Inside This Issue:

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"Thus, now that I am tasked with the incredibly difficult job of leading a school as principal, I believe with confidence that work with SDAWP, and similar institutions or individuals, is necessary if our dream as a school is building a community of learners adept at facing the challenges of today and thriving within the stampede of progress."

"The earnest responses, all of which address a myriad of complex issues in our society, showcase what a writing community looks like: diverse, individualistic, collaborative, with intentional practice in fluency and immersion in diverse mentor texts."

"We should encourage and give time for teachers from different content areas to work together, identify curricular connections and align their content and practices."

"Today, language classrooms involve communicative instruction, where deep-level understanding and idiosyncratic language usage are key. Instead of learning language for the sake of language, content knowledge, task completion, and an appreciation for who students are and what they individually as well as culturally bring to the classroom are all integral parts of the equation."

"This overlapping 'call and response' exchange characterized our group's lively discussion, a conversation that toggled back and forth between stepping on each other's words and pausing reflectively as we jotted down notes or hunted through the text for that particular quote or passage that inspired (or bothered!) us. *Discussing Writing with Mentors* encouraged us to play, challenge ourselves, and explore new teaching strategies."

"By using text features to discover the meaning of challenging vocabulary words, examining the unique structure of the text, and answering questions related to author's craft, students will gain a deeper understanding of the text as a whole."

"I write to get things off of my chest. I write to show complexities of situations and to predict possible outcomes. I write to relive experiences from my life and to reflect on how to be better."

Also in this issue:

Why We Revise:
To Be Better Educators than We Were the Day Before

Callie Brimberry, SDAWP 2008
Lisa Muñoz, SDAWP 2008

The refreshing opening words of Christine Kané reminded the participants of the 2015 Fall into Writing Conference why we, as educators, choose to spend a Saturday morning participating in professional development: revision. While we learned about the metaphors teachers use to describe revision as well as the fascinating history and future of revision, Kané's larger message truly captured why we were there—the shaping, molding, rearranging of ourselves as educators and learners is an ongoing process.

Peter Elbow uses the metaphor of the body to describe revision: "re-seeing" or "rethinking" restructures the "bones" of a piece of writing, while "reshaping what a piece says" is the "muscles," and the final step in the process—the tinkering of the words and sentences is the "skin." This was one of Kané's many examples of how educators describe revision. Kané reminded us that when we write, the hope is that the first draft will be mediocre, but that we will revise with the potential to write a masterpiece...or at least a less mediocre later draft. We come together each fall and spring at varying stages—some of us eager to work our "muscles," others maybe in need of a little lift—with the hope and desire to continually improve.

Kané showed us that it takes courage to revise, and it probably takes a little humor, too. Anne Lamott, whose book *Bird by Bird* has the notable chapter, "Shitty First Drafts," writes that after we've gotten down our ideas and reworked them a bit, we should revisit them and "check every tooth, to see if it's loose or cramped or decayed, or God help us, healthy." Though revising ourselves as educators is not nearly as uncomfortable as dental work, a willingness to explore and examine the crevices of our teaching methods is essential.

We revise with the hope that our teaching has an impact. We revise with earnest attempts to be less mediocre and to become better educators today than we were the day before. We revise to guarantee our students have the tools to not only tell their stories and participate in the literary world, but to also advocate for themselves. Each attendee nodded their heads in agreement with Kané's words as they recognized their own constant pursuit to revise their teaching practices in purposeful and finite ways. This sentiment was revisited during all of the presentations, whose topics ranged from using art as a pathway to problem-solving to using narrative in all writing.

So, we invite you to read these pieces about professional development from those who had the courage to draft, revise, and share their writing with you. Meanwhile, we encourage you to assess your earlier "drafts" in teaching, your current "draft," and the exciting revisions to methods, lessons, and pedagogies to come.

In Memoriam

Anne von der Mehden, one of the founding directors of the San Diego Area Writing Project, passed away recently from complications involving leukemia. She had been ill for some time.

Anne was a co-director of SDAWP from 1977 to 1991. She coordinated the in-service programs and kept the financial house in order. Anne had a long teaching career in the Grossmont Union High School District, ending up at Valhalla High School as one of the founding faculty in the early 1970s.

Anne touched hundreds of teachers during her SDAWP service. Her gentle ways and patient demeanor made the five weeks of the Summer Invitational at UC San Diego a pleasant experience for all of us. In the 11 summers of the Bob-n-Anne team, there was much learning and much laughter and even more writing.

God bless you, Anne. May you rest in peace.

—Bob Infantino
Founding Director, SDAWP 1977

Professional Development and the Dissolution of the Mythical Divide

Jacob Ruth, SDAWP 2010

Recently I attended a Kelly Gallagher presentation with a few teachers. Gallagher is an author of several well-respected educational books including, *Deeper Reading* and *Write Like This*. Online he writes, "I know in my classroom that good things happen when my students have meaningful discussions. I know as a teacher myself that my craft sharpens when I am given the opportunity to have meaningful discussions with my peers. And let's have a laugh or two while we are at it." Gallagher started his presentation with a picture of stampeding cows and alluded

> I recently dubbed the professional learning cycle at my school as the professional learning cyclone.

that the image depicted the "age of innovation/information" (he said the word innovation is overused these days). This made me think of another principal-friend who expressed that he employs the metaphor of spinning plates at staff meetings to describe the world of education to teachers. I recently dubbed the professional learning cycle at my school as the professional learning cyclone. I even played a clip of the tornado bearing down on Dorothy and Toto to really drive home the point.

Education will always be in flux, but we are currently teaching and learning in a time of great educational and societal change. It is chaotic, messy, confusing, intellectually taxing, and emotionally draining. At the same time, it is exhilarating to face the challenge of fostering deep learning, authentic collaboration, and creative expression—as well as ingenuity and perseverance—in a technology-driven society where the dissemination and acquisition of knowledge changes daily and before our very eyes. There is no doubt that educators tasked with such great responsibilities in this 21st century have days when it feels like the violent herd is crashing by at a rate impossible to match and the best thing to do is hunker down and let the raging storm rumble past. But... you would be hard pressed to find many teachers willing to be left behind in the dusty cloud as progress thunders by—most educators I know understand the need for leaders of classrooms, schools, and districts to collectively reimagine teaching and learning.

Within the whirlwind of educational progression, there is a current trend I, as a leader of a school, have noticed that gives me hope and stokes my fiery optimism: the dilution of what I sometimes call the mythical divide between the various levels of structure that support public education. While it is to some degree subtle and not present at all sites, I have seen a greater understanding at all levels that historic beliefs and roles related to educational leadership are shifting to allow for more intellectual collaboration. In some systems there seems to be a swelling desire to work together as educational thinkers, superintendents, principals, teachers, and students. A critical piece that drives this shift is the creation of, and access to, quality learning opportunities that respect everyone in the room as professionals and promotes thinking that leads to the knowledge and development of skills to take on the great challenges we are all encountering.

> Let's be creative and critical thinkers, as well as effective communicators, problem solvers, and productive collaborators.

A fellow administrator recently stood up at a principal meeting, waving a book overhead, and elegantly stated, "Leaders are readers!" It is not like his statement was revolutionary, but the simplicity made me chuckle a bit, and it highlights the need to develop educational systems that celebrate educators as professionals and thinkers. It reminded me of how the San Diego Area Writing Project builds a community of learners and has enriched my growth as an educational leader. We all need to do exactly what we are asking of the young minds in our classrooms. Let's be creative and critical thinkers, as well as effective communicators, problem solvers, and productive collaborators. SDAWP, and the people I have met through the organization, have continued to be bastions of inspiration and cutting-edge educational thought—it is a unique place within the cyclone and the stampede where learning is honored at the highest of levels.

If you have been around SDAWP at all you have probably had one of those Saturday mornings when, to your family's dismay, you roll out of bed, swing by Starbucks for sustenance, and barely make it to an SDAWP event. But the tired mind always percolates as a presenter sparks a thought, or a quick piece of writing creates a moment of reflection, or a protocol ignites a lesson idea, or an intriguing conversation leads to a new perspective or a validation of philosophy. The working-on-Saturday-weariness gives way to that invigorating feeling of thinking and learning. This is the type of professional development that we yearn for and should demand as educators. It is also exactly why I believe my school has benefited greatly from the work we have done with SDAWP.

Like most fellows, I believe that the experiences I have had with the Writing Project have changed me as an educator—SDAWP has made me better.

