

academic conversations with a peer and the one being observed gains advice, coaching and support from a peer. A drawback to this model is it is time consuming and hard to schedule mutual meetings (Guskey 23-24). The involvement in a development/improvement process model gathers a group of people together to achieve a goal collaboratively. The advantages of this model are an increase in knowledge of the participants and a sense of ownership. The disadvantages can be the participants are only a selective representation of a larger group and these participants might have a limited amount of knowledge. One way to compensate for lack of knowledge is to partner with an outside group such as a university (24-25). The study group model generally involves an entire school staff that is broken up into smaller subgroups (either homogeneously or heterogeneously) in order to solve problems or construct knowledge. The advantages of this model are team building and a more focused approach to improvement efforts; however, if hastily formed, groups may be co-opted by the stronger personalities. This can be solved by carefully considering the mixture of personalities and strategically planning how they are dispersed (Guskey 25-26). The inquiry/action research model allows participants to select a relevant problem to solve through research. The advantages of this model are putting research into practice, and it causes educators to be more reflective. It is largely based on the initiative of individuals and requires a substantial amount of time (Guskey 26). In the individually guided activities model, participants choose their own professional development pathways through goal setting. The advantages of this model are choice and flexibility, yet it requires a great deal of self-motivation and may also lead to a feeling of isolation. Guidance may be needed in aligning the teacher's goals to school success (Guskey 26-27). The mentoring model pairs a veteran teacher with a less experienced one. Built into the mentoring process are times to reflect, analyze student work, discuss strategies and goal setting. Mentoring fosters an individualized practice of

professional development that is mutually beneficial. Mentoring cannot be the sole professional development for an educator; it must be supplemented with other forms of professional development that allow for professional relationship building with a wider group (Guskey 28-31).

Because each learner is varied and not one approach works for all, the best model is actually a hybrid and combination of all the models described above. The models need to be integrated and scaffolded based on the particular needs of the group. For example, if an inquiry/action committee researches a solution to a problem, a small study group might come together to discuss the implementation of the solution. The models should spiral, be continuously connected and flowing together to enact change.

Professional Development for English Teachers

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has created a set of principles to guide professional development specifically for English teachers. They are as follows:

1. Professional development of teachers/faculty is a central factor leading to student success.
2. Professional development treats teachers/faculty members as the professionals they are.
3. Professional development supports teachers/faculty at all levels of expertise; its value is confirmed by external validation.
4. Professional development relies on a rich mix of resources, including a theoretical and philosophical base; a research base; and illustrations of good practices.

5. Professional development can take many different forms and employs various modes of engagement.
6. The best models of professional development—best in the sense of enhancing first, teacher practice leading to second, student learning—are characterized by sustained activities, by engagement with administrators, and by community-based learning.
7. Professional development is systematically reviewed with evidence of efficacy provided by a review process including multiple stakeholders and NCTE's own research. ("Principles of Professional Development")

Whatever appropriate combination of models used for professional development, it should always be informed by these NCTE principles. They remind us of the gravity of professional development. Professional development is one of the main avenues for teachers to continue learning, and it can be directly connected to student success. It allows for a dialogue to occur between "experts" and practitioners, between mentors and mentees, between administration and staff, between different subject areas and between peers. It gives a common space for people to come together to find solutions that benefit children. If we look around for a successful example of professional development that follows the NCTE principles and also incorporates a mingling of the models Guskey describes, we find the National Writing Project.

The National Writing Project

Originating out of the University of California Berkeley in 1973, the National Writing Project (NWP) set out to improve the teaching of writing in our K-16 schools. "Through a teachers-teaching-teachers professional development model, the NWP disseminates the exemplary classroom practices of successful teachers to teachers in all disciplines and at all

grade levels" (NWP and Nagin ix). Currently, there are almost 200 NWP sites housed in universities across the United States and its territories. Each site is autonomous, and no two programs are exactly alike, but most have a five-week-long summer institute open to teachers from grades K-16 in all subject areas. During the institute, university faculty disseminate current research and theory on the teaching of writing to participants (Bratcher and Stroble 67). The goal of the institute is to build relationships among the participants and the presenters, for the participants to see themselves as writers and to learn from each other as practitioners (Bearce and Woollven). In an article for *Educational Leadership,* Ann Lieberman and Linda Friedrich list some of the social practices that NWP participants engage in "such as honoring teacher knowledge, guiding reflection on teaching through reflection on learning, and turning ownership over to learners" (43). They continue to state: "The summer institute represents the first time a teacher has gone public with his or her practice, worked in a writing group, or shared or critiqued writing. Many teachers describe these opportunities for collegial learning and teaching as starkly different from their experiences with staff development in their own schools" (43). Often participants are asked to choose a book to read for a book study group. Simultaneously, participants are working on a research project of their own choosing and creating two sustained pieces of personal writing that they share and revise throughout the institute. Once a day, one teacher is asked to present an exemplar writing lesson they use with their own students; the other teachers discuss how they might adapt the lesson for their own classes and offer constructive feedback to the presenter (Bearce 2012,Woollven 2012, Whitney 2008, Sipe and Roswarne 2005, Goldberg 1984 and Smith 1984).

Shortcomings of NWP

An area of concern regarding the National Writing Project is the lack of research proving their model of professional development is effective. Though most teachers state their involvement with the NWP was a transformative experience, there is little data to support that such a teacher transformation had an effect on classroom teaching practices and their students' writing. In a review of NWP research conducted by Stahlecker, Thomas, Watson and Keech, they found three major weaknesses:

1. Comparison groups were not randomly assigned nor matched according to ability with experimental groups.
2. Comparison group teachers were not screened to determine if they were using the same teaching techniques as the NWP-trained teachers, and
3. Most of the studies were based on a single sample of student writing. (Bratcher and Stroble 68)

In another study, Krendl and Dodd found that often students' writing may improve immediately after teachers participate in the NWP summer institute, but the effect tends to be short lasting—for just that initial first year. Two other studies (Shook, 1981 and Pritchard, 1987) point to the fact there is often "no statistically significant difference" between experimental groups, students being taught by NWP trained teachers, and comparison students, students being taught by non-NWP trained teachers (Bratcher and Stroble 67-68). Finally, research conducted by Applebee, Langer and Mullis in 1986 and Wilson in 1988 both found that, though teachers felt changed after participating in the NWP summer institute, "changes in writing instruction practices were more ambiguous" and "that new instructional approaches" teachers adopted after attending the

summer institute treated “the writing process in a superficial manner” (Brathcher and Stroble 69).

Research on the NWP is conflicting and generally anecdotal, often relying on participant interviews which “take on a testimonial, almost conversion narrative-feel” making it difficult for researchers to gather hard data (Whitney 145). I found this to be true when I interviewed two of my colleagues who have participated in NWP summer institutes and who also remain actively involved with the organization. Neither could pin down exactly what they had learned or how it had affected their teaching and students, but both claimed feelings of transformation (Bearce, Woollven).

Another shortcoming of the NWP is it mostly focuses on the literary genres of poetry and personal narratives. I suspect this is because part of the NWP experience is bonding. By having teachers write about their personal experiences and feelings and sharing out, it builds relationships and a sense of community. In Anne Whitney’s “Teacher Transformation in the National Writing Project,” she describes a type of person that is either drawn to the NWP or sought out by the NWP: teachers “dissatisf[ied] with aspects of professional or personal life or senses of needing change” (155). The NWP uses these issues to elicit writing topics from the participants. Whitney interviewed two participants disappointed by the NWP’s summer institute who expressed feelings of discomfort from sharing out their deeply personal writings with the group (160-161). This creates a two-fold problem. Not all people are comfortable with expressivist-type writing. In fact, some people may even feel preyed upon by being asked to write about themselves in such a manner. The other problem is how is this writing applicable to science, math and history? With the changing of the TEKS and standardized test, personal

writing is hardly applicable to high school English, but this is the large majority of what goes on during the NWP summer institute.

The idea that "good writing is good writing" and will therefore transfer from personal writing to other genres, I feel is a fallacy. STAAR will require a more academic style of writing because of the expository, persuasive and analytical compositions. Prewriting, drafting and revising strategies for all genres of writing do have similarities, but it is usually easier to get students to apply these techniques to writings about themselves than it is about subjects they feel less comfortable with, and the strategies necessary for composing academic writing differ fundamentally. Poetry and personal writing are free-form, allowing more choice yet requiring less structure than the more "academic" types of writing.