I think back many years ago (actually not that long ago) when I was a teacher. There is no doubt I found teaching to be an incredibly difficult job. One aspect that I struggled with was the need to locate the resources and knowledge to refine my craft as a teacher. Professional development was hit-or-miss, often disjointed, and the ability to focus on the learning I needed in order to grow as a teacher was hard in a world with never-ending book titles, online opportunities, and educational conferences. I have blurry memories of discussing these feelings of being a lost teacher with SDAWP ellows Janet Ilko and Christine Sphar at some point years ago. They connected me with SDAWP and encouraged me to participate in

the SDAWP Summer Institute. The four-week Summer Institute is a serious and time consuming commitment, but the rewards are life-long. I think the most influential aspect of my involvement with SDAWP is the knowledge that there is a group of educators beyond my classroom and school walls doing amazing work. Once you are connected with SDAWP, you can stay connected with SDAWP forever. And, when we work in environments that can sometimes be filled with negativity, SDAWP provides a place to mentally and emotionally refuel. Like most fellows, I believe that the experiences I have had with the Writing Project have changed me as an educator—SDAWP has made me better.

Thus, now that I am honored to have the very hard job of leading a school as principal, I believe with confidence that work with SDAWP, and similar institutions or individuals, is necessary if our dream as a school is building a community of learners adept at facing the challenges of today and thriving within the stampede of progress. We have worked for a little over a year now with SDAWP at my school site.

Having SDAWP Professional Development on site has had a big impact on teaching and learning at our school. During the 2014-15 school year, we had five two-hour PD sessions on Fridays spread throughout the year. This year we will have two Friday sessions and one full-day Saturday session. Each visit begins with SDAWP Teacher Consultants leading a powerful piece of whole group learning. Then we breakout into primary and upper grade groups to focus more specifically on grade level learning. Last school year, the main objective was to take a deep dive into the use of power writing and mentor texts to improve student voice and writing authenticity. We are currently building on our knowledge of mentor texts to look at revision and a greater integration of mentor text copy change within all text types and across content areas. I believe teachers would express that there is an overall improvement of student

writing in all grade levels. Students are writing with an increased tenacity—and with more vigor and creative voice!

Beyond the superior work SDAWP does with writing, there is also the intrinsic love for being a thinker and learner that being a participant ignites or fosters.

By no means are we experts at power writing or the use of mentor texts. Writing structure is not gone and our school has always valued quality writing—but there is a decrease in classroom walls adorned with cookie-cutter writings. We see expressive pieces with sentence variety, intriguing leads, and juicy details often connected to evidence from texts. But beyond this important shift, I have noticed something that is also incredibly valuable that I attribute to our work with SDAWP and can be summarized with this somewhat silly statement—I think the thinking about thinking to promote thinking has changed or has been rejuvenated. Beyond the superior work SDAWP does with writing, there is also the intrinsic love for being a thinker and learner that being a participant ignites or fosters. This feeling then infiltrates many other aspects of being an educator.

I have been pondering a dynamic example of this related to the use of mentor texts. To some, teaching with mentor texts appears to be a simple strategy—of course, you would use the words of real authors as models, and of course, you would bring beautifully or diabolically written sentences to your students to analyze and use as their own. But

there is a very important question at the heart of the protocol that really highlights the shift that we all need to make in order to survive the crushing hooves of Gallagher's cows. The question is—What do you notice? It opens the door to deeper thinking and soon invades other areas of instructional practice. Soon enough, teachers are asking what do you notice in reference to a math word problem or scientific content. It leads to other questions—What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? I recently accompanied a 3rd grade class on a walking field trip to a canyon trail near our school site. In a beautifully designed lesson that blended technology and the exploration of nature, students with tightly gripped iPads were asked to document what they noticed as they hiked through coastal chaparral and fragrant sage searching for coyote tracks and Kumeyaay resources!

I must return here briefly to the idea of the mythical divide. One important addition to work with SDAWP and the development of a thinking school culture is the idea that the administrator must be right there with the teachers discovering and discussing. This is not a partnership set-up for the teachers to experience alone. I encourage other administrators to attend SDAWP's fall and spring conferences with staff members who are eager to give up a Saturday—grab coffee, walk around the beautiful UCSD campus together, and engage in dialogue as colleagues in the pursuit of learning. It is powerful to move a staff to a place where morale is not necessarily measured by the positivity of the teacher lounge banter, but by the level of intellectual respect and freedom to develop as a thinker under the facilitation of both teachers and administrators. It is a delicate give-and-take that can be summarized with the thought that we will accomplish much more together than divided. I would suggest this same thought to curriculum leaders, district directors, and superintendents.

Any school or educational entity is a work in progress, and we should al-

ways see our institutions in a state of evolution towards educational and functional improvement. The construction of a school or district culture focused on thinking and learning with the confidence to take on the challenges of the 21st century is no easy task. But I will say that the work with SDAWP at my school site and a dedication to becoming a school of thinkers and learners is having a

Any school or educational entity is a work in progress and we should always see our institutions in a state of evolution…

definite impact. Following the introduction to SDAWP last school year, two teachers, Vivian Bangle and Geri Little, attended the 2015 SDAWP Summer Institute. Another teacher, Jeri Aring, chose to join the Smart Tech Use group connected to SDAWP and lead by SDAWP Director Kim Douillard and CREATE Director Mica Polluck. Jeri has worked with the group for about a year now learning how to use technology to promote equity and has brought two more teachers to the group to extend the impact on our campus. How cool is it that the work of this group was recently featured as the cover story for the Spring 2016 issue of *Teaching Tolerance*? But we are also seeing a swell of interest and leadership in other directions. Several teachers and I will be taking an online course through Harvard Graduate School of Education connected to Project Zero, examining the idea of "Visible Thinking." A group of teachers and I will be attending the Palm Springs CUE technology conference. We are also beginning to explore the use of Calkins' *Units of Study for Teaching Reading* and will be taking a team of teacher leads to visit Fuerte Elementary in El Cajon, a school currently

integrating Calkins' *Units of Study*. Also, we will most likely bring in PD from The Reading and Writing Project this year. These are just a few of the examples of how we are promoting a school culture of thinking and learning. To diminish a divide, administrators must be willing to see themselves less as authority figures pushing for change by force and more as leaders hoping to inspire change through the creation of systems that allow for freedom of thought and provide true avenues to deeper learning. I think SDAWP has helped our staff develop this culture and see me more as this type of leader.

So…that is what I think you get when you show up at a SDAWP event on Saturday or drag yourself into a Friday PD the week before report cards are due. It is an organization that provides stellar professional development and excites that deep down love in all educators to be thinkers and to never stop learning. Teaching with mentor texts is just one approach that has the ability of shifting the way we think about teaching and learning—but the initial shift or reexamination of how we make students think can be a powerful catalyst. I think, as educators, we should constantly be searching for these very institutions and individuals because the stampede and the cyclone are already here, whether we like it or not.

Gallagher said, "My craft sharpens when I am given the opportunity to have meaningful discussions with peers…" I would echo that sentiment, while challenging all educators to read more and move beyond the comfort of their circle of peers. Reach out, have an open mind, don't be afraid to challenge the thinking of others, and find other educators that make learning fun! And in this spirit… email us, give us a call, follow us on Twitter, or corner us at the next conference. It is this constant *dialogue* that will make us all stronger.

Revising *Ourselves* Through **Professional Development**

Callie Brimberry, SDAWP 2008
Lisa Muñoz, SDAWP 2008
Emily Tsai, SDAWP 2014

It is difficult to even consider the possibility that participants left Jamie Jackson-Lenham's presentation, "Building a Writing Community in Primary Grades," at the 2015 Fall into Writing Conference feeling anything but empowered as educators. Within minutes, teachers were immersed in literature and discussing the value in teaching students to appreciate and love all parts of the writing process. After reviewing a variety of strategies and student samples, it became incredibly clear

...she honors their stories and creates an environment of encouragement that celebrates their growth as learners.

why Jamie's students are successful writers—she honors their stories and creates an environment of encouragement that celebrates their growth as learners. Upon closing, Jamie played a video of her students that reminded us why we wake up every morning inspired and motivated to revise our teaching practice in hopes of being better teachers than we were the day before. In the video, the students were asked to express why they enjoy certain mentor texts, and their responses held all of the genuine honesty we aim for our students to reveal in their writing. Some students said they loved books because characters share their similar features, which are rarely found on bookshelves, others asserted the moral of the story was valuable, while others recognized family members in the welcoming arms of characters. The earnest responses, all of which address a myriad of complex issues in our society, showcase what a writing community looks like: diverse, individualistic, collaborative, with intentional practice in fluency and immersion in diverse mentor texts.