NWP often has difficulty attracting participants from subject areas other than English even though writing across the curriculum is one of its main goals. And the few cross-disciplinary participants they do receive will be asked to focus on personal writing, which they might perceive as irrelevant to their own classrooms. The NWP does have several models of professional development delivery, but most professional development is received during the summer institute. They have had trouble getting teachers to participate in on-going professional development such as coaching, modeling and inquiry groups once the institute is over. If the summer institute is the NWP main mode of professional development, it requires teachers to give up over five weeks of their summer making it accessible only to a smaller group of potential participants (Bearce, Woollven).

A New Vision of Professional Development

I propose professional development for English teachers should be the bridge between academia and the classroom, constantly informing teachers of theory and research (both old and

new). Professional development should also build relationships between all the parties involved. Professional development should respect the participants and value their knowledge as the practitioners and, therefore, the real experts. Professional development should create self-sufficient life-long learners. There should be site-based or district based buy-in. The best way to reach these goals is by taking what the NWP does right and addressing areas of weakness. I propose we take Guskey's models of professional development, which are virtually identical to NWP's IIMPAC acronym for their vision of professional development that includes inquiry, inservice workshops, models, practice and coaching (Blau, Cabe and Whitney), infused with the NCTE principles as the mode to deliver information and make meaning together. I believe that teachers might initially be bribed in order to participate—aside from the continuing education credits, either through college credit or stipends (or a combination of the two). This new professional development "project" would start with a summer institute. First, English teachers leaders would need to be established. The English leads would study current rhetorical and compositional theory and research with a university professor. The following section discusses two potential models for the unit of study for the English leads.

Structure of English Leader Summer Institute: Two Theoretical Models

Studies in Composition Techniques

In order to create self-sufficient, life-long learners, participants must first have a background or a foundation in the history of composition studies and theory/research. Using Guskey's training/NWP's inservice workshop model, this could begin to get this foundation in a summer institute starting with "expert" presenters from a university and be modeled after Dr. Jonikka Charlton's course for pre-service English teachers or Dr. Elizabeth Wardle's freshman composition course. Both courses would offer teachers a wealth of information on history and

theory that they are currently lacking from their college experiences. Charlton's course is a graduate level one titled "Studies in Composition Techniques." This is a required course for graduate students receiving degrees in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Texas-Pan American and also serves as a requirement and foundation course for writing teaching assistants at the university (she also teaches an undergraduate level course that is almost identical to the grad level one required for pre-service English teachers). In her syllabus for 6325, Charlton states:

> The official course description of English 6325 "Studies in Composition Techniques" is this: "Advanced study of composition theory and techniques and methods of teaching composition, with special emphasis on teaching English composition to college freshman." Now, that's not very useful; in fact, it's a pretty poor piece of writing if its purpose is to let you know what this class is all about. Hopefully, I can do better. This is a really important class for anyone who teaches first-year writing; rhetoric and composition is its own discipline with its own theories and pedagogies, and as teachers of writing, it's our responsibility to learn as much as we can about the discipline we're teaching. For some of you, this class may be the only introduction to composition theory and pedagogy you'll ever have; for others, it'll be a piece of a larger education in rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies. But, for all of us, it'll be a chance to think about why and how we write, and more importantly, how we can design first-year writing classes that will have a positive, long-lasting impact on our students' personal and professional lives.

In her syllabus, Charlton asks her students to continually consider the following questions and attempting to formulate responses:

> Why do we write? What do we know about writing and how it works? What roles can and do first-year writing classes serve (for the individual, the program, the larger institution, and the larger community)? What do we value as writing teachers, and how can we create a course that honors those values? For instance, how can we design first-year writing classes to help students see writing as purposeful and meaningful? How can we help them achieve their own purposes in writing while also achieving our own pedagogical goals? What are useful and effective strategies for assessing and responding to student writing? Which strategies will work for you given your own context?

Though the course is created around first year composition, the theory and pedagogies apply to all levels of writing. Charlton brings up a poignant fact: that this course might be the sole course teachers get on composition theory and pedagogy. Charlton goes on to say:

> Through your work this semester, you'll each be given an opportunity to construct your own writing theories and pedagogy in relation to your own personal and professional goals, and you'll be able to do that with others who are thinking about the same things. When you're teaching, it's easy to get isolated and in a rut. You end up doing what you've always done or just copying what your own teachers did.

In essence, she wants her students to study theory and pedagogy in order to synthesize the ideas and make them their own, for their own unique contexts. And this is best done through the dialogic experience with others in similar situations. She addresses a common problem in most

writing classes: repeating the mistakes of the past. When teachers have no theory or pedagogy training, we often fall back on how we were taught—a long time ago. This usually entails teaching writing through a product and not a process. Charlton pairs two readings that are either complementary or contradictory, but, nonetheless, work well together. The readings also move from general concerns into more specific ones, creating a scaffold for thought. For example, she starts out with Yancey's "Writing in the 21st Century" paired with Deborah Brandt's "Remembering Reading, Remembering Writing." Both articles give overviews of the history of composition studies to trace areas of conflict such as the valuing of reading over writing. Other authors Charlton includes on her reading list are articles by Connors, Kinneavy, Wardle, Elbow, Fulkerson, Lindemann and Moffet—a veritable greatest hits of composition theory and pedagogy.

Research on Writers, Writing and Discourse

Wardle's course is a writing seminar titled "Research on Writers, Writing and Discourse" in which students focus "on conversations that explore the act of writing" (Wardle 114-HE Syllabus). Her course objectives are as follows:

> …study writing as situated, motivated discourse, study rhetoric as a theory of writing and a way of knowing and persuading, study the conversational and knowledge-creating nature of researched writing, study how we read and the conversational, contributive nature of reading, practice locating and evaluating documentary and human sources, and practice identifying available choices in writing and editing and making the strongest choice. (Wardle 114-HE Syllabus)

These goals are commensurate with those of the NWP, but Wardle's are supported with first-hand research and theory instead of being "informed" by the research like the NWP's are.

Teachers need to read the research themselves in order to truly absorb it and appropriate it as their own. Wardle's readings for her course include Sondra Perl, Nancy Sommers, Carol Berkenkotter, Rick Evans and Michael Klein among others. The reading list is not exhaustive, yet gives enough background knowledge for teachers to enter the conversation of writing discourse. These readings could easily be completed in a few weeks.

A Personal Paradigm Shift

I have first-hand knowledge of the transformative power of Charlton's course since I was a student in it a few years ago. Prior to this course, the only notion I had about theory or pedagogy was from 1993, when I read excerpts from *In the Middle* by Nancy Atwell as an undergraduate at UT Austin. While starting work on this paper, I unearthed all my old college textbooks from UTeach, the University of Texas's teacher training program. Most were about literary criticism or child psychology. The only book I found regarding writing was Joyce Armstrong Carroll and Edward E. Wilson's *Acts of Teaching: How to Teach Writing*, the 1993 edition. Although it looks like a very thorough and helpful book, it appears, too, that I never opened it. Regardless, my undergraduate experience did not prepare me to teach writing. It wasn't until I enrolled in graduate school that I began to understand the complexities of teaching writing—and the most powerful, useful class I had was Charlton's. The course filled a large gap in my knowledge base that existed from college and not having access to research and theory literature during my 17 years in the classroom. Even if I had had access to the research, I wouldn't have known what to do with it. I needed the guidance of Professor Charlton in order to transform my thinking. I, like the teachers who attend my workshops, entered her class wanting definitive answers, quick fixes and simple strategies. It was because of her I began honoring my students' life experiences and funds of knowledge; prior to her class, I perceived them as lacking

experiences, creating an unequal power structure and, consequently, power struggle. I also came to realize that many of the "mistakes" my students were making in their writing wasn't because they were "unskilled," but, rather, they were taking risks that needed to be supported. Charlton taught me the importance of providing authentic writing experiences for my students; in fact, many of the "problems" I saw in my students' writing were caused by me not situating writing assignments for them in situated contexts. Because of this course, I was able to develop a philosophy on the teaching of writing, one that was my own, though situated in rhetoric and composition theory and pedagogy, and that guided everything I did with my students.

CHAPTER IV.

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Making the Model Work

Either Charlton's or Wardle's model would work for a foundation course for the English teacher part of the summer institute because both options get teachers thinking about deep philosophical issues concerning the teaching of writing. Teachers need to have the proper background knowledge in composition theory so they can begin thinking through writing conflicts on their own instead of asking for professional development to deliver them quick fixes and formulaic answers that don't exist. The Academy would develop in three phases. Phase I would give English teachers the foundation knowledge to teach writing, Phase II would involve Writing Across the Curriculum and teachers of other disciplines and Phase III would provide ongoing professional development to sustain knowledge.