The exploration of mentor texts didn't only encompass the use of literature. In Lauren Drew's presentation, "Visual Art as a Pathway to Problem-Solving," teachers were prompted to use Andy Warhol's art to charge up their artistic critique and pedagogical discussion. Drew took us on a journey where we were able to see the universal language that art possesses and how that language can mold the ways we introduce mathematical concepts to students. Teachers connected different art pieces to grade level math standards, collaborated on the various ways art can be used to deepen mathematical understandings, and brainstormed lessons in which students write and solve story problems based on a selected piece of art or use a masterpiece to showcase the use of algebra. Drew's presentation demonstrated that art has the power to reach within all corners of our classrooms—an engagement point for all students.

Jennifer Boots's session, "Plenty of Fish in Academic Writing," provided participants with another opportunity to think outside of the box and use personal ads as mentor texts to analyze style, functionality, and the ability of writing, even in brevity, to convey a lot of information about the author. Jen introduced herself and shared that she has a three-year-old son and that she is single. Then, she asked, "Where do I find a guy?" The room was at first silent, but finally, after a few responses, she commented that some people look for love online. After her unexpected and clever start, she presented some of the most awkward, hilarious, and odd personal ads that she has taken from real online dating sites to show her students how people portray themselves through writing. Here is just a taste of what we read: "Are you looking for a man who's confident and self-assured but who's also a good communicator and open with his feelings?" Or "so if you are interested in meeting me, don't be afraid to leave me a message. don't worry i won't bite (hard)." In groups, participants had an opportunity to discuss what the ads conveyed about those who wrote them. One lively discussion touched on how poor grammar and spelling can impact the respect a writer receives. A similar conversation touched on how the ads would serve as a powerful tool for teaching the possibilities in revising, while another group focused on how word choice can engage reluctant readers or foreshadow conflict. It was clear that the presentation left participants with refreshing and engaging ways to introduce the many purposes behind writing and revision.

Boots' use of personal ads wasn't the only presentation to examine the power behind shorter pieces of writing. Jen Roberts explored the power of brevity in her presentation on "Short Form Writing: The Art of Saying More with Less." Roberts demonstrated how narrowing down one's words will often lead to more concise thoughts. Revising their own words, participants soon learned that better than a quick-write is a quick-write shortened to a 140-character tweet, better yet is a tweet condensed to a six-word memoir, and even better is a six-word memoir transformed into a meme. This chal-

lenge in revision is a creative and engaging way to bring student opinions and thoughts to the forefront of the classroom. Jen Roberts demonstrated how teachers could use short form writing to show learning, understanding, and analysis.

Roberts' second presentation, "Writing Without Paper: The Process and Workflow of a Digital Classroom," provided an additional lesson in efficiency. The session was packed with programs, apps, and tips for making our technology flow with our classrooms. Teachers have various digital resources available to them, but it can often be cumbersome if they do not know how to best utilize these resources for students. Roberts suggested that a paperless classroom that doesn't center around the never-ending revolving door of collecting, grading, and distributing notebooks can improve the consistency and overall depth of student writing. She demonstrated programs that have allowed her own classes to run more effectively, including "Socrative," which allows teachers to interact with their students paperlessly. Additionally, she highlighted the use of "Kaizena," "Doctopus," and "Goobric"—add-ons that allow teachers to leave voice comments for students, add a grading rubric to Google documents, and send documents to all students with a single click. To learn more about the paperless classroom, view the presentation at bit.ly/paperlessclassroom.

Across the hall, Wendy Craig further prompted educators to realize the power of young writers. In her presentation, "Guiding Young Writers to Define and Defend an Opinion," participants followed the journey of Craig's primary age students as they used mentor texts to learn how to craft clearly stated opinion statements that are supported by factual evidence. In addition to being surrounded by powerful literature, Craig also said that self-selecting topics is important, as is allowing students to analyze pictures. During the second half of Wendy's session, she discussed the end products: after having her students use cluster

charts to help them decide on their topics (season, color, animal, food, and so on), they are finally ready to write an argument. Through analyzing a variety of mentor texts and exploring strategies in clustering and brainstorming, students choose a "favorite something" as their topic before writing the first draft of their claims. With a plethora of mentor texts in their hands, students are surrounded with statements that demonstrate how writing can be both factual and full of individual voice.

Aja Booker and Christine Kané echoed the necessity of individual voice in fictional writing in their session, "Vision and Revision: Structure, Style and Accuracy." Kané and Booker shared various writing strategies that enable students to develop a vision of the fictional worlds they want to create prior to writing them. The concept: vision before revision allows students to become immersed in the fictional worlds they create so that they can depict these worlds with accuracy for their readers while maintaining their unique style and voice. Participants were guided through a variety of practices that allowed them to break into their own fictional characters and begin to see the innermost parts of their creations. With a myriad of brainstorming activities, the teachers married the details of their fictional elements (character, setting, and climax) with living details from their own lives. This practice served as a great reminder to honor the real life elements our students contribute to their writing since the "real" parts from our lives breathe life into the fictional world and story we seek to write.

The notion that writing is a blend of fiction and reality was mirrored in Lisa Muñoz's presentation on "Student Voice through Storytelling: Using Narrative in ALL Writing." The session started off strong with participants sharing their first thoughts related to the words "bananas" and "vomit"—an ice-breaker that made people laugh and tell pretty hilarious stories about bananas. Who knew?

And, that was the point: we engage and connect through storytelling. Using science, student samples, Thomas Newkirk's *Minds Made for Stories*, Chimamanda Adichie's "The Danger of a Single Story," and other writers to illustrate the power of story, we discussed what we already do in our classrooms and what we can do to encourage narrative in aca-

With a plethora of mentor texts at their hands, students are surrounded with statements that demonstrate how writing can be both factual and full of individual voice.

demic writing. Muñoz shared that before reading *Minds Made for Stories*, she had the feeling that storytelling was really important to conveying information, persuasion, and so on, but that she didn't have the language that Newkirk offers. While Muñoz shared what she does do in the classroom, what the experts say, and how she offers storytelling in the larger community with student showcases through Muses, Miramar College's writers forum, and opportunities to publish in *Community Voices*, her biggest advice is for instructors to continually remind students, regardless of assignment and topic, that they should be thinking about ways, moves, and strategies to really draw in the reader through stories.

As Adichie states, "I think I started to realize that stories are so powerful—particularly powerful because we're not always aware of how powerful they are."

An Argument for Teaching Interdisciplinary Projects

Dave Barry, SDAWP 2015

Facing northwest, 300 Spartans, led by their leader, King Leonidas, are strategically positioned, ground shaking under their feet, in a narrow mountain pass at Thermopylae. They are staring down an army of about 150,000 Persian soldiers, who must have looked like a sea of ants advancing towards them. King Leonidas is reminding them of their mission and sacred honor as Spartan warriors, Hoplites. While each Hoplite is extending their dory, raising their shield, and wearing the armor of their fathers and grandfathers, their field of vision shrinks and disappears as they interlock their shields to form a phalanx, an unbroken wall of shields and spears. Under the canopy of 300 shields, the sound of thousands of arrows being deflected sounds like torrential rain on a flat tin roof. You might think such an apparently lopsided battle might last for three minutes, but it lasted three days.

Where is the math? How is writing helpful? Why would this even be an appropriate approach to use?

This is not just a history lesson, it's also the introduction to a math unit grounded in historical context, which, in this case, relies on writing to empathize with the soldiers' perspective. At first glance, some may question: Where is the math? How is writing helpful? Why would this even be an appropriate approach to use? All too often, students do not see connections between different subject areas taught in school. This is not their fault; it is the fault of the education system. Many of us compartmentalize subjects and seldom incorporate content or skills from one area to another. We teach our content and collaborate within our departments or grade levels, yet seldom have the opportunity to team up with other departments. We should nurture the connections between content areas by teaching interdisciplinary project-based units. This teaching theory is known as project-based learning (PBL). PBL is important because students need to see the connections that we, as educators, naturally see when we are teaching.

The idea of interdisciplinary projects, or PBL, is not new, just underutilized. At my school site, we follow Stanford's Design Thinking Process: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test, which is utilized by project-based learning schools. This design process promotes creativity and collaboration and incorporates the higher order thinking skills that are essential elements of the Common Core State Standards. Under Common Core, students are expected to state why a solution works, how it fits or models a situation, and explain its significance.