Phase I: Teacher Leaders

At this stage in the project, only English teachers would be involved. The English teachers are the ones who need the rhetoric and composition theory knowledge, and, then, they, with this new knowledge, would become the writing leaders at their respective schools. Ideally, the writing leaders would be given a stipend (perhaps funded by a grant or the school district) and/or graduate credit hours for participating in this portion of the summer institute along with continuing education credits.

Phase II: Writing Across the Curriculum

The next phase of the summer institute would involve teachers from all subject areas. Ideally, schools would create and send teacher teams to this part of the training. For example, schools would make teams containing an English, history, science, math and elective teacher. Again, the English teacher is the lead. This stage of the project would closely follow the NWP's summer institute. In "The Neglected 'R,'" the College Board argues that every state should have a policy on writing that "aims to double the amount of time most students spend writing [and] insists that writing be taught in all subjects and grade levels" (3). This is a call for writing across the curriculum. This next phase of the summer institute, then, would involve all subject areas working in teams in preparation for writing across the curriculum. A problem with the NWP summer institute is participants are chosen randomly. Again, most of the people that apply for the summer institute are English teachers. One of the aims of the NWP is writing across the curriculum, but this is hard to achieve when there are hardly any other subjects represented, and of the few who do attend, it is difficult to implement WAC without school-wide, or at least, team-wide, support. A solution to this issue would be recruiting and accepting multi-disciplinary teams to the institute. For example, schools would make teams containing an English, history, science, math and elective teacher.

Why WAC is important

In Susan McLeod's article "The Pedagogy of Writing Across the Curriculum," she claims that WAC is defined by its potential outcomes which are "helping students to become critical thinkers and problem-solvers as well as developing their communication skills" (150). The aim of WAC is active learning rather than passive learning. On the Colorado State University

Website, a major clearing house for WAC materials, they outline some commonly held principles regarding WAC:

- that writing is the responsibility of the entire academic community
- that writing must be integrated across departmental boundaries
- that writing instruction must be continuous during all four years of undergraduate education
- that writing promotes learning
- that only by practicing the conventions of an academic discipline will students begin to communicate effectively within that discipline. ("WAC Clearinghouse Website")

Though these principles refer to university programs, they also work for K-12 organizations.

There are two main approaches to WAC: writing to learn and writing to communicate. Writing to learn pedagogy "encourages teachers to use writing as a tool for learning as well as a test for learning" (McLeod151). The main audience for writing to learn is the self (and perhaps the teacher). Most of this type of writing is informal and ungraded. Writing to communicate pedagogy, on the other hand, "focuses on writing to an audience outside the self in order to inform that audience, and the writing therefore is revised, crafted, and polished" (McLeod 153). Writing to communicate is reader-based rather than writer-based, as writing to learn is.

Phase III: Pulling it all Together

In this phase of the institute, the teams would receive professional development through the training/workshop, involvement with development, inquiry/action and individually guided acts of research models (see "Models of Professional Development" chapter). Teams would receive trainings from university consultants on WAC pedagogy. After a solid background has been formed and with the English teacher as the lead of the inquiry/action research team, team

members would review their current curricula and strategize ways to incorporate writing to learn opportunities into their lessons. Since these opportunities aren't content-specific, the group could work cooperatively and collectively finding daily opportunities to incorporate writing into each subject area. Again, Colorado State University's WAC Clearinghouse website has great suggestions for guiding principles when designing writing lessons. As teams create writing assignments, they should follow these five principles: "tie the writing task to specific pedagogical goals; note rhetorical aspects of the task, i.e., audience, purpose, writing situation; make all elements of the task clear; include grading criteria on the assignment sheet; and break down the task into manageable steps" ("Five Principles"). At the heart of the principles is the idea that the more specific we make writing assignments, the better our students will do. Often, when students fail to meet our expectations on a writing assignment, it is because our directions and expectations weren't explicit enough. In addition to the principles, the website has many suggestions for informal writing to learn activities that work well in all content areas such as reading journals, learning logs, letter writing, annotations and discussion starters. Assignments can be as simple as having students write an informal summary of what they read in their journals. Summarization is a quick way for students to begin synthesizing readings and for teachers to see any gaps or misconceptions in their learning. (For more suggestions, see "Examples of Writing to Learn" on Colorado State's WAC Clearinghouse website).