For instance, PBL curriculum would prompt a sixth grade student to examine the aforementioned piece of ancient civilization through historical, mathematical, scientific, literary, and ethical lenses. The history teacher would discuss and examine the events leading up to and following Thermopylae, analyze the Spartan culture, and facilitate a factual research process. The math teacher would introduce ratios and rates prior to exploring these concepts within the context of the Spartan battle. The language arts teacher would guide students in analyzing Greek literature and/or reading primary source accounts of the battle, while helping to refine and develop the students' writing. The science teacher would explore the physical aspects of exhaustion by having students engage in a physical activity multiple times within a set period of time while other students would record how the number of repetitions change as time progresses. In addition, this would reinforce the idea that there are no "rest" or "time out" periods during a battle.

Throughout the entire project, students would be engaged in cross-curricular writing activities in each subject area to allow them to process the content. The instructors would use student writing to formatively assess understanding. The culminating activity would require the students to create a final product incorporating all subjects: a news report, a scale model, or other forms of media that would present the content from either the Persian or Spartan perspective.

Students in a PBL classroom have more opportunities to see the similarities that exist between disciplines. Additionally, PBL provides students with opportunities to work on their communication skills and recognize the flexible use of content and vocabulary when they are working with their cross-curricular teams and sharing their findings. In particular, many of the thought processes in single subject learning are

exactly the same, such as cause and effect: a text structure that is vastly utilized in history and language arts classes, a method practiced in science to study a chain of events, and a mathematician's tool used to study the effect of a term in an equation.

Beyond recognizing cross-curricular terminology and applications, the content itself becomes more meaningful because the process of creating a project allows students to immerse themselves in the learning. Students are evaluated on the basis of their projects as opposed to the

The amount of planning time we put in is not always reflected in our students' work because teachers are competing for the students' time instead of sharing it.

narrow scope of exams; therefore, the assessment is more meaningful because teachers are able to see the students' ability to apply learned knowledge in a myriad of ways across a variety of subjects, which provides more information than a specific content area assessment. If students are able to interact with the content more frequently for a longer duration of time, they will also be encouraged to delve deeper into the concepts. The engaging format, in which learning isn't hindered by a bell and routine switching of subjects, inspires students to pursue learning outside of the classroom. It also lessens the workload so more effort can be devoted to producing a finished piece.

Just consider how many times we have assigned a project and received

lackluster results. The amount of planning time we put in is not always reflected in our students' work because teachers are competing for the students' time instead of sharing it. If we aligned our content, a student could bring the data from their science lab to math class to be more deeply analyzed, which would in turn allow the science teacher to focus more on scientific principles and less on the mathematical aspect of data analysis. In this scenario, a student is focused on one cross-curricular concept and allowed to dedicate more time to mastering and successfully applying it in all courses.

Modification, the amount of choice that projects offer, allows a student to be driven by their curiosity and immerse themselves as deeply as they wish into studying the concept. As PBL instructors, we can easily modify content without singling out a student because everyone is expected to be working on a similar task in a different way. We are then able to teach in the students' zones of proximal development. In addition to having the content presented at the students' individual levels, they will be exposed to examples of more sophisticated work and will be able to learn from their peers.

Incorporating these types of projects on a more regular basis may also encourage more students to enter into a science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) career. According to *One Nation Under Taught: Solving America's Science, Technology, Engineering & Math Crisis*, by Dr. Vince Bertram, a recent report suggested that 28% of high school freshmen, or one million students, declare an interest in a STEM field. By the time those freshmen become seniors, 57% of them (approximately 570,000 students) no longer declare an interest in pursuing a STEM field. Dr. Bertram further explains that since 1970, there has not been a statistical increase in math and science scores (26). It is clear that we lose many talented future scientists, mathematicians, statisticians, and innovators because of our education system's formulaic approach to modularly

teaching the subjects. This trend could potentially be reversed if the PBL structure was implemented, and now is a great time to implement changes as the Common Core curriculum prompts teachers and students alike to reconsider the ways in which we learn.

Fortunately, the school site where I teach has adopted PBL as a way to incorporate more critical thinking and cross-curricular coordination. Coordinating among the staff and connecting the curriculum in a middle school setting is not easily done. Our middle school has 1,500 6th-8th grade students and over fifty teachers. Every student has a minimum of five teachers extending across the subjects of math, science, social studies, language arts, PE, and an elective. Currently, each grade level math teacher at my school has been tasked with creating one project that will connect all of the other subjects. We have started this process by sharing and aligning the topics and standards covered in each subject via a shareable Word document. Not only does this allow us to efficiently use our time, it aims to promote more collaboration between departments. As of now, the most difficult challenge is finding the time to coordinate and plan with each other. It is because of these scheduling obstacles, which every school would undoubtedly face, that it is imperative that cross-curricular collaboration planning time be made available and prioritized.

Eliminating this challenge requires some structural changes to when and how our staff holds meetings. After practicing PBL, our staff has proposed some ideal changes that would allow cross-curricular planning to be more efficient. The first change would be to minimize the time spent dispensing information during school meetings. Instead, staff members would have the option to raise questions about previously distributed information that may not need further explanation (i.e. schedule changes, weekly announcements, etc.). This would allow more time to cooperatively

create curriculum and assessments during the scheduled staff meetings. The second change would be to release staff from their regular department meetings to plan with teachers from other disciplines. This practice would allow these interdisciplinary projects to be implemented without adding more minutes to the contracted day. The third change would be to add paid planning time into the summer months so the staff has more time to plan together.

> After all,
> why do we teach
> in the first place,
> so students can
> simply know
> content or
> so they can
> learn to apply it?

Despite these challenges, I am able to facilitate a few of these units during the last few weeks of school, after the state testing is completed. During this time, my classroom seems to be a much different place. Everyone participates, all homework assignments are thoroughly completed, group journals are used to document the learning and progress of each group, and students enthusiastically collaborate with their group members. These projects have inspired students to become innovators and critical thinkers as they use their cumulative knowledge (not just their content specific knowledge) to make connections between different subject areas.

At the end of each year, I have given an anonymous survey that provides me with feedback to refine my practice. The responses from students have inspired me to create more interdisciplinary projects. One student stated that he wanted to become a financial planner because he found the process of looking for trends interesting in a stock market proj-

ect. Another student stated that he wanted to become a meteorologist as a result of a project incorporating the study of weather. Many students stated the projects were their favorite part of the class because they had the opportunity to create something, they were part of a team, and they appreciated that enough time was spent on a concept so they could really understand it.

This isn't to say that single subject teaching should be done away with. My experience, however, has suggested that teaching content in isolation—devoid of a meaningful context—limits the students' ability to apply their knowledge in various formats. We should encourage collaboration and provide time for teachers from different content areas to work together, identify curricular connections, and align their content and practices.

Robert Marzano, a leading researcher in education, asserted that it would take a student twenty-five years to master all of the content standards (Sherer). Creating interdisciplinary project-based learning units would allow teachers to collaborate and create pathways students could more efficiently navigate in order to more effectively master content standards.

After all, why do we teach in the first place, so students can simply know content or so they can learn to apply it?

Work Cited:

Bertram, Vince. *One Nation Under Taught: Solving America's Science, Technology, Engineering & Math Crisis*: New York, Beaufort Books, 2014. Print.

Sherer, Marge. How and Why Standards Can Improve Student Achievement: A Conversation with Robert J. Marzano. *Educational Leadership* 59.1 (2011): 14-18. Print.

Project Notes

Congratulations, Valentyna Banner (SDAWP 2009). She and her husband, Kelly, welcomed Kruz Antonio Banner into their family on September 16, 2015.

Way to go, Cindy Jenson-Elliot (SDAWP 2012)! Cindy's newest picture book, *Dig In!*, launched on March 1, 2016. Illustrated by artist Mary Peterson, *Dig In!* gives children and families a push out the door to see what they can discover in their own backyards. Published by Beach Lane Books, an imprint of Simon and Schuster, *Dig In!* is available through links to IndieBound, Amazon, or Barnes & Noble on Cindy's website at www.cindyjensonelliott.com.

A fond farewell to Barb Montfort (SDAWP 2011). Barb left San Diego for her home state of Washington where she is excited to return to the classroom after spending several years in a district level position for the South Bay Union School District. Best of luck to you, Barb. You will be missed!

Goodbye to Callie Brimberry (SDAWP 2008). Callie and her family will be moving to Virginia where her husband is continuing his career as an Officer in the U.S. Navy. Callie will be missed, but we are grateful that she will continue to be a part of SDAWP through her role as an editor of *Dialogue*.

"Like us" on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SDAWP where links to writing resources and research articles are posted regularly, offering a wealth of ideas for curriculum design and implementation.

Follow @SDAWP_Fellow on Twitter and join the conversation as a different Fellow takes over each week to tweet about teaching and life from a unique perspective.

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A Brief Excerpt of
The Impact of TESOL Across the Curriculum: Walking with the Invisible

Mark Manasse, SDAWP 2010

Background

Every year in California, 70 to 80 percent of first time college students arrive at community colleges, the most common choice for higher education for low-income students lacking foundational skills in reading, writing, math, language, as well as learning and study skills necessary to succeed at college-level (transfer-level) work (Illowsky, 2008; Marcotte, Bailey, Borkoski, & Kienzl, 2005; Melguizo, Hagedorn, & Cypers 2008; Rose, 2012.). These students are classified as Basic Skills students (pre-transfer-level), and they are often institutionally marginalized, underserved, or stifled by a lack of collegiate knowhow, savvy, and/or confidence to voice concerns about their education (Blumenthal, 2002; Cox, 2009; Rose, 2012). Notably, while scores of Basic Skills students attend these two-year institutions, most do not earn a degree or certificate. In other words, they do not complete their education.

The purpose of this study, then, is to determine if pedagogical training in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) affects classroom practices across the curriculum (meaning, if training in TESOL affects classroom practices in all subject areas, not just language classrooms), and if such training affects instructors' perceptions of the potential for student success across the curriculum as well.

The following questions guided this study:
1. How did pedagogical training in TESOL affect one community college instructor's perceptions of how she relates to, and is aware of, her linguistically diverse students?
2. How did pedagogical training in TESOL affect one community college instructor's classroom practices?

Findings

Brief Participant Background

The research participant is a life-long teacher. By her mid-twenties, she earned her TESOL certificate and was teaching ESL in a private La Jolla language school. But ESL was only a conduit; she knew for many years that she wanted to teach anthropology, and by her early thirties, she had achieved her MA in this field, and was teaching at different San Diego community colleges as a so-called freeway flyer (an adjunct professor who works at numerous colleges to make ends meet) before becoming a full-time faculty member at her current school site in 2006. It was at this time her teaching philosophy and desire to help those who were invisible (at-risk or Basic Skills students) started to emerge.

Findings Framework

For this study, I:
1. Observed this instructor teach on two occasions,
2. Reviewed her classroom artifacts, and then
3. Interviewed her.

It was not until after the interview that I realized something vitally important. Although her professional path did include TESOL training, there were clearly other impacts, too. Therefore, it was not until I took a broader look at the multiple influences on the instructor's career path that I was then able to winnow down how TESOL training could impact her current teaching practices. With this framework, I could start to make sense of how her desire to create social and impactful change for invisible students manifested itself within the community college (CC) classroom.
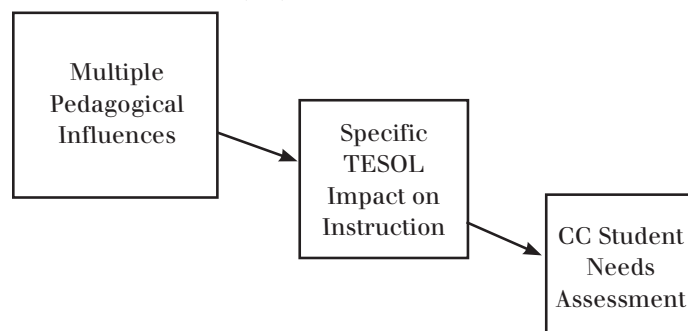
Figure 1. How teacher training can impact student success. In this figure, we can see the possible progression of how the multitude of influences on the instructor's teaching career can be focused down to possible TESOL impact on instruction and subsequent increased awareness of Basic Skills students' needs.

Pre-Interview: Influences on Pedagogy

In my observational notes, I made numerous and repeated reference to possible TESOL impacts on the instructor's pedagogical decision making. For example, during a discussion about a field trip her anthropology class took to the San Diego Zoo, I made note of how she may have been acting like an ESL instructor. Table 1 on page 12 demonstrates how I initially took a myopic view of what I observed in her class.

My field notes repeatedly made this type of interpretation, pulling what I observed back to only one possible influence: TESOL training. Interestingly, not only did I interpret her presentation skills in this manner, but I made similar interpretations about her classroom artifacts as well. For example,

Table 1:
Discussion of Zoo Field Trip: Field Notes and Interpretation

Observation	Concurrent Interpretation
Student said, "I feel bad about the monkeys at the zoo." Instructor responded, "You feel bad?" simply restating what the student asked. The student then talked about the conflict she feels about zoos, and the instructor repeated that too.	She is repeating what the students say a lot! ESL teacher move to restate for the rest of the class.
The instructor asked, "What did you feel when you looked into the eyes of the animals?" The instructor's eyes got huge, and she positioned her hands by her eyes with her palms out, demonstrating what she meant about the wideness and innocence of the animal's eyes.	She acts out a lot of what she says. Hands, eyes, face, movement. ESL teachers need to use multiple inputs.

a TESOL-only lens clouded my initial interpretations of her PowerPoint (PPT) slide creation (see Table 2 below).

Upon observing these slides during her lecture, I questioned why they possibly could have been made in this fashion with a predetermined answer in mind: few words, lots of pictures, supplemented with realia, must mean TESOL. As I continued to observe the instructor, I grew more and more certain of this supposition.

Post-Interview: Influences on Pedagogy

After two days of observation, my study moved to its next stage, the interview, during which the complexity of possible influences on her teaching career came to life. While it was true that her ESL training impacted what she did, it was by no means the only impact, as seen in Table 3 on page 13.

It's possible there are even more influences on her teaching career that she did not speak to during this one interview or

perhaps the categories could be classified differently. More importantly, no matter how it was framed, it was clear that TESOL training was not the only influence on what the instructor did and did not do in the classroom. There was something much more complex going on.

The instructor discussed how it wasn't just her daughters who had influenced her teaching, but it was her philosophy as well (Table 3). Buddhism helped her understand more of her students, especially the one who she mentioned in the following passage who was dealing with drug and legal issues:

> *I'm actually trying to think about it in terms of my Buddhist practice, because I feel that I'm finally able to fulfill…bear[ing] witness, and that's a really hard thing for me, to bear witness. But in this case, I've thought of really trying to understand where my students are coming from. Not that I'm going to necessarily bend rules…but I'm just trying to bear witness for him so he knows I understand where he's coming from. I'm listening to him. I'm taking in his expression of his pain…I just want to help these students who are largely invisible. All of that is part of this little shift I'm going through.*

The concept of the invisible student is key for this instructor and her teaching practice, and I will return back to this topic in "The Invisible" section. What was crucial to note after my interview with her was the lack of a one-to-one causal relationship between TESOL training to classroom instruction. On the one hand, I found a deep and complex web of influences that led this instructor to become who she was in and out of the classroom. On the other hand, while there were clearly multiple areas of pedagogical influence, without question, there were TESOL-specific training markers in her class and her classroom artifacts.

Potential TESOL Training Impact

Within contemporary ESL classes, there has been a pedagogical shift. Gone are the days of rote memorization, grammar translation, and/or simple mimicry (Brown, 2007). Today, language classrooms involve communicative instruction, where deep-level understanding and idiosyncratic language

Table 2: *Examples of PowerPoint slides used in the anthropology class.*
These kinds of slides led to an initial analysis of only being pedagogically influenced by her TESOL background.

Artifacts (PowerPoint Slides)	Field Notes	Concurrent Interpretation
What is a fossil? • The remains or trace of an ancient organism preserved in the ground **Endocast—Taung Child** • Naturally-formed cast of a brain when the minerals filled the mold • Australopithecus afarensis (2.5 mya) • Discovered 1924 by Raymond Dart *(Image not available)*	PPT had definition, brief…few words. Clear and big. "What is a fossil? The remains of, or trace of, an ancient org. Very simple PPT…with photos AND tactile handouts. Two types of fossils, PPT slide, again, few words. Brief definitions. Lots of pics PLUS hands-on stuff.	Does she teach differently than other anthropologist profs. to her knowledge? Why does she use so many photos, brief wording on PPT, hand outs/realia? Does she realize she repeats what students say a lot? Lots of hand gestures… Do you have a needs analysis? Do you ask students what their first language is? Why do you use so few words on slides and pics and handouts?

usage are key. Instead of learning language for the sake of language, content knowledge, task completion, and an appreciation for who students are and what they individually as well as culturally bring to the classroom are all integral parts of the equation. Table 4 on page 14 lists some of these types of possible TESOL-specific influences in the instructor's anthropology class: utilization of diversity in the classroom, cultural awareness, comprehensible input for all students, and focus on hands-on student engagement.