Individually Guided Research

Individually guided research could be used to learn about how to implement writing to communicate activities and strategies, as this aspect of WAC is more formal and discourse-based. Again, this is where the NWP falls short. They ignore the fact that there are discourse communities with accepted conventions and rules. By only addressing personal writing, the

NWP disregards the disciplinary demands of writing for other subjects such as science and social studies—disciplines that require a more objective tone and specific tenses. For example, in English we refer to authors as if they are still alive through their writings and therefore use present tense. In history, this technique would not apply as dates and times indicate whether someone is alive or dead, which affects meaning and validity (McLeod 154). Teams may choose to research ways of teaching writing that are specific to their own discourse community, or they may research ways to provide writing assignments with authentic audiences appropriate to the given discourse community for their students' writings.

Regardless of what the teams choose to research, the participants are involved in guiding it and become personally invested. The research is also context-specific. In most professional development, the presenters have to appeal to a wide audience and a common complaint is, "This won't work with MY students." In ideal professional development, like the one I am proposing, the participants are involved in its construction. They are given the proper theoretical background to inform their research, and their leader, the English teacher, is one of their own and acts as a guide. They have worked together to infuse writing strategies and opportunities into their curricula and lesson plans. They have networked and shared knowledge with other teams of teachers in similar and dissimilar schools that will form a future support system. In addition, all participating teachers should receive a stipend, continuing education credits and three hours of graduate credit.

Sustainability

After speaking to several high school teachers who have either participated in the NWP summer institutes or worked for them, a common complaint is sustainability. Though a few invitations for ongoing professional development are sent out during the school year,

participation is limited. Teachers get caught up in their jobs and day to day lives, and with no incentive to attend the ongoing professional development except intrinsic motivation, the cohort falls apart. I propose that in an ideal situation, teachers would receive another stipend, continuing education credits and three more graduate hours in addition to the other hours already received if they continue with the program. So if the participants make it to the end, the English leaders will have nine hours of graduate credits and the other team members will have six—essentially for free. With six to nine hours of graduate credits under their belts, teachers might be inclined to continue with graduate studies. The university partnership should make this an easy transition for the participants, aiding them in applying to programs, writing recommendations and cutting through red tape. I also propose that the graduate credits for the English lead be English credits, instead of education credits like the NWP offers. I feel that these teachers will be of greater service to their students if they continue their studies in composition rather than in education. As for the other content participants, I believe they should have the option of either getting their credits in education or as electives for their subject fields. I don't believe this is an outlandish idea since much of the participants' research and implementation will be in the discourse and pedagogies of writing for their particular field. The ongoing professional development implemented during the school year should include inquiry groups (their team from the summer institute), modeling, practice and coaching.

The inquiry groups will meet once a month after school at their own site. The group meeting will also be attended by an expert from the university who will act as a sounding board and will help keep participants accountable. Again, the English teacher serves as the lead for the team. In these meetings, groups can reflect on their past lessons, share exemplary lessons, create

future lessons and analyze student writing. The university expert will help the team problem-solve, incorporate technology and find authentic opportunities and audiences for writing.

One day a month, participants will be required to observe a lesson taught by a fellow participant on a writing topic of interest and relevance to the observer. Likewise, all participants must be observed at least twice during the school year. University consultants will coordinate with partner modelers and observers. The observer and observee must set aside dedicated time in order to debrief. As Guskey states, "One of the best ways to learn is by observing others, or by being observed and receiving specific feedback from that observation" (23). This professional development model allows the collegiality to continue between participants from other schools, provides lesson plan ideas and teaching strategies to the observer and gives constructive feedback to the presenter.

Teachers should be held accountable for maintaining a log used for notes and reflection, as well. Every time after a writing assignment is given in their classes, the teachers will reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. Teachers would bring this log with them to their team meetings, observations and post-coaching debriefings.

Finally, university consultants will visit one of each participants' classes at least one time during the school year to provide a demonstration of a relevant writing lesson. The participant and the university expert will meet ahead of time to discuss the needs of the students and that of the teacher. The participant will observe the university expert as he or she teaches the lesson to the participant's class. After the lesson, there will be a debriefing to discuss observations and questions. All of this information will be kept in the teacher's log.

Assessment

In order to assess whether the program is effective, we would need to consider a few items: standardized test scores of participating teachers' students, other writing samples from their students (aside from standardized tests samples), teacher interviews, teacher observations, student interviews, sample assignments and lesson plans.