Consequently, capturing what influenced her actions within the classroom was complex. As previously mentioned, there

Table 3: Possible Influences on Instructor's Pedagogy	
Influence	**Interview Quote**
Daughters	"I'm less nervous about letting [students] be my friends [because of my daughters]."
Collegiate Environment	"I think more than anything it's [my school site's] environment or the community college environment. After having years of experience teaching community college students, I recognize that there are many levels of learning…"
Anthropology	"I think that anthropologists in general, especially anthropologists who are trained primarily in cultural anthropology, are very aware of these issues of access and very aware of different backgrounds, different expectations of students, and different levels of [academic] preparation."
ESL	"I think that definitely teaching ESL was sort of my way of doing anthropology before I had my anthropology class…. It was a lot of cultural observation for me…. Really what I always wanted to do was anthropology, but I did ESL because I thought it was a pretty good job, I enjoyed it…"
Recognition from Peers	"Winning adjunct of the year made me realize I was doing something good that would help me when I applied for a full-time position."
Philosophy	"I feel much more empathy towards [my students]. I'm actually trying to think about it in terms of my Buddhist practice…"
Professional Development	"I remember starting to read things after I had done my PRF (Performance Review File) a few times and thinking, "I don't have a lot to say under pedagogy…" That prompted me to figure out some things. I definitely read or learned about multiple intelligences and that, combined with my understanding of different cultural values and expectations of education and how people respond differently…"

was not a simple one-to-one, cause and effect relationship between her TESOL training and her anthropology class instruction. What I initially interpreted with my field notes as only occurring because of her TESOL training was myopic and did not speak to the numerous, diverse life events that influenced her teaching acumen. Simultaneously, though, while it was true there were many possible influences as to why she taught the way she did (see Table 3), I still found attributable TESOL-specific moments within her class and during her interview (see Tables 2 and 3). Ultimately, then, it could be the confluence of the multiple impacts on her life, including TESOL training, that have perhaps led to her ability to be keenly aware of the needs of the invisible, or those so-called Basic Skills students, in her classes.

The Invisible:
Awareness of Community College Student Need

As I mentioned, the instructor was cognizant of many potential influences on her instruction and one of those areas of influence was TESOL training. Therefore, those influences, all together, could have helped develop her awareness of Basic Skills student needs in her anthropology class.

The most striking moment during our interview was a discussion about connecting to her students. The instructor repeatedly spoke about at-risk, or Basic Skills, students even though she never used that specific terminology. To her, teaching was not about helping those with a lack of skill, preparation, or performance, but more about those who did not want to be seen, the invisible.

In the midst of our interview, I asked her if she acted similarly or differently than other anthropology professors. If she had any sense of her desire to know her students' names and to joke around with them as something unique to her in the world of community college anthropology instruction. It was at this moment she shared that it was really about: "The really awkward shy kid who sits in the back with the pimples and the bad haircut. Those are the guys I really love because they're generally invisible. They walk like they feel like they're invisible."

During our interview, I got a better sense of the deep-level awareness that the instructor had for her students, even the ones in the back, with the pimples. I sensed that the instructor, then, could symbolize the aforementioned pedagogical transformation within the field of TESOL itself. What was once about the surface-level, the memorized, the cold, the rote became an attention to meaning and understanding and knowing about students not only linguistically, but also culturally and individually (Brown, 2007).

The instructor, too, had made such a transformation. Initially, she was not able to provide the emotional support her students needed until she, too, became more visible. It was not until she went through what she self-classified as a "heart shift," bringing all the pedagogical influences together, that she was able to provide an appropriate level of support to the invisible in her class:

Table 4:
Potential TESOL Training Impact

Marker	Interview Quote
Utilization of Diversity	"The diversity in materials, the diversity in input, diversity in output and then in behavior…I know there's not just one size fits all for all of that."
Cultural and Language	"I think more than anything it's [my school site's] environment or the community college environment. After having years of experience teaching community college students, I recognize that there are many levels of learning…"
Awareness	"I'm really interested in language as a field of study on its own, and I have been for a long time. When I took a class in language and culture, it was the culture part of this that I really liked, and how language plays out in culture."
Comprehensible Input	"For all levels of English learners and developmental students, it makes a lot of sense to have just very basic PPT slides…it helps students that may not be as well-prepared or have as much experience in a college classroom…or students who may be other language learners. It's very helpful for them to have things that they can write down and they can look up and translate later on…"
Hands-on Engagement with Material	"I think I will be a better teacher when I can engage the students every time we meet, rather than just sometimes."

I did a lot of pushing people away. Oh, you have a problem? I don't want to hear about it. These are my rules. I'm sorry if it doesn't work out. And now, I'm much more, you have a problem, why don't you tell me about it. Let me see if I can give you some guidance. Let me see if I can be that person who helps you this semester.

The instructor now felt that she should be there for all of her students; even the ones who take more work and more time. She should see all of them. Perhaps this was why she was so self-aware of all the pieces, including TESOL training, that impacted who she had become. Perhaps it was not until she saw herself that she could more clearly see others and their individual needs.

SDAWP's Study Groups
Kim Douillard, SDAWP 1992

The last thing that most teachers want to do on a Saturday morning after a long work week is head to the university for more learning. But SDAWP teachers and their colleagues get up early and drive from all over the county to gather and learn together…by choice! There are no monetary incentives or promises of promotion to get them there. They come because there is nothing better than being in a room filled with more than 60 educators who are ready to learn. These are teachers from across grade levels and school districts…what they have in common is a desire to continue to hone their craft, and they know that happens best in collaboration with their SDAWP colleagues.

This is the phenomenon that we at the SDAWP call study groups. We meet on four Saturday mornings over the course of four or five months to learn together, write together, read together, and share how we are implementing that learning in our kindergarten through college classrooms. We gather first as a whole group, which creates opportunities for SDAWP teachers to get to know each other across grade levels and school contexts. An ice breaker helps teachers learn about each other and prepares them to group in new ways for a common learning opportunity. One of these mornings involved rolls of toilet paper and gratitude.

After the opening activity, participants gather in smaller groups by book choice to delve deeper into how the reading informs classroom practices. This year participants selected from four books (provided by SDAWP): *Working With Mentors* by Allison Marchette and Rebekah O'Dell, *Writers ARE Readers* by Lester Laminack and Reba Wadsworth, *Teaching Arguments* by Jennifer Fletcher, and *Learning for Real* by Heidi Williams. (Book reviews by study group participants follow on the next two pages.)

We've also been experimenting with ways to include those who aren't able to participate in our face-to-face meetings. Both last year and this year, we incorporated a MOOC (Massive Open Online Collaboration) modeled after the National Writing Project's Connected Learning MOOC as part of the study groups. The Write Now! MOOC offered a way for those who could not participate to join in conversations about writing and writing instruction and allowed those who participated in person to share across groups and to connect with other educators, both within and beyond our local SDAWP community. This format still feels unfamiliar and uncomfortable to some, but our dream is for others in our larger Writing Project community to join in, adding their thinking through make cycles on the Google + community that houses the MOOC. You can find the Write Now! MOOC at https://plus.google.com/communities/102846973920410724288.
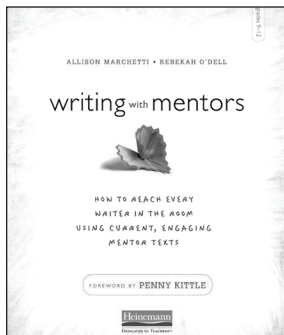
Writing with Mentors: How to Reach Every Writer in the Room Using Current, Engaging Mentor Texts
By Allison Marchetti
and Rebekah O'Dell
Review by Henry Aronson
(SDAWP 2014) and
Gina Barnard (SDAWP 2016)

"I felt too hemmed in," one group member said of the reading protocols we used to begin discussing our book, Allison Marchetti and Rebekah O'Dell's *Writing with Mentors: How to Reach Every Writer in the Room Using Current, Engaging Mentor Texts.*

"But I like them!" another interrupted, "Because I need a place to start. Plus, I've never used 'protocols' before."

This overlapping "call and response" exchange characterized our group's lively discussion, a conversation that toggled back and forth between stepping on each other's words and pausing reflectively as we jotted down notes or hunted through the text for that particular quote or passage that inspired (or bothered!) us. *Discussing Writing with Mentors* encouraged us to play, challenge ourselves, and explore new teaching strategies.