First, we could use the STAAR results as a means of evaluating progress. If we started tracking students as freshmen, before the teachers received training, we could use these scores as a base. As 9th graders, students are tested in expository and literary (short story) writing. After teachers received training, we could compare the students' 9th grade results with their 10th grade performance. 10th graders are tested in expository and persuasive writing, so one score would directly align and one would be a new genre. But if we continue to follow these students one more year, as 11th graders, the students are tested in persuasive and analytical writing, so we could check for growth in the persuasive essay. The difficulty in this is that it would require either whole school training or having teachers move up each year with the students. One way to solve this issue would be to have a cohort of 9th through 11th grade teachers participate and then try to ensure students move through those particular teachers' classes. Another option would be to administer benchmark pre- and post-tests. For example, we could administer an expository prompt at the beginning of the school year and compare those results with another expository prompt given at the end of the year. Steps would need to be taken to ensure fair and equitable grading. This could be done by using students ID numbers instead of their names and a coding system to maintain anonymity, similar to an AP scoring process. Other samples of writing from general in class assignments should be collected and maintained in a portfolio as another means of tracking student performance.

We would also need to conduct pre- and post-interviews with teachers. Pre-interview questions would focus on their experiences with past professional development in regards to writing and its effects on their classrooms. Other questions should center on writing strategies attempted in the past. For example, what genres do their students write in, do they teach writing as a process, do they use models, how do they create writing assignments, do they address audience and revision? Many of the follow up interview questions would be the same, but, in addition, there would be questions about whether teachers experienced a philosophical shift (or not) in their views of the teaching of writing. We could look through several writing assignments that they administered in their classrooms after the training and ask them to describe how the lessons went from beginning to end. Follow up questions should also occur during assignment explanations such as: What happens between this step and the next? What are some common problems students encountered? Is there group work occurring? Are you using mentor texts? If so, where did they come from? (Blau et al 25-28).

Information can also be gathered through observing the teachers. The first aspect to be evaluated would be the classroom space. Is writing celebrated in this class? Is the room set up for workshops? Are there classroom resources such as dictionaries, computers and models for students to refer to? Then we look for evidence of the teaching of the writing process and strategies. How is writing presented as a process? Is there evidence of prewriting and revision? Is there appropriate time provided for the process? Is writing merely assigned or is it taught explicitly? Are models used? Are peer response groups used? Does the teacher write along with the students? (Blau et al 29-31). We would conduct interviews with the students to gauge whether their perceptions of writing have changed for the better.

CONCLUSION

In “The Neglected ‘R’,” the executive committee makes a case for alarm: American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts language and communication in their proper place in the classroom. Writing is how students connect the dots in their knowledge. Although many models of effective ways to teach writing exist, both the teaching and practice of writing are increasingly shortchanged throughout the school and college years. Writing, always time-consuming for student and teacher, is hard-pressed in the American classroom today. Of the three “R’s,” writing is clearly the most neglected (3).

And why, if there are “many models of effective teaching,” is writing still “shortchanged” in our classrooms? Perhaps it is because teachers weren’t properly prepared by the university to teach it. We failed to get the memo. Because we spent too much time in generic pedagogy courses. Because writing is perceived as the sole responsibility of the English teacher. Because we have no background in theory since we were busy reading Shakespeare. Because the process has been mystified. Because the process has been codified. In all honesty, the university can only do so much. After two years of basics, a few hours of content, a few more of pedagogy, some student teaching, four years have evaporated. If states are demanding teachers receive professional development to keep their certificates current, why not do something meaningful? Instead of districts wasting time with willy-nilly, drive-by professional development, why not do something systematic that is transformative for teachers as well as students? The professional plan as described throughout this thesis values teachers’ funds of knowledge, expertise and

experiences; it values students' thoughts; it incorporates teachers in the design; it constructs relationships, communities and knowledge; it fills in gaps of knowledge; it bridges the divide between the theorists and the practitioners; it provides opportunities for the further pursuit of knowledge; it creates life-long learners; and it is sustainable. Yes, it would be expensive and require a substantial amount of work to plan and implement, but if "90 percent of midcareer professionals recently cited the need to write effectively as a skill of great importance in their day-to day work," perhaps we should no longer neglect it ("The Neglected 'R'" 11).

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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