Two particular moments in the book gelled for us: the notion of using "mentor text clusters" and the section on how to introduce mentor texts to the class. A cluster is a selection of about three to six mentor texts. This mini-collection of texts gives students more than one example of a writing strategy (as opposed to providing a single "correct" model). We all already used mentor texts in the classroom, but the idea of working with clusters resonated with us because it gives students a variety of examples and provides a better chance to pique all of our students' interests. Using clusters also precludes the problem we all face: students feeling limited by a single example.

The section "Getting to Know Each Other and Mentor Texts" explains how the authors combine the typical "getting acquainted" routines they use during the first week of school with the process they use to orient students to mentor texts.

Our discussion became more and more animated as we brainstormed how to splice introducing mentor texts alongside getting students acquainted with us and each other. And despite teaching different age groups, we plotted out a promising cluster of mentor texts we could all use that first week of school.

Discussing *Writing with Mentors* encouraged us to play, challenge ourselves, and explore new teaching strategies.

We also shared how we were already adapting the lessons from the book. One member's "show-and-tell" featured before and after student writing samples. Thumbing through the magazine aisle at her local grocery store, she noticed how her students' drafts could benefit from the craft she noted in the articles. She snagged some copies, marked specific passages from the magazines, passed out the articles to students, and asked them to revise. The results she shared inspired us, compelling us to keep our eyes open for mentor texts wherever we are.

Marchetti and O'Dell's ideas are not completely foreign to what we already do in our classrooms. However, their ideas validate our own practices, giving some of us "newbies" language and guidelines to get started with using mentor texts while re-energizing those who already use them.

Writers ARE Readers: Flipping Reading Instruction into Writing Opportunities
By Lester L. Laminack
and Reba M. Wadsworth
Review by Judy Geraci (SDAWP 2010)

With its clean layout, visual examples of anchor charts, and student writing samples, *Writers ARE Readers: Flipping Reading Instruction into Writing Opportunities* by Lester L. Laminack and Reba M. Wadsworth offers lessons that are easily transferrable from page to practice.

Each chapter features a stated focus, step-by-step instructions, and a model lesson plan for both reading and writing. Making it even more user-friendly, the book provides scripted models with side notes for teachers.

It is certainly possible for any teacher to independently design great instruction with *Writers Are Readers* as a guide. But why go it alone? With supportive feedback from each other, our study group members were able to stretch this book's lessons even further to meet our students' unique strengths and challenges.

After reading the first four chapters on text structures, we used the 4 Ds protocol to share our attempts to use a lesson from the book. Hearing others identify their stumbling blocks

and how they could work through them is both empowering and encouraging when faced with your own doubts and barriers. Another way in which our group supported each other was by sharing how we differentiated some of the sample lessons. In applying the "Noticing Important Details" chapter, Jamie Jackson-Lenham showed her version of the featured anchor chart, modified for younger students, by adding visuals to a written list. Meghan Tramp, who teaches 2nd grade at SDGVA, noted that the visuals actually work well for students at all grade levels, especially for English learners.

In our last meeting, the Next Step protocol gave us an opportunity to plan future lessons. Once again, hearing how several teachers planned to take the same chapter lessons in various directions really amped up the power of reading the book.

For instance, Patricia Copeland and Valentyna Banner both brainstormed lessons from the "Visualization" chapter, but for English and math lessons, respectively. From "Noticing Details" Lesley Murphey planned a gallery walk of photos from Japanese internment camps, while Meghan Tramp planned a mini-lesson focusing on subtitles to teach main ideas.

Andrea Davis and Geri Little, on the other hand, were both influenced by the chapter "Synthesis." Davis engaged her first graders in a letter-writing lesson focused on the text *Gingerbread Man*, and Geri used multiple books on the same topic for her students to synthesize into their own informational books.

Finally, *Writers Are Readers* incorporates mentor texts that lean toward picture books for younger readers but includes a list of alternate texts at different levels at the end of each chapter.

Having a half-dozen colleagues at your side to quickly comment on these texts from their experiences is an invaluable time-saving resource.

Writers ARE Readers; Flipping Reading Instruction Into Writing Opportunities
By Lester Laminack
and Reba Wadsworth
Review by Evelyn Leano (SDAWP 2013)

The morning sun peeked through my curtains as I woke up to the first day of a book study group with SDAWP. With Starbucks coffee in hand, I walked into the meeting looking forward to working with the book, *Writers are Readers; Flipping Reading Instruction Into Writing Opportunities* by Lester Laminack and Reba Wadsworth. The authors fully engage the teacher with explicit lessons to make reading strategies into writing opportunities. They write, "Leading the student to understand what he did as a reader can become a lens that brings into focus what the writer had to do before a reader ever saw the page."

The concept of "flipping" is simple. The reader focuses on what he must do to make meaning of the text; then, he "flips" that concept to think about what the writer of that text had to do to set up the reader. From that, the student makes connections between reading and writing and follows through with his own opportunity to write his own piece. The power of mentor texts comes to mind as you navigate through the book. The authors do a great job of listing more than enough titles to fully illustrate how text structure and story elements weave themselves into delightful and captivating stories. By studying how authors help us to understand their text structures, our students are able to write with purpose and meaning.

I find that the concept of flipping reading instruction into writing opportunities is something that we already do in our classrooms. The authors put a name to this process and defined it in-depth. The easy to follow, step-by-step lessons are invigorating and reinforced the positive strategies that I already include in my reading and writing instruction. In addition to discovering innovative teaching practices, the text rein-

forced the value behind simple strategies that had been forgotten. For example, instead of listing writers' workshop and reading workshop as separate activities in my daily class schedule on the board, I now list it as our language arts block. Reading and writing ties into virtually every subject we teach in our classrooms; they are inherently connected to one another. Given that they work hand in hand, why should I list them as separate entities?

Even as a seasoned teacher, I found some new and interesting ways from the lessons in the book for my students to have collaborative conversations with each other. I have a renewed sense of accomplishment and a renewed sense of confidence in teaching reading and writing strategies that, in the past, I would not have felt as confident teaching.

Teaching Arguments Rhetorical Comprehension, Critique, and Response
By Jennifer Fletcher
Review by Aja Booker (SDAWP 2009)
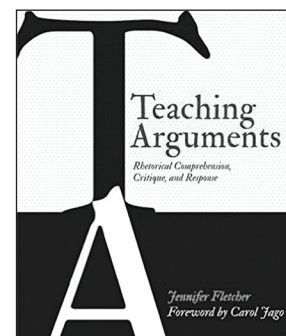
Teaching Arguments: Rhetorical Comprehension, Critique, and Response by Jennifer Fletcher is a humbling read that sparked conversations about the difficulty in defining rhetoric in the classroom. The author contends, "Students need to know how writers' and speakers' choices are shaped by elements of the rhetorical situation, including audience, occasion, and purpose."

Fletcher provides engaging classroom activities, writing prompts, graphic organizers, and student samples to help learners at all levels read, write, listen, speak, and think rhetorically.

In addition to using these strategies in the classroom, participants had multiple opportunities to reflect on the text and their pedagogy during the study group sessions as they participated in various protocols. For example, the D2R2 Protocol (Discover, Design, Rediscover, Redesign) prompted metacognition around pedagogical practices teachers have implemented and, post reading, plan to revise.

> ## Rhetoric is an incredibly complex concept to comprehend, master, and teach.

The Current Reality Protocol was a nice follow-up that built on the thinking facilitated during D2R2. Educators must consider their current reality, teaching situation, student population, etc. and compare this to the ideal goal they have for their students inspired by the reading.

In the *Teaching Arguments* study group, several of the strategies presented in the text were appreciated in theory, and a few were tried with students. The Believing/Doubting Game is one that requires students to consider dual perspectives while reading an argument piece. Having students sketch characters that represent all of the voices in an argument is a wonderful way for students to build awareness of the variety of perspectives offered. Introducing and recognizing the language of Kairos (the immediate social space and situation in which an argument must be made) was a huge take away. Rhetoric is an incredibly complex concept to comprehend, master, and teach. *Teaching Arguments* is a valuable resource any teacher of writing could use and refer to.

A Book Review:
Using Text Dependent Questions to Support the 4 Phases of Close Reading

—Laura Smart, SDAWP 2010

As a teacher of grades K-3 for over twelve years, and now as a Common Core Instructional Coach for English language arts, I have attended numerous professional development trainings in which teachers have expressed difficulty with implementing close reading. One of the most common challenges they face is motivating students to reread a text multiple times. This question inspired my initial research into close reading.
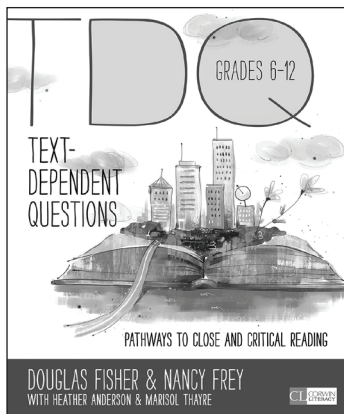
"Close reading isn't only about eyes on print; it is more accurately a means to explore the comprehension of ideas and structure more deeply," proclaim Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, in their book, *Text-Dependent Questions: Pathways to Close and Critical Reading.* Fisher and Frey offer a cognitive pathway for close reading that begins with establishing the literal meaning of the text and concludes with students having a deeper understanding of the text as well as a plan to create something inspired by it. The text, divided into four phases of implementation, provides a series of questions that guide students into fostering a deeper comprehension of the world around them:

• What does the text say?
• How does the text work?
• What does the text mean?
• What does the text inspire you to do?

After reading about this seemingly simple and straightforward process, I decided to try it in a first grade classroom in my district. Following the suggested guidelines for measuring text complexity (lexile level, language difficulty, and student interest), I selected Tedd Arnold's *Hi! Fly Guy*. This book is also listed as an exemplar text in Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards for K-1.

Before reading the text, I engaged the students by showing them a picture from the text and asking them what questions they had. This strategy sparked their curiosity and gave them a reason to want to read the story.

The first phase focuses on reading the text and asking students text-dependent questions that are centered-around the literal meaning of the text and recalling key details. These questions are the: who, what, where, when, and why of the text, and they are directly aligned to the first two Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading: Key Ideas and Details. Many of these questions can be asked while you read the story. Although questions such as "Who are the main characters?" and "What is this story about?" may seem surface-level, they lay the groundwork for digging deeper.

The second phase requires students to "zoom in" and look closely at vocabulary, structure, and the craft of the text. It is important to note that, in this phase, the entire text does not have to be read again. Instead, the teacher can select specific sections of the text that are worth examining further. By using text features to discover the meaning of challenging vocabulary words, examining the unique structure of the text, and answering questions related to

author's craft, students will gain a deeper understanding of the text as a whole (Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading: 4-6 Craft and Structure.) This phase can also encourage students to mimic similar techniques and crafts in their own writing.

When considering which vocabulary to examine further, Fisher and Frey suggest identifying any words that may potentially confuse students. In *Hi! Fly Guy*, for example, I noticed that the words "pets" and "pests" occurred frequently and could be confused because they are so close in spelling. Also, I felt the word "pest" was important to review because it may be unfamiliar to first graders and could interfere with their comprehension of the text. I reviewed these two words with students by having them create vocabulary boxes (Example 1).

I also had the students hypothesize why the author had decided to divide the book into three chapters. When "zooming-in" on the structure of the text, the students were able to discover that each chapter took place in a different setting, which indicated that time had passed. This insight will undoubtedly help them when reading other texts and can additionally support them when they are creating their own chapter books (Example 2).

In the third phase, students use all of the information they have gathered to assist them in determining the underlying meaning, or message, of the text. They use their prior knowledge to answer questions such as: "Why do you think the author wrote this?" and "What message are they sending?" In this phase, students are also asked to make intertextual connections by comparing this text to other texts they have read (Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading: 7-9 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas).

According to Fisher and Frey, "The best close readings are those that leave students with a lot of questions they still want to answer." In the final phase, students are asked to consider where they would like to go next with their learning. They could do more research, prepare for a debate or Socratic Seminar, create a public service announcement, and so much more.
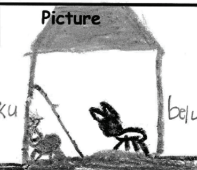
For their final product, I asked the first graders to reflect on the author's choices in *Hi! Fly Guy* and write an opinion piece about what animal they consider to be the smartest and to explain why. I encouraged them to push their thinking and try to go outside of the box the way Tedd Arnold did when he chose a fly to be the smartest pet. After composing their opinion pieces, they talked in pairs and tried to persuade each other as to why their chosen pet was the best. It was great to hear their choices and the reasoning behind their thinking (Example 3).

Text dependent questions are a critical scaffold for students as they develop their understanding of the texts they read. As Fisher and Frey explain, "The text-dependent questions that we ask should build students' habits, habits for inquiry and investigation that students can use across their academic careers." Using this method of close reading will prepare students for college and for their future careers, because they will be able to think more critically about what they read. Hopefully, they will also be inspired to transform the information in order to influence others and create change in the world.
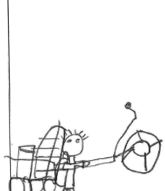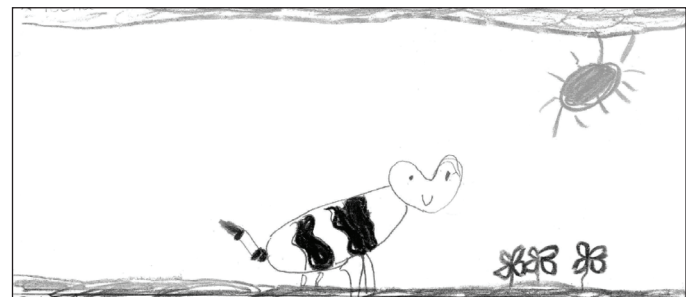

Example 1

Definition	Sentence
an animals that lives in your house	MY pets are leze.

Pets

Synonyms or Syllables	Picture
cats dogs animals	

Example 2

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3
•Fly guy was looking Fou food. Buzz was looking fou a pet. He caught the fly gave the fly a mme.	Buzz took the fly home. Dad tried to kill the fly. He	Buzz took Fly Gay to the pet show. Fly guy flow high. FLY wins smartest

Example 3

The Smartest animal is a Zebra because it runs fast and because it learns how to fid food.

Why I Write

By 8th Graders from Lewis Middle School
with Joe Ferro, SDAWP 2015

Each year, the National Writing Project and the National Council of Teachers of English join forces to celebrate the National Day of Writing in an effort to highlight the importance of writing instruction across curriculum and grade levels, recognize the variety of writing people engage in throughout their lives, as well as to encourage writing and the reading of others' writing.

On October 20, 2016, educators and students celebrated the National Day of Writing by responding to the prompt: "Why I Write." Joe Ferro's eighth grade English class at Lewis Middle School in the San Diego Unified School District explored the motivations behind their writing before taking to social media to express the reasons behind why they write.

"I write to focus my thoughts, so they don't run away from me."

"I write for a lot of reasons: it builds my vocabulary, helps me find what sounds good, and allows me to express my ideas and emotions without having to speak."

"I write because it allows me to express myself, but also makes me a better reader."

"I write to let out the things inside me that I don't want to say aloud, especially when I don't trust anyone to hear it."

"I write because, for me, it is easier to write how I feel than say how I feel. When you say something, anyone can know because your words are free. If I write, I can keep it to myself."

"I write to get things off of my chest. I write to show complexities of situations and to predict possible outcomes. I write to relive experiences from my life and to reflect on how to be better."

"I write to make sense of what doesn't always make sense. I usually write when there is no one to talk to, that way, I don't feel alone."

"We write to keep history—to tell the stories of our past selves. We share the feelings and the events so someone else can enjoy it or learn from it. My journal tells my history and my thoughts."

"I write—I set my mind free. I let my imagination out."

San Diego Area Writing Project
University of California, San Diego
9500 Gilman Drive, Dept. 0036
La Jolla, CA 92093-0036

Calendar of Events

Summer 2016 Programs for Educators

Writing, Revision and Mentor Text (Grades K-3) Level 2

Writing, Revision and Mentor Text (Grades 4-8) Level 2
June 28 – June 30, 2016
8:00am – 3:00pm
UC San Diego

Building a Writing Community (Grades K-6)
July 12 – July 14, 2016
8:00am – 3:00pm
UC San Diego

Summer 2016 Programs for Students

Information about summer programs is available on our website: http://sdawp/ucsd.edu/. Registration information will be posted by April 11.

Teaching for Impact: Innovative Practices for Today's Standards
Co-sponsored by Dept. of Education Studies & CREATE
UC San Diego
Saturday, April 30, 2016
9:00am – 3:00pm
Register at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/teaching-for-impact-innovative-practices-for-todays-standards-registra-tion-20741161372

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